ROUBEN DER MINASSIAN

MEMOIRS OF AN ARMENIAN REVOLUTIONARY

VOLUME ONE

Հայ յեղափոխականի մը
յիշատակները
Հատոր Ա

In the Furnace of Kars
Toward the Land

ARF SHANT EDITIONS · COMPLETE VOLUME · 1904

Rouben Der Minassian, 1882-1951

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Memoirs of an Armenian Revolutionary

Volume One

In the Furnace of Kars · Toward the Land

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ARF Shant Student Association · 2026

Edition & source note

First published by Horizon Press in Los Angeles in 1952. This edition presents the complete Western Armenian text alongside a new English translation in a matched design system.

Source scan: Bibliothèque nationale de France (Gallica), digitized in 2011 from the 455-page image-only edition. Publication basis: rights-holder release through the ARF e-library together with public-domain status following the author's death in 1951.

English translation and digital edition: ARF Shant Student Association, 2026. Editorial uncertainty markers and unresolved readings in the canonical transcription are preserved verbatim; no uncertain word has been silently normalized for print.

Canonical source record: https://elibrary.am/?p=221

Set in Newsreader and Noto Serif Armenian · 6 × 9 in

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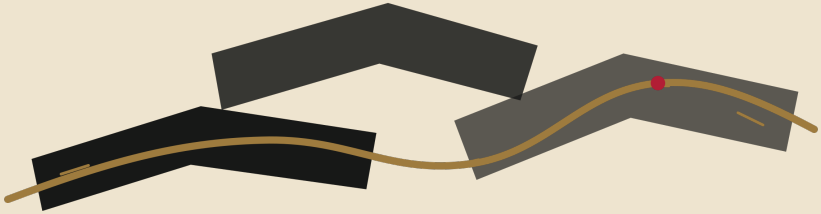


FRONT MATTER

Foreword

Յառաջաբան

Archive / notebooks

What one has heard directly from the actors themselves, or seen with one's own eyes, cannot be unreal or false; but neither can it be counted the whole truth. The voice of the *zurna*[1] gives the wedding guest pleasure, and delicate ears a fright.

To read the authors in order to grasp reality is to invite confusion: there the writer himself is the axis and the world his satellite; the hero parched on the front line is deliberately forgotten, and his water-carrier presented as the hero. So much is dictated by the interests of his own person, or his party, or his class.

Read the laws, then, to verify? Those too were built to make lawless deeds lawful.

Read the authentic documents? But those were built to veil what actually took place.

Read the daily dispatches in the press? But they are written to a purpose of their own — first to earn the fee, then to satisfy the instincts of the paymaster and of the mob.

It is for these failings that history and the social studies are still far from being a science; some say such a science exists, others say it does not.

From 1905 onward I made it my habit, within the field of my work, to set down descriptions of the notable events I saw or heard, to make notes on antiquities, traditions, or songs, and to keep the important letters and memoranda. Those scraps of paper and those notebooks could have become genuine and unerring documents, giving the picture of all that came and went. Unhappily, no trace now remains of the essential ones among those records.

Let me show what sort of fate they met. On the lake-facing side of Mount Varag, in a monastery near the village of Shushants (its exact name I have forgotten), there are cuneiform inscriptions. No one had ever noticed the wedge-writing on the foundation stones of the monastery's left wall. I took a copy, and since I myself could make nothing of those inscriptions left over from Urartu, I sent it by way of Persia to Moscow, to put the question to Grigor Khalatian and Msrlian, who had been masters of mine. Whether those copies ever reached their hands I have had no word; but I am confident that in the spot I have pointed out the originals must still remain. I sent them off in 1905.

In the years 1905–06,[2] in the village of Khndzorut in the Caucasus, the snow forced me into confinement, cut off from the world. I noticed that I was surrounded by men who were priceless wells of Armenian and Kurdish songs, epics, traditions, folk tales – of unwritten literature altogether. Such men were Khudo of Berkri, Samo of Sparkert, Khacho of Voghm, Lato, and others. I had no means to take down their melodies, nor to learn and describe the dances; but I could write out their songs in the dialect of the province, their traditions and their tales, whose age came down from times unknown – from Urartu, perhaps, and the origins of the Armenians. Though Kurdish was strange to me, I took down what they sang in that tongue as well, in Armenian letters, grasping their sense only roughly.

Among them were the epic of King Iskender, *Mek tsar mi ker mej tsovun*; *Khana Dum-Dum*,[3] the golden-armed khan's revolt against the Persians; and *Voy Amare khetabi*, in which the Armenian king Trdat takes the name Amar, embraces Kurdom and Islam, and opens war on Karapet and Hovhannes.[9]

Those writings came to twenty-one notebooks, a hundred pages to the notebook. I was conscious that by gathering those immortal songs, I too was mingling with the immortals.

In Van the notebooks were seized by the authorities, but in 1908 they were released thanks to Commissar Mehmed; I carried them with me to Erzerum, and there I left them.

In 1912, when I returned to Erzerum, I learned that Dr. Zavriev had sent eight of the notebooks, a year or two before, to Petersburg (or was it Moscow?). They must have reached their destination; into whose hands they fell, I do not know. I suppose into those of N. Marr, of Msrian,[10] of the teachers of the Lazarian Academy, and of the scholars of Zavriev's circle. Two volumes I left with Professor Asdvadzadur Khachatrian, for him to study as a Kurdologist and historian; the remaining volumes I took with me to Mush, meaning to copy them out and send them abroad, to Venice or Vienna. Events fell out so that I could not carry my purpose through. In 1914, sensing the dangers that threatened, I added to them my notes on events and persons, and other records besides; I wrapped it all in waxed canvas, laid it in a kerosene tin, and hid it in the place where I was living (where Dr. Zavriev's clinic had also been) – under the house of Jojo's Gaspar, on the river bank, beside the bridge that joins the St. Marineh quarter to the Koghu quarter.

In 1914 and 1915, when we had taken to the mountains like wild beasts, the satchel of my bodyguard Ghukas kept filling with documents. We had no paper for rolling tobacco or *khavrdzil* leaf.[4] And to a man living out his death-agony, a smoke is the supreme comfort. So I dealt those documents out to the smokers, so that they could roll up those testaments of entreaty and of command and send them up to heaven. And I know for certain that those records are no more: they have turned into prayer.

By 1916 I stood stripped of every document and of all I had collected. I grieved over the loss; yet, unchastened, I found materials gathering again of their own accord out of the new life in the Caucasus. To these were added my notes on the events, the figures, the documents, the raw stuff I had lost in Turkey; and to these again the papers that had accumulated with Aram, which he had handed over to me to decide what should be done with them.

To a young man of Khnus named Andranik I entrusted the sorting and copying of those important historical records. It was Aram's death that set me thinking of the papers' safety. One parcel of them I dispatched abroad; in it were the memoirs of Matteos and of Aram, which were printed in the *Hairenik* monthly. I am sorry that I did not send my own notes, which I had set down while memory was fresher, nor that five-*verst* map[5] on which the battles are marked in conventional signs...

Those stayed behind in my lodging in Erevan when I left for Zangezur. One must suppose they were either destroyed, or seized by the Bolsheviks.(*)

In giving these explanations I pursue two aims.

The first is that, by the trail here shown, those manuscripts may be sought and found. In them are uncut and priceless diamonds, torn from the country and from the people. There are records there of the latest period, which will complete – or refute – what has been set down at a later date. The real thing is those records, and one day or another they will be found. What I will tell is only their echo, propped on memories, dim and half-complete.

My second aim is to show this: that today, when there are cameras, the cinema, the phonograph record, and instruments of every kind – if only the means of communication exist; if we come to know the worth of the pictures and figures scratched into the rocks, of the strange stones jutting up among the hills, of the remnants of ruins where the mind, the speech and the life of our forefathers stand stamped; if the things their grandchildren tell and sing, and act out in gesture – expressions reckoned uncouth – are not despised – then all of this can become the documents of our age-old history, of a taste, a creative power, a purpose now passed away, which those instruments can record without falsification.

Every people is curious to know its origin and its past. When the historical data will not serve to satisfy that curiosity, it creates out of its imagination, out of its national memory, a legendary explanation, which often mingles with the history of the gods, who are without beginning and without end.

Without history there is no nation. A nation's history is set down either in oral sayings, in tales told in prose and in verse, in customs and legend-like folk stories; or else it is carved on stones and written on parchment.

The people's unwritten history, shaped and told across the centuries – however unconfirmed by documents, however shot through with legend, however wrong in the chronology it offers and the places it points to – is at bottom not false; it is real. In those histories and traditions one must look for the events and the lived experience of the past, for the present's searchings, and for the instincts of its hopes for the future, condensed beneath the veil of epic and tale. A people's true character, its past, is to be found in its unwritten folk poetry, which, having condensed everything into its heroes, is not history but the raw stuff of history.

The individual's history is the memory of his own past, which may be written down or not; it stays alive so long as he himself is not dead. Those around him may know that history in part, or not know it at all; to them it matters little. But for the individual the memory of his history is an inescapable, inseparable part of his being, and he is powerless to break free of the memories of his past, as though they were a vital part of his present and his future. That memory often makes its presence felt when a man is unconscious, asleep – through his dreams.

A nation is the individuality of the generations belonging to one stock; the only difference is that a person's individuality is bounded by a short span of time, while a nation's knows no bound of time. It is eternal, so long as it has not lost its memory; it is mortal when it takes no pride in its past or does not know it – even without having been wiped out as a people. When a nation, in its memory, dates its beginning from the creation of the world, and starts its history in mythology – like the Jews, the Greeks, the Armenians, and others – it becomes immortal, whatever its numbers, its quality, or the disfavor of its condition.

This is where the foreword my father meant to write as a testament breaks off, unfinished. It falls to me only to add some brief supplementary information about the manuscripts of the Memoirs and the publication of these volumes.

In Tabriz, where my father was living in 1921 with A. Avtandilian, he recounted to him his recollections, then still fresh, and Avtandilian wrote

them down. In this way some 1,200 pages of raw material were gathered, with passages here and there in my father's own hand.

It was on Ruben Darbinian's urging that my father undertook, in Paris, the first reworking of these notes. *The Memoirs of an Armenian Revolutionary* began to appear in the *Hairenik* monthly[6] from its first number. There followed in succession the story of Daron (which forms the matter of Volumes III and IV of the present edition), the life of Constantinople (the last part of Volume VI), and the Kars period (the beginning of Volume I).

In May 1950, Harry Karian and Alex Pilibos made my father's acquaintance and – let them say themselves what moved them to it – proposed to print the Memoirs in separate volumes, taking on the whole material burden themselves. Expressly for this undertaking they founded a press in Los Angeles, above all by Harry Karian's unresting efforts.

The materials already published could not simply be reprinted as they stood. They had to be reworked afresh, enlarged here and cut there, so as to become more of one piece. That is why the reader will notice an appreciable difference between this text and the *Hairenik* versions.

For reasons of convenience, publication began with Volumes III and IV (The World of Daron, 1906–1908). Next came Volume V (Akhlat, Van, Tiflis, 1908), whose contents had not been published before; then Volume VI (Kars–Constantinople, 1908–1909), in part from unpublished matter.

Death overtook my father as he was at work on Volume I. Its first ten chapters were already finished; the matter that follows them, drawn from the Tabriz notes mentioned above, carries the story, following the journal, down to his entry into the Land (1904).[7] For Volume II (Van–Lernabar, 1904–1906) the notes were likewise used, together with certain reworked passages, each one signalled where it occurs.

My father had planned to bring his Memoirs down to our own days, gathering them into ten volumes. It is with sorrow that I must report that not even the skeleton of this work's conclusion will be given. The notes on the first war are broken and few. I do have by me, however, a document of interest concerning the Republic of Armenia; I hope that one day it will be published as a separate work.

My father wrote all in one breath, paying no attention whatever to composition or to the rules of grammar, and someone had to come after him to put his writing and his language in order. The correction of the texts published in *Hairenik* was patiently carried out by R. Darbinian and A. Gesar; A. Gesar also corrected Volumes III, IV, V and VI of the present edition.

To see Volumes I and II through the press required minute and wearying labor on the notes, whose exceedingly careless language, even while being corrected, had to keep its style, its thought, and its savor. The man who did this work had to know not only the events, but my father's cast of mind and his ways of expression. That man was my father's old comrade A. Khondkarian, with whose help, our forces joined, we brought out the volumes named.

Part of the contents of the present volume appeared in the following numbers of *Hairenik*: –

- 1925, no. 3 (January)
- 1949, nos. 9, 10
- 1950, nos. 11, 12
- 1951, nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
- 1952, nos. 1, 2

Saint-Cloud, France
March 1952

V. D. M.

(*) All the papers and documents mentioned remained intact, down to the February Uprising,[8] in the cellar of Rouben's lodging. I had occasion to see and verify them myself. At the time of the February Uprising I told S. Vratsian about those papers, so that he might arrange to have them moved to some safer place. What arrangement was made, I do not know. – Note by A. Kh.

Notes

[1] *Zurna* — the piercing double-reed horn played, with the drum, at village weddings.

[2] The original prints "1905–96," an evident misprint for 1905–06.

[3] *Khana Dum-Dum* — the Kurdish epic of the Khan of Dimdim fortress, whose hero bears the epithet "Golden Hand" (Kurdish *Lepzêrîn*); the printed «ճանկ զէոհինը» appears to render Kurdish *çeng zêrîn*, "golden arm." The titles of all three songs are given as printed; the readings are uncertain in the scanned original.

[4] *Khavrdzil* — wild mountain rhubarb; its dried leaf was smoked when tobacco ran out.

[5] A Russian military map drawn at five *versts* (about 3⅓ miles) to the inch.

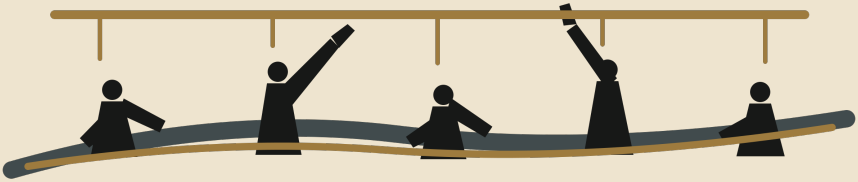
[6] The *Hairenik* monthly (Հայրենիք ամսագիր), Boston, began publication in November 1922.

[7] "The Land" (Yergir) — the revolutionaries' name for the Armenian interior of the Ottoman Empire; "entering the Land" meant crossing the frontier to serve there.

[8] The February Uprising — the anti-Bolshevik revolt in Erevan of February–April 1921, during which the Dashnak leadership, S. Vratsian at its head, briefly retook the city.

[9] Or, reading «Քրդութիւնը իսլամութիւնը կ՚ընդունէ» with a change of subject: "and the Kurds accept Islam and open war on Karapet and Hovhannes." The three singular verbs favor Trdat as subject throughout; the scan's letter-level readings of this sentence are uncertain.

[10] Spelled Մսրլեան (Msrlian) above and Մսրեան (Msrian) here in the original — evidently the same man.



FRONT MATTER

A Word from the Publishers

Երկու խօսք հրատարակիչներու կողմէ

Publication / legacy

The Armenian struggle for liberation was without precedent and without pity.

In the short space of twenty years, the Armenian people, enslaved for centuries, gave birth to fabled heroes by the thousand, who came out against a giant empire, scorning death, in the name of the Fatherland's freedom.

The struggle ran breathless, and in its race it knew resplendent ascents and terrible falls.

Among the Armenian people there arose a generation of *fedayis*,[1] cast of steel and of granite, in whose veins flowed the blood of David of Sasun.[2] Like blazing meteors they came and passed across our dark firmament, filling our souls with the divine nectar of pride and of hope.

Who was to write, for the generations to come, the history of those legendary heroes – of many of whom not even the graves are known, nor the names?

Who was to give us their inner life and their dreams?

For once, the God of the Armenians was just toward us: He spared the life of the choicest of the chosen – Rouben, himself a great *fedayi* and their commander, who, against his own wish, could not fall a sacrifice at the shrine

of freedom. By a miracle he came out of fire and sword alive, so that he might give us the life of those *legendary* giants who, at the price of their death, made the most sublime Armenian Battle for Freedom, in the name of the Fatherland's independence.

For years on end Rouben toiled and wrote: he raised from the dead the *fedayis* he had loved, described our enchanting fatherland as no one else has been able, and brought back to life our patriarchal world, forever lost, woven of the sunbeams of goodness and of toil.

In the course of the last thirty years a good many memoirs of our revolutionary life have been printed, and nearly all of them, with very few exceptions, revolve around the writer's own person.

Rouben, who has at all times been himself the central and guiding figure, labors in every way to keep his own person and his own work in the shade, and on the contrary brings into full relief, with great love and sincerity, the part played by the humble heroes.

These admirable memoirs of Rouben's have an artistic value as well as a great historical one, and in publishing them we are confident that the generations to come, and the historians, will find in them an inexhaustible spring – for analyzing the events of our time, and for taking pride in them and drawing inspiration from them.

With this printing we pay, at the same time, our tribute of gratitude and of love to *the memory of the great Armenian, the great patriot, and the great revolutionary*.

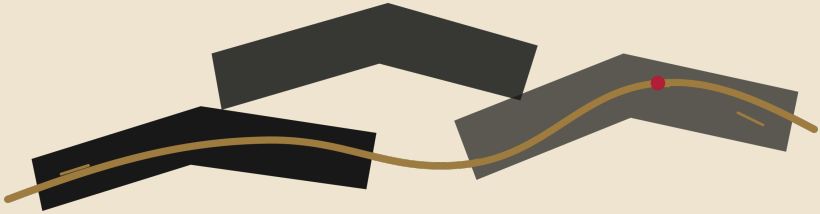
The Publishers:

ALEX PILIBOS
HARRY KARIAN
DRTAD KAZANJIAN

Notes

[1] *Fedayi* – a volunteer fighter of the Armenian revolutionary movement; from the Arabic *fidā'ī*, "one who offers up his life."

[2] David of Sasun – the giant hero of the Armenian national epic.



FRONT MATTER

In Place of a Preface

Յառաջաբանի տեղ

Portrait / memory

From one end of the emigration to the other, freedom-loving Armenians mourned deeply the loss of Levon Shant[1] and Rouben Der Minassian.

Levon Shant, being a great man of letters and above all a playwright, was already fairly well known to the broad strata of Armenian society through the works he had published over some sixty years, and above all through his plays and novels. Not so Rouben Der Minassian, who was comparatively little known to the public.

It could not have been otherwise, for Rouben had never been a literary man by trade; until the last period of his life he had had very little to do with the pen, but had been supremely a man of arms, had lived for the most part an underground life, and, by the nature of his revolutionary work, had kept out of the general public's sight.

Only during the short-lived period of the Republic of Armenia did Rouben's name gain a certain popularity. But had it not been for the memoirs he published in the *Hairenik* monthly across the thirty years following the Republic's fall, a great many, in the days of his death, would have forgotten who he was. It was only after his death that freedom-loving Armenians began to render their tribute of appreciation to the important work he had done,

and began fully to grasp what a great loss they had suffered in the death of that matchless Armenian, patriot, and revolutionary.

One may say boldly that, after Aram, no one played so decisive a part in the Republic of Armenia's becoming a living reality as Rouben did. And if today, under the Soviet name at least, we have an Armenia with a solidly Armenian population, we owe that in the greatest measure to Rouben's political foresight, his unbending will, and his resolve that broke through every obstacle.

Rouben was born in 1882. I knew him from his childhood days, from 1890, when he was barely eight years old. I first met him in Akhalkalak, where my parents had taken me to my grandfather's, to learn Armenian before I entered a Russian school.

He was a pupil at the parish school. I would see him not only in school but out of it as well. He became not only my classmate but my playmate.

From those days I well remember our "flight" toward "Armenia," Rouben and a group of schoolfellows together.

In those days not only the Armenian youth of the Caucasus but the boys, the children of ten and twelve, dreamed of going to "Armenia." Though they lived on the soil of Caucasian Armenia, they all held the belief that the real Armenia lay on the far side of the Russian frontier – that is, Turkish Armenia. And so they yearned toward it, to help their brothers and sisters suffering under the bloody Turkish yoke.

Years afterward Rouben often recalled our flight toward "Armenia," half in jest and half in earnest, and would remind me of it. That failed childish venture had left so deep an impression, so lasting a mark, in his soul – a venture destined to be the first sign of his later adventurous revolutionary life.

After that our roads parted. I left for Tiflis, then for Yekaterinodar, to get my schooling in Russian schools, while Rouben went not long after to Echmiadzin, to enter the Gevorgian Seminary.[2]

I met Rouben again in Moscow, when I was a student at the university there and he had come to enroll as a free auditor at the Lazarian Academy. At that time we had a circle of Armenian students that busied itself with "self-improvement." Rouben joined the circle too, and showed a particular interest in philosophical questions.

I remember one "paper" of his, full of original and rather knotty turns of phrase, which revolved around the following thought: "What begins does not end, and what ends does not begin"...

It was the time of the Russo-Japanese War. Rouben, as a reserve officer, was waiting to be sent to Manchuria should the call-up be declared in the Moscow military district. Being already opposed to the tsarist regime and unwilling to serve it, he had resolved to evade the call-up. He therefore asked me, if I could learn beforehand of the coming call-up, to let him know at once, so as to ease his flight.

He knew that through Russian women students I had a link with military families and could do him this service. And in fact I managed to learn of the call-up's announcement two days ahead, and told Rouben at once. That very day he left Moscow, without telling me where he was bound. Probably he did not yet clearly know it himself.

Only years later did I learn that he had gone to the Caucasus, and from there had crossed into Turkish Armenia.

The account he gives in "In the Furnace of Kars" makes plain that, after leaving Moscow, he had gone to Tiflis, had presented himself to the A.R.F. Bureau,[3] had received a letter of introduction from it, and with that letter had set out for Kars – to make himself ready, in the "furnace" there, for the revolutionary life he had chosen in the Land, of which he would give such unforgettable memories in time to come.

In February or March of 1909 I received a letter from Rouben in Moscow, written from Constantinople. It came just at the time when I was preparing to sit my final university examinations that spring.

The letter was a complete surprise to me. Rouben wrote of the opportunities opened by the Turkish Constitution,[4] and invited me to come to Constantinople, where, in his view, a broad field had opened for young men like myself.

I read it with astonishment and a little wry amusement, for in those days it could not have entered my head that in the autumn of that very year it would fall to me to fulfill Rouben's wish, and to seek refuge in Constantinople to escape the tsarist persecutions.

Unhappily, by the time I reached Constantinople, Rouben had already left for Geneva, to continue his interrupted studies.

The bustle of Constantinople swallowed me up so completely that I had neither the time nor the disposition even to keep up a correspondence with Rouben. It was only in 1912, in the days of the Balkan War, that I received from him a long, a very long letter. In it he set out in detail a plan for an armed insurrection in Turkish Armenia, and asked me to lay it before the A.R.F. Supreme Body and, if I agreed with it, to defend it there as well.

Looking at that plan in the light of later events, I must confess that it was a very sound, farsighted, practical plan, one that offered guarantees of success; and had it been carried out at the time, it might perhaps have saved the Turkish Armenians from the great catastrophe that came after. But in the atmosphere of Turco-Armenian collaboration in the days of the Turkish Constitution, our minds were not yet ready to accept and carry through such an insurrectionary plan. And it was natural that our Supreme Body would not so much as consider it.

Though his plan was not accepted, Rouben could not stay on in Geneva, but resolved to leave at once for Turkish Armenia – to be able to follow on the spot the course of the fateful events he foresaw, and to be with his people in the Land itself.

His part is known thereafter in the A.R.F. General Assembly at Karin,[5] where – though against the majority – he defended a view more promising than the others for the physical preservation of the Turkish Armenians. Looking at the events of the past through the lens of the present, we may say that this view, or plan, of Rouben's was likewise sounder, more farsighted, and politically

more correct than the road followed by almost all the Armenian people under the A.R.F.'s lead.

It was natural that Rouben would not consent to cross into the Caucasus, still less to join the volunteer movement that was to begin there on Russia's behalf. He stayed in Taron and fought, with the armed part of the people, against the Turks, who had set about the extermination of the whole Armenian people. There is no doubt that he would have succeeded in saving the Armenians of Taron, had the Russian troops and the Armenian volunteer units come to his aid in time, as they came to the aid of Van.

Unhappily, the people of Taron – though they resisted the Turks longer than the Armenians of Van – could not be saved from extermination, because the Russian troops and the Armenian volunteer units failed to reach them in time either. It was for this reason that Rouben, with only a handful of fighters, was able to cut through the enemy's ring and find refuge in the Caucasus.

Need one speak of the inner tragedy he lived through when he came down into the Caucasus with only his few brave men, after the tragic death of his beloved people of Taron?

Happily, the heavy trial of spirit did not last very long. Rouben found himself again and set to work anew, but this time in an altogether changed situation, one created by the great Russian revolution. Elected a member of the Armenian National Council, he did not stay long in Tiflis but soon moved to Erevan, where – first as a member of that Council, then of Parliament and of the military committee, and at last of the Bureau-Government – he played a fateful part in the two and a half years of the Republic of Armenia's historic life.

It was chiefly thanks to the undertakings he directed that an important part of Armenia was cleared of elements irreconcilably hostile to an independent Armenian state. It was under his leadership that the May Uprising[6] engineered by the Bolsheviks against our infant Republic was put down. And if Rouben could not come out victorious from the Armeno-Turkish war as well, the cause was no weakness in his military leadership, but the crushing superiority of the combined Turkish and Russian forces advancing at once from the south and from the north.

The last thirty years Rouben lived in exile, far from his mother country and his people, but he never lived an idle, fruitless life. Abroad too he gave all his strength to his party, and through it to freedom-loving Armenians and the Armenian Cause. He did his best to strengthen the organizational force of the A.R.F., the Dashnaktsutiun. Through the publication of his matchless memoirs he brought back to life the heroic period of our recent past – its spirit, its heroic figures and deeds – so that in this way the fire of our struggle for liberation might be kept burning in the surviving Armenians, and an ever-flowing spring of inspiration and devotion created for our new generation.

Very few Armenian revolutionaries repaid the Turks eye for eye in their lives as much as Rouben did. Yet very few, too, were as convinced advocates of Armeno-Turkish collaboration as Rouben.

Rouben wished to see Armenia cleared of that well-known element irreconcilably hostile to the Armenians, but at the same time he sincerely wished to establish a lasting friendship with it – for he knew that without its friendship the Armenian people could never be safe and free in their mother homeland.

He was an enemy of communism, yet not on doctrinal grounds but on political ones.

In the winter of 1919, when I managed to get free of the Soviet world and reach Erevan, I lived two months with Rouben, and told him then, at very great length, of the order the communists had established and of their violence. But he, after listening to me for weeks together, still showed a reserve toward what he heard. He fixed his position only when the communist armies conquered Azerbaijan and threatened the independence of Armenia.

Once he had grasped the essence of Soviet power, Rouben, naturally, could not but oppose, during the last war, the plan to enlarge the borders of Soviet Armenia, as well as the repatriation – for both that plan and the repatriation, in his deep conviction, could in no way serve the Armenian Cause, but could serve only Soviet world-dominion.

Rouben was never a doctrinaire, but neither was he an opportunist; he was never disposed to give up any of our fundamental principles or political aims in order to gain some temporary advantage.

Rouben loved the peasantry as a class, because he counted it the backbone of our people, and its soundest, purest, most decent, most virtuous, and strongest element. But Rouben did not love our intelligentsia as a class, because – though he was an intellectual himself – he was above all a man of action, whereas in the intelligentsia he saw the hollow mouthpiece of mere talk, and often of empty talk.

It is characteristic that Rouben felt no particular love for the working class either, because he counted it a child of the modern great city, with all that city's baser sides.

The village was Rouben's chosen element, and never the city.

Having been a pupil of the Gevorgian Seminary, he was deeply bound to Echmiadzin and to the Armenian national church.

I remember his fierce indignation over an editorial of mine years back, in which I had expressed the thought that the Armenian churches of the emigration ought for a time to cut their ties with the Catholicos of Echmiadzin – become a captive of Soviet power – and join themselves to the Catholicosate of Cilicia, so as to free the Armenians of the emigration from highly dangerous Soviet influences and interferences in the present stormy state of the world.

It seemed that Rouben loved Echmiadzin not only from national and political considerations, but from mystical, religious motives as well.

Though the child of a well-to-do family, he was austere in his wants by his natural bent and understanding. Yet Rouben's austerity was not like S. Zavarian's. Rouben tried to force his austerity on no one, and wished to influence others only by his own personal example.

Apart from Nikol Aghbalian, I have met no one in the Armenian intelligentsia as original as Rouben in his thought, his way of living, and his way of working. He was a penetrating observer and a philosopher born; he accepted nothing without his own minute and many-sided examination. His mind was

a scientist's mind. Beyond doubt he would have been a great scientist and philosopher, had he not become an Armenian revolutionary.

In Rouben's temperament there was also a strong streak of the adventurer, without which he could hardly have been capable of becoming Rouben Pasha in Moush. In this and a number of other respects he seems to have resembled the famous Englishman Lawrence,[7] who did so much for the liberation of the Arabs from the Turkish yoke.

Rouben seemed to believe in the life to come as well, though he was ashamed to speak of it seriously; when he did speak of it, he spoke in jest.

In a letter he wrote me on January 20, 1937, he said: –

"This life, too, came to nothing; let us see the next one, if that one exists at all… Just now I flew back to the days of childhood and remembered you, when you were getting ready to leave Akhalkalak for Tiflis, to enter the gymnasium… I wish we were in Akhalkalak, drinking from the Kulikam spring, eating alabalık (red trout) and boiling them at the water's edge. You know, Artash, this life abroad distresses me greatly; the earth is pulling at me; the farther I go, the more I hurry. I don't know whether it is a sign that death is near, or whether I will really go…"

In answer to my endless entreaties that he come to America, he wrote in his letter dated February 28, 1937:

"It seems we won't see each other again. What business have I in America, and what would I do there? – I cannot get my mind round it, and I have no wish at all to end up in those parts. I would like to go to our own parts, but that too is not permitted. There remains, then, the grave, beyond which perhaps we will meet"…

But, contrary to his ill foreboding, we did meet – in the autumn of 1947 in Cairo, during the A.R.F.'s 14th General Assembly, and last year, at the beginning of October, in Paris, when I was traveling once more to Cairo to attend our 15th General Assembly. When I was urging him to come with me to the General Assembly, Rouben said:

"My work with the living is finished. That work you and others will carry on. My work now is with the dead. Let me at least tell the story of the dead, and finish it before I die. I have only barely managed to gather myself into that

world and to fix my mind wholly on it. Do not cut the thread of my mind; do not part me from that world. Otherwise it will be impossible for me to restore the connection of my memories…"

Unhappily, he could neither come to the General Assembly to see his fellow workers a last time, nor find time enough to finish his memoirs. Death lay in ambush and came far sooner than he, or any of us, expected.

After the fall of the Republic of Armenia, when at the end of March 1922 I came to America by way of Persia, Iraq, Egypt, Izmir, Constantinople, the Balkans, and Germany, and settled in Boston as editor of the *Hairenik* daily, I began from the very first day to work at bringing off the plan I had cherished for years – the publication of a great monthly. I was sure that America, thanks to its material means and its free conditions, was the fittest place in those days, as it is today, for the realization of such a plan.

When I laid my cherished plan before our Central Committee, and then before the Delegates' Assembly, our comrades received it with enthusiasm. One of the chief reasons for that enthusiasm was that the magazine would give a chance to put to the best use the free hours of our deserving intellectuals and fighters, newly exiled from Armenia, by having them write their memoirs – and by that means giving them, at the same time, a little material help.

Together with the decision to publish the *Hairenik* magazine, the Central Committee took into account the straitened material condition of our exiled comrades, and, according to the plan I had proposed, decided to send some of them modest monthly stipends at regular intervals, so that they might give all their time to literature and to memoir-writing, and furnish the magazine with valuable matter. Among these were Levon Shant, Nikol Aghbalian, Hovh. Kachaznuni, and one or two others. To others we decided to send single lump sums for the same purpose. Among these last was Rouben.

At the same time we wrote letters to a great many comrades, asking them to contribute to our new magazine their memoirs and other writings, and promising them a certain material reward for their work.

Rouben was one of the few comrades of ours who only with great difficulty met our proposal that they send their memoirs, and above all that they take a

certain payment in return for their work. It is true that in the summer of 1921, in Tabriz, he had already begun to write, and to have written out, his own recollections and those of his close comrades. After Tabriz too, when he had moved to Geneva, he had gone on with that work. But he had done it, and was doing it, not for immediate publication, but to occupy his free hours with the recollections he loved, and to supply materials to the A.R.F. archive. Above all he could not easily reconcile himself to the thought of taking any payment for what he wrote.

When, by decision of our Central Committee, we sent him 150 dollars, so that he might with an easy heart give a little more time to setting down his memoirs and sending them to the magazine, Rouben wrote modestly in his letter dated August 15, 1922:

"This weighed on me greatly, since it is the first time I have been shown attention personally by my comrades, and it is hard to be shown such attention. But at the same time I was glad, for my material condition is very unenviable; I live from day to day and do not know what I will live on a month or two from now..."

When, on our stubborn insistence, Rouben at last began to send his memoirs to be printed in the magazine, he had to be urged each time with letters of encouragement to hasten the continuation. It was not that he was too lazy to write; he was afraid that what he wrote was not interesting, that it was tiresome, and that it would be better to stop publishing his memoirs. He kept voicing doubts about their worth, and always wanted to verify what impression they made on the readers. In his letter dated October 20, 1923, for example, he wrote: –

"One of these days I will send the continuation of the memoirs, though I had written that I would send no more. But Simon, and people in several places, advise me to go on and finish. I don't know whether anything real is coming of it or not. Write and tell me what impressions there are of what I've written. Isn't it tiresome, after all? I would like you to write a serious critique and send it to me. But don't print it in the paper, as Vahan did in *Husaper*,[8] because extravagances of that sort (praise) affect me worse than a serious critique, from which I myself want to learn."

In another letter, written in the course of the same year (1923), Rouben, fairly heartened by the appreciative letters he had received, wrote – with the self-forgetting modesty of a man who credits his merits to others: –

"It seems you fix up the pieces I send rather well. I get a fair number of letters from Persia, Siberia, Egypt, and the Balkans. They seem very pleased with the *Hairenik* magazine and with what I've written. They send me their thanks – not knowing that the one who fixes it up is you. Whatever comes of it, if bringing up this old capital can furnish a moral foundation for our ranks, then I am satisfied – though I am not at all persuaded that I am a writer."

It is true that his writings needed careful correction. His hand was untidy and hard to read. He paid no respect to the rules of punctuation. His grammar was defective. Even the misspellings were not few. His language was mixed – in one place Western Armenian, in another Eastern, sometimes both in the same sentence.

Yet Rouben's style was firm, all his own, and telling. In his writings there was no verbiage, not so much as a superfluous sentence or word. However strange his thoughts might be, he always expressed them clearly, and often in a very beautiful and forceful way. What he wrote was original, interesting, alive, and never tedious. His rare gift of observation, his uncommon power to penetrate the souls of men, his rare capacity to judge everything always by his own wits and not another's, his marvelous memory, his talent verging on the artistic in portraying figures and events, his philosophical approach to the life of the individual and of nations – of the Armenians in particular – and, finally, his almost unprecedented, many-sided acquaintance with the Armenian world: all these gave an extraordinary worth and weight to his word.

For that very reason it was necessary that his so precious recollections be published without needless flaws of language or grammar. Naturally this duty fell to the editorial staff of *Hairenik*, and it was one that, in the first months of Rouben's collaboration, Astur (Khorian) and I carried out with great pleasure. Later, when Astur had grown well accustomed to Rouben's handwriting and to the way of correcting it, he lovingly did it alone for years together. And beginning in 1948, when after a pause of some years Rouben began again to send his memoirs to the magazine, I performed that highly pleasant duty myself, down to the February number of this year's (1952) magazine, in

which, posthumously, the last section of his manuscript remaining with me was published.

"The compliments you pass on about my writing console me," wrote Rouben in a letter dated February 7, 1925, "though I never have so good an opinion of my writing myself. The secret of writing, to my mind, is this: if the subject matters first of all, the manner of the telling, the beauty of it, is just as essential. And it is precisely these last that I am unable to satisfy. It is my misfortune to have neither language nor pen. And though I understand this failing, I cannot learn Armenian, or any other tongue, well. If only I knew even Kurdish well! But that too is beyond me. What is the trick of learning it? Show me the way."

It is a curious thing that some of our known men of letters, seeing in the magazine the writings of Rouben, of Sepuh, of Sasuni, of Malkhas, and a few other non-literary men, complained in personal letters to me that I was filling the numbers of *Hairenik* with the writings of "Kurds." Happily, the written and spoken expressions of appreciation and admiration that came from every side, and from far humbler readers, were living proof that those "Kurds" spoke to the heart of our people, and that their writings too had a lasting worth – not only historical but at times even artistic.

Coming to Rouben's recollections in particular, one may say boldly that not one of our memoirists could present, as truly, as vividly, and as completely as he, the revolutionary generation of our last sixty years – its psychology, its character, its struggles, its ideals, its self-devotion, its fanaticism, its hard self-denial, its heroic bursts of daring, its whole array of striking figures and events. One may even say that Rouben's memoirs present the priceless raw stuff of the epic of freedom-loving Armenians in modern times. And indeed, how much matter there is in them for the epic creations of our present and future poets. "The Bride of Tadrağom,"[9] whose subject Kostan Zarian took from Rouben's memoirs, is only one small episode. Hundreds of like subjects lie scattered through those pages, and any one of them, under the breath of a gifted artist, might become a literary masterpiece like "The Bride of Tadrağom."

From Rouben's recollections, more than from any other writing, the reader can grasp exactly and clearly the life-giving spring from which the strength of

the A.R.F., the Dashnaktsutiun, was born, and by which it lives even today; for not one of our intellectuals was able, as Rouben was, to penetrate deeply into the soul of the heroic generation of our last sixty years, and to present it as truly as he to the public.

The interest aroused by the fragments of Rouben's memoirs printed in the magazine was so great that as early as 1925, heartened by the letters received by our editorial staff, I wrote to him of the need to publish them as separate books. In his letter dated August 12, 1925, he answered: –

"I would not be against publishing my memoirs in separate volumes, if they were finished. Besides that, if they are to be printed as books, additions will again be needed, and it should be done with pictures, of which I have gathered a good many. In that case the cost would be considerable. Though I think the outlay would be recovered later, still – so as not to burden the Party, and to give no occasion for bitter talk about you and me – I advise you to let the idea go."

Some years later, in a letter dated May 20, 1931, Rouben wrote: –

"From every side they advise me to publish my memoirs in separate books. But no one stops to think how. They must take me for a rich man."

For this purpose I applied to the Central Board of the Taron-Turuberan Compatriotic Union. But for reasons of one kind or another, which I have now forgotten, they refused to meet my proposal.

It was only during the last war that, at the urging and prompting of Drtad Kazanjian, the late Comrade Levon Hakobian one day wrote me a letter from Fresno, promising to pay the cost of publishing Rouben's memoirs in separate books, and proposing that I set about the work at once. I answered at once that Rouben's memoirs could not be published in separate books immediately, because they had first to be corrected, enlarged, and adorned with pictures by the author, whereas the author, on account of the war, was in fact cut off from us. It would be best for Comrade Levon to carry out his fine wish after the war, when it would be possible to enter into regular relations with Rouben. And meanwhile it was greatly to be desired that Comrade Levon publish one splendid work that remained in manuscript for want of a

publisher. That work was Kostan Zarian's novel "The Ship on the Mountain," which Comrade Levon Hakobian gladly agreed to publish at once.

Some years after the last war, when Rouben resumed the publication of his memoirs in the *Hairenik* magazine and moved from Lebanon to Paris, our two worthy comrades of California, Hagop Karian and Alek Pilibos, at the initiative and with the wholehearted collaboration of Drtad Kazanjian, conceived an idea without precedent in our history: to found, with their own means, a special press for the publication of Rouben's complete memoirs in separate volumes.

I have no doubt that, had Rouben lived, all ten of the volumes he had planned would have seen the light in a short time. At this moment, as I write these lines, I do not know to what extent our dear late comrade's untimely death will affect the publication of his complete work, or how many volumes it will prove possible to bring out. I know, however, that besides his memoirs he has left other manuscripts on various matters of interest. Among those manuscripts is, as far as I can learn, a study of Cilicia already ready for the press. It is to be wished that these materials too be published.

Of all our revolutionary leaders, the most fortunate was Rouben. Not only because he had two exemplary children who adored him and were devoted to his ideals, but above all because, without any effort on his part, there were found comrades who loved him to the point of adoration, and who of their own accord, with great enthusiasm and with great material and moral effort, undertook the publication of his complete memoirs. An honor and a good fortune that, apart from him, no Armenian revolutionary has been granted to this day.

I have no doubt that these volumes, published by the exceptional sacrifices of Hagop Karian, Alek Pilibos, and Drtad Kazanjian, will be lasting springs of patriotic inspiration and devotion, not only for past but for coming generations. I am sure they will be a fine, a very fine example to others. When these magnificent volumes, so well printed, are brought out, I believe the Armenian reading public will consume them in a short time, and the need for a second printing will soon be felt.

In publishing these volumes, the great-hearted comrades named above had meant to devote all their proceeds to Rouben, so that he might live and work

more at ease to the end of his life. But, unhappily, his untimely death prevented Rouben from benefiting in any way from those proceeds.

Whatever the publishers' original purpose may have been, it is hard to imagine a better means of honoring and immortalizing Rouben's memory than the publication of these fine volumes, now placed at the disposal of the Armenian public. They will furnish inexhaustible materials not only to the future historian of freedom-loving Armenians, but to our future artists and writers as well. And for this we ought to be forever grateful not only to Rouben, who supplied that priceless matter, but also to the three comrades named above, who by their personal sacrifices brought this splendid work to completion.

R. DARBINIAN

Boston, March 20, 1952

Notes

[1] Levon Shant (1869–1951) — Armenian playwright, novelist, and educator, a leading man of letters of the A.R.F.; he and Rouben Der Minassian died within months of each other, and the association whose edition this is bears Shant's name.

[2] The Gevorgian Seminary (Գէորգեան Ճեմարան) — the academy attached to the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, founded 1874, the principal higher school of the Armenian Church and a nursery of the national intelligentsia.

[3] The A.R.F. (the Armenian Revolutionary Federation — the Dashnaktsutiun), founded 1890; the Bureau was its highest standing executive body.

[4] The Ottoman Constitution — restored in July 1908 by the Young Turk revolution, which briefly opened a period of legal Armenian political activity and Turco-Armenian cooperation.

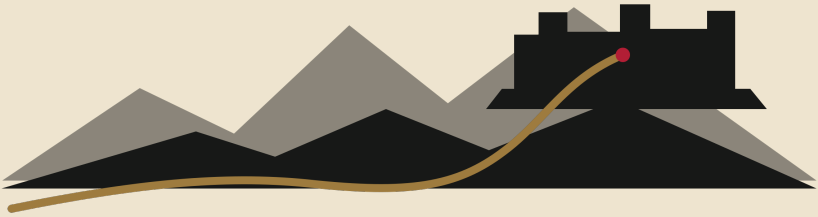
[5] Karin — the Armenian name of Erzurum. The reference is to the A.R.F. World Congress held there in the summer of 1914, at which the party rejected the Young Turks' proposal to raise an insurrection among the Russian Armenians.

[6] The May Uprising of 1920 — the Bolshevik-led revolt against the Republic of Armenia, suppressed by the Dashnak government.

[7] T. E. Lawrence (1888–1935), "Lawrence of Arabia," the British officer who helped lead the Arab Revolt against Ottoman rule during the First World War.

[8] *Husaper* (Յուսաբեր) – the A.R.F. daily of Cairo, founded 1915.

[9] "The Bride of Tadrağom" (Տատրագոմի հարսը) – a narrative poem (1930) by the writer Kostan Zarian, whose subject he drew, as the text says, from Rouben's memoirs.



CHAPTER I

In Kars: Among the Sworn

Կարսի մէջ՝ ուխտեալներու հետ

Kars ravine & furnace

IN KARS: AMONG THE SWORN.
THE WEDDING-GATHERINGS. SERGEI.
THE ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS OF KARS.
THE LAND QUESTION, THE CHURCH ESTATES,
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ATMOSPHERE.
THE ORGANIZATION OF THE TOWN.
THE ORGANIZATION OF THE VILLAGES.
THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.
THE FIELD-WORKER, THE SOLDIER, AND THE ONE WHO GOES TO THE LAND.
LEVON KALANTARIAN, RUS-KEVORK,
HAMO JANPOLADIAN.
THE SICKNESS OF MARTYRDOM.

It was toward the end of 1903 when I was ordered from Tiflis to go to Kars. It was the first time I had received a revolutionary order. Counting it a great honor, that very evening I set out to place myself at the disposal of the Central Committee there. To me that body was mysterious in the extreme. To see it, and to act on its orders, seemed a greater honor, a thing more to be held in awe, than obeying my commanders had been in my days as an officer and a soldier.

With a strange fear and awe I reached Kars. There I presented myself to Hagop Zilinkarian. I gave him the open letter addressed to the Central Committee, in which was written only: "The bearer of this letter is coming. We recommend that you make use of him and train him. Hamb. Mherian."

And indeed, the province of Kars was a place in whose revolutionary furnace fledgling Dashnaks could be tempered and come out hardened and polished

— or else, unable to bear the extreme ideological and Spartan life of the place, could abandon the revolutionary field.

From those few words Hagop understood that he must not at once reveal or show everything to this untried young man. He contented himself with saying:

"I will inform the Central Committee, so that it may make arrangements to use you here."

He called a young man named Medzik, who was dressed in plain clothes, and told him to settle me in "with the boys." And Medzik took me "to the boys." It was a crumbling stone house set down in the ravine of Kars, without any furniture. Only overcoats and satchels hung there from rusty nails, and a few men were sitting about. They did not ask me where I had come from or with what purpose; without any surprise, they treated me as a very old acquaintance.

Hagop himself came in behind us and said to those men:

"The comrade has come to work with us."

One of them — a young man with a small black beard, a little older than I, his eyes rather sore — looked at me with hard eyes.

"You'd do well to untie that 'necktie (*galstuk*) and all its nonsense' and throw it away… Andranik, there's a jacket over there, bring it…"

Andranik brought a threadbare jacket and flung away my newly tailored and cherished clothes. I obeyed without a word, accepting that perhaps this was one of those necessary laws.

The man with the sore eyes seemed very severe, and it appeared he was the chief. It was very hard to tell the great from the small: one had to guess, rather than know. They talked of laughable things and not of business. They told fables and, holding their sides, roared with laughter. But I was bewildered and took part in nothing.

Now someone came in with a *chanakh*[1] in his two hands — an oven-dish, a bowl of meat stew — whose aroma set the water running in your mouth. All together, crying *vah! vah!*, they surrounded the *chanakh* and began to eat with their fingers. I found it hard to keep up with them. The *chanakh* was already

half gone, the meat and the trimmings covered over with broth. Then the man with the sore eyes looked at me from under his brows. "Well, eat, then!… Why do you chew like a bride?" he said, and made me redder still.

Only Hagop looked on kindly, like a father. Seeing that I could neither kneel nor sit cross-legged, he pulled a satchel forward and offered it to me to sit on.

I knew no one's name, and was afraid to ask, since no one asked mine. It seemed that all of them were satisfied with the words, "he's one of our boys." I knew only the names Medzik and Andranik. But I did not know whether they too were the servants of these men, carrying out their orders, or the masters, making the jokes and sparring with the man with the sore eyes.

We went out into the town. They charged Medzik to take me that night to a gathering, and they scattered.

That night, with Medzik, through blind corners, we came into a house that seemed to be a wedding-house. In the street men were posted like sentries, and they pointed out the door. It was a sham wedding, but in truth it was the assembly-place, where more than two hundred women and men had gathered. The musicians, with their santurs, their *jianurs*, their daf and *zurna*, were seated there, but they were not playing. All of them looked with reverence at the man with the sore eyes.

There I understood that the man with the sore eyes was named Sergei, and that among those gathered there he was the most beloved, the most honored. But now he was not the sullen man of the daytime; on the contrary, he spoke with everyone, joked, and anyone he spoke a word to melted, and seemed happy to have been thought worth his attention.

Sergei began a speech on the Turkish-Armenian Cause. The thoughts did not seem so very deep – they were things said many times over. But he spoke with such emphasis, put such spirit into his rough words, that he cast a spell over all of them. I was moved by his words. But when the discussion began, and a little time had passed, I found myself not in agreement with many of his ideas, though I did not dare to speak against them.

There was a lottery, a collection of funds. Hagop directed it, with a few ladies.

It was just then that Sergei came up to me and asked what I thought of the questions he had raised. I explained my ideas, which were the opposite of

what he had said. He found my opinion strange and unrevolutionary, and defended his own with such faith and such sincerity that I could not help respecting him, even though I counted his ideas mistaken.

I do not know what Sergei found in me, but from that day he had an altogether different manner toward me. We grew more intimate with each other, and our intimacy, as time went on, deepened the more – until his death.

That man with the sore eyes and the sullen face was the Sergei of Kars, who later became the Aram of Van, to whom the Turks gave the title of Pasha. He became afterward the Aram who was dictator of Erevan, and who, without seeing the fall of the Republic of Armenia, parted forever from this world.

Looking at Sergei, I understood what is meant by "Thy faith shall save thee." I understood how weak, how unsteady a thing reason is in the face of faith…

A few days later I was present at another nighttime gathering, near the bridge. The "wedding-guests," with their families, came in one by one, verified beforehand by the watchmen.

Tables had been spread, laden with food. The tar and the *jianur*, the daf and the santur played softly. And in the street the passers-by were watched by our sentries, who kept reporting to Hagop, who sat gravely by the door. The passers-by were chiefly belated Russian soldiers, or officers seated in carriages, going up toward the fortress.

At Hagop's side stood two richly dressed girls, into whose baskets those who came in dropped whatever their hearts prompted.

Now Hamo came in. I do not know whether his real name was Hamazasp or Hmayeak; we knew him as Hamo. He shone and could have burst with joy. He had a black suit, gleaming shoes, a shirt white as snow, rings on his fingers like glittering light, his hair and his face done up. It was plain he had just come from the barber's. The scent of woman came off him.

Hamo drew out a red ten-note and dropped it into the basket of the girl standing on the right. When he looked to the left, he said to the girl on the left:

"Let there be no offense to you," and threw a ten-note into her basket too. It was a great sum, that, and many eyes went wide.

"Hamo *jan*, may you prosper!" cried Mkhchonts Margar. "But it's Sarkis who is the master of the bride and groom – what will you give him?"

"My *bumazhnik*," said Hamo, and held out his wallet to Sarkis.

Mkhchonts Sarkis, who was a tradesman, exclaimed:

"Now, Hamo – it isn't empty, is it?"

When he opened it and looked inside, he was struck dumb.

"Now, Hamo – do you know how many rubles are inside? " And he began to count aloud: "100, 200, 300, 400, 500, 600, 700 rubles. And of these small ones, 12 rubles more."

Mkhchonts Margar turned to his brother:

"Give him back his 12 rubles, so he won't go hungry tomorrow. Let the 700 be for the bride and groom."

And the wallet, minus the 12 rubles, was set before Hagop, who looked round with his sullen face and, without counting, threw it into the girl's basket.

Hagop looked displeased, though the true owners of that money were not the bride and groom, but the A.R.F., the Dashnaktsutiun – and the master and manager of the A.R.F. in Kars in those days was Hagop.

The performance began.

"Boys, *jan*," called Plo "the king," "let us all sing together." And he himself began:

> *"With gold-worked hoods, in costly Laz array,*
> *they were marching toward Sasun, to Andranik's aid.*
> *Fierce came the jan-fidan, terror seized the host," and so on.*

Blind Fahrat the ashugh, the author of that tune and those words, in those days threw all the authors and their works into the shade. There was not yet Charents.[2](*) There were not on the field Tumanian, Hovhannisian, Durian, Beshiktashlian. Those were for the schools, for the intellectuals. A little, too, one heard the name of Isahakian; but beside Fahrat he had – so people said – "made a hash of it." Fahrat was the best-loved singer and preacher of those

days, at whose words the masses were bewitched, and death turned into a wedding.

(*) If I am not mistaken, he was the son of one of the Mkhchonts brothers.

Hamo too was moved. He was on his feet, his face flushed, his eyes ablaze, his fist clenched. Before the song was over, he struck up a new one: "The Muslims' fierce battalions, vast in number"… And so it went on, until they gave the sign to fall silent.

Sergei mounted the platform. He spoke with an inner fire. He was young, but already he seemed to be counting over his comrades who had earned the crown of martyrdom. When he named Menak, and Isajan, his voice began to tremble. The listeners' eyes grew wet, and Sergei, finding himself again, said:

"My dear ones, the weeping, the mourning is not for them; they were martyred and earned immortality. The weeping, the mourning is for us – for us, who speak of martyrdom but are afraid to earn it…"

Sergei said many other things too, but only those words have stayed in my mind. All of them were dazzled. Sergei had reached his aim: he had made them all ready to be offered up as *matagh*.[3]

While they were clapping, Hamo came up to me and said: "I have something to say to you."

He was a handsome young man. On his face the down had scarcely sprouted, and had formed faint, thin whiskers, like an arched brow. Grief, anger, love, and passion poured out of his chestnut eyes and cast a spell, whether you willed it or not, on whoever stood in front of him. He might have been a flower of spring.

Until then I had met him only once.

"Let me say it in a word," Hamo began. "Believe me – I want to be made a *matagh*. If I cannot become a 'martyr,' then let me at least become a simple *matagh* for my nation."

He was moved, his voice caught, and he kept asking:

"You don't believe me? Believe me – try me."

"I believe your word," I answered.

"You believe, but Hagop does not. I begged him to send me to the Land with the first band, or to set me to some task where there is dying to be done. He threw a stone in my path and said scornfully: 'You are still a child, yesterday's *zhogin*.[4] The wind has caught your nose, you've cocked your tail, but you don't yourself know yet what you want. You say, let me go, let me be martyred. But they don't give martyrdom to everyone who wants it; you are still a thing whose "kind and kin are unsettled",[5]' he said, and finished. And I have not even yet been entered on the Dashnak roll. My hope now rests on you and on Sergei. If the two of you should wish it, you can persuade Hagop. And if you wish, you can put me into Tuman's coming band. Or wherever you two are, take me with you and try me."

Looking into his beseeching eyes, I answered:

"Let me see what I can do."

I saw Sergei and made Hamo's longing known to him. He was glad, but the doubt stayed within him.

"He is small — perhaps he'll regret it. Let us see what the others think; they know more of the ins and outs. We'll take the question to the Central Committee."

Through Sergei and the other comrades I came to know the whole machinery and the comings and goings of our organization in the district of Kars. I do not think it superfluous to set out here the organizational form of Kars, which became a model for the Land. The field-workers (*gordzich*),[6] trained there and taking their practical lessons, would cross into the Land and apply what they had seen and learned.

Kars, with all its villages, was saturated with the revolutionary spirit. The first cause of this was the closing of the Armenian schools and the seizure of the church estates by the Russians. The second cause was the question of the liberation of Turkish Armenia, which they called the Land.

In 1878, when Armenian generals — Loris-Melikov, Lazarev, Ter-Ghukasov, and others — took Kars from Turkey and joined it to Russia,[7] the Armenians believed that from this a great good would come to the Armenian people. If

not a free Armenia, then at least for the landless Armenians a place and a field were to open. And they believed in it.

But the very opposite came about. Though the Armenian generals took honors, and the fortifications of Kars were christened with their names, still the church of Abas – or was it Gagik – Bagratuni they turned into a Russian church, which was a thorn in the eye of the Armenian people; the hopes of Armenian self-rule vanished into thin air, and Russian military rule was established. Those too who believed that at least the landless Armenians would get land in their reconquered country were left despairing. In the first year of the conquest the Armenians were 45 to 50 percent of the population – some 80,000 in all. By 1903 the number of the population had risen to about 400,000. Though the number of the Armenians had grown, and reached 120,000, their extent of land had stayed the same as it had been twenty-five years before, while their proportion of the whole population had fallen to 30 percent. The lands were being parceled out to immigrant Russians, to Molokans, to Greeks, to Ossetians of the Caucasus, to Circassians and others, while the 30,000 Armenians who had escaped from Turkey in the years 1894–96[8] remained landless – counted an undesirable element by the Russian authorities, and dragging out their existence in Basen, Takht, and Kars through the goodwill of the local Armenians.

On top of this state of things there came the school question, the matter of the seizure of the church estates, and – after Kukunian's band, down to the destruction of Torgom's and Vaghharshak's bands by Russo-Turkish collusion. In this way Russian policy toward the aspirations of the Armenians was laid entirely bare. Laid bare, likewise, was the course of Turkey: on the other side of the frontier, the massacring policy of the Hamidian regime.

The people of Kars, of whatever class and schooling, saw all this and felt it on their own skin. They were cured of setting their hopes on the Russian or on any other. The "statesmen" of the coffeehouses, or of the salons of the capitals, they counted "wind-blowers, arse-blabbers." Kars had created its own separate atmosphere and political direction – pessimistic, yes, but realistic – which was distilled into the following words: "The Russian lays his axe to the root of the Armenians; the Turk lays his axe to the branches of the

Armenians. The others too have come to chant the hallelujah over our heads. A curse on this one and on that one alike."

This situation, however, had not set the Armenians on the ground of despair, but on the contrary on the ground of hope and of faith – faith in their own strength. Their watchwords were these: at whatever cost, to keep the national selfhood; to count holy whatever is national; not to offer sacrifices to the saints, but to spare no sacrifice for the abolition of Turkish and Russian tyranny. "Freedom is parted from us by a deep abyss; that abyss must be filled with the enemy's corpses and with our own."

These were not merely fine words. The comrades who surrounded me were preparing themselves for death. They had one concern only: to sell their lives dear and to die on the soil of the Land. And if they could manage to see the Lake of Van, and Antok of Sasun, then after that let come what may. They knew that it was not by their deaths that they would bring down the Turkish and Russian regimes; but they believed that it was over their corpses that the enslaved Armenian people would pass from bondage to freedom.

The people were aware that these men were going toward certain death. But neither friends, nor parents, nor anyone at all counseled them to draw back. On the contrary, with sorrow they would say: "May your vow be accepted." And to the comrades going to their deaths, death seemed beautiful and easy. Death had become more alluring even than life.

In this atmosphere, the town of Kars had taken the following organizational form:–

The town was divided into quarters, in each of which the sworn party members (*ukhtyal*)[9] were divided into bands (*khumb*), according to age and to the band's own wish. The members of a band knew one another, held regular meetings, attended lectures, paid their dues, and carried out the orders of the Sub-Committee. A member of one band did not know the members of the other bands. They were kept secret from one another and linked together by the Sub-Committee. Among them there were no women. But the women were organized like the men, and performed the role of the Red Cross. They

had their own separate boards, which chiefly created money, work, and sources of income for the members of the party.

Material sacrifice was a thing of rivalry. Stinginess was equivalent to putting oneself outside the Armenian people. And each one wished to sacrifice beyond his strength – sacrificed more than was needed – a thing the leaders had to moderate.

Schooling had to be Armenian. The Russian state schools were wholly under boycott. The children attended the Armenian private schools almost in secret. Schooling was obligatory.

A few years earlier, to speak Russian had been a mark of being cultivated and a matter of honor; the young, whether they knew the tongue or not, strove to express themselves in it. Now it had become the opposite. Russian was under ban. Whoever used that tongue was counted a traitor.

The Armenian churches stood empty at the hour of the liturgy. They did not go to prayer, which they counted deceit and vanity. Only a few old women went to church. In spite of this appearance, the defense of the Armenian church was a national and party duty for Armenians of every denomination.

The clergy were despised. "Mountain and gorge – the *der-der's* belly," they would say, and counted them backward, counter-revolutionary. In spite of this, since the Armenian clergy were persecuted by the Russians and were in danger, the party had taken their protection upon itself, as the remnant of a national authority. Khrimian Hayrik, in their eyes, was no longer merely a Catholicos, but the head of the nation. And they would dispute whether he was a Dashnak or a Hnchak, though he was in fact neither the one nor the other.

The Catholic and Protestant Armenian communities, though they attended their churches more, and seemed more firmly settled in their creed, were of one mind with the Lusavorchian, and were just as fiercely zealous in defending Armenian traditions and rights. "The Armenian church belongs to the Armenians and not to the Russian," they would say.

The organizational form of the villages was a little different, and had its own defects, which were to be put right after 1903. Those defects arose because of the *tayfas* – the clans – that existed in the village, or of those who belonged to another party.

The whole community of a village elected a three-man Sub-Committee, which was the highest authority in the village. Its business was as follows:–

Judicial. No suit reached the Russian state court. All the village's quarrels and suits were settled on the spot by the elected three. In the case where there were unresolved suits in the village, or where the elected three were themselves subject to trial, they were judged by the district committee.

Educational. The state schools were under boycott. It was obligatory to have an Armenian school, even a secret one. The costs of the school were met with money or with goods in kind.

Party levy. To evade the state taxes was no crime; but to fail in the national and party dues was a dereliction. Each one, according to his means, was obliged to pay his party rate in money or in kind, which was passed on to the Central Committee.

The question of the refugees. Lodging and work had to be found for the refugees. Every labor had to be performed for their welfare.

It was necessary, too, to keep in safety the munitions to be sent to Turkish Armenia, and to maintain the bands passing through, at the district's charge.

The villages of the county, through their representatives, elected the District Committee, which was the immediate superior board over the Sub-Committees. At its disposal was the district's circuit-riding field-worker (*shrjig*),[10] appointed by the Central Committee, who carried out – or had carried out – the Committee's decisions, and called the recalcitrant to order. At the *shrjig's* disposal were at most two armed men.

All this was carried on amid the conditions of the strict regime of the Russian government, the more so as the province of Kars was a military zone. No doubt the government sensed the comings and goings, but it had no possibility whatever of interfering. The people's antipathy toward the authorities was so great, and their sympathy toward the A.R.F. so strong, that its lower strata, terrified of the scorn of their own kind, strove to seem better

than the best. And those who dared, by loose talk or by malice, to become tools of the government, often paid with their lives at the hands of their own kin. For the deeds that were done, there were found near the government neither complainers, nor informers, nor betrayers.

This activity had yielded great fruit in the province of Kars. Although the authorities demanded of the 30,000 Armenian refugees sheltering there that they either accept Russian subjecthood or be dispersed from this military zone, they accepted neither the one nor the other, and, thanks to the local people, always stayed in the place where they were. Their material condition was bearable, and there was no trace at all of the question of native and refugee, which I saw later in other districts.

The people of Kars, above all of the villages, had until then been indifferent toward schooling, and the greater part of them was illiterate. But in spite of the Russian persecutions, and thanks to the direction the Dashnaktsutiun had adopted, the number of its pupils had tripled, the number of schools had doubled. Though their quality was low, and though the state schools had been left empty thanks to the boycott, the children attended with zeal the schools set up in the haylofts and the barns.

The Armenians of Kars, though fewer in number than the Armenians of Tiflis, of Erevan, of Alexandropol, and of other districts, and poorer too than all of them, had nonetheless covered their own expenses by 1904. The net capital it had brought into the party treasury was, I believe, 40,000 rubles, and it held the first place in those days. And Baku, which was the world of the millionaires, was left in the shade by Kars.

There was one other contradictory phenomenon, curious, which I have not to this day been able to grasp in its depth. The Central Committee was the district's supreme leader; in its name all business was carried out. But it itself was invisible. This was not merely a consequence of caution; it had another meaning as well.

From county to county, in bringing the bride home, the verdict varied. In Upper Armenia and its offshoots – Kars, Akhalkalak, and a few other districts – until the groom's mother and his aunt had seen their bride wholly

naked in the bath, they would give no verdict on the marriage. It seems likely that this custom had also had its effect on the election of the Central Committee of Kars, at which I was once present, and the like of which I saw nowhere else.

The District Delegates' Assembly had been convened in the general way, according to the by-laws. Only – since the Central Committee, though it was made up of seven persons, was yet a single person as Central Committee, and since it was itself a secret body, and had, by remaining secret, worked through its appointed field-workers – it therefore continued to stay absent from the District Assembly.

Two chief reports – the financial and the working – had been presented, confirmed with the seal of the Central Committee. The Central Committee had appointed as its representatives, in its stead, Hagop (Zilinkarian) and Sergei, who were its field-workers. They at the same time tendered their resignations, and demanded that a new Central Committee be elected.

In the usual way there were criticisms of the absent Central Committee. But it was not the Committee itself that defended it, but the delegates or the field-worker-representatives, who also gave supplementary information on the questions raised.

When every explanation had been heard, and criticisms made, the chairman put the question:

"Could more have been done than our Central Committee has done? Have its deeds answered to the decisions given, and what is our estimation of our Central Committee?"

All of them found that the Central Committee had been much to be praised for its activity.

The elections, as usual, were according to the by-laws, but there were particulars that were peculiar to Kars.

In the first place, they did not concern themselves with the person of the candidate for the Central Committee, but with his lineage. Who were the candidate's mother, his father, their grandmother, grandfather, great-grandfather and great-grandmother – and thus they would rummage through his descent all the way to Noah the Patriarch. If you made the

mistake of asking what that ancient history had to do with the candidate, the old men, who could tell the stories in minute detail, would answer:

"You are yellow-beaked; a word does not reach you. He who sucks lawful milk turns out lawful. From a snake's egg no turtledove hatches."

In the second place, they would rummage through the candidate's family, his inner life, and how he kept himself within the family: did he drink, did he play at gambling, was his eye not on what was outside, what was the well-being of his family, what was his personal life?

If you made the mistake of asking why they pried into the candidate's private life, they would answer with heat:

"Is not the Central Committee the leader of thousands upon thousands of our families? One who cannot govern himself and his own family – can he govern us?"

In the third place only did they examine the personal and party qualities of the candidates for the Central Committee. They must not be without work. On the contrary, they must have their own settled occupation, their post. At the least they must be self-sufficient.

If no well-off man could be found, and you blurted out – is there no place for the poor in the Central Committee? – you drew the objection at once:

"No, the Central Committee is for the wretched, but it must be independent and unhampered, so that it can reach out a hand to the wretched. The workless, the incapable man, who is forced to look to another's purse – how do you expect him to be impartial, free, and useful both to himself and to another?"

The candidates were chosen without regard to their place of birth, their standing, or their class. And so you would see one – a schoolmaster, or a clerk – who would argue:

"The nation is a rainbow of the sky made up of seven colors. The nation is a sweet melody made up of seven voices. Therefore I propose that we choose one from each of those seven mysteries, and create out of the seven kinds a Central Committee, so that we may have an ear and an eye in all seven classes."

And indeed the votes were concentrated in that direction:— Norhatian (a Kars man) of the teaching, cultural color; Sev Karo (an Akhalkalak man) of the color of the workmen, the laborers; Yeruand (an Akhalkalak man) of the color of the tradesmen; Bznuni (a Kars man, I believe) of the color of the state officialdom; Dr. Kazanjian (an Akhalkalak man) of the color of the free professions; Mkhchonts Margar (a Kars man) of the color of the small tradesmen, the peasantry.

To me this course was unintelligible, and I expressed my surprise: why had Turbakh not been chosen, who had been an old and famed field-worker even in the Land itself; why had Hagop and Sergei not been chosen, to whom the whole province looked?

Hagop answered, smiling:

"You are surprised, because you do not understand the essence of the Central Committee. In the beehive the queen bee is everything, and all the rest of the bees are her creatures and her captives. Whatever she commands, so it will be. To each she gives a different work, and according to that work she has armed them: to one she has given trunks and armor, to strangle the enemy; to another, stings, to defend herself, to gather the nectar of the flowers and turn it into honey. She herself is bare of all this — a wretched grub, that leans on the sacrifice of her creatures. But if that grub is absent from the hive, all of them will destroy one another and flee. And so she is always in their midst, and like a prisoner she never sees the sun. Take the queen bee for the Central Committee. She has three duties: (a) to be among her ranks night and day, never to see the sun, like our mothers, and to love all of them without distinction; (b) to keep the harmony among the whole multitude, and to have the will to enforce that unity; (c) to foresee and to secure the existence of that multitude in time of danger and of peace, and its strengthening in quality and in number. Nothing else."

By this example Hagop meant to make me understand something; I asked myself: "Hagop, in telling his story of the queen bee, does he mean us to ape the bees, or is what he says an inborn quality of this people?" In my imagination I had gone to Yeriza,[11] where the goddess of wisdom was the divinity Anahit, who, like the queen bee, was everything, though she was herself a statue of stone. Could it be that all this had risen again and come and

mingled in the by-laws of Kars, and the election of the Central Committee too had become an unwritten law?

"You say, leaving aside Turbakh, who is a hero, we are putting another into the body. That is the good of it. The members of the Central Committee do not have the possibility, or the duty, of being heroes. First, they must be secret. And then – they are the ones who must create the likes of Turbakh by the thousands. You say, leaving aside me and Sergei, we are putting others forward. That is good. We are here today, gone tomorrow, and we will come to our end on the work as well. But who is to be the one that creates workers better and more numerous than we? If the Central Committee understands its role and meddles in no other things – if it lays its eggs and has the will to govern, without factional strife – it will justify its existence, and everything will go on, lasting and good. This will be, when it becomes a single person."

I have told this much so that another cast of mind, another atmosphere, may be understood, which the Central Committee had created in that district.

The field-worker, the soldier, and the one who goes to the Land were the element that was to be made a *matagh* to the nation. They were subject to particular rules, of which the chief were these:–

– You must not have your own property.

– You must cut your ties with worldly life.

– You must cut your ties with your family and with women in general.

– You must in no way share in pleasures.

– You must be the servant of yourself and the servant of your comrade.

– In speech and in bearing you must be seemly, bold, and proud.

Lying, stealing, cursing, whoring, making love to girls, loving the soft life, not knowing the mother tongue, cowardice, tale-bearing, timidity – these are human failings. He who has not had one of them from birth, and does not have it by reason of his own incapacity, is not virtuous. Virtuous is he who has had every failing, but confesses it openly, renounces them, struggles against them, and conquers. What is the *der-der's* sermon on charity worth, when not a *metalik* comes out of his pocket? The benefactor is the man who

has, and gives what he has. What are the counsels of abstinence worth, from a broken man, or from a hermit who has fled to the mountain? The man of worth is the man who has everything, and stays abstinent.

Here, then, in this school of the spirit, was where they had put me to be "trained." My mother, my brothers, had come to Kars and settled there. They were even rich; but I, moved by the general atmosphere, would not set foot within our threshold. From now on I was to have nothing but our shabby lodging in the Zor quarter, the bare ground, and a *yapunji*[12] for a blanket. To fetch a *tava* or a *chanakh* from Tepanants Alek's cheap eating-house and fill my belly, to clean by turns my own and my comrades' shoes, to groom our horses with my own hands and to feed them — these had become our daily duties, alongside the party work.

Levon Kalantarian, who was a Zok, came among us from Baku. They said that he was rich, that he had renounced his rights, and, giving up his business, had come to go as a *matagh*. I did not learn it from him, but others said that he had paid to the Central Committee the whole cost of one or two dozen soldiers' full equipment, horses and all. In spite of this, his hard-hearted new comrades kept making trials of him, to see whether a man would come out of that "bourgeois." His sleeping-place fell by the door, from under which the cold wind blew. Before the dawn had broken, Sergei would say:— "I am very tired; clean my shoes, and go and groom my horse too." Hagop would add:— "You'll buy meat, onions, you'll buy potatoes, and you'll make something good, and we'll eat." They opened his saddlebag, and whatever he had, every man took from it what he wanted, and nothing was left him. Levon protested, laughing:

"Well and good, but you didn't even leave a change of things — I'll take yours too."

He had understood at once in what atmosphere he was, and adapted himself. Against our will we would say: "He's a golden boy…"

Different was Kevork — whom they called Rus-Kevork, "Russian Kevork," for having a Russian's features. He stood higher than all in schooling. He would say:—

"My dear fellow, the ties a man has with life are heavy chains; they hold him back from the highest sacrifice, from martyrdom."

Kevork had clung with severity to the hermit's life. The Tolstoyism that was in fashion in those times paled before his exactingness. His delicate body he wished to train to endurance, which it could not withstand. His mind was always soaring to the summit of Mount Antok, where with weapon and armor he would fight against the tyrant Turk – whom he never saw. His beloved Buckle, "The History of Civilization in England,"[13] he had thrown aside; he read it no longer, worn away in soul and in body.

We saw this and would say: "Rus-Kevork is a diamond."

But he was ill. At his head Sergei sat in sorrow and played the mother.

"Kevork *jan*, Minas's(*) place is vacant. Let us take him there. His mother will make you well."

"That is – you count me useless?"

"No – so that you may get well, so that you can reach Antok."

They lifted him and took him to our house, for care.

I had already left Kars when Kevork, restored to health, had – as I learned – joined Vaghharshak's band and added his bones to the ruins of Zivin,[14] without ever seeing Antok.

As for Hamo Janpoladian, who was likewise counted a "bourgeois" chick, he could not part from his costly cigarettes, his fine clothes, his lavish way of living, and his lovemaking with women. He was not moved by the atmosphere that had been created, and seemed to find it meaningless.

"Are we to save Armenia by asceticism, or by martyrdom and by deeds? I would understand it if you said that our aim will be to strike down those who disorder life. My aim is to strike 'them' and to love life."

And we, above all Hagop, would say in despair:

"A dog's crooked tail cannot be straightened with a press."

Let me tell of a gathering of the leaders, to which I too had been invited, and where Hamo's question was laid. There were Norhatian, Yeruand (my

brother), Sev Karo, Dr. Karo, Bznuni, Mkhchonts Margar, Plo, Sergei, and Hagop.

Yeruand was the one reporting.

"I was passing in front of Baghdasarov's shop. He called me in and said: 'It seems you don't count me an Armenian. I've understood that the nation needs money. There is no one to ask me, and no one to try me. Take this 500-note. Let my finger too be in your work.' I was taken by surprise, took the 500-note, and said: 'I'll give it to whoever needs it, but I don't know whether he'll accept your gift or not.'"

(*) Rouben's baptismal name. (Note by A. Kh.)

Hagop leapt up from his place.

"I had gone to the Kroy quarter. Khnko the water-carrier scarcely earns 30 kopeks a day and brings home the price of dry bread. He gave a gift of 2 rubles and said: 'Take it for the nation, in place of a glass of water.' Those two rubles are equal to Baghdasarov's 2 million rubles. Let us not mix these foul monies with the kopeks of the Khnkos."

It was decided: if Baghdasarov gives 1,000 rubles, to bring it into the treasury, since he has given the gift unasked. If it be less than 1,000, to return it.

Hagop reported on a gathering held two days before, saying that Sergei had shown a great gift for preaching and had charmed everyone. "I propose that we give him the leadership of the propaganda work."

The proposal was accepted, against Sergei's protest that this work was not to his heart, and that this was not his aim in coming to Jrabert (Kars).

"At the wedding-performance," Hagop went on, "the net income was 2,912 rubles and a wallet. Of that sum, 12 rubles have been returned to Hamo Janpoladian; 700 rubles, with the wallet, remain in suspense. I propose that we bring the 2,200 into the treasury and give a corresponding receipt to the Sub-Committee that organized the performance, and return the 700 rubles, with its wallet, to Hamo."

Silence fell. Sergei made me a sign to open my mouth. But I was moved, did not know what to say, and hesitated. Norhatian began to speak.

"Hagop *jan*, Hagop – I know Hamo, I have seen him in the street with the schoolboys. He is a mere slip of a boy who has not yet finished school; torn from the Russians, he has come to our 'church.' He has come to our church, and, turning all he has and has not into so many candles and tapers, he wants to light them for our saints, for our martyrs. Why do you, chasing after Hamo's candles, want to put them out – want to throw his gifts into the privy? I have been a schoolmaster, and I know what an effect it has on the soul of that slip of a boy, if his gift is not accepted. I propose that we accept it and encourage him, and send the '*bumazhnik*' (the wallet) to the museum."

Norhatian's remarks weighed heavily on Hagop, and he said:

"Your example was good, but wrong. Before the saints they light tapers and candles made of beeswax; that is acceptable for the saints. But if the candle is made of the fat of a pig or a dog, that becomes a sacrilege, and our church a pigsty. He is a slip of a boy, he has no earnings; but that 700 rubles – from where did it get into his pocket, that he offers it to us? Has your pocket seen 700 rubles?"

"No, it has not, because I have no rich father, nor the Kaghzvan salt-mine."

I took heart and opened my mouth:

"A word does not fall to me, but let me say what I have seen. I too have no earnings yet, but I have 150 rubles in my pocket. That is not from a pig's fat, since those who gave it are sitting among you, and are Hagop's dear ones."

Yeruand and Hagop looked at one another and laughed. I went on:

"I have begun to be afraid both of the money in my pocket and of you. How much will Hamo fear and be cast down, if his gift is not accepted? That is not what I have to say about Hamo. I wished to make his request known to you. He complained of Hagop, who, counting him a child, has become a bar to his joining the bands, to crossing into the Land. He begs that we take him into the Dashnak ranks, and then set him to some task where there is dying to be done. He has vowed – so he says – to be martyred. I would wish that his longing be fulfilled."

"No, *oghlum*," Norhatian put in, "martyrdom cannot be made into an aim. *Aparim*, Hagop – though young, yet he acts like a settled man. Last evening too they sent to my address, from Derbent, a very handsome boy of nineteen

or twenty who has finished the gymnasium. He was so fine that I left everything. He passed the night with us, and now too he is at our house. Yeruand, your house is roomy; I'll send him to you. He must not be mixed with the coarse and rough soldiers. Let us somehow persuade him and send him back; this trained generation will be of use to us. I have wandered a little from the point. What I meant to say was that when I spoke with him (his name is Kevork), he explained the mystery of death with such faith, he so yearned to go to the Land to earn the crown of martyrdom, that my mouth stayed open. Let me tell you a thing: this new generation of ours is infected with 'the sickness of martyrdom.'" Then, turning to Dr. Karo – "Have you any remedy for it? *Aparim*, Hagop, what you did was good. To save Hamo, one must forbid his suicide."

Norhatian, without knowing it, exploded a storm in this little assembly. Fingers rose, and all of them wished to speak at once. Mkhchonts Margar, without asking to speak, got up and began, thrusting his red beard up in the air:

"Norhat, Norhat, is what you say any kind of talk? So then – there are white bones and black bones, it turns out? Whoever is good, with schooling, let us put him in *turshi* at home, and the bad ones, the ill-bred, let us send to the Land – are we to leave martyrdom to them alone?"

Sev Karo shouted from his place:

"Norhat, Norhat, something has struck your head today. Doctor, look – hasn't he perhaps 'gone soft'?"

Sergei could not sit quiet in his place, but Hagop persuaded him that the word was his. Hagop made his speech:

"If Norhatian thinks I hold the same views as he, he is grievously mistaken. I am not against taking Hamo into our ranks and putting him into the bands of the Land. Let him keep his '*aparims*' to himself. Yet, contrary to Norhatian, I think that the first candidates to be put into the Land ought not to be the good-for-nothings, nor ignorant and idealess men, but our chosen generation, those who have taken schooling, those who have an ideological aim. I am against putting them in '*turshi*'; they will turn sour and become stuff to be thrown out.

"Ninety percent of those who go to the Land will be killed, and only ten percent will reach the place. That does not mean that our aim is to become 'dying, being sacrificed, being martyred,' but to bring at least one in ten alive to the Land, where they will spread our ideas.

"None of you knows Hamo as I do; he is capable of every sacrifice, he is fearless, but he loves the action, not the true aim of the action. It is that I fear."

Then, looking at me, he went on:

"You, who meddle without knowing, are mistaken. First, he is the son of Janpoladov, a rich man who exploits the sweat of thousands. We, who ought to be against that, can we be against it through such men as he? Such men are our adversaries of tomorrow. And it is not that which occupies Hamo today.

"The second chief cause is this. It is undeniable that without labor no money is created, and without money no work at all can go forward. However much one must fear being left without money, one must fear still more having much money easily. Our Hamo, a mere slip of a boy, has not yet had his own earnings, whether just or unjust, but he feels himself proud that he is rich. To give gifts from his father's money is no sign of sacrifice. And his personal expenditures — the theater, riding first class on the railway, his food, his dress, decking himself out like a woman — are a sign that he is on the way down. He is '*baylimiz*' (undefined). I am his friend; let the enemy know me. Let him not enter our ranks."

They all gave Hagop the right of it.

Notes

[1] *Chanakh* — a dish or bowl of stewed meat; here, an oven-baked stew eaten communally with the fingers.

[2] Yeghishe Charents (1897–1937) — the great Armenian poet of the Soviet era; the point is that in the years described here (1903) he had not yet appeared. The authorial footnote's guess that he was a son of the Mkhchonts brothers is mistaken but is preserved as written.

[3] *Matagh* — the votive animal sacrifice of Armenian folk religion, slaughtered and shared out; the fighters used the word for the offering-up of their own lives.

[4] *Zhogin* — an untranslated term of Hagop's rough speech (the reading is uncertain in the original), evidently a contemptuous "youngster / nobody."

[5] A Turkish jibe, *insi cinsi belirsiz*, "his kind and kin unsettled" — that is, a person of no fixed standing, not yet formed.

[6] *Gordzich* — the party's field-worker or organizer.

[7] In the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, Russian forces (with several Armenian generals in high command) took the fortress-city of Kars from the Ottomans; by the Treaty of Berlin the Kars region was annexed to the Russian Empire.

[8] The Hamidian massacres of 1894–96, ordered under Sultan Abdul Hamid II, in which some two hundred thousand Ottoman Armenians were killed and many more fled across the Russian frontier.

[9] *Ukhtyal* — "the sworn," a member bound to the organization by oath.

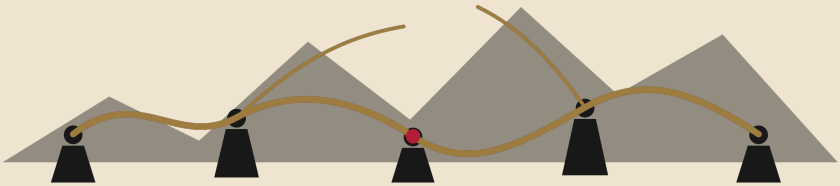
[10] *Shrjig* — the roving, circuit-riding field-worker assigned by the Central Committee to a district.

[11] Yeriza (Erez), in Upper Armenia, was the great pre-Christian temple-town of the goddess Anahit, whose gilded statue there was famous in antiquity.

[12] *Yapunji* — a felt shepherd's cloak, used here for a blanket.

[13] Henry Thomas Buckle, *History of Civilization in England* (1857–61) — a work of positivist history much read by the radical youth of the age.

[14] Zivin — a station on the Kars–Erzurum road, scene of fighting during the border crossings of the fedayi bands (1904).



CHAPTER II

The Party's Machinery

Կուսակցութեան մեքենան

Kars organizational network

THE WORK OF THE CIRCUIT-RIDERS.
THE PUNISHMENTS AND THE PRISONS.
THE CHURCH AND SCHOOL AFFAIRS.
V. CHILINKIRIAN AND THE COUNSELS OF HIS GREEK FRIEND.
THE PARTY REVENUES.
THE EXPENSES AND THE PURCHASE OF ARMS.
THE PROPAGANDA.
THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND THE FIELD-WORKERS.
THE RUSSIAN AUTHORITY AND THE PARTY.
TERROR-ACTS.
THE SECRET POLICE, THE TRAITOR, AND THE INFORMER.
THE ONES WHO CARRY OUT THE TERROR-ACTS.

Of the field-workers, the circuit-riders, and the ones who went to the Land, I have named only a few. They were the remnant of the multitudes that had gone before them, of whom many were no longer among the living. Their character will perhaps come clearer when I recall their work and their duties.

The work of the circuit-riders.— The first part of it we saw in part. To school oneself to the new way of living; to travel by railway third class, on horseback or on foot; to live among the people, with the life of its poorest class and of the hard-driven soldier, stripped of every pleasure.

Since the Central Committee was secret, it was the circuit-riders who were the link between the people, the ranks, and the Central Committee. They

carried out its instructions and gave effect to its decisions. Whatever affairs or decisions succeeded, they credited to the Central Committee. In case of failure, the field-workers would declare that the fault was their own and open to review, since the Central Committee had not examined it.

The town and the villages of the province were divided into committees, Sub-Committees, and bands, which, with their bodies rising from the low toward the high, resembled a pyramid. The apex of that pyramid was the impalpable, secret Central Committee. These were the legislative, administrative, elective bodies.

On the other side – running the opposite way, beginning from the apex above and coming down to the base of the pyramid – there was spread another authority, one that was appointed, not elected, and that was visible to the government and to everyone. That authority hid the elective bodies beneath itself and gave the appearance that it alone was the whole force. Its duty was to see the decisions of the Sub-Committees, the committees, and the Central Committee carried out, and to pass on to the corresponding bodies all those questions that it was not in a position to resolve. Thus that network, which had sprung from the Central Committee, covered the whole of the Central Committee's domain.

That network was sparse. Its knots, who were intellectuals with an education above the secondary, had with them 2 to 5 soldiers as escort, who were in general men of some name and skilled in the use of a good pistol and a knife.

The field-workers, the circuit-riders, and the ones going to the Land, mentioned above, were those knots of the network; they hung from the Central Committee and from the bodies subordinate to it, and were removed whenever a complaint arose.

The judicial business was the most engrossing work of all, since the Central Committee had forbidden litigation before the government. The opposing parties would present their disputes and their witnesses to the Sub-Committee, if the parties were party members; whereas the non-party people presented theirs to the same Sub-Committee, adding to it their own non-kinsmen judges in equal number, whose verdict was binding.

Those disputes that this body judged it necessary not to resolve were passed on to the district committee, to the Central Committee, or to the circuit-rider of the district. In that case the verdicts they gave were final, whatever the matter might be.

With those disputes that were between Armenians and outsiders, these bodies did not concern themselves; the field-workers, the circuit-riders of the Central Committee did. These men, sometimes armed, would present themselves at the village of a Greek, a Turk, a Russian, or of some other nation, at the house of the one who had the dispute. If they were unknown there, they would declare their identity and propose to settle the dispute without the intervention of the government.

There was no one who would not agree, willing or unwilling. The trial was free, swift, in their own tongue, and so impartial that the foreign nations, too, wished to settle their own disputes among themselves by the Dashnaks' procedure. No man set foot in the state courts. Judge and prosecutor, with their officials, and the lawyers, were idle, and the prison and the police unemployed; they drew a salary without justifying their existence. What a saving to the people's purse, what swiftness in doing away with disputes…

The trial took place in some chance house, in the silent presence of the interested and the curious. Both sides and the witnesses swore that they would not speak falsely, and that if they did speak falsely, they would deserve to be punished. They answered the questions put to them, and the trial ended and the verdict was given that very day. The verdicts were given according to the voice of conscience and to custom.

The small matters were settled at the corner of the street, of the eatinghouse. They generally ended over sweets, the passions being quieted.

The punishments and the prisons.— The punishments were according to the offense, and there were many kinds.

The greatest punishment was the death penalty, which was given when the village or district courts demanded it. But that penalty could not be carried out unless the Central Committee examined it and by unanimous voice arrived at the same conclusion. He who carried out the penalty was reckoned a criminal, if he did not hold a certificate with the red seal. In the case where

he held a certificate, it was counted desirable that the one carrying out the death penalty should be a near kinsman of the condemned, and never on the side of the one who had brought the suit, since that could give rise to clan feuds and blood vengeance.

The next punishment was final banishment. Except for acts of treachery, all the death sentences were commuted by the Central Committee to final banishment. A death sentence was in fact given for two offenses only – treachery and murder. For treachery the death sentence was unavoidable; for murder the death sentence could be softened, if a plea for pardon came from the condemned and his family, and if the condemned, in the presence of his parents and his wife, renounced his estate and his goods in favor of his heirs, gave his wife a divorce, renounced his family, all together signed the death sentence, and if the condemned removed himself finally within 12 hours from the bounds of the Caucasus, to Russia or wherever he wished. In the case of his return, not only he, but all the signatories as well, were condemned to death.

Simple banishment.– This punishment was not for criminal, nor yet for felonious, offenses. The Central Committee gave it rather in an administrative way, without trial and judgment. That punishment was generally given to party members whose presence was not desirable in the district. For example: when someone was an intriguer and created factions, when he was found in unseemly deeds, when he was disorderly, when he dealt roughly with the people and did not conform to local ways, and so on. The circuit-rider, presenting himself with the red seal, would order him in general to leave within an hour or two for Batum, or elsewhere. So it was in the case of Balakes[1] Karapet, and of Ariudz Avag, who were banished by Sergei.

Prison.– This punishment was given to thieves, to usurers, to profiteers, and to those who did not perform their duties. In the days of the tsarist authority, beneath the fortresses of Kars, alongside the Russian prisons – while the tsar's gendarmes were hunting the Dashnaks to imprison them – the Dashnaktsutiun had a prison of its own. That prison was a tumbledown house in the Kroy quarter.[2] No one lived in it, nor was there any guard. The door had no lock to be shut from outside; there was only a latch, to close it from

within, two little holes for a window, and two or three plank-beds with grass strewn on them, and nothing else. The town's circuit-rider, who was Sergei, would give the condemned man his instructions: "You will go to prison until you carry out the decision."

This took place in broad daylight, while the tsar's policemen stood at the street corners. When entreaty and supplication had passed in vain, the man, under compulsion, would go to the place pointed out to him, alone or with a guide, and enter it. And since there was neither guard nor lock from outside, he would shut the door on himself from within and imprison himself. Before he did, he would arrange the question of his drink and his food. His kinsmen would bring it, since that was at his own charge.

How could he not obey — how could he not stay in that prison on his own two feet? To take refuge with the government was equal to treachery, whose punishment was terrible. To send word secretly, under the hand, to the authority that he was imprisoned, was senseless, since it was he himself who had shut the door from within. Not to carry out the order, to go out and flee — that was impossible, since he would be seized in his own house and, subjected to a fearful beating as well, would be compelled once more to go back to prison.

Laughable incidents happened too. When the policemen, catching the scent, would enter the prison:

"What are you doing here? Come out and go about your business," they would say.

"No, leave me in peace and alone. I have made a vow to do penance; I have committed an offense against my wife."

The government, bewildered, would set him down as a disciplined, fanatical revolutionary, and, having no evidence, would let it pass, or move its own prison elsewhere.

The other punishments were given as a beating, when there was resistance, or an evasion of a decision given.

Fines were forbidden.

For theft, for profiteering, twice the amount was collected from the guilty man, and the stolen or embezzled goods were returned to their owner, while the remaining amount was given in full to the school board of the district.

Let me give an example by way of sample.

Let us say that A. has stolen a sheep from M. and eaten it with his two companions. The court decrees that the price of two sheep, or two sheep, be collected from the thief A. On the spot one sheep is returned to M. Since the stolen sheep was eaten together with the thief's two companions, from them too a sheep apiece, or its price, is collected. Then the school board member, or the teacher, is summoned, and a signature is taken from him that he has received three sheep from A. and his two companions, and the matter is closed.

I brought this example from the villages of Takhm,[3] where I myself carried out such a verdict.

The church and school affairs.— The Russian restrictions on the estates and the schools of the Armenian church had yielded a result contrary to the authority's wishes.

Before they resorted to those coercive measures, schools were to be found only in those places where there was an Armenian church, under whose shelter the schools were organized under the name of parish schools. From the joined income of the two the expenses of the church and the school were met. In the towns and at certain points, where the need for schooling was felt and where the churches had more income than their needs, other revenues too were added to the difference, and parish schools were opened. But in those places, chiefly the villages, where there was scarcely any thirst for schooling, and where only the priest's boys attended the monastery school, sending the rest of the children to school was reckoned as good as robbing them of their herding, and a dangerous business besides. Likewise, to give girls schooling meant to defile their morals. And with this understanding the village community had remained a hundred out of a hundred unschooled, illiterate. Eighty out of a hundred of the community of the province of Kars were illiterate.

To that backwardness the poorly endowed Armenian churchmen too contributed. The school, with its expenses, was a kind of rival to the livelihood and the well-being of the church's officials, since the income of the two came from the same source – the estates and the parish revenues. If schools were not opened, the whole revenue stayed with the church and its officials. If they were opened, their own income would be cut down. Therefore they either made no effort at all to open schools, or the schools were opened in a "symbolic" way – that is, to throw dust in the eyes of the school-lovers, and likewise to increase the income. In other words, they confined themselves to opening "Der Todikian schools."[4]

It was on this ground, then, that the broad and bright state schools sprouted like mushrooms in the district of Kars. These promised to give such an education that those who studied there could become not only priests but literate officials as well – which smiled on the common people.

Let me give the word to Vahinak Chilinkirian, who, though he was a teacher in state cap and uniform in a village that lay on the Kars–Sarighamish road, was nonetheless with us. He had splendid quarters attached to the state school, the like of which you could find only in the town; he drew 30 rubles and had other conveniences from the state. In a word, he had a condition that was enviable for the class of the petty townsfolk. Of the pupils he had once had, 25 remained. Only one was an Armenian, the son of a local official, who by the committee's leave attended that state school. The rest of the Armenians had drawn their children out on account of the "boycott." The remaining 24 of the state school, then, were boys of the foreign nations.

This friend of my childhood, whose uniform was an enemy to me, but whose inner man was more of a patriot than I, reasoned thus:–

"It is true that in these two years the greatest miracle took place. Our backward, religious communities awoke again and clasped the national idea. In all of them one will and one faith were created, and our people showed such adroitness, boldness, and resolve that they earned the leadership of the nation – happily. To all appearance the victory is on our side, and it is the Russian empire that is beaten before the Dashnaktsutiun. The proof is that in the school entrusted to me not one Armenian pupil has remained, and the boycott is everywhere complete. I am not one of those who ascribe these

successes and those of the past to the Dashnaktsutiun alone, or to the strength of the reborn Armenians it has led. If one quarter of our successes is to be ascribed to the Dashnaktsutiun and to the Armenians, three quarters must be ascribed to the imbecile Golitsyn[5] policy, of which the Dashnaktsutiun was able to make use. Do not be surprised if I say, 'Long live Golitsyn.' We owe our rebirth to him."

When, a little astonished, I looked at him, he went on:

"By the nature of my office I have many dealings with people of every sort. A year ago, when there was no boycott, my pupils' parents used to come and ask: 'When my boy finishes this *shkol* (the school) will he be able to become a *chinovnik* (an official), and how many *manet hakh* (how many rubles' stipend) will he draw?' I would answer them something, but I would grieve. When the boycott came and the parents drew their children out of the school, those same men would approach me as though I were cholera. One of them even – surely one of ours – called me a dog Judas and threw dung at me. In my heart I rejoiced, I smiled in spite of myself, and for that I heard a fresh curse:

"– He has neither honor nor shame; you spit in his face, and he takes it for rain.

"I said nothing. Let me give you one more example, so that you understand the state of mind. I have a friend, a der-der, who, it is true, has no pectoral cross, but whose gold watch has so long a gold chain that you would think he had a pectoral cross. Now and then he would bring me a roasted hen, cream, butter too, and would keep singing the praises of my school.

"– Der Hair," I said to him one day, "your village is rich; the church, the school, has much 'Ovkh'[6] land. If I were in your place, I would open a better school than this one entrusted to me. Do that, and take me too for a schoolmaster.

"– No, my son," he answered, "your thought is good, but it is not an experienced man's counsel. The Gospel says, 'No man can serve two masters.' And truly, can two watermelons be held in one hand? If we keep up the church, the school cannot be kept up. If we keep up the school, the church cannot be kept up. Do not speak that counsel elsewhere; it is bad for you too. What – do you wish us to raise a flag against the Russian tsar? Let us give

thanks to God that the tsar has come forward and with his own money has opened such a school, and set an Armenian schoolmaster over it, and wishes to make men of the foreign boys. Are we to go and claw at his face?"

I was cornered, and I did not argue back; I only said:

"– It was to try you alone that I made known these thoughts, Der Hair. Of course, what you say is right."

But I understood that our der-der was something of a snake. Afterward I understood that he was a very enterprising man; both the church land and the land in the school's name he had taken on lease at no price at all, and thinks only of the adornment of the church. But as to what the income is, and what the outgo, that he alone knows. We shy away from one another now, and when we meet, we change our road."

"Very well, Vahinak – what is the link of all this with your 'Long live Golitsyn'?"

"What is your hurry?" he answered, and poured out another tea from the samovar. "Today, and tomorrow, and the day after, you are with me; little by little I will open my heart. There is no harm to you, there is profit to me. My heart is full; I cannot empty it. Let me tell one more story, so that it may be understood why I said 'Long live Golitsyn.'

"There is a very clever friend of mine, a Greek teacher. We are intimate, and he comes often as my guest. He knows Armenian too. He knows our history better than we do. To pass the time I asked him:

"– You boast that you are a Greek and cleverer than the Russians and the Armenians. Well then, let me set two questions before you; solve them. My questions are: (a) What must the Russians do to reach their aim with regard to the Armenians? and (b) What must the Armenians do so that the Russians do not reach their aim?

My friend accepted my proposal, on condition that he answer the first question and I the second. Whichever man's arguments were unanswerable, he had won, and the loser must stand a good feast. I agreed, and he began.

1.– Let us grant that Russia wishes to swallow the Armenians and dissolve them in her own stomach. Do you agree?

I answered: Yes.

2.– Do you agree that the precondition of swallowing is that bones and thorns in the mouth must be broken up, mixed with saliva, and then swallowed?

I said, "Yes."

3.– Is not the Pobedonostsev,[7] or rather the Golitsyn, policy of swallowing the Armenians to be reckoned a failure, when the whole of the Armenians has become united and rebellious, while Golitsyn himself, having taken the blows of a dagger, has withdrawn?

"– Yes," I said, "for the present it has failed."

"– If that is so, then that great empire is a fool, since it cannot eat this apple, these Armenians, the easiest mouthful there is."

4.– There was a Russian minister by the name of Delyanov,[8] who first put forward the plan for Russifying the Armenian schools. I believe he was an Armenian by origin – is that not so?

"– So they say," I answered.

"– That is a secondary question, but the essential thing is this: are there to be found Armenians of the like – men who know the Armenian tongue too, yet who by their conduct are cleverer than Golitsyn and Delyanov and share their views?"

"– Why not; they may be found," I answered.

5.– We have agreed that Golitsyn has failed and will soon die. Russia loses nothing, since he is going to die anyway. But Russia will gain, if he (Golitsyn) is condemned and put to death. Do you not agree? What impression do the Armenians in particular take, if the Russian prosecutor demands the degradation or the death penalty for that headstrong governor who by his ill-considered steps aggrieved the loyal Armenian people? Do you not think that in that case the Armenians' hatred toward the Russian will scatter, and the anchors of this revolution will fall, and there will remain a few individuals of the clever ones? But what worth has cleverness?

"– Yes," I answered, "much would change."

6.– Then we are agreed that much would change by that one corpse. If that is so, I reckon the time has come for a capable Armenian to be set at the head of the Caucasian Viceroyalty – more knowing and more capable than Delyanov; for example, a Loris-Melikov, a Lazarev. If that Armenian is to stir the envy of the Tatar, the Georgian, and everyone, the Armenians will believe that they are the preferred ones for Russia. He will come, and pay his first visit to the Catholicos; and, receiving the return visit, he will take from him a formulated petition, in which there will be asked, in the first rank, the return of the exiles, the freeing of the prisoners, the return of the church estates and likewise of the properties and their free disposal by the spiritual authority, the freedom of the Armenian spiritual and secular schools, and so forth. I believe the whole of the Armenians will await its result.

"– To be sure," I answered.

7.– The Viceroy, to be sure, at the prompting of Petersburg, contrary to the discontent of many, will endorse the Catholicos's petition thus: "In accordance with the appeal of the Armenian Patriarch, I order:

"(a) To set free at once all members of the Armenian political parties who are in the prisons and in exile.

"(b) To return the Armenian church estates, goods, and properties, and to pay compensation for the damages. Their owner and administrator shall be exclusively the spiritual authority, under the higher supervision of the Armenian Patriarch. Those schools which are for the preparation of the clergy must be maintained from the church revenues and must be subject exclusively to the spiritual authority, under the higher supervision of the Patriarch.

"(c) To determine the number of the ecclesiastical schools and to separate the secular schools from them, be they primary or secondary. To subject the ecclesiastical schools exclusively to the spiritual administrations, and the secular schools to boards elected from the people and from the secular class. After the ecclesiastical schools and the church needs have been secured, to pass on the remaining estate and other determined revenues to the boards, to be allotted to the secular schools subject to them. Such an arrangement – what do you think, what effect and impression would it leave on the whole of the Armenians?"

"— A rejoicing equal to a firework display, and astonishment, gladness, and gratitude," I answered.

"— If that is so, show me your purse a moment; I have need of money," said the Greek teacher, and out of the 40 rubles I had he put 20 into his own pocket, and invited me to a feast at his place.

He, going on with his talk, said, laughing:

"— Did I not tell you that the Armenian's wits are in his heart and not in his head? We agreed that in order to swallow, one must first divide into parts, crumble small, mix, and then gulp down. Now, Golitsyn did not do so, but greedily wished to gulp down the Armenians at one go, and paid with his head. The Armenians, ossified in the Russian throat, would not go in; they had to be given back up. And what I said above was only to get that bone out, so that the empire[9] might be saved and the pursuit continue, which stays the same — that is, to swallow the Armenians into the Russian stomach. And that has already been brought off, when you say that the Armenians will be 'grateful,' when the tsar carries out the concessions I named above through a Russian viceroy of Armenian origin. That enchantment, that gratitude, will become your death. The opening of the prison doors, the pardon of all the condemned, will break the fanaticism of the Armenian revolutionary element, and its momentum, which is your strength. The settling of the church and school questions, which was the one cause of your national unity, will vanish, and you will no longer have a single question able to gather all the classes around the revolutionaries. The condition that gives all the properties to the disposal of an incompetent and pretentious ecclesiastical authority, while on the other side it invites the secular men too into the work for the secular schools, is bound to become the cause of your discord. The spiritual authority, leaning on the state order, will prove that the revenues are barely enough for the needs of the churches and the ecclesiastical schools, and will allot nothing to the secular schools. With that the secular class will remain discontented. One will say: 'The nation is the church, and its prelates are the leaders'; the other will say: 'The nation is the representation of the people.' And both sides will be encouraged by the state. The gulf will deepen, and the Armenians will be in two pieces. The secular men, who have the present-day parties, will not give way; they will make an effort to have their schools

independent of the clergy. And, as at present, they will open their schools in the haylofts, paying the teachers free or a paltry wage. In a short time a new question will arise – namely, that either the state must help with money, from which will follow the state's supervision over the secular schools, or the pupils must be sent to the state schools, and that is bound to become the cause of the boycott's ending and of the Russian schools filling up. This was Golitsyn's aim all along. Let one thing be plain: your present strength, your unity, is the result of the Russian's wrong course rather than of the awakening of your consciousness. That error the Russian will correct – not by giving up his plan, but by striving toward it along new roads. His retreat is no defeat; your victory settles nothing.[10]

"Now the turn is yours, to prove the second thesis and take the 20 rubles from me for a second feast."

Vahinak, finishing, asked:

"How am I to prepare my thesis, so as not to lose another 20 rubles?"

In those days I had no answer, and found what the Greek said unanswerable.

Yet what is unanswerable in quantity and in reckoning is answerable by faith in one's own strength, when the instinct of self-preservation drives a people to disregard everything and to be as daring as stinging bees are daring, though their sting may become the cause of death to the very one that stings.

When I told my comrades of the thoughts of Vahinak and his Greek friend, and of my own doubts, they grew angry. Evidently they too had no answer.

"*Janım*," said Sergei, "one work opens another. If everything is to go by reckoning, we must fold our arms and bow our heads. And where, in that case, is the revolution to be? Today we will do what is possible; and as for the future, let the coming generation think about that. You busy yourself with putting the schools of the villages of Takhsh[11] in order."

By 1904, before I left Kars, in all the inhabited places where there were Armenians there had been organized school boards, which without permission of the authorities levied a "*ghubara*"[12] from the villages' inhabitants; and where there were no school buildings, they would dig the foundations of buildings and raise up the walls, gather a tax in kind, or with the "*ghubara*" sow fields, and secure the expenses of the schools to come. The

undisciplined they subjected to a fine, and the fine too they added to the school revenue. They sought out teachers, and when they did not find a suitable one, they set to work those there were. And there it was – the school stood ready, and the pupils came. The quality was low, and in many places they could have vied with the Der Todikian schools; but they were all of them proud that they would not be Russians, and that they had an Armenian school, and did not send their children to the "*shkol*."

I have gone on at length about the school movement of Kars, because the forms it applied served on a broad scale as a model for the educational work of the Land. The Prince,[13] after 1904, applied on a large scale in Lernapar[14] what he had seen in Kars; and I too, who crossed into Taron, imposed the same form in the world of Taron.

The party revenues.– One of the field-workers' basic duties was the collection of the party dues and the increase of the revenues. To this they gave, besides its material sense, a moral sense as well.

Whoever counted himself a Dashnak was subject to the party dues (*tuyt*). The dues were the basic revenue and the measure of one's grasp of duty. A man who by his gifts made a material sacrifice a hundred times greater, but did not pay his dues month by month, was outside the ranks. The dues were not proportional, but according to means. The one who fixed the amount was not the payer himself, nor the higher bodies, but the comrades who belonged to his own band or Sub-Committee. If someone, prompted by ardor, took upon himself more in dues, or, prompted by stinginess, took upon himself less, the ones who fixed the amount of his dues were his comrades. The dues never went beyond 1 to 3 percent of anyone's fixed income.

For the field-worker, when collections were being made, individual persons did not exist. He received the sum of the list and the fixed dues presented by the Sub-Committee or the band. The real collector from individuals was the Sub-Committee or the band. Non-payers were reckoned out of the ranks. The sums of those who paid more were presented under the name of gifts.

The number of the enrolled was scarcely 1 to 2 percent of the population. Their dues were paltry, compared with the general revenue of the party. In that numerical limitation was reckoned its quality, since it was the stable and unchanging part. What the Dashnaktsutiun collected was from beyond the

ranks. But the ones who kept it stable and gave it life were the few enrolled. In 1904 the number of that collected body was about 80 percent of the population, which wavered with its own mood and rose and fell in its amount. That depended, on the one hand, on the labor of the enrolled and the zeal of the field-workers, and, on the other, on the outward situation. The amount of the revenue came 90 percent from that collected body, but not by monthly payment – rather from festivals, gifts, collections, fines, and so forth. The revenue too wavered like the mood of the collected body.

This form of revenue of the district of Kars was valuable for this reason, that the field-workers passing through it and entering the Land copied it and brought it into the Land.

The expenses and the purchase of arms.– These affairs too weighed on the field-workers of the district, whose pivot was Hagop (Chilinkarian)[15] in 1904.

For the province and the town there were kept up continually 15 to 20 soldiers and, on the average, 5 field-workers. But Hagop, in the name of the Central Committee of course, had set himself to establish rules that this should be done without expense. His "laws" were:–

(a) The field-worker or the soldier who has vowed to devote his life to the nation must have no money, under the name of a salary or any other. If he takes money, that is equal to selling his blood.

(b) Every house of the nation is his house; and that house which shuts its doors and does not receive as a guest the one who is dying for it, is not Armenian.

(c) These sacrifices are for the wretched, above all; therefore the field-worker, the soldier, must prefer to be a guest in the houses of the poor and to "break their bread," rather than of those who have the means. Your host is hungry; you too must stay hungry with him.

By these principles all the expenses were done away with. There were deviations only in the town, where, on the condition of not spending more than 20 kopeks a day, the expenses were paid.

Eighty percent of the party revenue went to the purchase of arms and cartridges. With them the stores were filled – stores that were not for the

district of Kars, but to be sent into the Land. Money was turned into arms by the following means:–

Those who were in the Russian army and counted themselves Dashnaks or sympathizers had to perform their material duty by bringing cartridges and arms – that is, by stealing from the state. At the same time they had to show the Russians and the men of the other nations the means of turning war-matériel into money.

This was brought about in the following way:– The Russian soldier loves brandy and women. But once in two months he received 37 kopeks of pay, which was not enough even for his poor sort of tobacco. Therefore he could have his beloved pleasures only by theft, through the bawdy-houses and through the go-between men of the "*mkitans*" (dram-shops).[16] To these there were left open advances of a thousand rubles apiece, on the condition that they give war-supplies at fixed prices – a cartridge, for example, at half a kopek. So it was that all the places of debauchery and drunkenness became arms-markets. These establishments were night and day under the supervision of the police, but at the same time they were sheltered by the authority, to scatter the soldier's boredom. Before the eyes of the police the soldiers would come and enter by the main door. On their backs they had their long "*shinels*" (greatcoats),[17] under which they hid all sorts of war-supplies.

"– Give a bottle of Smirnov brandy," the soldier would call out, and would slide his Nagant[18] pistol behind the "till."

"– Give *ghavghavat*,"[19] the next would call, and slide a bag of cartridges behind the "till."

And so, on the cry of "give, give," the splendid table was ready – without money – the cups were filled, and the songs began.

If the soldier were searched and the secret of the theft came to light, the one answerable was the soldier, before a military court…

But when the songs of merriment were sounding, the danger was removed from the soldiers and concentrated on the head of those establishments and of those who served them. There might be informers; the same soldiers, drunk, might demand more than the food they had received; the secret police

might have noticed the arms-trade and seize them on the spot and bring these strange tradesmen before a military court.

What is the harm, we would think – let there be one profiteering rake the fewer, if he is unable to conceal what he has bartered. They generally did conceal it.

Besides the entrance door, the tavern had without fail a back door as well, or a window, or a hole made on purpose. The moment the shopkeeper took the war-supplies, he would draw secretly near that door, the window, or the hole, bring his goods out, and give them to an unknown man waiting there. His shop was now "clean"; if they wished, let them come and search.

The danger now was only on the head of that receiving man, who was the go-between's man. He was bound to throw what he received into a carriage waiting 50 paces off, and to return to his hiding-place[20] and wait at the back door, to receive fresh "goods." The carriage would race off, loaded, and at the appointed place would find another carriage, to which it passed its goods without a word. Then it would return to its place.

The first carriage was likewise the go-between's, and the one answerable for the danger was the go-between. The second carriage was escorted by our comrades – usually Medzik, Andranik, Mato[21] – who conducted it to the appointed place, where Hagop made the reckoning and gave it over to other persons, who lost the trail, carried it off, and stowed it in the stores. Those stores were outside the town, in the villages and the ravines.

The responsibility for these last operations fell on the party.

The third means of procuring war-supplies was the bribe. That was brought off by finding a common tongue with officers or store-keepers. In that case the "goods" were emptied from the state stores and carried over to our stores.

However easy this operation may seem in the telling, it was hair-raising and extremely dangerous. The man who went on it had first to make his will. For all that, the state stores were emptied many times, in many ways, each one of which might become a detective novel, with unimaginable adventures. But let us leave aside these real novels that actually happened. Later, by way of an example, I will perhaps tell of the deeds done in Alexandropol by Vagho of

Padua[22] and Harutyun of Sebastia, which by their scale cast into shadow the deeds of emptying the Kars stores.

From what I have said it must be plain that by all means, permitted and unpermitted, war-supplies were being gathered in Kars. Unpermitted means were applied, because there was no other means of procuring arms in an orderly way. Arms were a strictly forbidden article, but they had at all costs to be procured for the Land.

The proverb says truly: "When the thief is of the house, he carries the ox off by the roof." No authority, with its prohibitions, is able to prevent it, if a people has as its leader an organization like the Dashnaktsutiun of that date, for which no impossible thing existed.

The propaganda.– This work too weighed on the field-workers, the circuit-riders. Written propaganda did not exist, because at that date not one party newspaper was published in Russia, in Turkey, or in Persia, nor any other literature. Our newspapers published abroad did not reach the Caucasus, and even if they did reach it, they were already stale. *Droshak* was our only official organ, which was kissed like a Narek[23] as a holy thing, but which, like it, was wrapped in handkerchiefs and set aside. It was read only by a small number of individuals.

I do not think that the press and literature played a great part, at least in our popular course of 1904. My own circle was guided by watching the beat of the popular current, and its theories had their source in work and in life. Reading was very slight.

I too, moved by that atmosphere, had set aside the following of both the Russian and the Armenian newspapers, and had even become their enemy. Like the others I would think, and would say to myself: "They turn a flea into a camel, but the elephant with its trunk they do not see. Life, work, goes on its way like a river, while they have risen up and are showing the river a new road. The river cannot climb the mountain; but they have risen up and reckon that if it climbed the mountain, it would be very well. Like a worm clinging to a leaf, if it goes by any current, willing or unwilling, they believe that it is they who go, and that they are showing the giant river its road."

We gave no force to the press, nor did we lend an ear to its good or its bad. And I would add that it was an evil, a factor that darkens the natural judgment, and black ink on the white.

Yet, for all that, we knew the Program and the By-laws by heart, and read attentively the circulars of the Bureau and the Central Committees and analyzed them for everyone.

The chief means of propaganda was oral preaching, which was accessible and intelligible to everyone. It was carried out on the one hand by the *ashughs*, and on the other by the intellectual preachers.

The worth of the *ashughs* has not been appreciated, though it was thanks to them that our popular mass awoke from its sleep and began to think. They had nothing to do with the present; the present was a pretext that moved them to recall the instincts of already forgotten ages, buried in the people's heart. They stirred up the hidden old fire and displayed it as the present. They made the Davids of Sasun of old living and present – which was what the people sought. Leaving aside the present, they made the future too the present, and showed the people's longings as an accomplished fact – which was what the people looked for.

The chief of those *ashughs* was Fahrat, the *ashugh* blind in both eyes, who would deliver a discourse and strike the *tar* and sing: "...Plpul-Kar, Antok, and Kepin, and brave Simon Zavarian when he drew the sword"... And if you were to remark, "Fahrat *jan*, but Simon was never in Sasun, he is no man to draw a sword," Fahrat would answer: "Mind your own business – he was not, but a man like that has to be from Sasun; and if he is no drawer of the sword, then he ought to draw it."

The matter was not only plain but desirable to everyone. You could remark that Fahrat was blowing up the pictures, and could remain wholly unpersuaded that "Sultan Hamid's throne was shaken," but all those puffings of his were pleasing, and it was desirable to hear them.

In a word, the *ashughs* were the awakeners of the longings of the past and the future. For that we ought to be very grateful to them.

After the *ashughs'* short tale, the song and the playing, the true lecturers, the preachers, came onto the field, who brought the hearers down onto the ground of the legends and spoke of the present, however bitter it might be.

Kars had seen many preachers, transient and abiding, whom it remembered. It had seen Rostom – stammering, but full of substance[24] – of whom they used to say: "You lend an ear, you understand something, and you are filled." It had seen Khazhak, who, when he spoke, seemed to bring the wind of Alagyaz. It had seen N. Aghbalian, who, like a prophet, counted a man's teeth in his mouth. It had seen Vramian, who spoke so fast that what would take others a year to say, he said in an hour. It had seen many others too, who like those had come and passed and left something. But among them all one was abiding to the last minute of his life. That was Norhatian, who had become one of the household. And beside him two men were always and with sorrow remembered. One was Yegor (Arastamian), of whom they used to say that he sang like a "houri, a peri," and led men toward death as though he were leading them to a wedding. The other was Sergei, of whom they used to say that he was rough and coarse, but spoke to the point,[25] to the *jan* said *jan*, to the sore spot said sore.

When I came up to Kars, the central figure of propaganda had, it turned out, remained Sergei, surrounded by the likes of me, who, though they saw and understood, yet when it came to making the man before them understand, their tongue turned to wood, grew heavy. So it was well that we kept silent and left the propaganda work to Sergei.

So we reasoned, Hagop and I, Levon and Rus-Kevork, and others as well. And Sergei had gatherings every night, under the pretexts of a wedding, a betrothal, a christening, or others, with 100 to 300 invited guests.

Our own propaganda was confined to the bands, where, in the presence of 10 to 20 men, we too became nightingales, answerers of question and probing.

Since all these affairs were carried out through the field-workers, the question naturally arises: what was the role of the Central Committee? At the same time the question is bound to be asked: was the Russian government asleep, imbecile, or bribed, that it tolerated within the authority another authority?

The Central Committee and the field-workers.— From the enumeration of the field-workers' chief labors it is intelligible that in general all the labors were carried out by the workers appointed by the Central Committee, while the Committee itself seemed not to exist, or to be a symbolic, impersonal administration, like an honorary chairman. So it was to all appearance, but so it was not in reality, since in its hand was the appointment and removal of the field-workers, since in its hand was the power to call to order and to punish the field-workers and all the soldiers and workers, since all had to work in its name, even though it were impalpable.

As I have said, the Central Committee was elected and cut off from the world. The conceiving of affairs, the establishing of order, and the having of a will did not belong wholly to the Central Committee, though it was the embodiment of all that. Those things were formed out of the longings and conceptions of the bands and the Sub-Committees rising from the low upward, which were distilled in the committees; while the Committee itself, leaning on the committees and having a direct link with them, was bound to give effect to their collective will, conception, and order. That was the reason why there could be no autocracy on the part of the Central Committee, though in form it acted as such a thing.

On the other side, all the field-workers, circuit-riders, and soldiers appointed by the Central Committee had but one duty — namely, to give effect to its will, to call the disorderly to order, to bring its conceptions to fulfillment, as the workers of the beehive do, or the soldiers of an army.

The strength, the vigor, was in the nameless collective. It did not hang on the brilliance of a single individual, whose eclipse often becomes the cause of the eclipse of the whole.

The Russian authority and the party.— It is wrong, of course, to think that the Russian authority was asleep, uninformed, imbecile, incompetent, or so lacking in will that it tolerated all this.

The Russian authority kept a keen watch. It had intelligence of everything. Already the operations directed against it had such a character that it could not fail to notice them. It had a giant force in that military zone. The number of its troops came double or equal to the population of the town. Perhaps it did not know for certain the names of the members of the Central

Committee, but the field-workers were known to it – so well known that when Sergei passed through the streets, policemen and even the chief of police would salute him, without being acquainted with him. It was as though, beside the governor, he was the unofficial, the real governor. They saluted Hagop and the others likewise, whom, evidently, they set down as members of the Central Committee. And to Plo, who wished to be received as such a one and gave himself airs about it, they would say, laughing: "Evidently you too are the king of them all." He would hear it, but smile.

And yet the authority was bewildered and did not know what to do. First, because the Armenians were united, had formed one body around the Dashnaktsutiun, to touch one member of which might bring on again those calamities that a few months before had taken place at the time of the church demonstrations. And still more was awaited – up to armed insurrection. The Russian authority's one endeavor was to divide the Armenians from the Dashnaktsutiun, to which it ascribed all these things; while the drawing away of the Armenians from its skirts it counted a great loss to itself. But in bringing about that division it felt itself powerless.

By judicial, lawful means it could not carry out a pursuit, since for the things that had happened there was neither complaint nor public application, even on the part of the police. Matters had reached such a pitch that in broad daylight, in the street, the parents of one struck down, or the passers-by who knew by whom and how he had been struck, would give testimony that the deceased had in all likelihood taken his own life.

There remained the administrative means. But that too had its danger. Already the Golitsyn regime had so estranged the Armenians from the Russian dominion, had so weakened the Armenians' guileless servility and loyalty to Russian policy, that a man would throw off the Russian cap from his head and would use the *papakha*, even the fez.

The Dashnaktsutiun's watchwords – the self-determination of nations, the Caucasus for the Caucasians, Federation, and so forth – already spoke to the Armenians' heart and enjoyed sympathy among the other nationalities too. In Georgia as well there had been formed the party of the Federalists and the Georgian Social-Democrat party. This last, changing its international, anti-national course, showed a tendency to take its stand on the ground of

national autonomy. Already in Guria (Georgia) there were movements of the like kind as in the Armenian districts, to which, if the Tatars too were to add their voice, the words "the Caucasus for the Caucasians" would become a real danger to Russia.

As a means of preventing that danger, the Russian authority did not count administrative squeezings a remedy. It counted the remedy to be the setting of the Caucasian peoples at odds with one another and, in the first rank, the breaking of the back[26] of the Dashnaktsutiun and its extermination. That means it found, first, by setting the Socialists against the Dashnaktsutiun, who counted it a "chauvinist" organization; and then by stirring up the Armeno-Tatar clashes; and, finally, by coming to an agreement with Turkey, to destroy jointly the Armenian marauders who troubled the inner tranquility of Turkey and the Caucasus.

These, then, were the chief causes of its toleration. The government waited until the moment should ripen when "the dog could be strangled by the dog," as the Russian officials expressed it.

The Russian authority's aim had become, first and foremost, to isolate the Dashnaktsutiun.

The terror-acts.— When we consider the national unity of the Kars of the years 1903–4, its single-willed stance and struggle against the mighty Russian authority — when we consider the Armenians' self-sacrifice and discipline — we ask in spite of ourselves: Was that people really so conscious, was it really at that time so ripened, that among them there were no base men to disturb that single-willedness?...

To imagine that in those times men were born with none but virtues is baseless. Man is man at all times, with all his negative and positive qualities and, as the old wisdom says, "there is no village without its dog." But in order that the dogs should not be predominant, three conditions were necessary, of which we have counted two. One — the outward pressure, which endangered the vital interests both of the base and of the good. The second — the existence within the mass of an organization that united and led all toward the general liberation.

Yet those two were not enough to herd the wolf and the lamb into one flock. There was needed a third condition as well – to call the incorrigible egoists to order. That condition was the power to subject men to force and to responsibility. He who did not perceive that the danger of the whole was ruinous to his own interests, he who was unmoved by the moral atmosphere that the organization had created for the defense of the interest of the whole, had to be chained or exterminated. On that principle rested the party terror-acts of those years.

The terror-acts, according to their nature, were divided into two kinds – the outward, political, and the inner, national-disciplinary. The outward, political, could in its turn be divided into three kinds – the mass, the destruction of the anchors of the state, and the curbing of the state officialdom. The national-disciplinary could in its turn be divided into two kinds – that of a person or a small group, when they openly joined the enemies against their nation; and that of a person or a small group, when they had given themselves over to the craft of informing and treachery.

For offenses of the like kind the Central Committees gave their unanimous decision and gave it effect with the assent of the neighboring Central Committee or of a higher body.

For all the other offenses, however grave they might be, there was no death penalty by terror-act (*ahabekum*).[27] For criminal offenses, for material embezzlements, for moral transgressions, for peculations, for breaches of discipline, men were subject only to punishments – yet on the condition that the person consented to bear those punishments and showed no resistance. In the contrary case, he was subjected to death by the administrative method. But to count that a terror-act is wrong. It is to be counted only a right – one that resembles the right of that commander who slays on the spot the soldier who resists or refuses to go to the front. In this class must be reckoned a number of killings – as, for example, the death of Vardo, which was carried out because he resisted the verdicts laid on him; or the terror-acts against the provocateurs[28] when they disturbed order and peace. These administrative punishments were in general applied for inner party matters, with regard to those individuals who, making use of their position or of party authority, abused their strength. Whereas for the others, as I mentioned above, the

terror-act decision was carried out in the accepted manner, for the five aims named.

It is not superfluous to recall briefly what those aims named above pursued.

Mass terror.— To this terror was subjected the Armenians, above all within the bounds of Turkey, which took on its official aspect in the years 1894–96, at the time of the Hamidian massacres. In the Caucasus Russia wished to replace that same form of mass slaughter or terror by the Tatar force. Mass terror in Turkey reached its summit of perfection in the years 1914–15, thanks to Dr. Nazim, Behaeddin Shakir, Talaat,[29] and their comrades, who had set themselves the aim of radically solving the Armenian knot. But among the Armenians not one current, and above all the Dashnaktsutiun, ever so much as let it cross their mind[30] to carry out such a mass terror in their own surroundings. The cause of not copying it must be sought not so much in the Armenian people's incapacity, nor in their being carried away by humane feelings alone, but chiefly in that principle — that the responsibility of vicious administrations rests not on the mass but on the authority; that by revolutionizing the mass and leading it, one can change the authority; that only by the establishment of a democratic authority will every nation, every class, win its freedom, and brotherhood, coexistence, and so forth be established.

This idealism was so deep-rooted in the Armenians and in the Dashnaktsutiun that to this day, with a peculiar emphasis and a peculiar pride, they sing: "Never is the vengeful Jan-Fidan[31] to lay a hand on women." And from the founding of the Dashnaktsutiun down to today there is not one decision to carry out a mass terror with regard to a nation or a class.

The district of Kars, and with it all the other Central Committees, down to the years 1904 and after them down to the year 1917, held a firm and single-willed understanding with regard to mass terror. That is, that such a terror is not only an anti-human, anti-revolutionary barbarity, but is also aimless and ruinous — whereby to be against it is a sacred duty for every single revolutionary.

The terror of the destruction of the anchors of the state.— Kars counted the destruction of the anchors of the authority purposeful and revolutionary.

The Armenians, and together with them millions of other multitudes,[32] reasoned Kars, suffer from two authorities – the Turkish and the Russian. Happily, both of them have the same state anchor, both are monarchical, both are absolute, and are headed by the sultan and the tsar. Ninety percent of the subjects would be glad of their removal. Now, to take these two out of the way, or to annihilate the anchors that support them, is a good for humankind.

Into the competence of the district of Kars there did not enter the application of such an undertaking; that the Bureau, or the bodies of Bolis and Petersburg, might do.

But the zeal to act in Kars was so great that it overflowed its banks.

"– We ask for the right," they would say. "Is a man needed to carry it out? We will give one. If the undertaking succeeds and the regime is not overthrown, no worse than what is will follow. There is a difference from tsar to tsar, from sultan to sultan. And if the regime is overthrown, that is already what we wish; there will be a revolution and a democracy[33] will be established."

But in Kars, fallen into its corner, these musings were never carried out. Yet they served "as a maquette" to the ones who came and went. When the master is to build a mill and set it working, it is essential that he first copy the pattern drawn and measured beforehand. When Kars, with its peasant logic, would sing the praises of the Ottoman Bank, it drew the conclusion that this was the cause of the May reform program. When it glorified the attempt on the life of Golitsyn,[34] which was the Hnchaks', it drew the conclusion that we owe it much. These became spurs to seek new and ever-new roads, to reach the aim and to drive men toward the attempt on Hamid, or the Ottoman revolution, or the Persian upheaval, at the hands of such men as had drunk the water of Kars. Among these last was also the modest Keri,[35] who in Plo's workshop made bridles for horses and asses. But the flights of Kars drove him toward distant Persia, to forge there the tales he had heard in Kars.

In a word, Kars was a warm partisan of individual, state terror-acts.

The terror-acts to curb the state officialdom. This work, in the district of Kars, fell within the competence of the Central Committee. And on that matter it had a peculiar understanding. It is worth saying a few words about

it, the more so as its conception differed from the conceptions of other districts.

Bznuni,[36] who was a state official and at the same time a member of the Central Committee,(*) and Dr. Kazanjian, adorned in a different uniform, who was likewise a member of the Central Committee, and who won the fate of his comrades, being killed in Kars – these two, taking me in among them, would explain to me wherein I was mistaken.

(*) I think he too was killed, in that role, by the Turks.

"– That is the shortsighted and habituated understanding that perpetuates the tyrannical authority. It is not by looking at the feathers of a cock stuck on with spit that one ought to judge. The uniforms of the officialdom, of the army, are a compulsion – to turn us into machines, to deprive us even of the right to judge. Praise God, you too have worn it. Why do you not perceive it? One must root out that understanding – that the state officialdom and the army are enemies of the people and love the regime, the tyrannical authority. One must look at the officialdom and the army just as we look at the workers and servants hired at the factory-owner's, who, though they hate their exploiting factory-owners, yet do the work ordered them, which they do not love, for a bellyful of bread. The difference between the two is that one puts on a blue shirt, the other an ornamented uniform. But the blue shirt is preferable, since the meanest servant or worker draws 30 kopeks a day, while the soldier draws half a kopek, the policeman 10 kopeks. The worker, when he wishes, leaves his work and spits and walks off; the official cannot do that – he is wedded to his uniform. The worker makes, by order and against his will, the sword and the bayonet he does not love, but he has no moral responsibility for it; whereas that bayonet is given to the soldier or the policeman, and they are ordered to lodge it in the belly of the man before them, and he is answerable before his conscience. Neither of the two is a man, but a slave and, for a bellyful of bread, a machine, a tool turned against what he does not wish, an enemy of what he wishes. But of those two, the most pitiable are the servants of the regime, who, unhappily, by reason of shortsightedness, are hated by all and are not loved even so much as the worker – which is baseless and harmful. The revolutionary above all must think how to liberate that officialdom and army turned into a machine, and

above all must love them, because their chains are the thickest of all; in them is the people's mind, its learning, its skill, and, in the end, they are compelled to be the prop of the hateful order. It is by loving them, by lightening their chains, by organizing them and punishing the incorrigible, that it will be possible to bring the revolution to success and to change the regime."

And Bznuni, beside himself, with his blue eyes and hooked nose, like a hawk, wished to peck at my eyes.

"— Listen. It is tens of years that I have been in the service; I understand better than you. When the soldier thrusts his bayonet into a man's belly, I do not pity the fallen one, but the striking soldier, and I strive to make him understand that the one who dies had no guilt, and neither had he, since he has carried out an order. When the policeman leads his friend chained to prison, I pity the policeman more than the prisoner. To console him I say: 'You could do no otherwise, it is an order.' And when I see tears in his eyes, I kiss him. When the tax-collector, turned to icy stone and scarcely holding himself in, stands before the door of the destitute, I draw near him and say: 'The sin is on the sinner; what sin have you?'

"But when I see that the official or the soldier feel pleasure and satisfaction in their evil deeds, I say, like you: 'These are lost past recall, and have sold their souls to the evil one.' The name I keep in my mind, and I count him an enemy. The number of such beasts is not great. Them one must pick out one by one and put to death — not in secret, but before the eyes of the officialdom, of the army. Many are struck dumb and feel themselves between two knives. Against an order we cannot rise, but we can avoid it — not see, not hear, confuse the right with the left. In a word, that class, whatever post and position it may have, whatever terrible deeds it may have done, must not be counted the people's enemy, but must be counted the people's own kin, and, as such, they must be won over step by step, man by man, knowing that one of them is worth a hundred of the other classes."

When I heard these words of Bznuni's, I could not believe that this silent and impalpable man was the death-angel of the officialdom and above all of the secret police. His door was shut before the Armenians, but open before all the Russian officialdom. He did not salute his comrades, but met the foreigners face to face with a smile. In his glittering clothes, seated in an open carriage,

he paid visits to the tsarist officials. Once a week, seated in a closed carriage and having changed his uniform, he would go to the session of the Central Committee, where there was to be no outsider. And on that day blood smelled in the meeting, and a verdict was given to take or not to take the soul of this or that man.

It was a delicate matter to reach a terror-act decision with regard to members of the tsarist officialdom and the army. Not only had one to take into account the harm the condemned man had done to the community, but also whether his act fell within the condemned man's duties, and whether he had done it as an evildoer for his own pleasure, or had been compelled to do it. That was necessary so that the class to which the condemned belonged should not be stirred up, and so that the impression of the terror-act should at least in part be softened.

Thus, for example, if the condemned belonged to the military class, the reasoning was: "We send our sons to the army in the name of the people's security, to fight against the outer enemies; whereas Ivan, counting such-and-such a citizen an outer enemy, has tortured him and left such-and-such a family orphaned. In these conditions his death is a necessity for the people's interests."

If it was a policeman, the terror-act was reasoned thus: "We keep our sons, with our own money, as policemen, for our inner security. Such-and-such a man was neither a criminal nor a felon, and has been arbitrarily tortured and imprisoned on the strength of such-and-such a policeman's fabricated proofs. The real cause is the wringing of money, which does not serve the inner security," and so forth.

The arguments made in this direction, when they were real, proved, and beyond dispute, were written in a short form and fastened to the condemned man's corpse – which left a deep impression and drew from everyone, in spite of themselves, cries of "*afarım*" or "*okh*." When those cries of ratification were wrung from every heart, the terror-act carried out had reached its aim, the consequence was good, and the authority passed over it. In the contrary case, when there was an error in the condemnation and the terror-act was counted a crime, the consequence was negative, and the authority made of that error a bandage for its finger.

They used to tell me that from 1900 to 1904 there had been carried out in all eight terror-acts, of which seven were just, and one had been a "disgrace." The verdict had been just in that one too, but the *ahabekich* had been confused, had not recognized his victim, and had killed an innocent man and fastened the verdict to his breast. That error cost us dear, though, to expiate the error, material security was given to the family of the victim of the mistake.

The eight terror-acts against state officials and the army had been in the light of the sun, in the street, before all, "reasoned," and – what is the chief thing – not one *ahabekich* had been arrested. All of them had "vanished away."

They were well pleased with the consequence, though a few innocent passers-by had, it appears, been thrown into prison and were still kept by the authority, to give testimony as to the identity of the ones who carried out the terror-acts. But they persisted in their "I do not know."

They used to say, and I too would see, that the troops had orders not to interfere in criminal or political matters. Only the Cossacks would mingle and consort with the population, and often committed thefts.

The police performed its usual role, but was cautious in its arbitrariness, and when it sensed that the matter had a political lining, it would not see, or would forget what it knew. It would see men who were strangers in the district, but would not ask for a passport. It would see the guards going behind such a man, under whose belts there showed protruding bulges, which were surely pistols; but why should it see, when the man's name was not registered and this had not been laid on it either? Yet it well knew who those strangers were, and, when the place allowed, would salute them humbly as chiefs of the nation and fighters against the authority. But what need had it to bring them to light? Its duty was to carry out an order, and it had no order concerning such men. When there was an order, it would hasten its trusted men, to give word that within an hour they were coming to search, to arrest – let there be no unpleasantness. The police had become a kind of curtain to cover the revolutionaries' deeds.

There remained the hard thing – the secret police, the traitors, the informers.

The secret police, the traitor, and the informer.– The most difficult work of all was to determine exactly the secret police. They were the most dangerous,

because they were not present in any deed, that you might see them; they had no name, that you might find them; they did not speak, that you might hear them. They were impersonal beings, who existed and were perhaps at your very side, and you did not recognize them. They saw you, and you did not see them. And what they saw was reported so secretly to the authority that only the exceptional could understand its essence.

Only approximately could you understand who the secret policeman was, when you were already in prison and subject to interrogation. Recalling the past, you could, by supposition, among a dozen names, search out and find the secret policeman, who might be someone you did not love or someone you loved much – your own kin, your comrade, your soldier, and, who knows, perhaps also your superior, the famous hero and field-worker, of whom you thought, but did not dare to think highly. Why not. When Azef,[37] who was a member of the central body of the most daring of the Russian terrorist Socialists, could at the same time be a member of the secret police, why could not the like of him be also among us? Already this very thought was a crumbling and a weakening, which the Central Committee had to take into account, yet must keep, with cold blood, a keen watch.

There were two means of finding the secret police. First – to attend to the suspicions and the movements of the people round about, and above all to their material income and their expenses, which led to mere suppositions. And second – to have in the state establishment trusted or bought officials, who would beforehand make known the list of the secret police, and, if that was impossible, at least those operations that sprang from the secret police's reports.

These means could limit the evil, but the real source stayed conjectural. Therefore, with regard to that suspect element, a terror-act decision was not given in the accepted manner and publicly; rather, counsel was given to the suspects to leave their districts, and the very suspect ones would vanish away.

If in a nation there are no traitors and informers, the authority with all its means becomes powerless, and even its secret police becomes fruitless.

It was not hard to forestall those two plagues. That, at any rate, was easier than the secret police. In Kars they went about it in the following way:–

In the first place they worked to create such an atmosphere, above all among the little ones and the women, that these should feel disgust toward the traitor and the informer, and should shrink from these last more than from cholera. The means of bringing that about was strong preaching, with historical, religious, moral matter. And when on a Night of Darkness[38] a guileless child would ask its parent: "Why did Jesus not do worse than death to that Judas?" the parent would shudder more at its own switch[39] than at the gallows and the bullet. When such questions were asked within the families, the snakes died within the house.

In the second place it was necessary to know where they came from and how those snakes were created. It was understood that a large percentage of the traitors came out from among the chatterers, the vainglorious, the boasters. Among them were gathered the reputed traitors. In essence they were neither traitor nor informer, and even shuddered at being such. They hated the Judases, the Vasaks,[40] though the consequences of their own tongues carried them to those men's estate. They had fallen, unwilling, through frivolity, onto that path, being unable to measure the consequences of their act. To count them traitors, to subject them to a terror-act, would become equal to the creation of real traitors within their very families. On the contrary, one had to make them one's own partisans, to let them live and see the consequences of their act, so that their conscience should torment them. But it was also necessary at all costs to punish them, so that they should remember their error forever. And that punishment had to be the beating with the switch,[41] either alone or in the presence of the family. The blows of the switch became a salve to the voice of their conscience; and when they cried, "May your hand stay green," you could understand that you had become, in spite of yourself, a fellow worker against the voluntary traitors and informers.

The greatest part of the traitors and informers arose from personal or other enmities against one another. We are a passionate people; in a tight place we go to every extreme. The means of drying up those extremes was the inner peace of the people and the resolving of all disputes by our courts. But as for those who nonetheless went as far as treachery and informing, the remedy for such men was terror. It was necessary at all costs to subject them to a terror-act – on the condition that the treachery or the informing had been established, on the condition that the terror-act was not carried out by the

opposing side, but by men close to the person, or by the party's soldiers, in broad daylight; the executing hand was to be made plain to all[42] by its reasoning. The corpse of the one who bore the terror-act had to be buried, without mutilation, apart, at the edge of the road, so that the passers-by should each throw a stone on his grave and say, "A curse on the bearer," and beg God to forgive him.

Our organization of Kars had created this mystic psychology around the traitors and the informers, and it was so mighty, so out of keeping with its own traditions, that they were the exceptional who went to those extreme deeds out of the prompting of love, of money, of a bribe, or of ardor. The bread brought by a traitor or an informer, his own child, his mother, his wife, would not eat. That the one who stumbled[43] knew, and he too, to cover his act, would cry: "Away – the traitor's bread is pus." But that repentance did not raise him up.[44] By his own kinsmen he was pitied,[45] and his blood was counted "*halal*," lawful.

A few words too on the operation of the terror-act.

It would be no exaggeration if I said that in the years 1903–4 there was not one Armenian who was a traitor, an informer, in the true sense of the word. And that cleansing we owed first and foremost to the atmosphere that had been created. Scarcely eight terror-acts in all[46] had been carried out in the whole province in the course of five years. But the whole population, taking in the army too, lived in the nightmare of the terror-act. It did not perceive that that terror lay not in the terrorists and the severity of the punishment, but in its own psychology, in its own imagination.

This, then, is why the operation of the terror-act was counted easy and natural by all. The *ahabekich* was the Angel Gabriel, to resist whom was unnatural. He had no guilt; he was only the executor of a higher will. He had to be helped. He was invisible and invulnerable. His "hands" were even "green." In these conditions it was harder for a *matnich*[47] to slaughter a sheep than for the *ahabekich* to kill a colonel before the eyes of his troops, or a traitor on the threshold of his own door, and to remain unknown, without arrest and without complaint.

We had not one terrorist arrested. They all stayed unknown, but about them all everyone knew, and dined with them in reverence, without speaking of what had been done.

At the time of the *ahabekich's* operation, everyone's doors had to be open, to save him from pursuit they had to show a road, to disguise him they had to give clothing. If it was a policeman who saw, he had to lead the other astray and foil the pursuit, and he had to hear about his identity. Those were counted answerable who had not helped; while the helpers of the authority might be killed on the spot, or had to kill themselves, so as not to fall into the *ahabekich's* hands.

A few words too on the choosing of the terrorists.

In the affairs of Turkish or Russian courts, or of other systems, it has often been heard that the *ahabekich*es were chosen by lot or by a "committee's" order. That means that they did not understand that "one does not strangle the wolf by beating the dog," and that the one who went to a terror-act by lot or by order might make that delicate work miscarry.

The one who went to a terror-act had, first, to have resolved that the work given had at all costs to be brought off. Second – he must not be arrested, neither wounded nor unharmed. Third – he had to be able to get free without leaving his trail. Fourth – if he could do none of these, he had at all costs to die.

From that it is plain that the *ahabekich*, besides courage, had to have something more as well. He had at all costs to have the certainty of succeeding, and the question of his escape or of certain death had to be secondary for him. That quality only the *ahabekich* himself could determine, and the order or counsel of a third person, or a compulsion by lot, could bring no profit but only harm.

The choosing was in general in the following way:–

Someone on the part of the Central Committee would call to him the person who was counted fit for the appointed terror-act, and would propose:

"– There is a grave, responsible work to be carried out, for the success of which one man is to be answerable. Are you able to take on such a work?"

The answer to that proposal had to be given only the next day. When the night had passed, after the anguish, and the answer was in the affirmative, then only would the Central Committee's representative lay open the essence of the work, give the needed information and conveniences, and, if he heard no objection, give a short time to carry out the commission, and set him on his road with the words "success, or your little head."

In general the ones who carried out the terror-acts performed the duty laid on them without flaw – and in Kars always, because the people helped the *ahabekich*. The chief cause of the terrorists' success was that the factors that impelled him were neither office, nor glory, nor above all material matters, but one single fixed thought – to annihilate an evil that endangered the community, and certain death or escape without a trace, so that the community should not be endangered.

The *ahabekich* who strikes his adversary at the very first sight of him – from him one may expect a miracle. He who dawdles and, after seeing him several times, cannot take the decisive step – of him one must beware; everything may be well by reckoning, but the fanaticism being wanting, the work[48] turns out defective. One must not fall into two errors. One must not think that a miracle-working *ahabekich*, who has brought off a work counted hopeless and himself risen up without a trace, is able, as an experienced man, to carry out a second and a third miracle. That is wrong, because the foundation of the miracle done is a fanatical resolve, which may have altered. After tasting certain death and getting free, in general life grows sweet. The vitality[49] of his surroundings and of his own self gives a spur to ambition; the rising up from death[50] breeds the craving to live, the fanaticism wanes, and a wavering arises. And you see, by examples, that the one who swims the sea drowns in a brook.

The second error is that the initial self-satisfaction shown by the terrorists is turned into the measure of their idealism throughout the whole course of their life. He who has carried out one or two, or at most three, terror-acts, and has neither the passion nor the desire to carry out more – who does not even remember his deeds – may still be possessed of the ideal. But he who takes pleasure in the terror-act and seeks it out – that means that he has lost his ideal. From such a one one must expect evil.

Truly did Serpey[51] and Norhatian say:

"— The man he is to kill,[52] but who cannot slaughter a hen — love him and count him a comrade, but forbid him to kill a second time. And the man who has carried out many terror-acts and has taken pleasure in it — count him an enemy."

And indeed, in Baku, Tiflis, Erevan, and elsewhere, that element sank so low that it became necessary to destroy those heroes in a body or piecemeal, though they had been the bravest of the brave, the most self-sacrificing of the self-sacrificing, in their first steps. The man who kills more than once turns *dasak*[53] — a hired blade.

Notes

[1] *Balakes Karapet* and *Ariudz Avag* — two men banished from the district by Sergei; both names are uncertain in the original (the first possibly *Balabek* or *Balaken*; *Ariudz*, "Lion," read by sense).

[2] *Mahalla* (Turkish/Armenian *mahla*) — a town quarter; "the Kroy quarter" (the quarter-name is unattested and doubtful in the original).

[3] *Takhm* — a group of villages near Kars; the name is doubtful in the original and may be *Takht* (the Takht district south of Kars).

[4] *Der Todik* — the proverbially incompetent village priest-schoolmaster of Armenian satire; a "Der Todikian school" is a sham school kept up only for appearances.

[5] Prince G. S. Golitsyn — Russian Governor-General (chief of the civil administration) of the Caucasus, whose 1903 confiscation of the Armenian Church's estates and closing of Armenian schools provoked mass resistance; he survived a Hnchak attempt on his life that year. (His name is uncertain in the original.)

[6] The word here (read *Ovkh* in the original, and doubtful) evidently denotes a form of church endowment or *waqf*-type land held in the church's or school's name; the exact tenure-term could not be recovered from the page.

[7] K. P. Pobedonostsev — over-procurator of the Holy Synod and the arch-ideologue of tsarist reaction; the printed form of the name is garbled in the original.

[8] I. D. Delyanov — tsarist Minister of Public Education (1882–97), of Armenian descent, associated with the Russification of the empire's schools.

[9] The printed text reads "so that the *kayutyun* may be saved," almost certainly a misprint for *kaysrutyun*, "the empire" — which the whole argument requires.

[10] The Armenian here («ձեր յաղթութիւնը՝ պարտադրութիւն չէ») is unusual; the sense is that the Armenians' apparent victory settles nothing permanently — it is no binding conquest.

[11] *Takhsh* — another group of villages near Kars; the name is doubtful in the original.

[12] *Ghubara* — a communal levy or collection raised, without government leave, from a village's inhabitants (here, to fund the school). (Term doubtful in the original.)

[13] "The Prince" — i.e. Sergei/Aram (or the field-worker so nicknamed), who after 1904 carried the Kars school model into the region named next.

[14] *Lernapar* (or *Lernabar*) — a region; the name is read by sense from a doubtful original.

[15] The surname is transcription-flagged and appears here as *Chilinkarian*; in Chapter I the Central Committee's representative Hagop is given as *Zilinkarian* (itself flagged, with *Chilinkarian* among the possible readings). The two are very probably the same man.

[16] *Mkitan* — a tavern or dram-shop (the author's own gloss); the dram-shops became the clandestine markets for stolen munitions.

[17] *Shinel* — the Russian soldier's greatcoat (Russian *shinel'*; the author's own gloss, "overcoats").

[18] The Nagant — the M1895 revolver, the standard Russian service sidearm.

[19] *Ghavghavat* — a sweet (a kind of confection or drink) called for as cover; here the coded call under which a bag of cartridges was passed across the counter.

[20] "His hiding-place" — the original is transcription-flagged (*tagstaran* / *taqstaran*).

[21] *Mato* — a comrade's name, uncertain in the original (*Mato* or *Mado*).

[22] *Vagho of Padua(?)* and *Harutyun of Sebastia* — two men who carried out large arms-raids at Alexandropol; the first epithet is doubtful in the original.

[23] The *Narek* — the "Book of Lamentation" of St. Grigor Narekatsi (10th–11th c.), the most venerated devotional book of the Armenians, kept and kissed as a holy object and even used as a talisman.

[24] "Full of substance" — the original word is doubtful; the sense is that Rostom, though he stammered, spoke with pith and marrow.

[25] "To the point" — the original transliterated word (*keasa*) is a colloquialism meaning terse, straight to the point.

[26] "Breaking the back of" — the original verb is a rare colloquialism (doubtful), meaning to make (the party) collapse.

[27] *Ahabekum* — the revolutionary act of assassination or terror carried out as a sanctioned judgment; Rouben uses it interchangeably with the loanword *teror*. The one who carries it out is the *ahabekich*.

[28] The original word here is garbled; from the context (men "who disturbed order and peace"), it denotes disruptive provocateurs or cheats within the party.

[29] Dr. Nazim, Behaeddin Shakir, and Talaat — the chief organizers of the 1915 Armenian Genocide: Mehmed Nazım and Bahaeddin Şakir directed the Young Turks' Special Organization, and Talaat Pasha, as Minister of the Interior, ordered the deportations.

[30] The printed text reads "*mokʻen*," a misprint for "*mtkʻen*" — "through the mind."

[31] *Jan-Fidan* — the beloved fighter of the revolutionary songs; the couplet enshrines the rule that the fighters were never to harm women. (Both words are transcription-flagged.)

[32] The words "millions of other multitudes" reconstruct a passage broken and smudged at the page-turn in the original.

[33] *Zhoghovrdapetutyun* — literally "people's rule," here rendered "democracy."

[34] The 1903 Hnchak attempt on the life of Governor-General Golitsyn; the name is transcription-flagged in the original.

[35] *Keri* — the future famous fedayi commander (Arshak Gavafian); here still the humble harness-maker of Kars, drawn by "the flights of Kars" toward Persia.

[36] *Bznuni* — a state official and member of the Central Committee (see Chapter I); the name is transcription-flagged.

[37] Yevno Azef — the notorious double agent who headed the Combat Organization of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries while at the same time serving as an informer of the tsarist secret police (the Okhrana); exposed in 1908. The original spells the name *Agef*.

[38] "Night of Darkness" — the Armenian designation of the Thursday-night vigil of Holy Week (the commemoration of Christ's betrayal), when the Gospel of Judas's treachery is read.

[39] "Its own switch" — i.e. the small whip or rod of correction; the original word is doubtful and may mean the sting of conscience.

[40] *Vasak* — Vasak of Syunik, the fifth-century prince who in Armenian tradition is the archetypal traitor, paired here with Judas.

[41] "The switch" — the instrument of beating; the original reads *morak* and is doubtful, probably *mtrak*, a whip or switch.

[42] The Armenian of this clause is corrupt at a key word; the sense is that the executing hand — the act and its reasoning — was to be made plain to all in broad daylight.

[43] "The one who stumbled" — i.e. the man who fell into betrayal; the original word is doubtful.

[44] "Did not raise him up" — the original verb is a dialectal form, doubtful.

[45] "Was pitied / went soft on" — the original word is doubtful (softened / pitied).

[46] The original of this sentence is corrupt at one word ("from every nation"), which does not fit the single total of eight; the clear frame — eight terror-acts in the whole province over five years — is followed here.

[47] *Matnich* — an informer; the point of the comparison is that the informer had qualms the *ahabekich* did not. (The word rendered "informer" here is a doubtful dialect form in the original.)

[48] "The work" — the original word is corrupt and emended by sense.

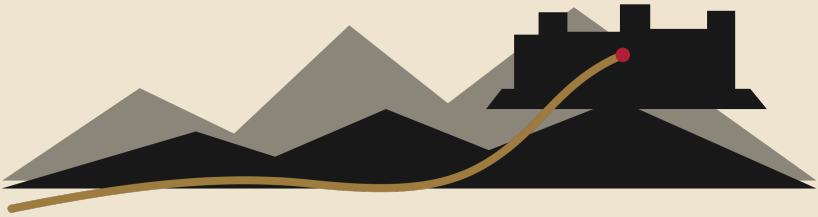
[49] "The vitality" — the original word is doubtful; the sense is the life-force or survivability of the man and his world.

[50] "The rising up from death" — the original uses a dialectal verb-form (doubtful).

[51] *Serpey* — a name uncertain in the original; paired with Norhatian as two Central Committee figures quoted here.

[52] "The man he is to kill" — the original uses the Eastern-Armenian noun *vagh* for the intended victim or quarry, kept in the following sentence as "many a victim."

[53] *Dasak* — a dialect word for a professional, hired killer-informer; the author's own parenthetical gloss (*matagordz*) means roughly "a hired blade / informer."



CHAPTER III

Kars, the Mother

Կարս մայրը

Kars citadel & arms routes

FROM KARS'S PAST.
THE FIRST GENERATION. YUNO.

1880–1892. THE HUNCHAKIANS. KUKUNIAN'S BAND.
1893–1900. THE INFLUENCE OF THE EVENTS OF THE LAND ON KARS. HRAYR'S ACTIVITY.
THE PSYCHOLOGY IN 1904.
THE BENEFITS KARS BROUGHT FOR THE LAND.
THE FIELD-WORKERS KARS PREPARED.

THE TRANSPORT OF ARMS. HRAYR.

THE ARMS-BEARING BANDS FROM 1890 TO 1900.

The immediate impression I took from Kars astonished me.

It was a school – a school for creating an authority within the authority – whose founders had been intellectual young men, each carried away by his own dreams. In 1904 they were remembered like a dream, without anyone's pointing to the substance of their deeds; yet that memory had already become an unverified capital, part imaginary, part real.

There were recalled, for example, Bakhchian and Sedrak Mandinian, who later became pedagogues. "Hey, *janım*, the men of the old days were *bashkha* (different) men; they knew every tongue, they had every learning – yet they crossed themselves and prayed, and would go to St. Karapet."

They would recall Mkrtich Ghazarian – long-legged and small-headed – and likewise Levon Sargsian, beetle-browed, with a big head and a solid frame.

Though the first ended his career in the priesthood and the second in journalism, of them people would say: "Did you see? – that is how a man ought to be. Whatever else they did, they kept their word: they went to the Land, they trod it underfoot, and brought us tidings of the *zulum* [the oppression] there."

They would recall Rostom,[2] who was like a *kototi* [a bear-cub] – which is where his nickname came from. They would recall Martiros Margarian, who, though he had the look of a bookkeeper, was serious and full of weight. Likewise they would recall Prince Arghutian, who had the look of a merry, jesting prince. And they would say: "*Janım*, before these there came and passed many men of every stripe, with more learning, with more *chalum* [swagger]; but from under every man's *papakh* [fur cap] a different voice sounded, each one sweeter than the last. Yet come and see – which of them are you to take a fancy to? These men raised no voice, they had no separate songs of their own; all of them said one thing with one mouth: when your head itches, you must scratch the itch with your own hand."

They would recall – and picture most vividly of all – Abam Tatul, Sarkavag, Jallat, and Turbakh. These were not intellectuals but men of action, and prized by the mass more than the learned ones. "They are of us, they speak our tongue and have no truck with high-sounding words. They are of us, and for that very reason we do not know their *ghadr(). What need of words – we all of us know that the fortress of Kars belongs to our kings, that it is our capital. A* matagh* to your feet – ah, Tatul, Jallad and Turbakh, and poor Sarkavag: were their feet of iron, they would have worn them away in the mountains of Khnus, of Mush, of Erzurum"...

() Ghadr* – the value, the worth.

And they would be sure to strike up the song "The voice rang out from Erzurum"...

Yuno was the manliest of these figures, the brightest and the best-beloved. It was he who lit up the imagination of the masses and pointed the way to the future – though such a thought never so much as crossed Yuno's own mind. Of his exploits the people would tell a great deal, mixing what was with what was not. But the essential thing was not what he had done. The essential thing was that the people found in his deeds that which they themselves longed for.

And their inmost longing was to see a bold man who would scorn both the Russian and the Turkish powers, and strike right and left – at the oppressing policeman and the *beg* [the landlord-chief] – and share out what he seized among the wretched and the luckless.

In truth I do not know whether Yuno had any notion of the parties that were then being born; but they claimed him as their own.

When they say Yuno, I remember Nabi and Aley,[1] the Turkish rebels, who roamed the mountains of Gugark and the Caucasus, and about whom there were legends, and songs were sung in every tongue. I was a child; the grown-ups would say to one another, and I would listen:

– Did you hear? Nabi has risen and taken the Tsalka road, they say; he honored all the women like his own sister and let them go their way; from all the poor he took not a single straw; all the rich he stripped mother-naked and sent packing; the *pristav* [the district police-captain], the judge, and the Cossacks he stood against the wall, they say, and slaughtered like sheep.

And Aunt Abed would add:

– *Ka*, what is it to us? Let him slaughter; our aghas of Azavret too have been with him. Why, Nabi's and Aley's bravest fighters are Armenians – they get the better of the bully, and they are good men. There is no harm to us; may God grant them long life.

We children too would go to school and ask one another:

– Did you hear, did you hear?… On Mount Abul, where a fire burned last night in the dark, it was Aley who had lit it; he was roasting a sheep and running these *sokhs* – the Russians – onto the spit.

These were brigands, with this difference: that it was not for money they had taken to the mountains. The one had been wounded by the absence of justice and had fled from prison; the other had gone up to the mountains out of a tragedy of love. But the one had become a hero of terror, the other a hero of freedom and vengeance. At least I had made heroes of them, when I was a child. I would feel happy when we went to the mineral springs of Tsikhisjvari, where I would dream of Aley – that he might come and besiege us and take us captive, and that I might have the chance to see him and render him my service.

When I went to Kars, and they would tell me of Yuno as though he were still alive, I remembered the fancies I had had ten or fifteen years before about Nabi and Aley. What was told of Yuno was of a piece with what my aunt Abed used to tell – that is, in want of verification. So I pass them by, and leave that to his fellow-workers and to those who were close to him.

Of Yuno's fellow-workers I met Kaftar Arshak and Kevork the Hunter, but unluckily I did not ask them about their pre-revolutionary adventures. The first of them was Keri of Erzurum, who for a time, after Yuno's undoing, made pack-saddles, bridles, and halters in Plo's workshop in Kars. Afterward he crossed with Tuman's band into Sasun, and from there to Van, from there to Persia, and became the famous Keri, who, taking the head of a company of volunteers, was killed at Rawanduz. What the second did after Yuno I do not know, but he too had joined Tuman's second band, to cross into Sasun, and was killed together with Tuman.

Yuno and his comrades, who were contemporaries of Nabi and Aley (in the years 1885–90), differed from them in this: first, that they had no other nations among them, but only Armenians; second, that the field of their activity was the districts of Tayk and Vanand – chiefly Narman, Olti, Gerla (province of Kars), Tortum, Kiskim (province of Erzurum), and Ardvin, Khopa (Batum district).

Yuno's significance is not to be measured by his deeds that remained unrecorded, but by the worth the people had set upon him. They would say: "One like Yuno has never come into the world, nor ever will. When Yuno turned his face toward Erzurum and roared, the *vali* trembled in his seat and the throne of Constantinople shook. When Yuno turned his face toward Kars and Batum and roared, the *gubernators* [the governors] quailed, and his voice carried all the way to Petersburg. Yuno was a man apart"...

When I was a child of seven to ten, it was with just such exaggerations that I pictured Nabi and Aley. And to this day those knightly brigands are for me the "greatest" of heroes. Is the public of Kars in that same illusion, I wonder, when I hear the tales of Yuno that Plo and Mkhchonts Margar tell with such relish? True, they were well on in years, their hair inclining to gray, and they wore beards. But that does not keep an aged people – one that keeps an old dream of revolt and of freedom – from having childlike imaginings. When

someone is born who shows signs answering to that dream, he becomes its cherished child, independent of his real worth. He becomes a token and a guide answering to the people's dream.

Yuno was reckoned a palpable, virile force, and was the beloved of the fighting organization in Kars – as Arabo,[7] too, was in Taron. Parents love the more, and always remember, the days of their children's first steps; and that hero is the child taking its first steps…

The years 1880–1892 must be reckoned the years of the rebirth of the Armenians of Kars. Each of the intellectuals who came and went there brought his own ideas, but there was no common bond among them. The patriotic groups that were formed were ardent and idealistic, but there was no common harmony.

The Hunchakian party in Kars – judging from the impressions I formed – had, by every measure, what it took to gather up the self-sprung revolutionary elements and currents and to make of them a single, complete force. It was the oldest, as a widespread organization. It was the one that embraced the progressive national and social ideas. In it were gathered the most self-sacrificing, disinterested elements of the time – the patriots of both portions of the Armenian people. In its hand was the Torch that kindled the revolutionary flame from Zeitun to Sasun, from Sasun to the Caucasus. The nation looked to it.

For a very short time, at the beginning of the nineties, Zhirayr and Murad[3] had come up to Kars from far-off Cilicia, when they were still unknown men; but they had shown such breath, such spirit, that in a short space they had won the heart of all the currents and had made of them "one field and one dale" under a single roof, which was Hunchakianism. Even in 1904, when I was there – when Hunchakianism no longer existed in the province of Kars, save for a few individuals – it was with these words that they remembered them, and they took offense if you made any negative remark about them. They marveled when we called them "Hunchak."

– No, no, you are wrong; you sin against your own Soil. Rostom too was in Kars, and would go to Erzurum; Murad too was in Kars, and would go to

Sasun. Sweet and kind, they were together. Both of them I saw off myself; both were men like angels. Neither "Center" nor "Hunchak" – the two of them said the selfsame thing: "The nation is a poor king, and we are its soldiers." We loved them, and saw to their every need, and sent them on their way – so Tevanents Ale would tell me.

Tevanents Ale was not making it up out of his own head. Such was the state of things at the beginning of the 1890s, when the likes of Rostom were leading the Federation of Revolutionaries and its decentralization. The likes of Murad found in it a practical idea; and had the members of the Hunchakian party's Center, seated abroad, understood its meaning – or had Rostom been a member of that Center – then in that case it is doubtful the A.R.F. would ever have been formed.

Hunchakianism, with all its endowments, did itself to death through its unpopular, centralizing, and totalitarian administration, and also as a consequence of the notion that the peoples do not possess their own *khanjal* [dagger], and that this *khanjal* is the monopoly of a few book-learned individuals. It is there that one must seek the causes of its decay and degeneration, and the sources of the Dashnaktsutiun's vitality.

In Kars the unity of the new organization, the Dashnaktsutiun, was perfect, thanks to Rostom.

That same unity arose in the work of gathering the fighting forces. Kukunian's band[4] may be reckoned the Dashnaktsutiun's first attempt at organizing an armed force.

Andre Ter-Ohanian, in the pages of the *Hairenik* monthly, having for his source the recollections of the members of Kukunian's band, has grasped the essence of that band so truly, and described it so beautifully, that the reader may read it not as an invented novel but as real history. I too have had close friends among the members of that band, of whom Balajan and Tuben (Derdzakian) have told me the story more than once. What they told confirms the same as what Ter-Ohanian has set forth. So I add nothing further of my own about that band. I will say only that the worth of that band is not to be sought in itself, but in the influence it left on the psychology of the people.

The people of Kars were thirsting to see "the Armenian deed." This they saw and handled. And though that "deed" was imprisoned and exiled, yet the people loved what they had seen and wished to have a more flawless, more perfected military force – and they had it.

The battles and massacres of Sasun and of the years 1893–96 in Turkey had turned the whole people of the province of Kars into mourners – but mourners of one will, ready to exact "vengeance." Though in those years the mass followed the Dashnaktsutiun, yet the leaders of the movements in Turkey were the Hunchakians, and the responsibility for the failure fell on them. Even so, there was no criticism whatever against the one side or the other. "What has been, has been. Let us think rather of seizing by the collar the ones truly to blame – Sultan Hamid and Lobanov-Rostovsky," they would say.

It was with this thought that the song of the *ashugh* Jarjati – "The Muslims' haughty companies…" – and the songs composed about Damadian and Murad had become national songs, as had the song "Of Talvorik am I the brave, the rock of the flank"…, which was the national march of those times. The broad-hearted people reasoned: "If the issue succeed, the fruit of it will be for us all; if the issue fail, the consequence too will be for us all." And it sheltered and lodged under its roof all the fugitives, all who had escaped from the massacre.

The rise of the Dashnaktsutiun and the fall of Hunchakianism took place in the course of those anxious years – through the Hunchakians themselves, and thanks to the persistence and circumspection of the Dashnaks – and in the following manner:–

In Sasun, Damadian had been arrested. He had been replaced by Murad, who had been appointed by the Hunchakian party as leader of the Sasun insurrection. It was expected that, in the event of the insurrection's breaking out, Europe would be shaken, the English fleet would enter Constantinople, and the Russian army would move – to put into effect, if not the decisions of San Stefano, then at least those of the Congress of Berlin.[6]

But for an insurrection arms were needed. Murad, apart from the Berdan rifles he had brought from Kars and 2,000 cartridges, had no other arms. The Sasun men had flintlock guns and sword and *mattal*, to call which by the name of arms was itself an offense. That is why, at the meeting he held with the chiefs of Sasun, Murad had resolved to meet their demands halfway and to send a representative from the Caucasus abroad, to bring the promised arms. The Hunchakian party had made its promises in plenty.

The representative chosen had been Hrayr,[5] the beloved of Sasun. He had sent about fifty of his men – of his own people of Shlghlaghaj and his intimates – to Kars, to convey to Sasun the arms they were to receive; and he had himself set out for Kars.

Turbakh and Tevanents Ale in Kars, and later Mkrtich of Kannenu and Poghos of Shlghlaghaj in Taron, would tell the story, and their several accounts confirmed one another in the main. Mkrtich, who after Hrayr was the second man in the world of Taron, would tell it with a mocking emphasis:

"Murad was without guile, he was simple, he trusted the promises. He said to us: 'If Sasun revolts, the *Ingiliz* [the Englishman] on the one side and the *Urus* [the Russian] on the other will enter Constantinople and pull down the Sultan's throne, and the Armenians will be freed.' He drew out the 'Center's' letter and read it. The assembly of Sasun said to Murad: 'You have come upon our eyes and our head; for the nation's sake, may our blood be *halal* [freely given]. And let the 'Center's' (Hunchakianism's) plenipotentiary be our chief, let him be the light of our eye.'

"Osei Ave and Hrayr turned to face Murad and said: 'All well and good; but a woman, being a woman, before she does the wash first makes ready the water, then the soap, and then begins the washing. We have flintlock guns, but we have no *barut* [powder]. With a flintlock one can fight against you, but against the *askar-i rashi* (the regular troops) there is no fighting. Where are your cannon and your musket?'

"A few hotheads – empty in the upper storey – cried out in the faces of Hrayr and Osei Ave: 'You are troublemakers.' And we said: 'The troublemakers are you.'

"Murad was a good man; he rose from his place and called out the ones who were crying 'troublemaker,' and said: 'You have a few men with their wits about them – is it their tongues too you would cut out? Osei Ave and Hrayr are in the right. Without arms and munitions there is no insurrection.' And he drew out letters sent from the 'Center,' in which the Hunchakians said: 'Whatever munitions you want, whatever is needed, go to the Caucasus and take from our branches.' Hrayr he appointed chief, to go and bring the arms, and gave him letters for the four corners of the world.

"We went to Kars, we searched for a branch. There is no such thing. There were a few Hunchakian youths; we gave the letter and demanded the promised arms. They said: 'That is the Center's affair; we have no arms.' We said: 'Janım, this will not do; there is fighting over Sasun, Murad is left in a hard strait, he has sent us in haste to bring help. You are leaving us to bleed. Brothers – will you not be brothers to us?' It was no use. They said: 'It is the Center's affair,' and stood their ground. And where the Center is, the devil knows. In our extremity, we clung to Jallat, who had been to Sasun and to St. Karapet. He took us to Turbakh, who is a very good man. He took us to Alek, who is an upright man. We told them everything. They said: 'We acknowledge no Center; we are Dashnaks, and we have no word of the Hunchakians. But since you are in the midst of a fight, apply to our committee – they will surely help.'

"Hrayr went forward. We went to the Dashnak committee and told our trouble. We did not know what a Dashnak was, nor did we know these men. When we said that we had come for arms, that there was fighting there, and why should we go back empty-handed, they said at once: 'What we have, count as yours. And let our own boys too be a *matagh* for you. We are one nation and of one faith, and we want the freedom of our nation.' The next day we set to work. Of the men of Shlghlaghaj we had brought with us, under Poghos's lead, we armed twenty-six and sent them back to Sasun. They reached safety. Seven others too – among whom was Cholo, a tender boy still – we started off by the road, but they could not get across beyond Baten. They were arrested; Cholo alone managed to escape.

"Jallat crossed into Sasun with a few men and came back, while Turbakh crossed into Khnus and settled there to pass bands across, and stayed there

until the massacres came; but he got away. And so we did not send back from Kars empty-handed the men we had brought with us. Hrayr explained the whole affair to those who were returning, and begged them to make it plain to all – to the chiefs of Sasun and to Murad – that the Center was lost, and that all these arms the Dashnaks had given."

These accounts of Mkrtich of Kannenu, which I have brought in here by the way, are not meant to shed light on the history of the first Sasun insurrection. That does not concern Kars. It may be that Mkrtich of Kannenu's accounts are not verified facts, either. That I count a secondary matter. The essential thing must be reckoned to be those phenomena that became the cause of the Hunchakian party's utter disappearance in the Land and in Kars.

It must be reckoned undeniable that from Taron there were sent by Murad, as Hunchakians, Hrayr, Mkrtich, Poghos, and with them Hovo of Gomer, who turned to bring from the foreign "branches" the promised arms for the insurrection. Yet these men's efforts came to nothing with the Hunchakians, and, on the contrary, bore fruit with their adversaries, the Dashnaks. As a consequence, Hrayr, Mkrtich, and those who had come with them returned as Dashnaks.

It must be reckoned undeniable, too, that at that anxious moment, when the Dashnaktsutiun was still unknown in the Land, we see not only Peto of Kars in Van, but also Rostom in Erzurum; while Jallat (of Alexandropol) and Turbakh (of Kars) we see in Sasun and Khnus, together with the men Murad had sent, under the watchword of helping "the nation," without condition.

Who were the modest members of the A.R.F. central committees in the years 1893–1896, I have not been able to determine.

But for me it is a conviction that they, however unwittingly, by their conduct took so vast a step that they bound their district finally to the Dashnaktsutiun. And it was they who were the founders of the moral authority of that district, which I enjoyed in 1904. That step they wished to ascribe to Tevanents Alek, to Jallat, and to Turbakh; but these men, in my view, could be helpers and initiators, while the one who truly decided was the Central Committee. As the consequence of that step must be reckoned the riddle that the world of Taron – where the ruling and moral force had until then been the Hunchakians – passed all at once and wholly over to the side of

the Dashnaktsutiun, with its Gevorg Chavushes,[8] its Pokhots and its Makhars. From Kars to Erzurum, where Rostom had made his nest, and from Erzurum to Taron, Hunchakianism vanished away, and the Dashnaktsutiun took its place. This we owe to the Central Committee of Kars.

After the Congress of Berlin, Khrimian Hayrik set forth a vivid image with his famous tale of the "iron" ladle.[9] This had a fateful significance in the Armenians' relations, both inner-revolutionary and outward. That two-edged parable, which became the anchor of the Hunchakians' line of conduct and which infected the Dashnaktsutiun as well, was for me a question open to review. And I would often speak of it with Sergei and with Hagop (Chilinkarian).

At the beginning of 1904, Sergei said to me one day:–

– Musings are fruitful when they are worked out in the open. They cripple a man when they are not dispelled. So you are to give a lecture on the subject "The Congress of Berlin, the Hunchakian Line of Conduct, and the Affair of Bank Ottoman."

I wished to refuse, but there was no escaping it, the more so as the meeting had been fixed for a close circle. Constrained, and stammering, that day I spoke more or less the following:–

– Khrimian's conclusion – that at the Congress of Berlin they could not eat the *harissa*, because in their own hands were paper spoons while in the others' hands were iron ladles – is a piece of poetry: harmful, senseless, and two-edged, and one that has led Hunchakianism, and us likewise, and the whole of the Armenian people, down a wrong road.

They listened to me in silence and looked at me coldly, as though I were dripping poison into the chalice. But I went on:

– It is two-edged, because we can understand that parable otherwise: "Freedom cannot be gained by petition, by prayer, by weeping, but can only be wrested and seized with the iron ladle. International undertakings have worth when they serve the interests of the powers, and when what you have wrested with your own iron ladle you have been able to carry to your mouth

and digest." If this is what Khrimian means to show, then that wisdom does not belong to him, but is a very old, time-worn truth, reckoned indisputable in history and beyond doubt.

Here the faces of my hearers cleared a little.

— But that elementary truth was grasped neither by Khrimian nor by his clerical companions, who went in the name of the Armenians to the Congress of Berlin — and, by their own confession, with a "paper" spoon.

When I marked reluctance on their faces, I raised my voice and cried out:

— Kruger,[11] the president of the Boers, who is now going about Europe for the freedom of his people of a few hundred thousand, will attain his aim, because he understands that without the iron spoon no request is ever granted; and he will win the Boers' freedom from England. But we, a people of several millions, cannot win our freedom from Turkey and from Russia, since we have not yet understood that truth.

Khrimian's understanding, and that of the Hunchakians who followed his path, of the *harissa*'s "iron and paper" spoons had another sense. They had believed in the victory of justice; they believe that by setting forth their just rights they will attain their aim; they believe that to stir the human conscience is decisive for reaching their aim. In a word, they await salvation from outside. This is a deadly peril, and a chasing after chimeras, which leads us to failure and ruin. Those who think and act thus will bring nothing but harm.

Such are our diplomat-clergy, who preach justice and freedom without the dagger. Such are the Hunchakians, who make an insurrection without a rifle, hoping that the pity of Europe will be moved and that justice will triumph. They do not know that justice and freedom are torn loose only with the point of the dagger.

The hearers were exasperated. Norhatian said: "Let him be, let him be, let him finish; let us see what he means to say." I went on:

— As for the affair of Bank Ottoman,[10] I see in it only one thing, if we set the heroic side aside. By its action it means to make us and the world understand that one must spit on all political labor, if it is not backed by force. The worth of Bank Ottoman lies in this — that it is aware that it is to the biting dog they

throw the bones, while for the whimpering and beseeching dog no share is set out. But we, unhappily, do not grasp that simple thing, and do not act in the spirit of Bank Ottoman.

When I saw that the listeners were awaiting my conclusion, I added:

– All of them are wrong. We have no iron ladle. That must be found, created, made ready. A paper ladle will serve for nothing. It remains to eat the *harissa* in the Armenian way – without a spoon, with our fingers and with *lavash* bread – and always keeping in mind the watchword of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries:[12] "Only by your own strength do you come into your right."

I had finished. But fingers shot up and wolfish voices were heard: "I want the floor," "Give me the floor," "Give me leave to speak." And they fell upon me like vultures and tore me to shreds.

I took the blows and was in a pitiable state. Only Sergei – whether he pitied me or found me in the right, I do not know – intervened, saying:

– What did the lad say, that you have fallen upon him? He said that all the sermons, the weeping and the wailing, and the petitions are worthless – all of them empty hopes; and empty hopes must not be encouraged; and only after we have force must we wrest our right, to the measure of the force we have, and not beg for it as alms.

I had taken a beating, meeting with fierce opposition and reproach, but I consoled myself. Since there was such passionate opposition, it meant that they could not so quickly part from the traditions of decades, and the passion there was ought to be reckoned a sign of the loosening of those traditions. Therefore they had to be pulled down, stubbornly.

They were already on the point of falling. In Kars there was no longer any Russophilia, any blind service to the Russians. The Armenians there had been left despairing, looking at the fortress of Kars, which had once been their capital. Today it belonged to the Russian, though it had been retaken by the Armenian general Lazarev. They had been left despairing by the ruin of the bands of Kukunian, of Basen, and others, and by the joint efforts of Russian and Turk. They had been left despairing above all by the forcible seizure of

the Armenian church estates, and stood before a reality that was far removed from any blind faith in the Russian.

Therefore a positive support had to be found, to replace those false and harmful dreams.

That break had come about not in me alone, but in all of us.

Weeks had passed when one day Sergei said to me:

– In your last lecture you said one good thing, but you did not explain your thought well. You said: spit on the paper spoon, we have no need of it; let us eat the *harissa* like Armenians – with lavash bread and with our fingers, spoon and all. Come, let us work this out in detail and find the practical road. I have thought much, and I find that something must change. But how it must change – that let us ponder together. Have you read *Droshak* [the A.R.F. organ, "Banner"]? While we are pondering such things, Loris and others are going about in Italy and other cities, holding meetings and blowing the *zurna*. That does not please me. It has no smell of the Dashnaktsutiun about it, but of Hunchakianism.

So we would talk, and could find no road. That road we were to find in the Land – which came out at the line of collaboration with the neighbors.

Those years were the years of the break in our politics.

When you ask a man whose son he is, he gives his father's name, even if his father's influence on him was slight. He does not give his mother's name, though he knows perfectly well who his mother is, and that everything he is hangs on her, and that he owes her every quality he has.

Like all mothers, Kars too remains unacknowledged, though she was the mother of the revolutionary upbringing, its tender parent, who gave her all to all Armenians without distinction.

Blessed be Hovsep Ter-Davtian[13] and Hamo Ohanjanian,[14] who said to me: "Until you have drunk the water of Kars, breathed its air, and digested the ways of its people, go nowhere else." And giving me a note, they sent me first to Kars, that I might grow used to the atmosphere there. This I did, and I saw

that the mother of the Armenians is Kars.

And if you ask me whose son I am, I do not err in telling you that I am a boy of Kars, though I was not born here.

Sons of Kars are all those who have passed over her soil and drunk of her waters. And if they have not drunk, it is all the same: Kars is a grandmother who counts every Armenian her own child, though she may never have seen them. Kars helps them without distinction, grieves for them and rejoices for them, though she draws no one's notice.

Kars, with her districts, sat astride the roads that led to the Land. It was from beneath her skirts that one could go to Bagrevand, to the districts of Erzurum, to Khnus and Akhlat, to Hark and Apahunik, to far-off Kajberunik and Tmorik, to Vardo, to Taron and the land of Sasun lost among the mountains, and to the parts more distant still – in a word, to the whole of Upper Armenia and the center of Armenia. Kars was the ring and the key of northern and southern Armenia.

The benefits she brought for the Land were these:

1.– Within her bosom she had created such a patriarchal and national atmosphere that every Armenian, whatever his origin and class, felt himself within a family of his own; he forgot his narrow and harmful feelings of faction and of native-place, and was consumed with the joys and sorrows of the whole Armenian people. He spared neither his goods nor his blood for its independence and its freedom. There, in the moral sense, died all those who by their selfishness and their foreign-mindedness stood in the way of the settlement of the Armenian cause.

We have seen that the district of Kars had reached this goal through its autonomous, revolutionary inner government. And this psychology it exported to the Land and to northern Armenia.

2.– As a waystation between northern and southern Armenia, she encouraged and aided by every means all those men, intellectual and non-intellectual, who crossed

from the one side to the other with the aim of forging freedom. All the field-workers and fighters who fell as martyrs in central Armenia died with a feeling of gratitude toward Kars, carrying away with them her tenderness and her encouragement. Arabo, Keri of Dersim,[15] Serob of Sokhord,[16] Rostom,

Hrayr, Zhirayr, Murad of Sasun – which of them should I name? – all of them drank the water of Kars and learned something of the spirit of her people and carried it away with them.

Not content even with this, Kars sent to Van one of her own sons, Peto, who laid the beginning of the Dashnaktsutiun there. Several times she sent to Sasun Jallat and Turbakh, who in their day were figures dear to the people and spreaders of the mind of Kars. She sent others too, such as Maloyan and Shavro, who, before reaching their goal, froze or were killed on the frontiers. But this did not dishearten the man of Kars. "The pitcher breaks on the road to the water," he would say, and so he consoled himself – and multiplied the number of the martyrs.

3.– She gave shelter to those who suffered for the nation – to the fugitives, to the weary fighters, to the multitudes fled from the massacres. But she did not reckon this giving of shelter a favor, a national service rendered to the afflicted, but their natural right – as it is the natural right of the weary and the wounded to return to their own house and be given over to their mother's care. Those who came to Kars felt themselves neither "refugees" nor strangers. Such a thing I have met with nowhere else, except in the land of Taron. Some 25,000 Armenians fled from the massacres of 1894–96 had found refuge in the district of Kars, despite the persecutions of the Turkish and Russian authorities. The newcomers were protected and cared for by the Armenians of Kars as fellow-workers with equal rights.

4.– The district of Kars had also the following psychology:– The Land is under the first and gravest danger. It must be

set free. Freedom and security are not given if you have no force. Force cannot be created so long as you have no perfected arms. Therefore, first, arms must be procured. Second, the arms procured must be conveyed to all those who fight within the Land. And third, armed bands must be prepared and brought to the aid of the fighters.

I have already noted that for the procuring of arms only two means were used – namely, purchase by party or other national funds, and theft from the state depots. Here I must add that the suspicions of the Turks were groundless, who supposed that the arms had been supplied by the Russians. Equally groundless were the suspicions of the Russians, that some other power was

aiding us. Because these dealings were carried on with money, they imagined that the Armenian people could not raise that money. It is to be noted, too, that this method of purchase and theft could not be put into practice within the Land – which would have brought a double benefit. Nor was the building of our own arms-factories ever accomplished in Kars. That came about only in part, in Tabriz. One way or another, in a limited fashion, arms were procured in Kars.

A harder task was the work of getting the arms into the Land, which was full of dangers. At first it was comparatively easy, when no notice was yet taken by the governments. The arms were passed across the frontier as goods, as merchandise, and reached their destination through men who were in on the plan. But this means was soon wholly done away with. When they understood that under the name of merchant-goods forbidden arms were being brought in, the inspections at the frontiers grew severe, and the trade of the Armenians was prohibited on both sides, by Turkish and Russian agreement. By that agreement, the Armenian subjects of the two states were to be cut off from one another, and no Armenian could any longer cross from one side of the frontier-line to the other, though both

sides were the country of Armenians.

There remained but one means: to slip by night past the two frontier-guarding armies, to organize arms-running bands, small or large – the *zinatar* (arms-running) bands – and to carry the arms across into the Land. In other words, either the fighting element in the depths of the Land had to come in person as far as Kars and take up the store of arms, or fighters had to be found in Kars who would cross the frontier fighting. The transport of arms became a constant preoccupation, one that was as good as playing with one's life.

Into this hard work Hrayr introduced an innovation.

Though hot fighting had already broken out in Sasun, Hrayr hastened to reach the other centers abroad, going as far as Romania and Bulgaria, so that, if there were no arms even to convey to Sasun, at least the fleet of the *Ingiliz* [the Englishman] might hurry into Constantinople, as the Hunchakian Center had promised in the letter addressed to Murad. That promise, too, was without foundation. Hrayr had not turned back in despair; he washed his

hands of the Hunchakians and vowed to go after the Dashnaktsutiun. Rostom had become his idol – whom, though he had not seen him (I do not think he ever saw him at all), yet, judging from his deeds, he had come to believe in.

In Kars Hrayr had become a man of Kars; he had taken to himself the mind and the method of Kars, and had become an unsparing critic of the Hunchakian way of working. And when they sang the songs of Talvorik and the others that Damadian had composed, he would silence them, saying: "A curse on those sweet tongues that can raise the simple people to their feet but cannot keep them standing. Better that the people of Talvorik had remained – better you had never understood its glory."

When they read that Gladstone had said this and Dillon that, he would say, exasperated: "A curse on those hands that can make another believe what they themselves do not believe. Such men are the grave-diggers of the people. I have seen where lies end."

The old men, and Tevanents Alek in particular, when they told of this, would add:

– Everything about Hrayr was as it should be. He was a great man; only, he spoke against Damadian and Murad, which did not sit well with our hearts. When we made him see that one does not strike a man already fallen, he said: "Let it be as you say. But you do not understand. I have eaten the garlic and the pepper – my mouth burns. I have minced the onion – my eyes water. It is I who was their fellow-worker, and now I see – no good will come of it – that my people went down underfoot on a vain hope."

The people-loving, embittered Hrayr did not know what awaited him ten years later. Under different conditions, he too would be killed for the love of that same people, prompted by his own disillusionment.

Sasun had fallen. Near the rock of Yorofor, Murad, Gevorg, and their comrades had been taken in 1896, and despair reigned there. But Kars did not despair; she was only sorrowful. Hrayr, who had come to Kars, was seeking new devices, new paths, to help the Land. Looking to the organization and the people of Kars, he pointed to a new way out. He reasoned in the mind that prevailed in Kars:

– A rock that has broken loose from the mountain cannot be set upright again. Our people have opened their eyes; they cannot be made slaves again. An awakened slave who has no protector will surely be killed by his master of yesterday. Let us take this into account. And that there is no protector, let us know for certain too, so that we do not deceive ourselves to no purpose. We have not that quiet, hush-hush organization of yours, without *chalum* (swagger), the one you have let slip. Second: we have fighters, but no arms; you have both. I will cross into the Land this very tomorrow, if you give me your word that you will place at my disposal – on the frontier, in the places I show you – arms and organizers, as many as I want.

He got their word, and set out from the Russian Basen to the Turkish Basen, where the same Armenian people live. Already, by the same plan,

Aram Takhul had crossed to Erzurum, while Turbakh and Jallat had crossed to Khnus and Taron.

The plan was simple. First, to organize the Armenians of the Turkish part quietly, hush-hush, without noise, without *chalum*. This Hrayr accomplished fully in Basen, taking it upon himself to carry the work through. The second task was to bring munitions, by local bands, from the Russian Basen and the district of Takht into fixed places on the frontier, to hide them in the mountains and withdraw. This Kars did. From the Turkish Basen bands came, as though they were peasants, took up the hidden arms, and by night conveyed them to Hrayr, and turned peasants again. This method of transport, which was carried out without noise and at speed, had yielded a fairly large result. Force was being made ready in Basen, and from there it moved more easily on to Khnus and the parts further in.

But into the field had fallen tares, and into the wheat, a moth. The government had learned the secret, and was hunting out and arresting every farmhand and plowman in the Armenian villages. In the village of Igderan in Basen, I think, while Hrayr was watering buffaloes in the ravine as a farmhand, they arrested him and took him to the prison of Erzurum, where Aram Takhul too had fallen. The latter they hanged, while Hrayr was freed at the time of the general amnesty and returned to Taron. With his arrest his method of transport came to an end.

This was in the bloody and dreadful years of 1895–96.

It remained for Kars to continue her help to the Land – with armed bands.

The number and the quantity of the *zinatar* bands is very hard to determine, because of those bands that had reached safety nothing was written and little was said. To remain unknown made the next undertaking easier. It is the ones that met with failure that were known to all; for when a band had not

reached its place and all had been killed, there could no longer be any harm in speaking of it.

I must try to speak in turn of these *zinatar* bands, each of which was an epic and a tragedy. The list I give will not be complete. Let those who take an interest in the matter make their study in the old letters and archives, or let those who took part in those battles and marches supply what is missing.

Of the marches of the following armed bands in the years 1890–1899 I have heard from the accounts of those who took part. These are the ones from the province of Kars:–

1.– Yunan's band. What I know of this I have written. It penetrated into the Land as far as Sper, Kiskim, Khope, and Tortum, and had its base at Artvin, Olti, and Geola.

2.– Kukunian's band. As it seems, the most trustworthy source is the collection of Andre Ter-Ohanian. The compass of its activity was confined to the counties of Kars and Kaghzvan. Among those who took part in this band were Yeprem, Beri (Baftar Arshak), Balajan, Ruben Derdzakian, and, I think, Kevork the Hunter too, who together with Beri had also been in Yunan's band.

3.– Prince Hovsep Arghutian (of Lori) and Jallat, who crossed from Kars to St. Karapet, or established themselves with Arabo, and, leaving their band's arms behind, returned.

4.– Arabo's band.(*) He came to the Caucasus. In Kars they armed his band and put into it such comrades as gave the band a revolutionary character. One of them, I think, was Levon of Akhaltskha. The band and Arabo were killed on the road, in the valley of Geale-rash, on the frontier of Taron.

5.– The band of the Hunchakian Murad, which was armed in Kars

(*) Of Arabo I will tell later on (Volume III).

and reached Sasun in safety.

6.– The band of Poghos of Kzghl-Aghaj, whom Hrayr had brought with him to Kars, where it was armed and reached Taron and Sasun in safety.

7.– A second band from among those who had come with Hrayr (the leader's name I do not recall) was armed in Kars and returned to Sasun and Taron. In this band took part Zoro of Shenik, still a lad. On the road the band lost a few men in fighting, while the rest reached their place in safety.

8.– The band of Stepan of Shenik. Stepan, who was a close kinsman of the renowned Prince Grge, set out for Kars to procure arms before the Sasun fighting had begun. On the road, in the village of Apri in Bulankh, he saw a Kurdish sheikh who had seized the estates of the Armenians by force and lorded it over the Armenians. Being a hot-blooded lad, he drew his dagger and, without a thought for the consequences, killed the sheikh; and he himself went on his way and reached Kars.

– I am the brother of Grge of Shenik (his cousin, I think). I have not begged to live; I have killed. Give me a good weapon, he said.

– There are no arms for you, they answered, since you have brought no letter. We will give you five weapons instead of one, if you find five comrades known to us and return to Sasun with the arms.

He accepted the condition, and, finding five men who were known, was armed and returned to Sasun in safety.

Two weeks later he planted himself in Kars again and asked for arms once more. But this time they grew suspicious of him, and death swung over his head. How was it that he had gone and come back within two weeks, and had again brought no letter? By the time those suspicions were dispelled, the thing was long past: Grge had been killed and Sasun had fallen.

Stepan too I saw, at the end of 1903. He was in the villages of Takht, living on his past and puffing himself up on Grge's laurels. He had become by now a rusted rifle.

9 and 10.– These two bands are ones that Hrayr passed across, which from the Turkish Basen, with arms received from Kars, went to Taron. Who their leaders were I could not learn.

11.– Jallat's second band, which he brought safely to Taron. He himself returned to Kars by way of Khnus. On the road he was caught in the storm of the general massacre, for which he drew a reprimand – why he had turned back into that storm.

12.– Turbakh's band, of men of Khnus perhaps, armed in Kars, which reached Khnus and settled there. During the massacre he too stayed in Khnus, and then returned – alive, I believe.

Of these twelve bands, the first five crossed into the Land in the years 1890–94 – that is, before the first insurrection of Sasun had yet broken out. The remaining seven were in the years 1894–95 – that is, in the course of the Sasun insurrection or in the days of its fall.

13.– The band of Abro of Shabin-Karahisar, which crossed from Kars to Sasun during the general massacre and the rebuilding of Sasun and, after reaching safety, departed content, falling under *hiwsini*.

14.– Serob of Sokhord, who came by way of the Balkans and, having taken the head of a band in Kars, crossed safely to Mount Nemrut and the district of Akhlat, and became Serob Pasha.

15.– A small band of men of Akhlat, which crossed by way of Kars and reached Akhlat in safety. The leader's name I do not know.

16.– Sepuh of Baberd (known in Kars by the name of Kersa Arshak) crossed by way of Kars, reached Sasun in safety, and returned.

17.– The great band of Jartar of Akhlat (a kinsman of Serob), in which took part Arakel, Musheg, Avag the Lion, and Balabek Karapet; arming in Kars, it entered Bagrevand and, from there onward, fighting without cease, reached Mount Khatavin. By the name of the last that band became

legendary. After many Homeric battles, the remnants of the band reached Akhlat, to Serob. The fights of this band have been made immortal by unbelievable feats of daring, which the Kurds above all swear by.

18.– The Khastur band, likewise armed in Kars, went to Akhlat on the traces of Jartar. Who the leader was – Mihran or Khan – I do not know for certain. This band was caught in very heavy fighting in the neighborhood of the village of Khastur in Bagrevand, and by that name it too is known. The chief among its members were two brothers, Mihran and Yaket (who were very brave, but who later, carried away by factional passion, turned traitor and became Russian agents, and were made the object of a terror-act by the Dashnaktsutiun, having first snatched Yeghishe Topchian from us); Khan, who later became the band's leader; Simon of Baberd; and Tultsik Gevorg (the Georgian), who was a most original figure, with a higher German education, and a steadfast lover of soldiering. This band, before reaching its goal, was forced by its losses to turn back halfway. Sepuh too, I think, took part in the Khastur fight.

19 and 20.– The bands of Sako of Sev-Kar and Sepuh of Baberd, which – whether separately or together I do not know – set out from Kars and reached Sasun and Taron in safety. Their chief aim was to replace Gurgen, who had been killed in the village of Tsronk, and to put an end to the disagreements and conflicts that had arisen between Serob Pasha and Andranik,[17] and between the people and the *fedayis*. The mission had failed because of Sako's arrest, and Sepuh, seeing that he could not reconcile the sides, had turned back.

This list, as I have said, is incomplete. Let others complete it.

How many took part in these bands, how much armed and human force was supplied, and how much of it perished and fell as martyrs – to determine this exactly is impossible

in present conditions. But the fact remains a fact, that in the years 1890–99 the work of bringing in forces of that magnitude weighed almost wholly upon Kars.

Not in this list are the bands and undertakings that were carried out from Erevan and from Persia toward the Land.

Notes

[1] Nabi and Aley — Muslim (Turkish/Kurdish) social bandits of the Kars–Gugark borderland, remembered in folk song as avengers of the poor; Rouben treats them as the childhood prototype of the revolutionary hero.

[2] Rostom — Stepan Zorian (1867–1919), one of the three founders of the A.R.F.; his nickname derived from *kototi*, "bear-cub."

[3] Zhirayr and Murad — leading figures of the Hunchakian party in the early 1890s; "Murad" is Hampartsum Boyadjian ("Medzn Murad"), who led the Sasun resistance of 1894.

[4] Kukunian's band — the armed expedition led by Sarkis Kukunian, which in 1890 tried to cross from Russian territory into Ottoman Armenia and was intercepted at the frontier by the Russians.

[5] Hrayr — Armenak Ghazarian, called "Hrayr Dzhoghk" (Hrayr the Hell), the celebrated fedayi organizer of Sasun, killed in 1904.

[6] By the Treaty of San Stefano (March 1878), and then the Congress of Berlin (1878), the European powers took up the "Armenian question"; Article 61 of the Berlin treaty promised reforms in the Armenian provinces but left their enforcement to the very powers that had no interest in carrying them out.

[7] Arabo — the famed fedayi of Taron (Arakel of Sasun), a folk hero comparable to Yuno.

[8] Gevorg Chavush (1870–1907) — the most renowned of the Taron fedayis.

[9] On his return from the Congress of Berlin, Catholicos Mkrtich Khrimian ("Khrimian Hayrik") preached his celebrated "Iron Ladle" sermon: the powers ladled out the "harissa" of liberty with iron ladles, while the Armenians had come with only a paper petition, and so went away empty.

[10] Bank Ottoman — on 26 August 1896 a party of Dashnaks seized the Imperial Ottoman Bank in Constantinople to force European attention on the massacres; the deed became a symbol of armed action over petition.

[11] The Boers' war against Britain (1899–1902); Paul Kruger, president of the Transvaal, toured Europe in 1900–01 seeking support for the Boer cause.

[12] The Russian Socialist-Revolutionary Party (the SRs), with whom the A.R.F. was ideologically allied.

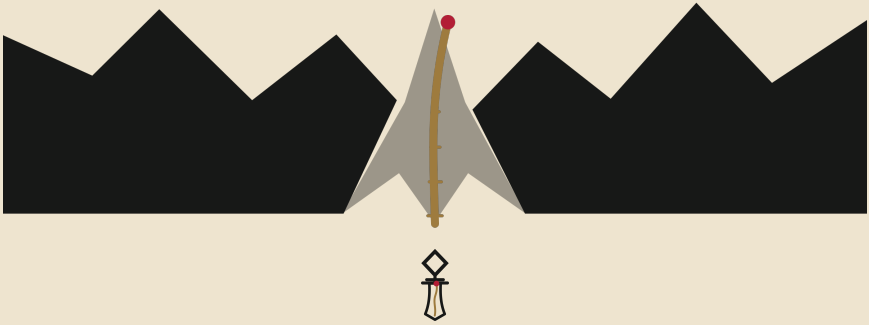
[13] Hovsep Ter-Davtian — a leading A.R.F. organizer of the Caucasus in this period, who directed Rouben first to Kars.

[14] Hamo Ohanjanian — A.R.F. leader, later a member of the Bureau and Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia (1920).

[15] Keri — the celebrated fedayi Arshak Gavafian (per Ch. II); here "Keri of Dersim." He headed a company of volunteers and fell at Rawanduz.

[16] Serob — Serob Vardanian, "Aghbyur Serob," called "Serob Pasha," the renowned fedayi leader of Sasun and Taron; killed in 1899.

[17] Andranik — Andranik Ozanian (1865–1927), the most celebrated of the fedayi commanders, who succeeded Serob in Taron.



CHAPTER IV

The Basen Fights

Բասենի կռիվները

Basen winter passes & bands

KARS IN THE YEARS 1900–1904.
THE NEW AND THE OLD GENERATIONS.
THE CURRENTS AMONG THE YOUTH OF SHUSHI.
TORGOM-TUMAN.
MENAK, ISAJAN.
SERGEI, A FIELD-WORKER IN KARS.
ISHKHAN.
THE BATTLES OF BASEN. NEVRUZ, KHAN.

In the years 1900–1904, the life of Kars was more than turbulent, and subject to storms. Marked changes had come about both in its inner organizational life and in the very character of the struggle.

We have made acquaintance with the conditions of election to the Central Committee. The electors had to know not only the person of the candidate, but the past of his forebears, who had to be faithful to the Armenian ways. This circumstance was the reason the Central Committee was generally made up of natives, or of men of Akhalkalak and Alexandropol, who were known to them and were of one and the same people – born of Upper Armenia. This state of things made the character of the Central Committee enduring and traditionalist.

A second circumstance must be pointed out too:– The Central Committee kept in its own hand only the helm of the work, but itself remained secret. Those who plied the oars of the work were the field-workers, who were

generally chosen according to the taste of the Central Committee – generally from persons of their own district or of districts they knew, or from those districts of the Land whose base of support was Kars. These were Upper Armenia and Taron and the districts adjoining them. Whatever the causes may be, it is a fact that, though the first field-worker of Vaspurakan was a man of Kars, yet no field-worker or fighter of Vaspurakan ever came to Kars. At the same time Artsakh and Syunik, which had flooded Transcaucasia, Persia, and Vaspurakan with their field-workers and fighters, were wholly absent from Kars, from Upper Armenia, and from Taron. So it was until the year 1900.

Nothing had changed in the districts of Kars and of central Armenia, where the old patriarchal ways went on and the differences of class were not felt. But in Tiflis, in Baku, and in Karabagh, a good deal had changed. Changed too were the local circles – young men who, having received a higher education, came from the seminary of Echmiadzin or from the diocesan secondary schools (generally expelled from them), and who criticized all the established orders severely. Likewise those who came from the Russian schools of Tiflis were pleased with nothing, and were seeking some new thing – denying the old, yet unable to give shape to the new. Among these were Derenik and Vahagn Demirchian, Avetik Isahakian,[1] and others, who in after years became well-known figures, once they had drunk water from ten springs. Of them the old folk would say:

"*Janım*, even the hen, hen though she is, cackles only after she has laid her egg. Our whelps, without laying any egg – sprung from us – would teach us to swim, and go about cackling. Is this a thing that ought to be?"

The parents did not understand that there was a travail in the world – one they did not feel, but their children did feel, though in a vague way. And this had two sources. The one was the inner rot of the clerical order, which had made that order a thorn in the eye – above all in the eyes of those who had come out of the ecclesiastical schools. The other was aimed at the townsman class, which had already taken root, and in particular against the Armenian bourgeoisie, which was reckoned an instrument of the Russian tyranny.

These antipathies among the youth, if they had not ripened in the districts of Kars and central Armenia – where those classes did not yet exist – had

nonetheless crystallized in the great cities of Transcaucasia and in little Shushi.

It was around the year 1900.

The young men, the students, would dispute hotly, would quarrel, would fall out with one another – not over the current questions of life, but to settle the questions of the whole world. They put the questions point-blank:

– At the root of the differences between nations and states, of their conflicts, of their empire-buildings, lie economic factors – the strivings of the exploiting classes to keep the exploited classes in bondage. With the abolition of classes all this comes to an end, and socialism reigns.

– No, – the majority would object, – the national question is no offspring of economic factors. It is a force given by nature, and independent of class and of material data alike. A nation that is not free, and is dominated by another, is already an exploited, an oppressed class; while the one that dominates it is the exploiter. Hence the freedom of nations, and their federation, leads to socialism. Socialism can be brought about only by the union of the toil of free peoples, federated with one another, against the exploiting classes.

In these disputes there took part, on the one side, A. Tsaturian, Nariman Ter-Ghazarian and Ghazar Ter-Ghazarian, Sako Hambardzumian, A. Hovhannesian, and Levon Atabekian, who was reckoned to face both ways – and on the other side, Aram,[2] Torgom,[3] Isajan.[4] Those who listened to them were the students, among whom were Menak[5] and little Nikol (who later became known by the name of Ishkhan).[6] The older men would listen, shaking their heads and exclaiming: "They are idle boys; with nothing to do, they are trying to thicken water."

Perhaps the older men were right, since half a century has gone by and still that water has not thickened. But the parents of those disputing youths did not understand their children's yearnings. To their ears those quarrels were but the sound of running water, or seemed the clattering of storks migrating in the autumn.

These ceaseless disputes of the young men ended in this: that one day they too, dividing into two wings, took wing into the sky. The one wing turned northward, toward Russia, in search of the revolution of all mankind, and in

the persons first of Plekhanov and then of Lenin[7] found the Social-Democratic party, into which it melted away. And not one of them ever saw his own house and home again.(*) The second wing – at whose head went Isajan, at whose flanks Torgom and Aram, and the flock behind them – did not step outside the cares of Armenia, but turned southward and came down upon the frontiers of the Land, finding there the soldiery of the A.R.F. and melting into it. Of this last flock of Shushi, too, not one returned to his own house and home. All of them fell upon the soil of Armenia – for its freedom, and for the federation of free nations.

And these two groups remained adversaries of one another to the very end, and died as adversaries, though some of them

(*) These men played a great part to Russia's advantage, yet did not earn even so much gratitude as the old generals of Armenian blood.

were own brothers – as were Kosti and Sako Hambardzumian.

How did it come about that these seeking youths of Shushi – who were kindled with a spirit national and socialist alike – having lost their accustomed road to Persia and Vaspurakan, fell into the district of Kars, with the vow of crossing thence into Taron? I do not think this happened of itself. Nor do I believe it happened by the invitation of Kars or of the Land. I believe that over the city of Shushi there had passed the shadows either of Rostom or of Hamo (Ohanjanian). And they fell into Kars in just the way that I had fallen there – to "get accustomed."

The hardships of Kars and of the Land wearied the wings of some of those cranes and neutralized them – as, for example, Farsadan; but the others – such as Sergei (Aram), Isajan, Tuman, Menak, Nikol (Ishkhan) – drove such a plow through the life of Kars and of the Land that, though half a century has passed, their furrows are not effaced, and along their track the Armenian people still sows, to build its political future.

Thus they reasoned:–

– Let the believer love the church. We are not against that, and we are bound to defend that institution, since the believers are of our own nation. But that does not mean that the nation must go in under the skirts of the cowled ones and put its bridle into their hands. The shepherd on the mountain is more of a

believer than the *vardapet* [the celibate doctor-priest] who reads the Gospel every day. The soldier who by force of duty holds the bayonet in his hand and kills us is a more warm-hearted Armenian than the Beniks (a *vardapet*), the Mesrops (a bishop) who has the fame of a scholar, or the Ashghians, who are reckoned heads of the church. These are functionaries and celebrants of rites, who are wherever much bread or much honor is to be looked for. The Russian can give more, and they are with him, and will be. The helm must be entrusted to the people's representation alone.

The people of Kars listened to these thoughts with astonishment and reserve. But they became unreserved when the seizure of the church estates took place – when these "godless ones" made a rampart of their own breasts against the bayonets of the Cossacks, and compelled the clergy to walk with them.

A novelty too was the attitude of these young men toward the bourgeois class, which was already on the point of reaching the summit of its power, and had shown its national countenance in Shushi, Baku, and Tiflis.

– True, – they would say, – in your districts there are no classes; every man is a peasant, or something like one. Zitoghtsev in Alexandropol, Baghdasarov in Kars are no class: they have no claws to their fingers, no teeth in their mouths. They cannot rid their surnames of the Russian tails "-ov" or "-ev." But know that the danger is there. Such men, one day, will without fail be a scourge on your heads. With us too it was so. Our Vardan and Nikol used to reason as you do. They would say: "Those fellows love money – let them go and earn it; perhaps they may come in useful for something." But that opinion of theirs was wrong. We did not understand that from a snake's egg a snake comes forth; they did not crush the eggs, and now are repentant. It is late already. They have formed a class, taken the clergy and the conservatives under their wing, doled out to each a dog's "whelp's share," and now count themselves the representatives of their own nation. You say: "We have two enemies – the Turkish and the Russian tyrannies." Well. But it is these men who strengthen those tyrannies. Are they our enemies or not? They are our enemies, even if they are reckoned Armenians. Do you drink wine along with yogurt? Of course not. Do you yoke a cart from its two opposite ends? Of

course not. The cart will stay where it is. In our committees there is no place for men whose god is gold.

Thus loud and bold they would speak; and in the end Yeruand Hamamchian in Kars and Vahan Jallatian in Alexandropol were neutralized and driven from the field.

The newcomers had their own peculiar way of thinking about the work in the Land as well.

– Beyond doubt, Sasun must be strengthened. But it grows strong by quality and by arms, and not by the number of those who offer themselves up – of whom it is rich already. Perfected arms must be sent not piecemeal, at many hazards, but in bulk, at a single hazard.

These views were a fundamental review of the way of working followed until then.

– There, in the Land, – they went on, – the brave and the fighter are many, but arms and trained forces are few. Let the physician and the man of learning, then, go into the Land – the officer and the under-officer, and the specialist in the craft of war.

So said Sergei and those who had come with him, out of their sound instincts; but not one of them, as yet, met those qualifications himself. For that reason Isajan was eager to become a specialist in bombing quickly – and to the preparations for it, sadly, he would fall victim.

Of the youths of Shushi who had come to Kars I knew not one beforehand. Of them all, only Tuman had I met – under very strange circumstances, in 1901 or 1902.

Every kind of troops of Transcaucasia and the Caucasus had gone out to maneuvers along the Turkish frontier. We did not know whether there was to be war, or whether it was a mere maneuver for all the armies. The whole stretch from Alexandropol to Kars, Sarıkamış, and Ardahan was covered with white tents. Horses neighed, wagons in an endless file moved sluggishly along, and soldiers swarmed like honey-flies. And the Polygon had become a place where, had you dropped a needle, it would not have reached the

ground. On every mouth was "the viceroy is coming," and when he should arrive from Tiflis, everything would begin. What was to begin – that was not for us to know. The great ones alone knew.

Under one tent we were five men. We had already grown cocky, for within ten days at most we were to become "officers of the victorious Russian army." Only a formal examination remained, which we were sure to pass with success.

Of us all, only Katz was one who did not look for that happy day, though he was the ablest and best-prepared of us all. Katz's father was a diamond-merchant, whose shop stood on Golovinsky Prospekt in Tiflis, near the viceroy's palace. Among his customers were the viceroy and, above all, his duchess. Our friend Katz wore on his breast the graduation medal of the University of Odessa. He had lately returned from Berlin, where he had also finished the university there. In a word, he was the most learned of us all, the richest and the most presentable. Beyond question he had passed the officer's examination more successfully than any of us. But he could receive only a single stripe of common soldiery and could not become an officer, because he was by origin a Jew. This he knew; and, already reckoning us officers and himself a private, he bought us every kind of drink and food at his own expense, so that we might make him feel his origin at least the less. This eagle-nosed, tall Katz was a likable man, for all his persecuted origin.

The second was a Georgian, but what he was he would not let you know. He was proud of his title of *knyaz* (prince), and was called Knyaz Tumanov. He was proud that near the corner of Veriysky Spusk and Mikhailovsky Prospekt he had his own theater, and in Mtskheta a splendid palace besides. He waited impatiently for the day when he would deck himself out in the gilded officer's epaulettes he had already bought, and with the jurist's badge that was much prized among the military. He might become a "prosecutor" without exposing himself to the perils of the front. He would be an officer without the tedium of fighting. He was an honest man, and exceedingly hospitable.

The third was a pure-blooded Russian – more exactly, a Ukrainian, by the name of Rudenko. He was under the influence of the "Black Hundreds."[8] He too had a university graduation badge, and already pictured himself

commander of the invincible Russian army. Though his interest lay elsewhere, he wished to be entertained again and again in Knyaz Tumanov's palace at Mtskheta; and with the "Zhid" (Jew) Katz he was forever talking of commercial affairs, and wanted to get the taste of the various drinks Katz set before him.

Of the remaining two, one was I, the other my seminary companion Artashes Sütjian. Though we had no university badges, we were sure that we too would soon wear the officer's epaulettes, however little our Russian ran as smoothly as theirs, and however unlike our dreams were to theirs.

I was a misfit among those officers-to-be. Artashes, at least, would come in useful for something. He played the violin well, Rudenko blew the horn well, and they kept us – and the officers of the neighboring tents – entertained.

When Rudenko and Artashes had brought their playing to a stop, Katz turned to us and said:

– Allow me today to invite you, that we may make a little merry in the company of a most agreeable officer. To him I owe a hospitality: last evening I was his guest.

Rudenko answered at once:

– Of course, of course…

Already he had a foretaste of Katz's costly drinks.

Artashes and I followed his lead, saying "of course, of course," without knowing who Katz's guest was to be.

Courteous Katz, turning to Prince Tumanov – who had not yet called out "of course, of course" – added:

– Perhaps it will be a great surprise for you. That agreeable officer is Tuman Tumanov – perhaps a kinsman of yours by blood, though he has named himself Tumaniants.

Prince Tumanov was intrigued, and said, "Please, please do."

Katz slipped out of the tent and in twenty minutes returned in the company of an officer.

The newcomer had a brand-new officer's uniform. At his side the sword swung. He was of middle height, his face a little pock-marked, his eyes smiling – more tender than the imperious and disdainful look proper to epauletted officers. He came up to all of us as to old acquaintances, and sat down at the head of the table without ceremony.

Prince Tumanov was taken by no surprise, since the newcomer was a man of common stock – not so much as a *melik* – whereas he himself was a prince, a Catholic, while the other was of the Illuminator's church.

– Gentlemen, gentlemen, allow me to say a few words, – said Rudenko, swelling up, the glass of cognac in his hand.

With difficulty, but at last, gravity prevailed.

– Here we are six men, – said he. – We have at least four religions, and two of them undefined. We have at least four mother tongues, and two men who have not even that. We have six origins, whose nature only our mothers know. And here we are – all these different men – gathered together as kinsmen, wearing one face, thanks to our one and great Fatherland, thanks to our empire and its invincible army. Let us drink the health of our glass; let us drink the health of that officer-corps which leads it. *Alaverdi* [the toast passes] to you, Sir Tuman.

Tuman, taken aback, had no way of avoiding it, since he was the only person there wearing the officer's epaulettes. He glanced at his watch. Rudenko's toast had told upon us all – above all upon Katz, who had turned a yellow morsel. We dreaded Tuman's answer, which might become a calamity beneath our roof.

– I, – said Tuman, – have but five minutes to spend with you; I have an appointment. Yes, Rudenko is right to be proud of this union of ours, which is knit the closer thanks to this rich table and these bottles – for which I thank you. You, the leaders of tomorrow's army – I drink your health, and I wish that you may feel yourselves the servants of the people, and not spare your lives for its happiness.

He begged their pardon and slipped out of the tent.

Rudenko, suddenly catching his meaning, cried out:

– Did you take his meaning? That ass of a Karabaghtsi is a nihilist. Woe to our army, that is to be led by such *armyashkas* [the Russian sneer for Armenians].

– We took his meaning, we took his meaning, – answered Prince Tumanov, beside himself. – It is men with tongues like yours who create nihilists; and those who root out those same nihilists are *armyashkas* like the Loris-Melikovs,[9] of whom you make your boast.

Thus the two Tumans wrecked our union, and we all fell apart, each to himself.

My first meeting with Tuman was under those circumstances – without our exchanging a word, without our knowing each other. But for me it became plain that we are the servants of the people, and nothing more.

Two or three years had passed, and we had lost track of each other.

Toward the end of 1903, Sergei said to me:

– Let us go to Torgom. He has come back from Sasun. He is off to the General Assembly.

When we met, I understood that Torgom was that same Tuman. He too, looking at me, said:

– Bless you, lad, we are old acquaintances. What became of your companions? Are you too among us? When I come back, find me, and we will go to Sasun together.

– I am not one bound for Sasun; I am bound for Van. Of my companions I have no news, but I am sure that, save for Rudenko, all of them, after your words, are disposed to be the servants of the people rather than of tyranny.

Tuman was pleased.

We had not much time to talk; he departed, and I never saw him again to the end of my days.

Torgom-Tuman, having given up his commission, had become a field-worker of Kars, and his fixed thought was the strengthening of Sasun. The ideas he had upheld were these:

— Insurrection, fighting, do not depend on consciousness alone, on self-sacrifice, on courage, on superiority of material; they are a craft and a science, which must be learned. Without this last, the rest are nothing. Without the first, this last too is worthless.

It was as a consequence of the deepening of these principles that he was able to gather about him men more experienced than himself, men of name and renown, and to organize the "Mrrik" [Whirlwind] band, some thirty horsemen. Into this band there entered under-officers and soldiers of the Russian army, as well as Artashes of Akhaltskha, who was killed afterward in the district of Tiflis; Nikol of Akhalkalak, who saw many trials and died; the soldier Grigor, who struck the blow in Alay-bek's face while himself lying wounded: "Dog, do not bind up my wounds; I want death. If you heal me, I will kill you."

In that band were also Baftar Arshak, who was afterward called Beri and won the martyr's crown in Persia; Beros Arshak, who was afterward christened Sepuh and became a general of Armenia; Turbakh of Kars, who became Tuman's standard-bearer; Grigor of Mok, Avetis of Mashad, the impartial Avo of Gümüşhane, Arkel, Murad of Sivas — all of whom became, one by one, historic figures — and others who did not pass unremarked.

All of them, under the leadership of Torgom-Tuman, reached Sasun unharmed and played their part in its struggle. And all this was accomplished thanks to Menak, who, by agreement with Torgom, had crossed unremarked into the Land and had determined the roads and the dangers for the "Mrrik" band.

Torgom, at Hrayr's insistence, entered the command staff of Sasun, but was constrained to go to the General Assembly and to return with fresh force, together with Vagharshak.

Menak (Yeghor Aratamian) was Torgom's comrade, and from Shushi had fallen into the furnace of Kars. He went by the road of Rostom and of Hrayr. His principle was: "Before you sow, first plow, and make the soil ready."

Menak I never saw. But of him I have heard from his intimate friends. They would say that he was an intellectual of positive bent and of a likable

countenance. Very close to him had been the poet Avetik Isahakian, who dedicated a poem to him as well.

This young man – having no special training, and not counting himself one to have soldiers or people to command under him – took upon himself the most responsible and the most dangerous work. He reasoned, and Sergei confirmed it, that in order to link up with Sasun and to bring forces through, one must first study the roads two or three hundred kilometers in length, fix the stages, prepare stores of supply at certain places, and determine the enemy's manner of movement. For the carrying-out of all this no arms were needed, nor anything else, but only sharp eyes and caution. And in disguise he crossed the districts of Basen and Khnus, as a peasant reached Sasun several times, and became a perfect *valad* [guide]. He gave his directions to the "Mrrik" band, and the band reached Sasun in safety.

One of Menak's feet was in Basen, the other in Kars and Alexandropol. In this thankless, yet most arduous work he was killed, while hastening to the aid of Nevruz's band.

The news of his death weighed doubly upon Sergei: first, because the march of the arms-running bands by way of Basen had failed; and second, because Menak – the young comrade of his hope and his faith – had been killed, and of Nikol (Ishkhan) too there was no word.

Isajan of Shushi, by the time I reached Kars, was already killed. And I never saw him at all. Kars was in mourning; it would remember him and the deeds he had done, and would often say: "Had Isajan been alive, the issue of that affair would have been otherwise."

Sergei, who was his intimate friend, could not remember him without feeling:

"Better that we had died and Isajan remained," he would say. "You cannot know what a loss we suffered. Had he been alive, our bands of Basen would have reached their place. Had he been alive, the case of Kars and of Sasun would have been otherwise. It was he who gave spirit to me and to my comrades."

Perhaps these estimations were the exaggerations of feeling that follow after the dead. But it must be reckoned beyond doubt that in Kars he had played a

great part and was an authority among the comrades who had come with him. One of his watchwords – which, as I later understood, was also the rule of conduct of Nikol Duman – was this: "When you fight against an unequal force, you must not fight with the ordinary and equal weapon. Choose a weapon that will take your adversary by surprise. And if you have not that weapon, you must invent it."

Isajan had set himself to the work of inventing that weapon in the city of Kars. He was making bombs. From the careless mixing of chlorate of potash and sugar the bombs had gone off, so I learned, and he and his comrades had been killed on the spot.

One of the comrades who had come with him was Vardan Donoyan, a man of Kars, who was the right arm of Hagop Chilingarian and one of the pillars of the work in Kars. The second was Poghos Poghosian, whom I had seen in the seminary of Echmiadzin as a student. That dreamy youth had withered while still a bud, before he had become a flower. The fourth was Hovhannes Nahikian, of whom they would say: "America too, besides money, gave its blood." The fifth and last victim was Sarkis of Rodosto.

Thus, from five different places, five young men in the flower of their youth fell victim to an experiment that might have been avoided, had but one among them been a specialist. Let this be a lesson – that mastery of knowledge is more necessary than will and than desire. Though now I understand that lesson, yet I myself made the same mistake in my time.

Sergei's comrades, who had come from Shushi, were being killed off one by one, or were departing for the Land. He himself was the one who sent them on their way, and that weighed upon him, because he had stayed behind and had not followed them.

The Central Committee of Kars would say to him:

"Kars too is the Land. 'The Land,' they say, and off they go – let them go, let them all go. But you are the field-worker here. Is it not work, then, to choose men, to make them ready, and to send them off to the Land? Is it fighting you want? Is it not fighting, then, to stand against the Russians, who would have us change our faith and follow the crooked cross? See – our churches, our

monasteries, are shut up; their estates are seized; and these onions [the Russians] would strangle us too."

Sergei, fallen into his element, was hard at work. It was as though the war of Byzantium and Ani, of the Illuminator's church and the Orthodox, had begun again. Catholic, Protestant, and Gregorian there was no longer; all the Armenians had become one person. The apothecary Kösseyan, who I think was a Catholic, had taken down under cover of night the Russian flag that flew over the fortress of Kars and had raised a black flag of mourning in its place. A dog had been killed – Kollo – and on its head the *kamilavka* of a Russian priest (the Russian priest's hat) had been drawn, and it was set on show on the bridge. In broad daylight the knives would be driven into the ribs of unmasked spies, who, like cut ears of grain, would roll noiselessly to the ground. When you heard the crack of a pistol, you knew that a Russian policeman was giving up his soul.

At daybreak, if you passed down the main street and saw before the door of the Russian governor an empty coffin, and on the coffin a letter nailed in a black border, you knew that within it was written in red ink: "You have taken everything, and deceived us. To snatch away, from those you have deceived, even the last consolation – the right to pray – is no great honor to you. If a stop is not put to it, let this coffin be a gift to you – and no jest."

In the inner national life there reigned an intense frame of mind of this sort, which may be summed up as follows:–

"Where is our Catholicos, whom we have made our Hayrik? Where are our bishops, our *vardapets*, our *ter-ters* [village priests], whose hands we kiss? It is war, it is struggle – let them come out to the work. If they feel themselves prisoners, let them transfer the See wherever they will, as was done before this – only, let them go without concession. If they are waiting for us to die, and mean to come like ravens to our burial, they are mistaken. Without their burying us, there is no dying for the Armenian people. If they are waiting to eat the wedding-feast – to sit at the head of it – they are mistaken; for at that time there will be no need of them either."

The struggle widened, reaching Gyumri, where "Paduali Vagho" and Totov Avetik (Isahakian) blew on the fire after the example of Kars and turned it to

flame, and the smoke reached the city of Tiflis. Men of great name, men who bore arms, came to say:—

— Hey, are you gone mad? You take the Russian flag down from the fortress, you hang up a flag of mourning, you clap a Russian cowl on the head of a dead dog, you kill off the loyal subjects of the state one by one. And if the order comes to the troops of those fortresses to put us, great and small, to the sword — what will your case be then?

Kars and Gyumri would answer:—

— Enough of their toying with our souls. We are not blind, and every day we see that two corps of troops, and more than a thousand cannon, are turned against us. We know our end — that we will live without honor. If you are Armenians, go to Tiflis and to Petersburg, and make all this understood on the spot, there. Here you have nothing to say.

It is well known that after this the whole Armenian people rose to its feet, that Echmiadzin too became the rear-guard, and that in the end the concession came from Russia's side, and the rights of the church were restored, with certain limitations.

They were days of half-victory, wedding days. The Central Committees of Kars and Alexandropol and their field-workers — Sergei, Nikol (Aghbalian), Vagho, Avo (Isahakian), Hagop (Chilingarian), and above all that Catholic Armenian whose very name I confuse, to my shame (Kösseyan?) — were absent from the tables of rejoicing. Whereas it was they who had begun the defiance and had brought the Armenian people together; it was they who had scorned the Russian cannon and troops and had brought on the wedding days of that time.

At the head of the *harissa* sat Khrimian Hayrik. According to their rank, the celibate clergy were ranged in order, and the guests invited from every province and county stood ready, their spoons at hand. Many of them, only a few days before, had drawn back from the public square, saying:

— What a calamity these madmen have brought down upon our heads!

Such men now smiled happily and had become the most talkative of all:

– I did thus, I did so; had I not shouted in the face of the *gubernator* (the governor), God is my witness, the thing would never have come off…

In that same style spoke the bishops of Echmiadzin:

– The concord of our brotherhood, the single will of the people, the wisdom of the beneficent government…

But Bishop Sukias, his white beard on his breast, his mouth full of water, listened dumbfounded and looked on in silence. It was the Hayrik of the Armenians who was speaking; he was no common vainglorious man – he knew what he was saying:

– Ah, see now, our nation is a strange and a faithful nation. Archbishop Sukias holds his peace, but he fell into hardship; at his age he grew weary. Our wondrous people had unharnessed the horses from the carriage and, harnessing themselves, came on foot from Erevan all the way here, in their thousands upon thousands. Well, this too will pass; I too went so, as far as Alexandropol. We give thanks to God, not many men were killed. They are not with us, nor are those who are absent. Whatever they be, they are my own true children. Let us say a *hogwots* [a requiem] for them.

Of the absent, some had been killed. They heard the requiem and slept in peace. Some were on a journey, with an escort, the glittering Cossack sabers their guard; they rotted away in the corners of Siberia. Among them was that Catholic too. But the greater part spent their gold, procured a false passport, and, like men come into a new world, went on with their lives.

In those days there had come from Shushi the short, wiry Ishkhan, who was Sergei's pupil. Ishkhan lent his strength to Sergei's undertakings – Sergei being an authority in his eyes – half in jest, half out of *tasib* [zealous loyalty].

– Sergei, now that it is all over, let me tell you something. It is not for nothing they say, "mountain and dale – the belly of the *ter-ter*." Was it worth our while, I wonder, to leave our own proper work and fall into the affairs of those *ter-ters*?

Sergei was astonished at Ishkhan's misgiving. Ishkhan began to give his explanations – which are of interest for understanding his future line of conduct.

– The struggle is reckoned ended, with our victory. But I do not reckon it ended. I think so because, even in the hot time of the struggle – noticing, perhaps, my want of enthusiasm – a *vardapet* and a *ter-ter* would ask me: "If we do not succeed in getting the estates back, how are our institutions to be maintained, how is our livelihood to be secured? Is it true, I wonder, that the government, after seizing the estates, has resolved to maintain all the Armenian institutions at its own expense, and to fix a salary for all the Armenian clergy according to their rank – for the Catholicos, as much as a viceroy; for a bishop, as much as a governor; and for a priest, as much as a *pristav* [a district police-captain]?" You should have seen how, behind those questions, they felt a contentment and a happiness…

At that moment Bznuni had come in, the government cap on his head, and Norhatian.

– Hey, who were those dog-and-son-of-a-dog clergymen? We fight for their sake, and they – look – what were they dreaming of? Traitors…

– The essential thing is not who those traitors were. One more, one fewer – it comes to the same reckoning. In my view the question is graver than the pinning-down of who is traitor and who is true. I am only a recruit; you are the leaders. But I too have an opinion. We began the fight from the wrong side, and the result we have won may fall into the water. For that reason I do not reckon the affair ended. First: we and the people rightly reckon all the national institutions, the riches, the rights handed down from our forefathers, to be the inheritance of the nation – taking in the ecclesiastical order too. And for its sake the nation rose to its feet as one man, and made as if to conquer. We are in self-deception. The lawful owner of that inheritance is not our people, but the Catholicos. But when there is no nationally-elected administration attached to the Catholicosate, but only the will of the churchmen – and they, moreover, firmly convinced that the nation is a milch cow and an ass to be ridden for their benefit – then the church, the spiritual power, is the personification of the nation. On the other hand, when the clerical order, having laid the Gospel of Jesus aside, has made a trade of

service in order to scrape together a bellyful of bread; when that order, without understanding the meaning of what it reads and does, repeats it as a mere rite – what do you look for from these wretched, benighted creatures? Sergei, let me turn back upon you your own under-the-stone words. You used to say: "For the dead man who lies in the ground, call no *ter-ter*; when he asks for money, do not let him read the Gospel. Read the Gospel yourself, and bury your own dead. He who reads the Gospel only after taking your money, and preaches with tears in his eyes – believe him not at all: he means to send your dead man to hell. Give money again, that he may stanch his tears." And it is to this same order that you would entrust our national rights, won at so many perils. Put it out of your sight – else they will either sell it or squander it. Keep your fist in your pocket: without fail they will prefer the *gubernator*'s salary that the Russian has promised.

Sergei found his pupil's rebellion bitter. "You have run on too long; give you the face and you want the lining too," he said, seeking to silence him. But Norhatian, who had seen Ishkhan but had not spoken with him, said in astonishment:

– Why do you not let this lad finish what he has to say? I thought this whelp was not fit to be so much as a *haiduk* [irregular] soldier. But it turns out he is the shrewdest man of all. Where did you get your schooling?

– At the spring of Bekh, – Ishkhan answered, with wicked eyes.

– The lad speaks the truth. Not two days have passed since they were fouling their *shalvars* for fear. Now that they get a telegram from Petersburg, from Tiflis, that all is going well and there is nothing to dread, every dog and cur of them is gathered at Echmiadzin eating the *harissa*, with sugar on top of it – while we here, crept into hole after hole, are wondering to which corner of Siberia we will be driven. The lad speaks the truth.

Sergei was storming within, but outwardly feigned calm. He exclaimed, offended:

– One would think you had made some great discovery. It was in full awareness of all this that we took the initiative. Had even a single spoon been put into your hand, you would not talk so. Once we have laid the bear low, to tan its hide is no hard matter. Better let us think about our own work.

In those days I was absent from the Caucasus. When, immediately after these events and the battle of Basen, I went to Kars, Sergei – to acquaint me with the characters of the dead and of those left alive – recounted to me the conversation set down above. And Norhatian sweetened it with spice.

Afterward, when I saw Ishkhan at his work, I saw how faithful to the life were the things that had been told me. Ishkhan went, in consistent fashion, along that road which Sergei had marked in his comrade-pupil – the road that would lead to the purge of Aghtamar.[10]

The songs and airs composed by the *ashugh* Fahrat had magnetized our popular masses. "With Gilded *Bashliks*," "There Was No Moon," "Fight, Lads," and songs of that kind – which are sung to this day, but with a yawn – in those days drove the popular masses toward war. And from every quarter, of their own accord, candidates for the fight set out toward the Land – meaning, as such, the Armenia that lay in the hands of the Turks.

The candidates were many. One might have formed whole armies. But neither the political nor the material means allowed of doing so. Only the tried men were chosen – those versed in the military art, the schooled, the picked – and they were sent to places near the frontier: Basen, Takht. Among them was Ishkhan of Shushi (Nikol), who, though short and thin, was a hardy and healthy young man. He had entered Nevruz's[11] infantry company as a common soldier.

A general and mistaken conviction has taken hold concerning the aims of Nevruz's infantry and Khan's[12] cavalry bands. They were not formed for frontier raids or for demonstrative aims of vengeance, like the Khanasor Expedition[13] or, later, the Porun Mosuni expeditions. The aims of the two united bands of Nevruz and Khan had been fixed precisely as follows:–

a) To provision the two bands abundantly (their combined number reached 150), and to convey that store of supply to Sasun for its needs.

b) To fill the bands with men who, on reaching the Land, could become local military leaders, and to send the rest back – if they were only bearers of arms.

The fully-equipped bands set out – seemingly without having settled what they should do if the road of some 250 kilometers before them were held by the enemy. Stay and fight to the end, or fall back? That was left to the decision of Nevruz and Khan.

This undertaking was the first and last of the very largest undertakings of the A.R.F. with a view to bringing a tangible force into the Land. Before it, beginning in the 1890s, numerous small *zinatar* bands of five to ten men had crossed into the Land. From Russian Armenia they went by way of Alashkert or Basen straight into Taron, Sasun, or Akhlat. Those small bands, on the perilous roads two or three hundred kilometers long, were often marked by troops and, still more, by Kurdish tribes; they were forced into battle, spent in the fighting the war-materiel they carried, and some were annihilated – like Arabo's band – while others, reaching a safe place, had so far depleted the munitions they carried that, as the saying goes, "there was not enough left even to blacken an eye with kohl" for the needs of the Land.

To forestall these disadvantages, it had several times been attempted to send bands of thirty to fifty men. Their advantage was that the Kurds along the road did not dare to cut off their path without the support of troops, and that such bands could bring through a tangible quantity of war-materiel. But the defect of these bands was that they were inevitably marked by frontier-guards, shepherds, and Kurdish tribes, who followed them and gave word to the troops. And the unequal battle became inevitable.

The most arduous of these battles, the longest, the bloodiest and the most brilliant, must be reckoned the battle waged at Chartar, which is known by the names of Khatavin, Jragats, and others, and which to this day the Armenians and the Kurds sing under the names "Arakel, Mushegh," "Khatavin," "Torune, vay Lmbne," and others.

The road of some 200 kilometers, from Alashkert to Nemrut – fighting by day, in the evening screening the road against the enemies who barred their way, by night advancing under fire and by day sitting still and fighting the whole day long, and at Khatavin falling into burning scrub – on the sixth day the remnant of the band reaches Nemrut, having spent all the war-materiel it carried and lost the greater part of its members.

Heroic though that band's battles were, they had not reached their goal. Of such large bands an exception had been Tuman's cavalry band, which had reached Sasun alive and whole and with its entire store of supply.

The aim of Nevruz and Khan's *zinatar* bands of 150 was the same as Tuman's and as Chartar's, only more perfected, and five times greater in number. But a bitterer fate was allotted to them than to the heroes of Khatavin.

Assuredly the preparation and the movements of so large a band along the frontier could not remain unnoticed by the Russians. The Russian authorities would at the least form their conjectures. Nor did it remain unnoticed by the Turks, who have always kept their spies in the places near the frontier. Besides, in those years the Russo-Turkish friendship was close, and the antipathy of the two toward the Armenians was, moreover, a common one; they could pass their observations to one another. If these are conjectures, it is no conjecture that the Russian forces had been strengthened along the frontier, while the Turkish forces had been drawn forward from Erzurum and massed at Hasan-Ghala, Köprü-Köy, and their surroundings – which was verified by later reckoning.

Nevruz's and Khan's bands cross the Russo-Turkish frontier without incident, and unhindered reach the triangle of Dali-Baba, Gomadzor, and Yudveran, some twenty kilometers deep from the border. And the battle begins that had begun in the morning. Those who take part in this battle are the frontier-guard troops, not the rabble; the rabble is only a spectator. On the one side, the regular troops; on the other, the two *haiduk* bands made up of 150 men. On the one side, numbers and three kinds of arms (reckoned at 8 battalions, 4 cannon, and 300 sabers); on the other, the resolve to die dear, or to reach the goal.

The enemy, methodically, stubbornly, and by plan, squanders his fire and presses the *fedayis* hard; but they keep their cold blood, and, fitted to their position, hold out and check the enemy's assaults.

The sun has broken noon. The Turkish troops have grown angry; they press on and fling some 200 horsemen at a gallop, to drive those "jan-bezars" [the life-weary ones] out of the hollows of the ground. The horsemen reach our *haiduks*' positions, but do not succeed in stirring them from their place. Fire against fire, bayonet against bayonet – and now, from under the hill, Khan's

horsemen come piling into the middle of them, and the Turkish troops go flying *slapa* toward their own – faster than a bullet. The Armenian horsemen prudently withdraw to their places.

Our lads' positions had turned into a garden caught in hail. Horse and man, foe and friend, were strewn on the ground like windfallen pears, tangled together. Some gazed at the sky, silent, with glassy eyes; some poured their blood onto the ground and moaned and pleaded: "For the love of God, one drop of water – water"…

Not an hour had passed before a new affliction. Four cannon roar and plow up the ground around the positions Nevruz holds. Shek Hamo of Javakh – who had earned three stripes in the Russian army, and on whom the band's eye now rested – watches the movements and says:

– Lads, a *matagh* for your dear lives, don't fret at all, give no answer, let the fire die down. You have this task before you. Whoever's position is not deep in the ground, let him deepen it with claw and bayonet. Whoever's is deep, let him not put his head out, let him not stir; if he is hungry, let him eat; if he is drowsy, let him sleep; if he is weary, let him smoke and take his rest. I will keep watch over you. When I blow the whistle, then our work will open.

For two hours the cannon plow the positions, throw the earth up and cover the lads like a shroud. But the lads keep silent, though they breathe. The enemy fancies a graveyard before him and sounds his bugles. The enemy, formed into three dense columns, rifles on shoulders, moves forward.

"Why does he not form a skirmish-line? He must think we are dead, or he trusts too much in the power of his cannon," our men think; "but like it or not, the cannon will fall silent once the infantry comes within 100 or 200 paces of our positions. That is when we show ourselves, and with a volley thin out their ranks."

Shek Hamo, lowering his voice, calls to them all:

– A *matagh* for your souls, our luck is working. The coward is the one who fires from afar, without an order. Lower your *pritsel* [the sight], and when the signal is given at 200 paces, fire.

The enemy comes and comes. He is at 2,000 paces; 1,000 is passed; he comes faster and is already at 500 paces, and the lads grow tense. "Have patience a

little longer" – and now the cannon are silent and the volleys have begun, and the dense columns of the troops are mown like fields of wheat. As though they had forgotten what they came to do, some run forward and drop, spent, at the foot of the positions. Some sit where they are and fire without cease. Some go back and are hunted anew. And thus, after an hour or two of the death-struggle, the bugles blow, and under the lads' bullets they draw back, just as the sun was living its last moment, sinking behind the mountains.

Their joy was great. Some say: "Let us pursue them and seize the cannon." But Shek Hamo, who understood the business, says: "No – for today we must sing a song together. Sing, all of you"…

"Come, strike, strike!… Come, *lekhsn, lekhsn, bra mrni lekhsn*… Arakel and Mushegh came down from the mountains, a ruined mill became their lodging"…

They sing; they take their reckoning – who is killed, who wounded and unable to move. And that day one in four is killed and three are alive and whole, and their store of supply remains at the same quantity, if the supply of the slain and of a few wounded is divided among the living. That is the operation that is carried out.

The most piteous is not the case of those who, taking cannon- and rifle-balls, or mutilated by bayonet and saber, have been killed and are finished. The most cruel is not that, the battle not yet ended and his strength spent, a man already tastes the uncertainty of tomorrow's fight. The most tragic of all, the hardest, for the Armenian *fedayi*, is to have fallen wounded.

On this let us give the word to Garegin the Tall, from the Erzurum districts, who had come safe out of the Basen battle, and whom I questioned closely about his escape and the fight.

– What wretched questions you ask. The dream you saw last night – do you remember it today? Why, five months have passed since that fight. It came and went like a pain in the elbow; I remember nothing. Only one thing I can never forget – said Garegin, and his eyes filled.

– Well then, tell me that one thing you remember, I asked of him.

– Seto, the son of Srgey of our village – you do not know him. He was a good comrade of mine. We fought in the same squad of ten. I understood that he

had been hit. I loved him dearly, more than my own brother. "Garegin, Garegin," he called; I made as if I did not hear, I did not look his way. I was afraid. Evening came. We had broken the troops and were singing "Arakel-Mushegh," making merry. All at once that godless Shek Hamo stood over me. "Seto has been hit in both legs and in the chest. You will go and take Seto's last word. This water-flask, this *halva*, and this little purse with 20 *manats* in it – you will set beneath his head. His cartridge-belt and rifle you will take. From me and from yourself you will kiss him on the mouth. Do not tarry long; a little later we take the road." My legs trembled, my eyes darkened. Seto turned his head to me, saw me, did not speak, looked into my eyes; my heart crumbled. The flask, the *halva*, the purse that Shek Hamo had given, I set beneath his head, and added what I myself had to them. He asked where Shek Hamo was. I lied; I said he was wounded, that he would stay here, that he had sent these things to you, that they might come in need. I said: "Seto, I must go, I am one bound on the road. Your rifle and cartridges will come in need to me." He did not object, and said: "Garegin – so, then, we are to go by roads that part from one another?" My heart could bear no more. I wanted to flee, but he stopped me and said: "My soul tells me that you will come through safe and sound. Tell my bride that if she has a child by me, let her find my mother and live with her. You will see my mother, and you will tell her that if my bride has no child by me, let her release my bride freely – let her keep her without mourning, find her a bridegroom with her own hand, and make her her own daughter." I kissed him, but I wept along the road. You will forgive me. When I remember this, I become a woman, and my weeping comes.

Seto had not eaten the *halva*; but he had drunk the water. To this day his end remains unknown.

Let us return to the thread of our story.

With what intent Shek Hamo had struck up "Come, strike!... Come, *lekhn, lekhn*" – the song of the ruined mill of Khatavin, which goes on to this day, decade upon decade – no man can say. Perhaps it was simply the chance choice of a song; but perhaps, too, a foreboding of tomorrow's menace. The answer to that Shek Hamo alone could have given, who by the next day would himself be no more. But that song, to all appearance, had worked

powerfully on Nevruz. He checks the war-materiel – gathering both from those fallen on our side and from what was taken from the enemy – and sees that it is so much that it is hard to carry all of it off with the forces at hand. Though one in four had been killed or fallen out of the ranks, yet the remnant was twice the number of the fighters of Khatavin. And he exclaims:

– It is good, very good; in today's fight we have laid low of the enemy – you say a thousand, I, to be modest, say two hundred. Our force is still fully in its place, several times more than the other bands that were sent out on the road. So then, make ready to continue our road. Change the song – strike up "Lazi Shorer" [Laz Clothes].

There was no objection from the *fedayis*, roused to *tasib*. Only Shek Hamo went on muttering under his breath: "A ruined mill, dear soul, became the lodging"…

Nevruz was right: had he turned back, he knew what awaited him – from those who make sense of a woman's kerchiefs, and above all from those who do not. He could not turn back. But on the other hand, he did not reckon that a man's body has its limit of endurance, that this was still but the beginning of the road, and that 250 kilometers of road still lay before him. And so, by ceaseless fighting, it was an impossible thing to tear open the enemy's line – the more so as the enemy was abundant in number and, having taken up their trail, would come upon them at every moment with fresh forces.

Perhaps Khan, with his horsemen, could have thrown the enemy off his trail; but he too was bound by the infantry, which he had no right to abandon.

The band, divided into parts, when darkness falls, walks forward silent as the grave. Menak is not there, nor the experienced among the road-guides who had been with him; the day before they had been killed. There are guides who, though they reckon themselves all-knowing, have lost their own way. They turn the road, wind to the right, twice cross the cold water of the Arax, and only toward daylight do they understand that they are still in the same places as yesterday. Nevruz's infantry, soaked, weary, drowsy, were very, very far from the place appointed with Khan.

Khan, long since arrived with his horsemen, the field-glass to his eye, was waiting for the infantry.

— There, our lads have appeared, — he exclaims, rejoicing.

But a moment later, when in the dawn he marks that the mountains are held by a multitude of men, he understands that these are not Nevruz's lads, but soldiers who have surrounded them.

— Lads, horses ready, — he calls; but he watches the troops and does not stir from his place.

He might have withdrawn, avoided the fight, and saved — at least — the greater part of the band. Infantry, ten times slower than he, how were they to surround a retreating cavalry?

— If it is that same cavalry, — he says, — which we saw yesterday, it can do us no harm today, the more so as today we are in the mountains of Dali-Baba.

In truth, to his south were the mountains of Kaliazi, from which in ten hours he could come down to Haramik of Khnus. The road before him was open. His horsemen of Khnus were drunk with that prospect. At his back was the saddle of Tahar, from which the road runs to Alashkert — a single *manzil* [a day's stage] for horses. To his north was the Russo-Turkish frontier, barely two hours' road to cross toward Kaghzvan, or Russian Basen.

The escape of Khan's band was beyond doubt, had he willed it. But he had stayed rooted like a statue, while the enemy troops drew near, bringing certain death. And then, all at once, Khan turns to the impatient comrades gathered about him and says, in Turkish:—

— Let them say that Khan was so good-for-nothing that, with a horse beneath him, he died a dog's death of some lameness. But let them not say that, to save his own dry skull, he left his comrades and made off. Draw up the horses and tie them one to another. We are not going anywhere from this place.

To all appearance, the Turkish troops, after the hot fight of the day before, had resolved to keep our bands surrounded from a distance. They had marked Khan's band and thought that this was the whole of it. Nevruz's band, meanwhile, being noiseless and having lost its way, had remained unnoticed until eleven o'clock, before noon.

He who a whole night through has fallen ceaselessly over mountain and dale, then fought the whole day, then again continued the road, knows very well

that even death is nothing anymore. The one aim is to sleep, which comes over him like a master.

It was in this state that Nevruz's soldiers were when the order comes to sit down. That was as good as sleep – which was mighty as death.

– Who can give his word to keep watch without sleeping? – ask the leaders of ten.

Some are already asleep; some hear, but have not the power to take in the question. Only nine men answer. Among them was little Nikol, the future Ishkhan.

These nine men, with Shek Hamo added over them as leader, take their orders from the leader:– Only three are to stay awake one hour, and after each hour the other three are to relieve them. They are not to stand, not to walk, not to speak aloud. They must see that all the rest stay asleep and raise no noise. Each hour they must wake him and, after making their report, change their turn.

In the first hour of daybreak, the first watch wakes Shek Hamo and says:

– Near us we heard no sound and saw no movement. Only there, on the flanks of that far mountain's slope, troops, it seems, are passing on and on.

Shek Hamo rubs his eyes, thinks a little, and says:

– By that side they will not come upon us; they are going elsewhere. Change over, you, and sleep.

And he too falls asleep.

An hour later, when the sun had already grown warm, the second watch wakes Shek Hamo and says:

– Near us we heard no sound and saw no movement. Only there, from those far places, troops go on endlessly and endlessly. We do not know where they are going.

Shek Hamo rubs his eyes and says:

– Well and good. Let them go where they will. Change over and sleep.

And he too falls asleep.

In the third hour Shek Hamo hears the same report, but with one addition:

– It seems as though from afar, from under the ground, sounds of battle come, *zalb* upon *zalb* [volley upon volley].

Shek Hamo rubs his eyes and says:

– What business has a battle under the ground? You are weary; your ears are ringing. Change over, sleep, and when the watch hears that ringing, let them wake me.

Before the fourth hour was out, little Nikol wakes Shek Hamo:

– Up, up, hear the ringing. Set your ear against the rock.

Shek Hamo rubs his eyes, yawns, strains his ears, but hears nothing. He sets his ears against the rock, and hears the throb, throb, and the hum of a samovar coming to the boil.

– What else did you see? – he asks.

– From among those rocks opposite, six horsemen came, looked our way, and, dividing into two parties, drove their horses off in two directions and vanished.

– Eh, did they see us? – asks Shek Hamo.

– Unless the field-glass on their eyes was blind, they saw us for certain, – Nikol answers.

– They saw us, they saw us. Today we will not be idle. Sleep no more, – and, troubled, he rises from his place. He lights two cigarettes and wakes Nevruz.

– Get up, smoke a cigarette. The day has come to noon.

And as Nevruz lights his cigarette, Shek Hamo gives his report.

– Khan is in a fight somewhere – I do not know where. We have been seen, and soon the fight will be upon us. Shall I wake the band?

Before noon it was the second day's battle upon Nevruz's band. And at the break of morning, upon Khan's horse-band, that had willingly turned infantry.

What episodes passed on that second day, no one can say for certain. In the course of that day's – and perhaps the following day's – partial fighting, all

the leaders were killed. To have a notion of the general state of things is conjecture. Four or five men had fallen prisoner in a wounded condition. But they had been taken prisoner after the first day's fight. Once their wounds were healed, the survivors had been carried off to the prison of Erzurum. They were four men: Nikol of Javakh, Melkon of Gandzak, Gelasim of Karabagh, and Usul Khecho of Akhaltskha. One of them, Nikol, took part later in the volunteer army. They were as ignorant as we of the end of their bands.

Of the second day's battles the escaped men gave limited information, and made allusion only to the third day's death-agony struggle. They had cast themselves over to the other side of the Russian frontier. Their number too was limited – barely ten or twelve men, all of them from Nevruz's infantry and not one, I think, from Khan's horsemen.

These dozen or so escaped men were not cowards, nor forsakers of their leaders and their band, nor men who had saved their own skins. Their leaders had been killed, the band cut to pieces; they had been left without orders, and, as fortune would have it, wounded or whole, singly and alone, with no word of one another, they had fallen – *kyor kyoruni* [blindly, at random] – onto the Russian frontier.

They were of one voice on one thing – though they had no word of their separation from one another:

– We, they would say, did not know exactly where we were. Above, far off, there was fighting upon Khan; below, there was fighting upon our band. A stern order came to us to sit fast in the place we held, never to leave open the ground and the rock we held until each of us should have laid ten low, and only at night to await a new order. Night came; all had been killed. I found myself alone, took some direction, and came out here.

They soon proved that what they said was true. Of those ten or twelve men, I came to know Minas of Saron a few months after his escape. He had one longing – to go into the Land and take vengeance for his comrades. I came to know too Mikayel of the Erzurum district (I think) and Garegin, who, having left Seto's testament unfulfilled, wished to enter the fight anew. And so also Vardan of Aruarinj.

Of these acquaintances of mine, Minas entered Gayl Vahan's band in 1904 and was killed in the battles of Khorun and Mosuni. Garegin and Mikayel entered Tuman's second band and were killed by the Russians. Vardan enlisted in the cavalry regiment of Kaytsak Vagharshak and, though he was the only one to come out alive from the battle of Zivin, yet died in another fight. I am sure that the other escaped men, too, went by that same bloody road.

These recollections are proof of two things that must not be forgotten. First, that the vow to be martyred is mightier than the fear of death or the love of life. Nevruz's and Khan's bands had that vow, and for its sake all of them were martyred. Second, that it is a false opinion which holds that he who has tasted death and the bitterness of battle no longer wishes to meet with them. On the contrary, he who has tasted the savor of battle and of death wishes to taste it again and again – if his vow has not died within him.

And that is why not one man of Khan's and Nevruz's bands is left alive; all of them have fallen in battle.

Among the exceptional survivors – and afterward among the martyred – was Nikol of Shushi, Sergei's pupil-comrade, the Ishkhan of Lernapar. Here is what Margar of Mkhcho would recount, who had gone to the frontier-head to gather news and collect the remnant of the band:–

– I was at Stahan. In despair, in the morning I meant to go back to Kars. Before the dawn had broken, they woke me. They said a Turk, a Russian, or an Armenian had been taken prisoner near the village, and that he was on horseback too. I said: "Bring him, let me get a look" (that is, let me see). I look and look – I cannot know him. He looks at me and gives my name. How was I to know he was no whelp of a Turk? On his head a greasy Turkish fez, on his back a bloody *askari* [soldier's] jacket, got up like a *chamchakhatun* [a bedraggled figure], ragged, nothing like our strapping lads. And beneath him, into the bargain, a fiery ambling horse that ill became him. Come now – and try not to suspect he was a spy or of some other race!

– Now, tell me straight, who are you, where do you come from? – I asked.

– Who I am, Sergei knows. If he is alive, ask him, – he answered. I was in Nevruz's band. After two days of fighting, when there was no longer any man left alive around me, at night – trusting to luck – I took a road, and here I am.

He wished to cut it short; I asked:

– My dear, tell it properly: who is alive, who is killed, how many of the enemy are killed, whose is that horse, where did you get that *askari* dress of yours? Speak, my dear.

Nikol looked at me as at an enemy, but gave a dry, curt answer:

– You wish to learn who I am. Do you know Sergei? He is not dead, I think. You were standing at his side that evening when you came to send us off into the Land. Go, and learn from him who I am.

Margar of Mkhcho seized his fair beard, opened his eyes wide, and cried out in astonishment:

– May my eyes go blind! With Ezo (Menak) he often came to our shop, and was very fond of raisins and *lablabu* [roasted chickpeas]. Woe, may I go blind – how had he so changed?

Margar, left ashamed, had wished to draw near and kiss him, but before Nikol's wicked eyes he had sat back in his place. And Nikol-Ishkhan had gone on giving his answers, as though he sat before a prosecutor.

– That evening, when we parted from you, we entered the Turkish frontier. Whether they saw us or not – I was a common soldier, I know nothing. We walked and walked, and the lads said: "We have come to the marches of the Armenian villages." The order came to us to take up positions and sit down. So we did, and we waited for the dawn.

"At dawn Ezo (Menak) joined our band with several armed villagers. He came to my position, and for the last time we kissed. If only he had not come – that same day he was killed, together with those who had come with him.

"The sun rose, the battle began, and went on the whole day. Many of us were killed. Of the enemy, more were killed. The battle ceased when the sun went down.

"At night we became two parts and took the road. Our part lost the way and did not reach the other part. Twice we crossed the river and fell exhausted.

When it had grown light, we rested an hour or two, and a fight began upon us. We had an order not to stir from the spot, to cling to the last to the ground we held, until we should hear the sound of the whistle. We fought. Evening came; no whistle-sound came – I think no man was left alive to whistle. I remained alone, and, thinking how to shift for myself, I reached this place.

When he reckoned his tale finished, Margar of Mkhcho pressed him further:–

– Welcome to you; now tell a little more of the fight – who is alive, who dead? How did you come through?

– A fight it was, to be sure. They came on, and we struck. They struck, and we were killed. The lads of our position were all struck down. I stayed alive, thanks to two great rocks between which I had crept. Before us, too, were Shek Hamo and his lads. They stayed alive longer; it was near evening, and we were still fighting. But at the last assault, I saw that they were all killed, and the Turks took their positions. The other positions were far off, and, one by one, still answered. When the sun went down, all fell silent.

– And afterward, how were you saved?

– When they took our positions and those alongside, they seemed to have forgotten me. Two soldiers came my way. I took aim; one fell, the other vanished. I felt that someone was on the rock behind me. I turned, just as the *khshtik* [blade] was about to enter my back. I do not know how, but my *napan* [dagger] came out. I struck, and he toppled onto me and gave up his soul before my feet. It came into my head: since our men are gone and our positions are filled with troops, let me turn myself into a soldier. I stripped off my clothes and put on a slain man's jacket and fez, exchanged my rifle for his, and came out of my place. I went among the corpses. Our men and theirs were mingled together. I reached a mound. A horseman called to me: "My son, come this way." There was no going back. I came up. He said something, I did not understand, and by way of answer I struck him with my pistol and in one motion sprang onto the horse. They loosed their bullets after me, but I got away. Night had come. I drove the horse without looking right or left, only toward the northeast. I crossed the mountains and did not know where I had come. And now here I am, questioned like a prisoner, as though I had come out of the midst of the Turks.

With tears in his eyes Margar says to Nikol:

– No, my soul, our hearts ache for you and for the lads. We wish to have news. Our hearts rejoice at the enemy's losses. We wish to have news. Do not take us for Turks.

– How should I not take you so? You see my state. It is three or four days since my eyes have closed, since anything has entered my belly; and you demand a reckoning of me, as of a spy – as though I had had nothing to do but sit and keep the count of the Turkish and Armenian dead. You have come and are raking at my heart, to make me remember our fallen and the enemy's…

After his escape Nikol was sound in body, but sick in soul. For a week or two he slept without cease – ate and slept, stared fixed at the ceiling, and wished to be alone and to speak not at all, even were it Sergei who would speak with him.

The cause of Ishkhan's spiritual torments was not only the heavy impressions of the battle, the annihilation of his comrades, the sight of the enemy's corpses, and other harrowing effects. His soul was shattered, and he had lost his faith in the way of working that had been followed. In his silence he sought ways out – to pursue the goal by other roads. Before fifteen days had passed, he had said to Sergei:–

– We say, and we go, that one must be martyred for the Fatherland. Here, some 150 of us went, and within a few days we were martyred. Save for a few, all of them fell with honor. But is it the being martyred that matters, or the reaching of the goal?

"Seven times our number of wretched soldiers lay strewn as corpses about us. Around us it was like a forest hewn down without mercy. Men had fallen in sheaves. I am ashamed to say that we did the slaughtering. We did not set out on the road to slaughter, but to reach a place, or to conquer. Neither the one came about nor the other, and we too were slaughtered. This must be taken into account.

"The matter must be looked at from the other side too. I do not say that we will abandon our aims, or that reaching them is impossible. But the trial has shown that, at least by this road – and that by main force – to carry out what

we planned is impossible. Or else it is a matter of luck, and luck is not a thing to lean on. Reckon it up: before we had traversed a tenth of the road, the enemy set at least 5,000 to 10,000 soldiers against us. As many more await along the roads. As many more, likely, he held in reserve. So then: to reach Sasun with armed bands cannot be done, and to come out of there again would be a miracle. I have withdrawn my hand from the work of going with armed bands. Do you withdraw your hand too, and think of reaching our goal in another way.

Sergei, after telling me this, said:

– Within a few days Nikol had become a mature man. I could not object, for there was substance in what he said. I could not accept it at once, because that was as good as reviewing everything anew. Only that I would think on it. He said to me:–

– I have thought, and have decided for myself, once and for all. If you will help me, tomorrow itself you will set me on the road to Persia. By the roads of our Vardan and of Nikol (Duman) you will send me into the Land. My mind is made up to do a thing there; I will come out no more, but stay there. If it proves impossible to do anything, I will come out and leave it all.

Little Nikol did just so. He went first to Erevan and thence, by way of Alashkert and Abas Göl, crossed into Vaspurakan, where he took upon himself the name of Ishkhan – but became a true *ishkhan* [prince] in the land of Rshtunik[15] that he organized, calling to mind the ancient sovereigns of those lands. He took with him Vahan (Papazian),[14] who adopted the name of Koms.

The accounts of the survivors of the Basen band concerning Shek Hamo agreed one with another. He had been not only brave, but aware of their situation, and stout-hearted, and had met death without flinching.

The survivors disagreed only about the duration of the battle. According to some, the battle had lasted four days and three nights. That is, one day and one night more. This must be explained by the fact that, after three days and two nights of the bands' combined fighting, the remnants had continued the struggle individually, so as not to surrender, and their last few had come safe away only by crossing the frontier.

Later, after the Ottoman Constitution,[16] it was confirmed – from the accounts of the Turks – that the battle had indeed been merciless. The Armenian fighters of Basen had fought to the death, and had carried off with them some 800 soldiers. "It was a war of states, not of *chetas* [irregular bands]," the participants would say.

Notes

[1] Derenik and Vahagn Demirchian, and Avetik Isahakian – writers of Caucasian Armenia who began in these radical student circles; Derenik Demirchian (1877–1956), the novelist, and Avetik Isahakian (1875–1957), the poet, both later celebrated. Several of this set were drawn toward Social-Democracy.

[2] Aram – Aram Manukian (1879–1919), here under his Kars conspiratorial name "Sergei"; later the organizer of the Van self-defense and effectively the founder of the Republic of Armenia (per Ch. I).

[3] Torgom – the fighter Tuman Tumaniants, called "Torgom"; the former Russian officer Tuman Tumanov of the tent scene, who became a field-worker of Kars and organized the "Mrrik" band into Sasun.

[4] Isajan – Isajan Arakelian, of Shushi; the bomb-maker of Kars, killed by the accidental explosion of his own bombs.

[5] Menak – Yeghor Aratamian, of Shushi, Torgom's comrade; the scout who mapped the arms-routes to Sasun and was killed near Basen.

[6] Nikol – Nikol of Lernapar, later famous as "Vani Ishkhan" ("Ishkhan of Van"), a chief organizer of the Van self-defense; Sergei's pupil.

[7] Plekhanov and Lenin – Georgi Plekhanov (1856–1918) and Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924), the leaders of Russian Social-Democracy.

[8] The Black Hundreds (*Sev Hariwrak*) – the reactionary, ultra-monarchist and antisemitic street-gangs of late-tsarist Russia, notorious for pogroms.

[9] Loris-Melikov – Count Mikhail Loris-Melikov (1825–1888), the Armenian-born Russian general and statesman, minister of the interior under Alexander II.

[10] Aghtamar – the island-monastery see of the Catholicosate on Lake Van; the reference is to a later action of Ishkhan's in which corrupt or traitorous elements there were forcibly cleansed.

[11] Nevruz – the *fedayi* commander of the infantry company in the great arms-running expedition across Basen (1904); he and his men were annihilated in the days-long battle recounted here.

[12] Khan — the *fedayi* commander of the cavalry band that crossed the frontier together with Nevruz's infantry; rather than escape mounted, he tied up the horses and stood to die with his men, as told here.

[13] The Khanasor Expedition — the A.R.F. punitive raid of 24 July 1897, when a large force crossed from Persia to strike the Mazrik Kurdish tribe on the Khanasor plain, in reprisal for its share in destroying the retreating defenders of Van; the movement's most celebrated set-piece armed action before Basen.

[14] Vahan Papazian (1876–1973), "Koms" — writer, teacher, and A.R.F. leader; Ottoman parliamentary deputy for Van, and, with Ishkhan, a principal organizer of the Vaspurakan (Van) region.

[15] Rshtunik — a historic district of the province of Vaspurakan, on the southern shore of Lake Van; seat of the medieval Armenian Rshtuni princes, whose memory Rouben invokes in the pun on Nikol's assumed name "Ishkhan" (prince).

[16] The Ottoman Constitution — the 1876 constitution restored by the Young Turk Revolution of July 1908, which briefly opened Ottoman political life and allowed such wartime facts to be spoken of openly.

CHAPTER V

My Circuit-Riding

Շրջիկութիւնս

Kars villages / snow road

MY CIRCUIT-RIDING.
THE VENGEANCE OF THE BASEN BANDS.

ARMENIA: A SIEVE OR A WALNUT?

The New Year and the Christmas of 1904 I was to spend among the villagers. I was to stay at least a day in each village, share in its holiday, and at the same time do all the work that fell to a circuit-rider.

Winter in Kars and the country around it is bitterly cold. As they say: "Spit on the ground and the ground won't take it – it freezes." But I had a splendid escort: Garegin of Erzurum and Minas of Taron, two of the men saved from the Basen band, and old Saron the avenger, whom everyone knew. Their *yapunjis* hung from their shoulders, and their horses played beneath them. The *papakhs* [wool hats] on their heads were covered with cowl-like *bashliks*. Of the horses you could see only the legs, and their heads – with the white fountains of steam that puffed, gust by gust, from their nostrils.

Our faces could barely be seen under the *bashlik*. White icicles hung from our mustaches.

Our hands were in mittens, and though they were buried under the *yapunji*, our fingers still ached on the horses' reins. And yet it was a great pleasure – to

be one with the horse and cut a road through the frost. It was a moving tent, smoldering and burning; on all four sides the snow was a dead shroud.

We visited the villages one by one, like *ter-ters* going round to bless the houses. The whole village, old and young, would crowd around us and invite us into houses as warm as a bathhouse. We could feel that the villagers looked at us as men lost beyond hope – who, though they had escaped their sentence, might yet be lost again. They looked at us the way a mother looks at her child and a father at his son; while the little ones found simple comfort in gazing up at Garegin's plane-tree height.

The center of attention was Garegin and Minas, who had just risen from the dead.

– A *matagh* to your feet – lay it out for me: how did it happen, that great battle? The whole world went tumbling one into another. Did the Osmanli get his lesson? – asked an old villager, his *chibouk* [pipe] in his mouth.

– Let me kiss your feet – welcome home to you. Ten of you went, and you came back one by one; ah, what a *zulum* [calamity] came down on our heads! – said an old woman, wiping away her tears.

Garegin and Minas, moved, would answer:

– What can we do, *abla* [auntie]? Our luck ran out; we came back to you alive. God willing, we'll join them too.

– No, no, no, don't even say it. God forbid – you have a mother and father too. Are you married? Do you have children? – the *abla* went on.

The others would break in.

– Hey, Varde, what are you blurting out, knowing and not knowing? What is it to you what they have? You there – tell us this: if *intar* [aid] had reached you, and the road held open, could you have got into the fortress of Erzurum?

Those simple, innocent questions left us at a loss; they gave away the people's own heart and longing. But grey-headed Saron would find the way out, and answer:

– No, Margar dear, you need cannon to get into Erzurum, and we have no cannon.

– Saron, forgive me, but you're talking off the point, – Margar persisted. – What do we need cannon for? My father used to tell how, in the fight for Kars, Mukhtar Pasha[1] had gathered a great many cannon and held the fortress of Kars. The Russians said: "Our cannon are few; we can't take this fortress." Lazarev[2] said: "No such thing – I'll take it." He called up the Armenian *olas* [lads], my father among them, and said: "Cannon we have none, none at all; but the fortress is ours, and we'll take it for certain." They all said: "*Helbet* [surely] we'll take it – the fortress is ours." They drew up their horses and mounted, drew their swords, and drove *dümdüz* [head-on], straight at Mukhtar Pasha's cannon; they took the fortress, and drove Mukhtar Pasha to Aladja-Dagh. Let a man have the heart, and the fortress can be taken without cannon too.

Let Saron and Margar go on with their argument; I would get to work. On those occasions I would call in the village Sub-Committee, go over the accounts in private, hear the report, and, if there was business to settle, settle it.

All this was very easy to finish inside an hour. What help there was in the mood of the moment – and above all in the presence of the soldiers riding with me, who, as everyone knew, had only yesterday been saved from certain death and were ready to go to death again! What man without a conscience would refuse to pay what he owed the party, or the school, or the other public charges? Who would hold a grudge against his neighbor and set the village against itself? The soldiers who had come back from the grave and rode at my side shamed the villagers. Petty quarrels that might have flared up were laid to rest, and the unity was complete.

And then you would see a party comrade come up to us and turn to the Sub-Committee:

– Look in your *defter* [ledger]: last year the hail struck my field, and I did not pay my debt in full. What do I still owe? Tell me, and I'll pay – my *hala* [means] are good just now.

The Sub-Committee man would look at his list and turn to him:

– Ako dear, all that is left is twenty *kopeks*. You owe nothing.

— No, *janım*, a debt is a debt — take the twenty *kopeks*, and one *manat* [ruble] besides, as *jagha* or as a gift, — said Ako, and laid 120 kopeks down before him.

Another would come up, a little sheepish, and turn to the Sub-Committee:

— *Janım*, that was empty talk I gave you. What am I — a Turk, a Russian, that you take no money from me for our school? I said it only to be saying something, that I have no children and would give nothing to the school — and you believed me? Aren't all the village *olas* [souls] mine? Collect the *hakh* [fee] for three *olas* from me.

The Sub-Committee man, his eyes wide, looked at Kiro and said:

— Kiro dear, you won't be left out. There, I've written it in — I was wrong.

What troubled the village assembly was Gaspar on the one side and Akho on the other, who had become enemies over money and other matters. Tangled together, the two of them were the village's open wound. But — to the relief of the villagers and the Sub-Committee — Gaspar, who was a hard head, came up to us with his mind made up and said:

— There will be no holier day than this. I am a *matagh* to your feet, now that you have come to the village. Gather round, all of you: I have taken off my silent, louse-ridden shirt and shaken it all out into the *tonir* [hearth-oven]; my *jendek* [body] has found its *rahat* [ease]. Ako, my dear — come, stand here at my side; you too, shake out your shirt.

Everyone was astonished — above all at the words "Ako dear." Ako, submitting, came and stood at Gaspar's side.

Gaspar went on:

— A man is a man, and he falls into sin when the devil gets into his belly through the *plnj* — through the nose. I wished Akho harm. Akho is no angel either; but I confess that I am the sinner. I won't make your heads ache. Let Akho be my judge, and let our Sub-Committee be the witness. Whatever they say I accept, and whatever punishment they lay on me is welcome.

Akho, moved, answered:

— Gaspar dear, I'm the sinner too; you be my judge — and he kissed Gaspar.

But Gaspar was a hard head, and said:

– No, no – first let us kiss the feet of these men of the nation, whom we are not worthy of.

And they knelt, and would have done it. But I push them away and point to Garegin, who refuses as well.

– What kind of *kritik* is this?(*) Stop it, make peace – we'll see about the rest later.

Garegin did not know that what Gaspar and Akho had done was no *kritik*, but a genuine change of heart – and that the cause of it was he himself and his comrades who had been martyred.

So, each day, we would go to a village. Without a speech, without a sermon, without argument or intervention, the work turned like a wheel on a greased axle. My part, and my comrades', was only a silent presence; there was no effort on our side, yet the work turned of itself.

For the most part – not seeing to the bottom of it – they credited that success to me, and sent glowing reports to the Kars Central Committee about our miracle-working labors. If I had been fool enough, it would not have taken much for me to believe that I really was something. But I knew that the people go to order and to sacrifice of their own accord, and not by any grace of mine. For the sake of the omelet, one puts up with the handle of the pan. The omelet was the national awakening, and the pan was the Dashnaktsutiun. I was only its cold handle.

(*) Kritik* – a critique; in the present instance, a comedy.

Two or three months passed in this way. I was preparing to visit the gorge of Kaghzvan when I received a letter from Sergei: he wrote that I should return to Kars at once.

Sergei and Hagop received me very warmly. By now they counted me their equal.

– Do you know how empty the places you have passed through have gone? You could jump straight into a dead man's place. May Menak and Khachik sleep in peace – that was how they put it.

About Menak I knew already; about Khachik I did not. I asked after Khachik. They told me he was a physician who had come from Bulgaria and had sworn to cross into Sasun or some other part of the Land, to be of use to the people and to the revolution. Until then he had been making himself useful there in the district of Kars. Wherever he went he bound the people to him by his gentle, kindly ways. He was a quiet man, of few words, and he organized the district with his smile and his soft manner. When Khan and Nevruz were forming their bands, there was no holding Dr. Khachik back any longer. "If you die, I'm with you; if you are wounded, I'm your keeper," he would say; and, shouldering his medicines, he had joined them and had set out to reach Sasun. But he had been among the first of the slain.

– That was how he too was sacrificed, – Sergei and Hagop would tell me sadly, and they listened in silence.

In the evening, as I was going with Hagop and Sergei to the meeting of the Central Committee, Hagop asked:

– Did Garegin come back afterward?

– Yes, I answered.

He fell silent, and I did not understand why he had taken an interest in Garegin.

Among many other matters, Hagop reported on a Turkish bey from Erzurum whose name I have forgotten. He argued that the man was a former officer of the Turkish frontier-guard, and that he now passed, supposedly, for an ordinary citizen. This Turk had become the link between the Turkish and Russian frontier troops; he would often come as far as Sarıkamış and Kars and meet with the Russian command. He was thought to be the one link in the military collaboration of the two powers. He had acquaintances among Armenians, Greeks, and Turks, and, wringing information out of them, he would go back to Turkey, cross the frontier again, and was forever meeting with Russian officers. At the time of our Basen fights he had been mixed up in

the Russian dealings, and had twice crossed the frontier and come back into the Russian frontier-guard army.

Hagop proposed to put an end to the man's life and to break the link between the two operations.

The findings of the inquiry seemed highly probable. There was only one who objected, and said:

— If we break this link, a new link will surely be created between the two powers, and by new men.

But this objection too was set aside by the following observation:

— Until the new one gets the practice of the old, seasoned hand, we gain time.

So Hagop's proposal was accepted unanimously, and the carrying-out of the deed was entrusted to him.

When we came out, with Sergei and Hagop, Sergei turned to Hagop with concern and said:

— The main thing — is it to carry it out safely?

— No, — answered Hagop. — The main thing is reaching the verdict. Whoever brings the proposal has certainly weighed first whether it can be done. I have been thinking about this for several months now. If we strike him down on the road, it is nothing — but the day of meeting him cannot be fixed. If we catch him in Kars, that is easy. If we catch him at Karaghurdan or Karaghurut, the doing of it is nothing, but covering the tracks of the men who do it is hard. If we catch him at Sarıkamış, the doing of it is certain, but getting the men away is a little harder — still easier than at the frontier.

Then, turning to me, Hagop said:

— Set your mind at rest, and leave that business to me. I have only one request of you. Sound Garegin out — is he willing to go on a terror-act (*ahabekum*)? I want the vengeance of the Basen bands taken by the hands of the men who fought in those fights. They must be given that satisfaction; it will console them. I authorize you to ask, without revealing any explanation or detail — no name, no place. Only this: is Garegin willing to enter this dangerous work? If yes, you say nothing further. If no, I authorize you to tell him not to let slip the chance of taking the vengeance of the Basen bands and cooling his heart.

In the morning I found Garegin and asked:

— Garegin, why don't you take part in the terror-acts?

Garegin looked me in the face and said:

— Aren't you ashamed, making such a proposal to a *jan fedayi* — a fighter to the marrow? We can wage war with drum and *zurna*, we can cut men down — but we cannot raise a hand quietly, by stealth, on a man we happen to meet. That is not my work. If there is a fight, say so, and I am ready to go this very moment.

I was forced to deliver Hagop's second message:

— Garegin, I said this to you because I am afraid someone else will take the vengeance of the Basen bands, and you will be sorry for it.

— That is a different thing; that is my right. Well — is there something like that in hand?

— There is nothing at all. I spoke only to test you, — I said, and closed the matter.

I went to Hagop and reported the outcome of the conversation on the spot. Hagop listened and said:

— Keep clear of Garegin. He is no use for such work. He is a man for a fight.

Five days had passed since that day. Hagop had said he was going to Alexandropol on business. Sergei and I were eating face to face in an eating-house. Garegin came in — we had not run into him for a week. He came in and settled himself at my side. His face was solemn. He ordered three glasses of *oghi* [spirits] and asked:

— Where is Hagop?

— He is in Alexandropol; likely he'll be back soon.

Garegin laughed and said:

— It serves you right: you laughed at me, and he, it turns out, has laughed at you. I know you don't drink, but today you're drinking to the bottom. Let us drink to the memory of our fallen of Basen — may they sleep in peace. Try not drinking, if you can! — he said, and drained his glass.

We drained ours too, and understood that the Turkish bey had already given up the ghost. We fell silent and asked no question.

In the evening the news went round the city that a Turkish colonel had been shot in the forehead and the chest, in broad daylight; that the killers had got away, and that an inquiry was under way.

In the morning Hagop appeared and said that Besua and Garegin had been the killers.

Who Besua was I do not really know, but I know that he was one of Garegin's countrymen. Garegin was annoyed with him: he had left Garegin no time to do anything, but without a moment's hesitation had put the bullet in first, between the two eyes of the Turkish spy. Besua too was one of the men saved from the Basen band. I think he was the one who – under the name Mikayel, in the fight at Olti, after the Sarıkamış terror-act – was bayoneted by a Russian soldier. He had been thought dead, but afterward had recovered, and, after one misadventure and another, had become – I don't know what.

Garegin was killed in the fight at Olti. His corpse had been photographed, stripped naked, together with Bikov and his soldiers. That degrading photograph would become the cause of Bikov's death.

We are in the common lodging-house – our shelter, anchored in Zor [the gorge]. The wind blows through the chinks of the door, but the *yapunjis* in which we are wrapped protect us.

For a bed, under me there is only a rush-mat, with a coarse rug on top of it. My ribs ache from their hardness. The best of it is that lice have crept over me, and the fleas give no rest either. I am forever scratching.

The one lying at my side is Sergei. He too is in my plight.

– You're not asleep either? Let us go out and walk a little.

That was the very thing I too had been wanting. We went out into the street.

The street was asleep. Only, in the houses – piled one on top of another, climbing terrace by terrace – some of the doors were opening, and housewives were shaking out their dust-cloths. And the morning bells were breaking the silence.

Toward that house where the bomb had gone off, and Isajan with his comrades had vanished, Sergei would not look. His head hanging, he went down into the gorge, and there, before the bath-house, fell into gentle, peaceable talk.

Sergei had a remarkable gift. Whoever it was, he would get close to him. About himself he said nothing, but every last detail of the man in front of him interested him. He would take in the other man's work, his situation, even every fold of his family life, as though the man were laying out his whole self.

When I came up, Sergei said to me:

– What do you say – shall we take a bath?

– Good, let's, – I answered.

– Sergei dear, on my eyes – but you have come too early. The water will not be hot yet, the bath will not be warm. You'll have to wait half an hour, an hour.

– What is half an hour? Throw on one more *apirish*, make a coffee too, and there – your bath will be ready, – said Sergei to the bath-keeper.

The bath-keeper, with a happy face, as though gold had fallen on him from heaven, warmed to his task and ushered us in. We sat down, ringed with soft cushions, while he ran off, woke the furnace-man, roused the *kiseci* [scrubber] from his place, and hurried him off to fetch the barber. The *kiseci*, with a frightened face, half-naked, half-dressed, ran for the barber. And the bath-keeper blew under the *ibrik* – the coffee-pot – to make the fire flare up and the coffee-water boil.

– Really, this is good. You know, if the *ishkhan* had not been killed so suddenly – the day before, we had promised each other that we would go to the baths. He went without getting that *murad* [wish] of his....

We were both silent when the bath-keeper brought in the hot coffee, and sugar with it.

– Would you like a *narghile* [water-pipe]?

– No, – we said; but the bath-keeper began to explain the wholesome, healthful properties of the *narghile*.

At that moment the barber burst in, all in a fluster, with the *kiseci*. I sat down, had my hair put in order, and went into the bath. Sergei, behind me.

– What a good thing we've done: whatever filth there is, we wash it away. From here we'll go to your house, drink a good tea, breakfast like human beings, and spend a few days at your house – soft and sweet. I've sent word ahead by the barber, – said Sergei.

I looked at Sergei in astonishment. He noticed, and went on:

– What do we know about what tomorrow will bring us? Let us have the taste of it in our mouths, at least – and go like that.

We finished. The *kiseci* gave us a fine drubbing – cracking the bones of our backs by kneeling on us, and thinning our hides with his scrubbing-mitt.

The coffee was ready. We drank that too, and when we wished to give the bath-keeper his money, he said:

– Sergei dear, a *matagh* to your feet – why do you dishonor me? How am I to take money from you?

– Very well – take the barber's money, at least.

– *Janım*, what business is it of yours? He too, I know, will take offense.

We tried to pay the *kiseci*, but he too scowled:

– Are we as unworthy as all that?

We went out. The *phaeton* – the carriage – stood at the door. "Get in, it is paid for," the bath-keeper called. We took our seats, humbled. When the horses started off, Sergei said to me: "*Ishte* [look] – it is these dogs, sons of dogs, who by behaving like this make our life count for nothing and death a thing to be wished for."

That was my last bath in Kars....

We are in our house. The door opens with a laugh, and in the kisses and the noise we settle in around the samovar. What can I tell you? – every one of you has had a mother, a sister, a brother, and feels the moments of meeting and of parting better than anything I could say. There was a gaiety of parting

in it that soured the sweetness a little and gave it a *maykhosh* [bittersweet] taste – all the more to be craved, all the more to be drunk.

My mother said to me:

– Mbnika,(*) when do you leave?

I shrugged my shoulders, and she understood from that that I did not know either. She and I were silent, busy with our tea. But the one who made the most noise was Sergei, with his pealing laughter and his jokes.

– Hey, *abla*, rest assured we have come without our guests. We left them behind in the bath and came away. Shut the door, and, as for a man setting out on a long road, spread the soft bedding and cover it with a white sheet – we mean to sleep sweetly, sweetly. We'll get up, eat, and sleep again, until we tire of resting.

(*) Mbnik* is the shortened, endearing form of Minas – Turkeni's baptismal name. – A. Kh.

– Very well, Sergei dear; but you tell me this – the guests on you, how many days have they left, two, or more? – and my mother and Sergei fell to laughing at each other.

For two days and three nights we were cut off from the world; we slept, rose, ate, drank, and slept again. On the third day, still lying on our backs, we fixed our eyes on the ceiling – which was itself a sign that my weariness had passed. The human creature is a strange machine: when the spirit of everyday life is idle, when it is not tired but filled with vigor, it must at all costs busy itself with work or with some bodily motion. And if there are no such outlets, it makes work for itself – to spend itself, to be occupied. It sharpens the imagination and the mind and drives forward questions that have nothing to do with everyday life. It must, at all costs, get inside the soul of the man in front of it and wear itself out over what is passing and turning within him.

Sergei's eyes gazed unblinking at a single point. Now and then he knitted his brows. I did not disturb him. My mind wandered around Sergei and his Shushi comrades, some of whom had already parted from him forever. And I thought that the rest, too, would soon part from him, and that perhaps he in turn would part from me, as his comrades had. Already I saw the martyr's crown on his face, and I grieved, and I envied. Sergei's Shushi circle, many of

whom I had never even seen, moved through my head, and their whole company seemed to me a city of martyrs.

– Fellow, are you daft? – Sergei called to me. – Are you struck dumb? Why don't you answer? Say something – what are you thinking? Say something; I want to test whether my guess is right.

I looked at Sergei, who was sitting up in the bed. Under his black brows his eyes had gone wide with wonder, and, holding his chin in his fingers, he pleaded with me: "*Mean cholum* – a *matagh* to you – out with it now, a-ah…"

I could not help laughing.

– What kind of Madonna pose is that you have struck?

– *Halata*! – I was mulling over empty, idle things: over you, and those donkey Karabaghtsis of yours.

– Amazing, – Sergei straightened up, exclaiming. – I knew you were thinking about them. So whenever you think, I can guess it. Watch yourself! What conclusion did you reach?

– If you want to talk seriously, I'll tell you; if not, it stays with me.

Sergei wanted to talk seriously; and because, up to that day, his views and mine had never come to a common denominator – and because I had the very same disagreements with Jamalian[7] too, decades later – I will set down that idle-hour conversation.

I began to explain my "demons." He listened seriously.

– You have certainly sifted lentils or wheat with a *karmagh* – the coarse stone-sieve – or watched it done, I said. Whatever is dust and fine grain falls through the bottom; those are the useless parts. In the sieve two layers form: one light, made up of the small grains that rise and cover the surface; the other made up of the heavy, full grains, which lie beneath the first. And since we also turn the sieve round about, all the grains in it – those on the surface and those beneath alike – arrange themselves by their size and weight, parallel to the radii of the sieve: the light and the small toward the center, the big, the heavy, and the full toward the ends of the radii and the rim. Do you agree?

– Yes, if we leave other circumstances out of account, – answered Sergei.

– If what I say is right, then it is not hard to work out where the true Armenians are – the ones worth dealing with, and worth laying down your life for.

Sergei listened thunderstruck; I set him at ease and went on:

– Let us suppose that Armenia is round, and is like a sieve.

Let its center be Manazkert, and its edges Syunik, Gugark, Vaspurakan, and Mokk – that is, our four ancient principalities, or else the Taurus and the Lesser Caucasus ranges. The axis of the sieve passes through Manazkert; the sieve rises and falls to the height of Masis. The horizontal radii of the sieve run out – one to Shushi, another to Sper, another to Bashkale, another to Kharberd – and these four radii turn from left to right, faster than a millstone.

Now pour into that sieve, in place of lentils, five million Armenians, and turn it fast. Once the dust, the refuse, has been sifted out, the rest arrange themselves according to their weight and their pith. That is: the hollow, the empty, the light, the sapless, the small – the coward of the human element, the witless, the man with no initiative and no daring, and so on – gather around the center. And, on the contrary, the full, the heavy, the audacious, the brave, the enterprising – that is, the true Armenians – gather and range themselves along the radii, according to their weight. Now, from this natural phenomenon I conclude:

a) Shushi lies turned to the tip of a radius, and that is why it, together with the other radii, concentrates within itself the most useful, the strongest, the most decisive cultural and physical stock of Armenia and of the Armenian people. And I conclude that without the border-provinces neither an Armenian people nor an Armenia can be brought into being. Your own vigor proves it – yours, and Tuman's, and Duman's, and Vardan's.

b) When you come from the tip of the radius toward the center, the central part of Armenia is either held by Bero Hüseyin's pasha-tribes[3] – the tribal horde – or is empty, or is held by passive, uncultivated, thinly scattered Armenians, who must be revived by the border-provinces. Otherwise they are lost.

c) I am amazed at you and Tuman, who strive, like Menak, to sacrifice yourselves for central Armenia. That is as good as beating water to make it thicken. I prefer the road of little Nikol, of Vardan, of Duman, and I would rather do what I can for Vaspurakan than for Erzrum-Taron. Come – change your road.

Sergei looked at me and did not answer; he picked at his nose and muttered a Russian saying: "*Slyshal zvon, da ne znaesh gde on*" – "You have heard the ringing, but you do not know where it is."

– Come, answer, or agree, – I said, finishing my say.

– Wait, don't hurry; to root out foolishness is harder than to build a monastery.

Sergei began, solemnly:

– Since with your wonderful sieve you want to give a scientific grounding to the content of Armenia and of the Armenian people, and to what we must do, let me begin with the sieve as well. The very word *karmagh* – "stone-sieve" – shows that the tool was made to separate the dirt from the good grain. And, to my mind, what falls into the sieve divides into four kinds; with that I agree. And do you agree with me that, in general, there is no uniform, single-race element?

I agreed.

– You turned Armenia into a giant sieve and poured five million Armenians into it. Cut that down a little, because those five million have their chaff too, which, when you shake your sieve left and right, will fall through the bottom. What falls through is what carries the Armenian name but is nothing in itself – degenerate, worm-eaten, without progeny or tradition, deformed, a part crumbled to dust. Take those siftings off your count; reckon them neither as number nor as quality; write them off as manure for the ground.

When you shake it left and right, the surface is covered with a thin, light layer. Our grandmothers lift off that layer and, turning their fingers into a rake, set it aside. They shake the sieve up and down, left and right, until those light parts can no longer bury themselves in the mass. They set them aside until they are gone. Afterward they give them to the pigs and the donkeys, for they are not lentils but the lentil's stalk, the straw, or other plants that have

nothing to do with the lentil grain. In this way what is in the sieve grows lighter again, but the quantity of lentils does not lessen, and their quality rises.

From this simple cleaning you draw conclusions that have no foundation. You say that the central part of Armenia is either empty or held by Bero Hüseyin's tribes — which is plausible, but not true, because beneath those tribes there are Armenians pressed down as *raya* [subject peasantry]. It is true that these superfluous and foreign forces take up a great deal of room in the sieve of Armenia; but when we, like our grandmothers, pick out that straw, that stalk, and set it aside, what remains at the bottom of Armenia's sieve is the pure Armenian stock, which holds the floor of the center.

Your conclusion is a fantasy. When all the chaff has been lifted off, top and bottom, what seems to remain in the sieve is the clean lentil. Now you turn the sieve fast about its axis and rightly observe that the lentils range themselves along the radii: the full, the big, the heavy near the walls of the sieve, at the ends of the radii, and the small, the light at the center. And you find that the strength, the force, the mind, and all the good qualities of the Armenian people must be sought in the four marches that surround Armenia. And so, you say, the center of Armenia is nothing and the border-provinces are everything. As proof you bring Shushi, and me along with it. I thank you; but, being myself from the tip of that radius, I can see your error.

Now, among the big and small lentils there are all sorts of stones, and sometimes chickpeas and other heavy grains. If you eat them, you break your teeth. To make it edible lentil, you have to pick it over grain by grain, throwing out the excess, the stones, and the rest. Note one thing more: their skin is thick, not fine like that of the others. It is better to eat the small lentils and to keep the big ones for sowing.

So — lay your scientific grounding out in front of me; my conclusion is a different one. I grant that in the border-provinces there arise strong individualities, devoted Armenians, brave men, above all men of initiative. But to conclude from that that the strength, the wholeness, the salvation of the Armenian people must be sought in the border-provinces — that is an illusion.

Sergei had shaken the foundation of my theory, but had not yet brought down its walls. I was bewildered and amazed. I asked what his point was. He explained:

– You are right when you look for the strong individualities in the border-provinces. I would add the diaspora as well. That confirms your theory of the "centrifugal" law. In Russia the Yermaks(*) gave the empire ambition and a rotten grandeur by their adventuring. But what else did they give it? We too have had our Yermaks, our adventurers – Tzimiskes[5] and a good many Armenian emperors. But tell me – apart from harm, apart from hollow ambition, what did they give to Armenia and the Armenian people? These centrifugal forces, as you know better than I do, have brought nothing but harm and ruin.

() Yermak* – the Cossack chief who conquered Siberia and annexed it to Russia. – A. Kh.

Let us come to our border-provinces, the marches, the ones you are so taken with. One of them at least – Karabagh – I know well, because I am its child. Your eye and your ear are filled with tales of generals, of princes, of *meliks*. You have heard of the millionaires of Baku, of the oil-men, of the famous wielders of bomb and pistol, or of the self-satisfied, patriotic allurements of the Dumans and the Vardans. And, impressed by all this, you have concluded that the flower, the strength, the mind, and the drive of the Armenian people turn within Karabagh, and that it, and border-provinces like it, must be our goal and our starting-point. No error can be greater or more harmful than that conclusion. Here is why.

In the border-provinces of Armenia the good and the bad of the Armenian people are packed together, mixed one with another. The Armenian too has his selfishness, his vainglory, his rancor, his guile, his overblown arrogance, his faintheartedness, his witless obstinacy, his adventurism, his denial of the collective, his rejection of tradition, his foreign-mania, his self-will – which one of them am I to name? These weigh the individual down like lead. And, being heavy, they too gather – by your own centrifugal theory – at the rim of the sieve. Now you will say that on those rims are gathered, likewise, the likes of Duman – men endowed with virtue, with self-possession, with disinterestedness, with courage, with patriotism, and with other good

qualities. True. But what is that worth, when it is mixed in with the negative? Do you understand? When you mix the positive and the negative, you get zero. Sow alfalfa in a wheat-field, and you will reap no harvest. And so never hope that with Karabagh, or any other borderland, you will save Armenia. On the contrary: if there is no Armenia, those border-provinces are lost – no Armenian will remain there. Let there be an Armenia, and those border-provinces, if they do not turn assimilated, will hold on, attached as restless frontier-guards, like the Russian Cossacks. And so you err when you strain to go to Karabagh or Vaspurakan; and we are the ones in the right, who strain toward Upper Armenia and Taron.

When Sergei held these views, how did it happen that he later became Aram of Van? How did it happen that I myself did not become one like Aram? That was perhaps chance – but perhaps, too, something else: a subconscious thing that, though it steers us, is not itself there.

By Sergei's understanding, our homeland is like a walnut, made up of a kernel, a shell, and a green husk that guards the shell. The kernel falls on the upper sources of the Araxes, the Kura, the Euphrates, and the Aradzani – that is, Shirak, Kars, Upper Armenia, Taron. The shell falls on the middle courses of those same rivers, with the course of the Chorokh added. The husk falls on the lower courses of those same rivers, with the valley of Lake Van and the head-springs of the Tigris valleys added.

And Sergei would conclude:

– Let there be a kernel, and it will itself make the shell. The shell, once made, makes its own husk. If you have shell and husk but no kernel, the walnut is hollow. Therefore our first aim must be to set free the kernel of Armenia.

This, then, is the cause of our disagreements, – Sergei adds.

– The Armenian people, too, is of three kinds, each completing the others, but of a different nature. We carry the Armenian name around with us, we work for it, and yet we neither know it nor look to see where it is. Not every Armenian who bears the name is truly a free Armenian. The Armenians outside Armenia – in whatever classes they live, from Kizlyar, Mozdok, Armavir, Stavropol, Rostov, and Nor Nakhijevan as far as Kharkov and

Kherson – you cannot tell what they are: Armenian or Circassian, Russian or Cossack; as though they were an apricot grafted onto a plum. Look at his face, his nose – he is Armenian; listen to his tongue, watch his soul – he is Russian. And sometimes the reverse: look at his face – he is Russian, with his flaxen hair and his tip-tilted nose; look inside, hear his tongue – he is Armenian. He is a mule that recalls each of its two different parents, and he is Armenian only in so far as the soil of Armenia and of its true Armenian people still lives in him; without that soil and that breath he is not Armenian.

When you draw near to Armenia, it is ringed, like a walnut, with a whole, hard shell. That hard shell is your four marches, which surround Armenia proper and the Armenian people. That shell – inside which lie your cherished holdings, Vaspurakan and your beloved Karabagh – is a necessary part of Armenia and of the Armenian people, but it has no separate vitality of its own; it has life only so long as it stays closed around its kernel. Its life hangs from those hair-thin veins by which the kernel binds it to itself; through them it is fed and receives life. Cut those veins, and it dies and is severed from the Armenian people; it becomes firewood, while the kernel is left defenseless.

Do you want proof? Take our own Shushi, which is already on the road to degeneration. Because the routes of communication with Armenia have dwindled while those with Baku and Russia have grown stronger; because the economic and cultural ties with the kernel of the land have slackened, while, through a unifying administrative partition, the ties with Turkey have strengthened – the Armenians of that district have now become three parts: two parts are against the interests of the Armenian people, and one part alone works for the good of Armenia and the Armenian people. There has already been created a class that does not exist inside Armenia. Its center is Baku and Russia, while its claws and talons are Karabagh. That class is the men of money, Armenian by origin but the vanguard of the international and of the Russian. They claim the right to lead the Armenian people, yet they reckon that people a mere pedestal for dragging out an animal existence under the Russian roof. That class has become an evil to the wholeness of the Armenian people; it has become a bait for the neighbors; it has become a hook in the Russian's hand for catching the Armenian people. It is our enemy – it has ground the Armenian name to pieces.

The cultured class has become the same evil as the first. Aren't they my own comrades – Tsaturian, Narimyan, Zaghar, Muryan[8] (Social Democrats) – who, by their zeal, their strength, their preparedness, are perhaps worth more than the rest of us? Yet they are servants of the Russian might, and instruments of the Armenian people's fusion into it, even if in words they are against it and unwilling. When even the "Nameless" and the "Fatalists" are fixed on the notion that the national idea is a superstition and that internationalization must be our aim – don't such men help to cut the ties of the Armenian people and add water to the Russian's mill? They may repent, but the harm will be done.

There remains the third part – made up of the likes of me and of the peasants – whose ties with Armenian life have not yet dried up. But how much good can they do, when they are only a third of the whole?

Start from these indications, then, so that you can put a right value on our border-provinces and grasp that it is not they that matter, but solely and only the kernel of Armenia, without which the whole Armenian people is doomed to annihilation. If that kernel dies, all are dead. That is why I would give my life for the kernel of Armenia.

Sergei's views on the various elements of the Armenian people had shaken my "sieve" theory. And, if I had not wholly given it up, I was beginning to think in earnest that the shell of the walnut, without the kernel, is a useless thing.

I am myself a child of that kernel, and all the outland Armenians and the foreigners give us the demeaning name "*kro*." Perhaps it was for that reason that I had never seen the worth of those "*kros*," in whom the life, the very essence, of the Armenian people lies hidden.

Sergei had dispelled the nightmare of my self-underrating, and my mind turned to the monasteries and churches of central Armenia, which are unlike others. They have no windows that look onto the street, but all of them have high domes, through which they take the light of heaven; and under that heavenly light guilty and guiltless alike are put to the test. Through my mind fly the Armenian villages that survive still from the time of Xenophon,[4] and

their houses, which persist stubbornly to this day. Winding and rambling, endless narrow lanes forming a maze; no windows at all, only a hole here and there, opened in roof or wall, as though they were the doorways of moles' burrows. You enter by the hole, and the slick, muddy yard leads you to the inner room of the house, which is the very likeness of our domed monasteries. Many beams, cross-lashed one to another, rise and turn into a vault. At the crown of the dome a round window is opened, through which God's light comes and, like a flue, cleanses the air. The inner room, too, has no business with the street; it is with itself and with its own household.

The family, elsewhere, is those few souls who are married and, parted from their own families, have set up a house apart. At most they keep one little dog or one cat with them, to amuse the household. Not so with the house in the kernel of Armenia. The Armenian house is like Noah's ark. Under its roof, as members of the family, not only human beings but the offspring of all the household animals are sheltered and fed. So long as the grandfather smoked his *chibouk*, so long as the grandmother, keys at her side, kept the household, the people lived together under one roof with their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, though their number ran to several dozen. The animal members of the family ran into the hundreds, and a whole herd would come out of the door – yet they were all true members of the one house.

The house of Stepan, a villager of Gandza near Lake Parvana, comes before my eyes. The members of the family were seventy souls, and some hundreds of animals besides. They knew one another and loved one another.

I remember the great wolf-throttling dogs that stood at their doors, past which people would edge warily, out of fear; while the little ones just turned toddlers – barely begun to walk – gnawing at their bread, would grip the mastiff's tail and play at horses, and the mastiffs, tongues lolling, would sniff them over.

I remember, out of the dark house – horns thrust out, dazzled by the sun – the buffalo and the oxen coming out in a rage, as though spoiling for a fight; but a single lad, from the midst of the herd of fierce buffalo, would give them his command like a king – to go right, to go left…

I remember the young wives who, sweat pouring from them, washed the animals' grime with water and with a *pochay* – a brush, a besom – as though

cleaning their own children's cradles; while the young man of the house scoured the flagstone floor of dung and litter, spread dry brushwood under them, and made the animals' bedding. The fodder, the hay, and the barley came in great panniers, and a portion was made ready for each in the mangers.

I remember the hour of eating, when all the members of the family came home. Each spoke in his own tongue: the cow lowed, the dog whined, the goat bleated, the horse neighed, the ass brayed, the hen clucked. And they all hurried to their mangers. And when all were duly in their places, their herd-boys ran to the inner room crying, "Granny, I'm hungry," and pulled out their spoons and fell on the *tanabur* [yogurt soup].

When these pictures raced through my head with the speed of lightning, the backward "*kro*" family of central Armenia turned into a universe – where beast and lamb, the speaking and the speechless, having found one another and formed a single family, had created the strength of one soul, founded not on a narrow, selfish love, but on a broad love of nature.

I came to see that love and marriage too – which had seemed a simple matter – held a different content for Shirak, Akhalkalak, Kars, Taron, and Upper Armenia. Whereas everywhere else love and marriage are a factor in the individual's happiness and in the making of his present, for the Areg aunts perched at the upper sources of the rivers it was not so. They reckoned the present a bridge to the future. Their true aim was not the present but the future. They weighed the matter when they wished to bring a bride into the house.

– Leave love aside; I have nothing to say against the bride; everything is as it should be, and they love each other too, but one thing is missing – the bride's hips are not round. Will she bear children? That is the question. I am against it.

And old Aunt Areg would undermine the match.

When they wished to take a bridegroom, they would weigh it:

– What do I want with the bridegroom's wealth, his good looks? Does he love my daughter – good; but he has one lack: he is *tinapas* – consumptive. I am against it.

And they would undermine the match.

I came to see why they – whether beast or human – were held in honor and were sacred when they were with young. The household animal, so long as it was not barren, they would never slaughter. And when by mistake they slaughtered a hen of their house and found the "*kurnit*" – the clutch of forming eggs – in its belly, they would curse themselves and would not eat the meat of that slaughtered hen.

I came to see how the bride of a house, however quarrelsome she might be, if she gave a child each year, was honored, and her willfulness became bearable. "The laying hen is a cackler; no harm – she is the apple of our eye," they would say. But the bride of a house who was unable to bear children was held in lesser honor, even if she was the more graceful. God help the bride who stayed barren: even if she was an angel out of heaven, she was counted a punishment of God. And they would put up with a husband bringing a second wife into the house alongside a fruitless bride, though the law forbade it.

The same held when the fault of the barrenness lay on the man's side: "*Janım*, he has no *harakhat* – no potency; why did he take a wife and settle down? Let him leave her and go – let him become a *tiratsu*, a monk," – that was how they closed the matter, breaking the law but saving the creation of the future.

I thought to myself: "Sergei is right. From Taron all the way to Gugark, these Armenians in their red skullcaps and red aprons have made members of their family of the dog and the cat, since these are enemies to their enemies. They have made the bull a gelded ox and taken it for friend and brother, because it is a fellow-worker. Its flesh they never eat, since it is of their own house. The cow and the other animals are sacred, since they conceive. Their own children they see the same way. Whatever holds the future is good and sacred; whatever does not serve the future is fit for the market and for eating."

Now – could it be that the secret of the Armenian people's economic strength, of its endurance, lies in this receptivity? Could it be that the self-defense of the Armenian people lies in this mutual honoring of man and beast – and that this is what really keeps the Armenian people in its number and its quality? And I was leaning toward Sergei's opinion, but it was hard to give up all at once my "sieve" theory; while Sergei went on trying to dissuade me, not knowing that I was already half broken down.

– Listen, listen, – he said. – In the kernel of Armenia the classical tongue, *grabar*, was created. Sahak and Mesrop[6] were the ones who built it, and they made one nation and one language. Then the border-provinces arose – the Cilician, the colonies, Constantinople, or Kanaker with its Abovian – and said, "The *grabar* has grown old; it has become unintelligible to the people," and threw their weight behind the spread of the vernacular, *ashkharhabar*, and the forgetting of *grabar*. Perhaps they were right. But which vernacular? – that they did not understand. If they had taken as their foundation the language of the Armenian people who sit at the sources of the Armenian rivers, it would have come to something: that is the ring binding south and north, east and west, one to another; that is the true Armenian, and the bridge of the old and the new. But this they did not do, and they turned up their nose at our tongue as well. That is not all. Vramshapuh, Sahak, and Mesrop by their tongue made Armenians of non-Armenians, while the new reformers made of the Armenians an Eastern Armenian and a Western Armenian – as though these were not one nation.(*)

() Years later Jamalian too had the same preoccupation, but he found the solution in giving resurrection to the cultivated classical tongue, grabar*.

Sergei, though a man of the border-provinces, having landed in Kars, had become a man of Upper Armenia. And I, who was of the Upper-Armenian people, granted him the right by my reason, yet in my heart I stubbornly stayed a lover of the border-provinces. I don't know why. Perhaps because "the neighbor's bride always looks the fairer."

It was the fourth day of this carefree life of ours under our family's roof. My brother, when he came home from the market for the midday meal, brought a letter ordering us to set out that very day for Gyumri – Alexandropol.

Neither I nor Sergei knew why we were being summoned. Nor did the household suppose anything out of the ordinary. Only my mother seemed sad, and asked in earnest:

– Son, when will we see each other again?

That question weighed heavily on me....

Notes

[1] Mukhtar Pasha — Ahmed Muhtar Pasha (1839–1919), the Ottoman commander on the Caucasus front in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78; despite early successes he was defeated around Kars and Erzurum. Margar's tale recalls that campaign as village folk-memory.

[2] Lazarev — General Ivan Davidovich Lazarev (1820–1879), an Armenian-born general of the Russian army who directed the night storming of the fortress of Kars in November 1877, after the Russian victory at Aladja-Dagh (October 1877) had broken Mukhtar Pasha's field army.

[3] Bero Hüseyin — a Kurdish chieftain whose tribes (*el*) held stretches of the central Armenian highland; the same figure Sergei names again a page later («Բեռո Հիսէյինի էլերով», p.188). Rouben's point is that the core of the country is occupied by such tribal hordes (*tsegh*), left empty, or held only by scattered and passive Armenians. (The printed initial is ambiguous, Ֆ/Բ, and reads «Ֆեռո/Բեռո»; harmonized to Bero to match p.188. An earlier transcription misread the surname as "Hitler" — corrected at QA; see transcription-notes §35.)

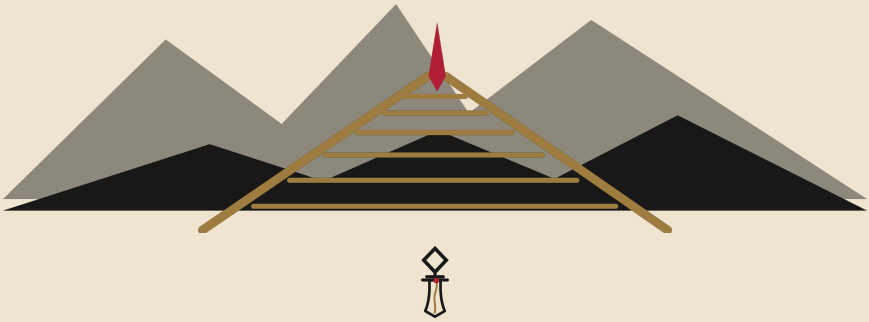
[4] Xenophon — the Greek soldier-historian (c. 430–354 B.C.) whose *Anabasis* describes the sunken, dome-roofed houses of the Armenian highlands, shared by family and livestock, through which his Ten Thousand marched in the winter of 401 B.C. Rouben's point is that the same house-form has persisted, unchanged, into his own day.

[5] Tzimiskes — John I Tzimiskes (c. 925–976), Byzantine emperor of Armenian origin; cited here, with "many an Armenian emperor," as one of the "centrifugal" adventurers who won glory for a foreign empire but gave nothing to Armenia itself.

[6] Sahak and Mesrop — St. Sahak Partev, Catholicos of All Armenians, and St. Mesrop Mashtots, who under King Vramshapuh created the Armenian alphabet (c. 405) and, with it, the classical literary language (*grabar*). Abovian — Khachatur Abovian (1809–1848), of Kanaker near Erevan, founder of modern Eastern Armenian literature and champion of the vernacular (*ashkharhabar*) over *grabar*.

[7] Jamalian — Arshak Jamalian (1882–1940), A.R.F. leader, publicist, and diplomat of the Republic of Armenia; Rouben names him as a later interlocutor in this same debate over the Armenian core and the literary language. (See the author's footnote at the foot of p.197.)

[8] Social Democrats — Armenian Marxists of the Caucasus, organizational rivals of the A.R.F. The names as printed (Tsaturian, Narimyan, Zaghar, Muryan) are transcription-uncertain; "Muryan" is probably Askanaz Mravyan (1886–1929), later a Soviet Armenian commissar of education. Rouben grants them ability while charging that their internationalism served the Russian absorption of the Armenians.



CHAPTER VI

Gyumri and Its Underworld

Գիւմրին եւ իր «սաղը»

Rail: Kars to Gyumri

IN THE TRAIN: FROM KARS TO GYUMRI.

GYUMRI AND ITS "SAD."

VAHAN ZALLATIAN.
VAGHO AND VAGHO'S "PADVAL."
BIDZA AND THE PLUNDERING OF THE DEPOT.
KEVORK'S "NOMERA."
HOVHANNES MAKARIAN, YERKAT, VAGHARSHAK.
THE ROLE OF AKHLAT AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE.
SIMON ZAVARIAN. A LECTURE
IN THE GORGE OF ZARKAGH.
I GO TO EREVAN.

At the very moment when the station official was calling out – "Second bell, Kars–Alexandropol!" – Sergei and I flung ourselves into the train.

Before the train the tsarist gendarme paced up and down, his sword at his side, jingling the *shpors* [spurs] on his boots, though this was no place for cavalry and there was no horse under him. He kept eyeing us askance, and we from the window watched that cockerel of the state.

A minute later the third bell rang, and the train,

going "pəsh-push, pəsh-push," moved off with a *dəkhkər-dukhkur*; and the further it went the more it quickened its pace, until at last it began to run.

In the train was Hagop too (Zilinkarian), who had kept places for us. Facing him sat a woman of Alexandropol, in a red *chukha* [broadcloth] apron worked all round with gilt, and wearing the blue *chübbe* [overmantle], embroidered

with *klapiton* [gold thread]. Her breast-piece was lost among roses and *vərner* [lace]; it covered her bosom. On her head the beaked band – the brow-piece of the woman's headdress – was bound fast, lost in pearl and gold, and the whole of it gracefully covered over with a transparent *chifila* [veil]. On her arms the gold *khalkhal* [bracelet]; on her fingers a glittering ring. And all of it together – she might have been a living treasury. The woman was like an idol, but she breathed: her breast rose and fell, and she panted. Her chestnut eyes looked this way and that with the air of a mistress, and now and then she spoke with the man beside her.

The man beside her was her husband, and his clothing too was native to the place, though strange to an outsider. Instead of our long-topped boots he had *yemeni chusts* [soft leather slippers] on his feet, with white *dulpas* [stockings] drawn up to the knee. Below the knee the stockings were tied with a woven band of many colors, with *pukher* [tassels] hanging from its ends. His *shalvar* was wide: a small man could have hidden in the seat of it. He wore an *arkhalukh* [a fitted coat], covering his chest. Over it he had drawn the *cherkeska*, one sleeve on and the other not. Only the hat was ordinary – the Russian *furazhka*, flat and ungainly, a witness to Russian civilization and to his subjection to it. He wore no ornament: that was the woman's business. Only, about his waist he carried a heavy, broad belt of silver, and a silver chain with a watch at the end of it, whose key hung from his neck and lay spread on his breast. His beard was his ornament, red as flame, as though it had been dyed with henna. But it was natural.

These Alexandropol types I had seen many a time. This

dress was very near to me, for it was the national costume of central Armenia. But that day I looked at it as a stranger might, and the whole of it came to me as something strange and full of mystery. Perhaps that was because we were in April, and the sexes, like the cuckoos, wake in that month; and the one seated opposite me was a young woman who was playing with me out of her *badam* [almond] eyes…

It was agreeable, and it made me a sinner in spirit, and silent. It made me forget, too, the conversation I had had with Sergei a few hours before. I remembered his saying that the Armenians who sit at the headwaters of the rivers are the true Armenians, and that they are the link of our national unity.

And I began to carry Sergei's theory further, and thought that the spring of those Armenians was this woman too, with her dress, which comes down unchanged from the days of Haik the Patriarch.[1]

That woman was like the miracle-working "Our Lady of the Seven Wounds"[2] of their own city, adorned in the same way with gold and with pearl, with weeping and captivating eyes – weeping not for herself, but for another. The goddess Anahit,[3] it seems, must have been such a one as well: alluring for the sake of the fruit of her womb.

While I was trying to fix the springs of eternity in this mortal woman, Sergei, with his hot temper, had already made friends and fallen into talk with the woman's husband, and was saying to him:

– Brother *stolyar* [joiner], you have learned the Russian word; you have turned the word "joiner" into *stolyar* and taken it upon yourself. But why is it that for a hundred years now the Russian has been forcing you to call your town Alexandropol, and you go on stubbornly naming it Gyumri? I do not understand it. What does it mean?

Brother *stolyar*, it seems, had never in his life met with such a question. Thrusting out his red beard, he thought a moment and said:

– Gyumri – *helbet* [surely] Gyumri. The name was christened so from our grandfathers' grandfathers. The Russian came and changed the name. Let him say Alexandropol; we will say ours, and give the

real name. And where am I to know from what Gyumri means? It is a name, and there's an end of it, like any name. They say that in its day our town was a *gömrük* [customs-house]. That is why they gave it the name Gyumri.

Hagop broke in and, as a man of learning, explained that the *stolyar* was mistaken, because before ever it was a *gömrük* Gyumri had borne the name Kumayri.[4]

They wanted my opinion, but I got free of it with a shrug of the shoulders – though in Moscow I had heard from G. Khalatian, a Gyumri man, that the name comes down from the ancient Cimmerians, and that the name Gamirk is a synonym of it. What need was there to know the name, when there sat before us people who said everything by their dress?

I wondered why Sergei did not see, seated right before him, the costume of this exquisite woman, decked out like a partridge. Unlike the women of every other place, who adorn themselves according to the season, according to their kind of work, according to their age, according to the "mode," the costume this woman wore was unchanging – at home or abroad, in winter or in summer, until she should die. And when a woman makes her costume unchanging, then her taste and her soul too have crystallized, and she has one unchanging aim: to keep what she has, and to add to what she has the thing she has not. And the thing she had not was there in the longing of her eyes. She had no child, it seemed.

Sergei, it seems, did not perceive that this woman's costume was no creation of her own taste, nor did it belong to the imagination of tailors. Its maker was the past, lost in darkness, begun in the oldest of the old centuries, when the goddess Anahit was in Taron, on the banks of the Aradzani and the Euphrates, among the mountains of Yerznka. From those parts as far as the neighborhood of the Akhurian and of Akhalkalak, the women wear this woman's costume: gold and pearl on their heads, the red apron before them, the blue *chukha* worked with gold on their backs, like the ornament-figures of the old monasteries. Surely it was in this costume that the virgin daughters of the very rich

and of princes, and the barren wives, went on pilgrimage to the statue of the goddess Anahit; and, under pretext of "the vow, the sacrifice," gave themselves up to chance passers-by in the name of the goddess Anahit – not for rejoicing and for pleasure, but to be made fruitful and to bear fruit, for the love of eternity.

I looked into the woman's eyes. They were watching me: so velvet, so caressing, so alluring were they, that my own eyes closed before them. I seemed to hear the woman's prayer, her entreaty – she was asking for a child…

I came to myself, and, looking round, saw that the husband was still keeping up his hot dispute with Sergei about Gyumri. I cut him short:

– Brother *stolyar*, answer me one question: how many children have you, girls or boys?

The *stolyar* was struck dumb; his face soured; he glanced toward his wife; and, turning to me, said against his will:

– I had children. They died while they were little. Now I have nothing.

– That I knew, – I answered; and in my mind I said: "You are lying."

Just then the train stopped in a station. The woman opposite threw one more glance at me. But I had understood her secret by now. It was not I that was in her mind, but her own future – a bridge to her happiness and to her husband's self-deception. Like a beggar, she was begging alms. Why should I give alms? I thought; and I did not look at her face again.

Gyumri holds Ani's place, the capital of Shirak[5] – but it is not Ani. About it are gathered two hundred thousand Armenian souls, though it is itself a small town. It has not, as Ani had, walls and moats turned into a girdle of war. It has not Ani's crooked streets, like the swirled filling of a *gata*, nor her palaces, nor her thousand and one churches, which

astonish a man with their beauty, and which are, for all that, silent – every one of them dead.

Gyumri is another thing. She has broad, straight streets; flat, squat houses; churches out of all proportion to her size, built of red and black stone and copied from the ruined churches of Ani.

Beside Ani, Gyumri is a dwarf. She is not beautiful; she is even ugly. Were it not for her few trees, to which they give the name *sad* [garden], and were Aragats[6] not to be seen in the distance, she would be a dreary place. And yet, for all that, Gyumri is a most desirable town. There a man's heart opens and rejoices, more than in beautiful Ani, where a man's heart weeps and beauty turns into a hymn of lamentation. Of Ani's inhabitants there remain only the bats and the owls; but in Gyumri men are living, and they give the town beauty and life.

From my childhood I had been in Gyumri many times, but never once had I seen it as I saw it on my return from Kars, when I learned to see not only the lifeless houses and the views, but, more than these, the people. In earlier days my eye perched only on the domes of the churches. As a man will often go up

into the forest and not see the trees, so I too, in my student and my soldiering years, when I came to Gyumri, saw no people. About me the people swarmed – *papakhs* on their heads, black *chukhas* on their backs, kerchiefs the size of red bed-sheets with broad borders at their necks – and I did not see them. They passed by me, jostling me, hurrying to clear their own road, and now and then giving me a fearsome look; but I said "*kinto*, *kro*," and did not see them. The streets were full of children, of schoolboys carrying their satchels, wanton, wicked, flinging out foul words. In the doorways stood the women in their red aprons; but I thought, "They are *ablas*," and I saw no people.

In despair I would go to Gyumri's *sad*, where blind

men like myself, or cultivated townsfolk, were hounded by boredom and killed time. They wore the ordinary European dress: a little walking-stick in the hand, spectacles on the eyes, long narrow trousers and a white collar, and on their heads a "melon" hat. Among them I had acquaintances – amiable, well-bred, and every one of them carried away by the delirium of being a "writer." In the *sad* the poet Mochorian would be waiting for me, hunting for a listener. He would take out of his breast his carefully written verses and read them to me:–

> *In the blue of the heavens the stars are ashine,*
> *And thunder and lightning pour down on this head of mine.*

– or something of the sort. And he would want my opinion. I praised him smoothly, though in truth I understood nothing of it.

Here I present to you Sedrak – Mnjoyan, I think – who, back in Moscow, had been my first preacher of the Dashnaktsutiun. He too waits for me as for his own pupil, and repeats the same lessons in different words.

And here is his gainsayer, Vehapetian, whose very name commanded my awe. He accepted Mnjoyan's national views, but he would add: – "It is only by international reforms and by revolution that we can be delivered."

There were others too, of more extreme mind: "Strike at every ruler, whoever he may be." One of these went as far as the Transvaal, to help the Boers.[7] I met him aboard a ship bound for India. He had traveled the whole of America as the agent of Singer, and wanted to go back to his Gyumri, after fifteen years of wandering.

Outside this circle of ours there were other circles too, that walked under the trees each apart. They were couples, cleanly dressed, the men in the uniforms of the intelligentsia or of the *gymnasium*.

There were also young men of grave and preoccupied aspect, a little older,

who traced marks on the ground with their walking-sticks as though they were members of the general staff of some great power, and who looked at us so coldly that there was no coming near them.

– Do you know who that group are? – one of our own set would explain. – They are the ones expelled from the Seminary. That one is Avetik Isahakian,[8] who writes verses in the manner of our *Yarjat*, and, like a backward *tiratsu*, copies either the Song of Songs or the peasant songs of Aparan. He is not modern. He is neither Nadson(*) nor Lermontov.[9]

– And that one there is no Gyumri man; he is a countryman of yours, and one of the expelled as well. His name is Vahagn Demirjian. They say he is a good sculptor. But what is to become of a man who eats the bread of Echmiadzin? He wants to go to Aparan[10] and turn *ter-ter*.

In this way I gathered particulars about the others as well. We argued – or rather we gossiped – and we wished very much that these elders would count us as men; but they kept themselves far off, reckoning us, no doubt, as "whelps."

My acquaintance with Gyumri was bounded by its wretched garden and by the denizens of that garden, whom I have presented. Gyumri itself, with its inhabitants, had been as uninteresting to me as a forest: it appeared to my eye a collection of "*lotis* and *kros*" – and how was I to attach myself to it, being an "*intelligent*"?

How arrogant they were, the denizens of the *sad* – in love with their own selves!

One day, when I was proudly repeating by heart the lines "In the blue of the heavens the stars are ashine, and thunder and lightning pour down on this head of mine," a Gyumri man in wide trouser-legs said to me:

– Hey, *durumsagh*, if the stars are shining and the sky is blue, then why are thunder and lightning pouring down on your head?

(*) A Russian poet, whose works set the whole of Russian youth weeping.

That "*durumsagh*," and Gyumri's *sad* with its torpor, drove me to despair and convinced me that it was the emptiest town on the face of the earth.

In 1904, when I came to Gyumri after going round the districts of Takht, Basen, and Kars, I was a changed man – but Gyumri was where it had always been. I remembered the abuse "*durumsagh*," and did not so much as look toward the *sad*; I passed close by the black-and-red-domed churches, and did not notice them.

Hagop Zilinkarian, who was a Gyumri man, said:

– The boys are bound to be hard-pressed just now; they are at their work. Let us go first and see what is going on.

And he led us to a house where men were coming in and going out as though it were a *bit bazaar* [flea-market]. Before the door they spoke aloud; in the passages, in whispers. We went into the hall: all were silent, as though they were novices. A table stood there, and about it men were sitting in a jumble; and in their midst a handsome man in a starched shirt and a necktie, to whom they gave the name Vahan Zallatian.[11]

When we came in they rose to their feet, saying "Ah, welcome!" and offered us places. Vahan took Sergei and Hagop at his right hand and at his left. Me he did not know. I remained standing; but they found a corner for me as well.

– Forgive us; it will not take an hour to finish these friends' business. Two hours a day we meet here, so as to be free of the street, of the shop, and of the workshop, and to see to affairs at our ease, – Vahan explained. Then, turning to those who were waiting their turn, he said: – Speak briefly, and come up in order.

One after another the representatives of the committees and of the sub-committees came forward. They had come to settle accounts. From their breasts they drew out their balance-sheets and presented them; from their pockets they drew out the money and counted it, and took a provisional receipt, to serve until the accounts should be verified – when they would receive

a receipt with the red seal.

After them came those with reports to make, the petitioners, and those who had come on this business or that; each one of them was satisfied with a short answer, or else given a fresh appointment for the night.

These proceedings, moving like a picture-show, however interesting they might be to onlookers such as ourselves, were wearying to the men who carried them out. Vahan Zallatian handed his part over to one of his comrades, whose name I do not remember, and invited us into the next room to drink coffee. With enthusiasm he laid out the state of the district. Though in everything he pointed out his own part, still, on the whole, it appeared that this party district of Gyumri was on the rise, and that its rank and file breathed and lived through the Central Committee.

I could see no difference at all between Kars and Gyumri. Gyumri was the same as Kars. The town was divided into quarters, the districts into circles, the circles and the wards into bands. Band, Sub-Committee, Committee, Central Committee. The same as in Kars – an Armenian government within the Russian government: the first real, the second a form.

What I have said of the district of Kars would present Gyumri and its districts, if one changed the men's names and the features of the players. Only – the difference lay in this alone, that Kars was a frontier district, and there were frontier fights there and soldiers who took part in them; whereas here, in Gyumri, there was none of that, and in its stead Gyumri was the place that furnished those fights with munitions and with the rest of their stores.

Hagop Zilinkarian was pleased that his native ground was no district to hang its head. I was so carried away by Vahan's account that I all but rose to kiss him.

But for Vahan Zallatian our praise, mine and Hagop's, counted for nothing. What counted was to win Sergei's approval, for Sergei had become the idol of the province of

Kars. Vahan watched him and wanted to make out his impression. But Sergei looked at the ground and let nothing be understood. At last he found his tongue and asked:

– And what are we, that you tell us all these fine things?

– That you may understand the position. We are a neighboring district.

– Only – your position is not a very good one. You are a member of the Central Committee, and it is dangerous for a member of the Central Committee to put himself on show. The *gordzichs* can do that. Is there really no one else here, that you and your comrades have thrown yourselves out into the open?

– I understand, – Vahan answered, stung. – We are not the Kars Central Committee, to hang the *davul* [the big drum] about our own necks and put the *chombakh* [the drumstick] into the *gordzichs*' hands. Our work we do with our own hands. We are neither idle nor cowardly.

– You are mistaken. It is no question of idleness or of cowardice, but of the Central Committee's safety. A fish is taken by the head; and you are putting your head on show and endangering the whole organization.

– There is nothing of the kind. In Kars the population is mixed; here it is unmixed. In your house there is a thief; here there is none at all. Here there is no need to play blind-man's-buff.

Sergei heard him out with displeasure and made no answer, but muttered under his breath: "I do not understand what these men are after."

When we had parted from Vahan Zallatian and were left with Hagop – who, like me, was full of admiration for Zallatian – Sergei said:

– In Kars we have Plo Tapalur, who is dear to us because his braggadocio does harm to himself and good to the party. He is a child; he looks for nothing but to draw attention to himself and to earn the caress of an *aferim* [well done]. Your Vahan is other goods. What he is after is dark. There is danger for you here. To be rid of him a day the sooner is a mercy.

Hagop was displeased with these opinions of Sergei's. I too found Sergei's negative attitude strange.

Was Sergei, then, one of those who strike at the head of any man who shines, who spends himself and shows zeal? I told him what I thought, and it wounded him deeply. Embittered, he answered:

– Very well; let it be as you say. His hide we will know at the *dabakhana*[12] – the slaughterhouse.

A year passed, or two. Those who came from the Caucasus told how Vahan Zallatian, the object of my admiration, had carried off a rich man's son to squeeze money out of him; and how, in fear of the party's *ahabekum*, he had fled and vanished into the depths of Russia. I was astonished; I was greatly shaken; and I repented of having wounded Sergei for nothing. I wrote to him about it. He answered me:

– It is Hagop now who is seeking V. Zallatian's death. Did I not tell you that the hide of such men can be known only at the *dabakhana*?

I granted that Sergei was in the right, and was convinced that to know a man by instinct, without evidence, is no small thing after all. But that gift, as it appears, had not been given to me nor to Hagop, but only to Sergei.

I had been often in Gyumri, but I had never come to know it as it needed to be known. Hamo Janpoladian, though of the rich class, was a sociable man who got into every hole and corner; I took up with him. He said to me:

– To come to Gyumri and breakfast at home, never to stand before the bakehouse and eat Gyumri's *yaghli*, means to understand nothing.

And so we did: we went to the bakehouse to eat the *yaghli*, which in savor is different from the *yaghli* of other places. Among the customers was a blacksmith's apprentice of twelve, with a sooty nose.

– My *usta* [master] wants four *yaghli*, but they are to be piping hot.

– Hey, *oghul* [my boy], how can they be piping hot? By the time you carry them there, they will be cold.

The boy, with his sooty nose, flared up:

– "*Oghul*" yourself. Since when have I been your *oghul*, *durumsagh*?

– Hey there – what did I say, that you call me *durumsagh*, you son of a dog? I have no *yaghli*.

– Look at him, look at him – you'll get my blood up till I take a stone to you and lay you out like a dog. *Khtin ashe* [look here] – hand over your *yaghli*, or I'll come and give you what's coming to you.

This unequal combat, between the sooty-nosed little fellow and the thick-set baker with the twirled mustaches, was diverting and full of interest. The customers went on eating their *yaghli* and waited, with twinkling eyes, for the end of this cockfight; while Hamo poured oil on the fire with his laughter and said to the baker:

– The boy is in the right; his *usta* wants his *yaghli* piping hot; why do you keep him waiting? – And turning to me he added: – Gyumri is like this. Great and small, it wants a fight. And if there is no fight to be had, it will open one over the hot and the cold of a *yaghli*. – The right is yours, – he said, turning to the boy; – eat half of my *yaghli*, until the oven turns out hot ones for your *usta*.

The boy measured Hamo with a scornful eye and said:

– What is this? Do you take me for a beggar, that I should eat your leavings?

The fight might well have turned upon us. We licked our fingers and made our way toward Vagho's *padval* [the cellar].

Vagho's *padval* had made a name for itself; men spoke of it even beyond the bounds of Gyumri. But wherein its excellence and its worth consisted, the man who knew did not say; and the man who did not know spoke of it as though it were the monastery of Jerusalem, or of St. Karapet.[13]

– You have been to Gyumri; did you go into Vagho's *padval*? – men would ask one another.

– No. I looked for it, but I did not find it.

– Then you have seen nothing at all. I have been inside; I have kissed Vagho's forehead too, and drunk his sweet wine.

But do not suppose that the man was telling the truth. He had neither gone into Vagho's *padval* nor set eyes on Vagho and kissed his forehead. The whole of it he had imagined, and by it he wished to show how near he stood to Vagho's business.

Many of our soldiers, of the depot-guards, and of the arms-carriers would say:

– How often I told Vagho not to send the weapons in great crates – there would be no hiding them – and he never lent an ear.

But there was no believing what they said. It is true that the weapon in the soldier's hand, and those that lay in our depots, had been come by thanks to Vagho; but the soldier himself had never so much as been in Gyumri, and where Vagho's *padval* was, and who Vagho was, he had never known.

The members of the Central Committee, and the comrades of mark, were proud that there was abundance in their arms-depots. They were like the beekeeper who is proud of the abundance of the honey he takes. But as the beekeeper does not know how that honey is made, nor which kind of bee makes it, so those comrades did not know the source of the munitions they had, nor the manner and the means of getting them. This alone was known to them: that Padval Vagho could give them as many weapons as they had strength to hide away. And if such men, after Zallatian's fashion, told you, "This we settled with Vagho, this we planned," you were not to lend an ear. The truth was that Padval Vagho had authority from the Central Committee to do whatever he pleased – to pour out the weapons he brought, safely, at an appointed place, and take no payment.

And if I too should tell you that I know the whole of the matter, do not lend an ear. That was known to Vagho alone, and to Bidza of Sivas (Harutiun),[14] who kept what they did and what they knew inside their own bellies.

What I do know, Sergei and Hagop told me: they stood nearer to the business, and were very intimate with Vagho. And since the district of Kars was the chief hiding-place of the war-material that was got, it is the likelier that what they told was true and real. They had assured me that the source of our depots at Takht, Basen, and Kars was Padval Vagho; and they had charged me, likewise, to breathe no word of it, if I did not wish to bring my head into danger.

Hamo leads me to Vagho's *padval*.

"*Padval*," "*padval*" – when they said it, I would picture to myself the Delipudzur[15] of Tiflis, with its white cloths, its flower-vases, its shining bottles and its dishes and its dainties of every sort, where there is everything

except a seasoning made of nightingales' tongues. I was preparing myself, from the heart, for a good *keyf* [a fine time] at Hamo's expense.

Hamo stops in a street before a hole, out of which the smell of wine and of other drink comes blowing, and where you must go down under the ground by a winding stair, holding your breath.

In the murk of the half-dark you can just make out a few black tables with nobody at them, and shelves ranged with bottles; in front, the till, and behind it a young man seated. Beyond, a few casks of wine and of beer. So this is what he calls Vagho's *padval*… A door, without window, without light, and without dainties, hollowed out of stone and earth.

– Hamo *jan* [dear], is it you? Where have you been lost all this while? It is a long time since you came near us; you never do the *entor*.[16]

To all appearance the speaker was a close friend: he had taken Hamo's hand and was pressing it, and would not let it go. He shook it and shook it, and with his beautiful eyes he caressed him.

– Vagho, man, what are you saying? *I* do not do the *entor*! It is you that do not do the *entor*; it is your Hagop that does not do the *entor*. He takes me for a whelp; he puts me back from my vow.

– Good, good; I know, I know. Do not take it to heart; we will make something of it. What may I offer you? Who is this with you?

– Wheat of the upper field, like yourself; and I am your tail. I have come – let us see whether my business can be done.

Vagho measured me with a sidelong eye, took on a serious but cordial air, and reached down several bottles from the shelf.

– Which shall I offer you? – asked Vagho; and without waiting for an answer he filled the glasses.

– This is the best of them all. Good luck to you, – he said, and tossed off his own. – Now, Hamo *jan*, tell us how you took it into your head to make your father rich all at once, and to drop the price of salt all at once.

And Vagho held his sides and began to laugh, while Hamo went off like gunpowder. It was only there that I discovered Hamo's talent for economics.

– Vagho, what are you laughing at? Is your head made of wood too, like my father's? My reckoning is right, it is profitable, and it is just. A *pud* [about thirty-six pounds] of salt costs forty kopecks – no? Of that forty, fifteen kopecks go to the middlemen. Fifteen go to the cost of the offices, to the workmen – whose noses have to be wiped for them – to the weigher, to the man who sorts the salt as it comes out, and so on. There is left ten kopecks for the man who works the mine and for the government. Now tell me yourself: if I sell that salt at ten kopecks and save the thirty superfluous kopecks of expense, who is to lose by it, and who is to gain? There are a million people eating salt out of our mine. Let them eat it at a quarter the price. There are a few score, or a hundred, middlemen selling salt. Let them lose too; no matter. There are a few hundred workmen; let them change their terms and work on the new ones. And what was it that I did, that he and my father together should make a laughing-stock of me? I told them all: whoever digs the salt with his own hands and carries it off by his own means, to him I give it at a quarter the price. Men came pouring in on foot, with donkey and with horse, with cart and with camel, with their own picks; they took their loads at ten kopecks; and in three months they carried away more than my father had sold in a whole year. What did my father lose by it, or the government? They gained. Understand that they would take no harm at all if it were sold at five kopecks. Understand that the salt-mine may go a thousand years and never feel that anything has been taken from it. They are misers, and greedy. They know neither how to spend nor how to earn. And you have come and joined with them and laugh at me.

The venom Hamo meant for his father he poured out before Vagho. And Vagho, though he went on laughing, said:

– I tell you honestly, I had not understood the pith of the question; but now I see that the right is on your side. – Hamo was content to have found a man who valued him.

While Hamo was telling his story, a man came and stood over him – tall, sinewy, shapely as a poplar, his beard black, his eyes dark and shining like a cat's – laid his hands on Hamo's shoulders and said:

– I see now that the men who call you a whelp are whelps themselves. Out of you, Hamo *jan*, a man will come. When you are hard pressed, I am at your side.

Hamo's eyes shone.

– Bidza *jan*, sit down. Vagho – pour one out for Bidza. May I be a *matagh* for your soul; the rest of them all call me a whelp and go their way.

When I heard the name Bidza, a shudder took hold of me. Sergei had told me of the soaped rope with which he strangled men. And Bidza seemed to me an old serpent from which there is no escape – though he was a handsome man, and there was nothing monstrous in him.

Vagho and Bidza were the sources of our munitions, and about them were woven feats of incredible daring and resolution.

To these men of legend, needless to say, I put no question about their services; but what Hagop and Sergei told me I will pass on to you.

Gyumri was a military town, filled with barracks. There too were the chief depots of the army for the Transcaucasian front. Those depots were guarded by a special detachment, which every two

hours changed the sentries, and every two hours verified the seals on the sealed doors; and only if these were found untampered with did the sentry take over the watch.

Vagho was handsome, young, unmarried, cheerful and open-handed. He was courteous. Gyumri man though he was, he did not wear the local dress, but military dress – without epaulettes. His party duty of buying arms he had discharged hitherto exactly as Hagop discharged it in Kars; but he had wearied of it, and would say:

"Drop by drop the belly is not filled. Some other road must be found."

He makes the acquaintance of the officer set over the depots, and perceives that the man is in money straits. He stops his gaps, sends him drink and food, and is soon an intimate of the family. And one day he proposes to empty two of the depots entrusted to him, in such a fashion that the seals will stay unbroken and no one will make out the secret. And since a general inspection comes once or twice a year, the officer is from this very moment to petition

for his own transfer. If the secret does come out at last, he will not be the man answerable. Against all this, he is to be paid whatever he asks. They agree, I think, on twenty thousand. At the same time, into the detachment guarding the depots – a thousand men – Vagho puts some twenty-five Armenian soldiers. He organizes them, and out of them chooses the five or six most trustworthy, who were thirsting to go to the Land. He takes their word on it: to live together, to die together, and to take every danger upon themselves.

When all this had been arranged, he lays the matter open to Bidza, with whom he was intimate.

– I take it upon myself to get into the army's depots and to throw out everything that is in them, in front of the door, – he says

to Bidza. – How I will do it, do not ask at all. Can you take it upon yourself – what I throw out – to carry it away, and to move it to a safe place and hide it?

– The work is hard; we may set fire to Gyumri and to ourselves along with it. I cannot answer at once. Let us go and see the ground; afterwards I will answer.

They go; and then they settle upon the following.

The work is divided into three parts, each independent of the others.

The theft itself is to be done by Vagho, with two comrades and with the army's own guard-soldiers.

The carrying-off of the stolen goods, and the duty of losing the tracks, Bidza takes upon himself, with ten comrades, four drivers, one shepherd, four carts, and two hundred sheep. (Those sheep were to graze about the depot, in order to wipe out the tracks.)

The hiding of the stolen goods was to fall to the men of Kars. For this last part they speak with Hagop of Gyumri, who was the *gordzich* of Kars, and whose office it was to buy the weapons.

– We have come to terms with the railway administration to unload the freight of the Tula[17] military trains at a certain station. We can hand the weapons over to you at the foot of such and such a hill. As much as you can hide, so much we can bring. The risk and the safeguarding are yours. At the appointed hour we will leave the goods and go.

– How much can you give, and in how many deliveries? – asks Hagop.

– A wagon a day, if you like; or half a wagon, if you like; or four *furgons* [covered wagons].

– I hope to hide four *furgons* a week; more would be hard. What is the price, and how is it to be paid?

– It is free. If we can make a present of 20,000 rubles, we become masters of goods beyond all reckoning. You are to give the 10,000; the rest we will find. When everything has gone well, we will tell the Central Committees, and they will pay it back.

– I go into that business, succeed or fail. Such a chance

will not come again – unless you are in a *dzughak*.[18]

Hagop calls in the most experienced of the old comrades among the Akhaltskha men – Usul-Mkcho,[19] Levon, Ashik; he calls in Saro of Mush as well, and Aramayis, and others. He undertakes to organize the work of "hiding," and gives Vagho the 10,000 rubles.

After that the three separate operations are carried through with success, and take on the shape of a magnificent detective novel of theft.

Vagho presents himself to his friend the colonel, lays 5,000 rubles down before him, and says:

– You are to take me to the storehouse tonight. You are to open the door, lock it behind me, and seal it. In three days you will have the rest of the sum. And if disaster comes, there is no danger for you: they will find me an unrecognizable corpse.

There is no sentry there. By Vagho's order he has hidden himself, so that he will not see the man who comes, nor the officer know his own sentry. The officer breaks the seal; Vagho goes in. Then the colonel seals the door again and goes his way. Vagho is a prisoner inside the depot.

The sentry appears once the officer has gone off, verifies the seal, and calls out: – "All is in order. Mind your business."

Vagho has one hour and a quarter in which to work. With his fine tools he begins to saw through the eight thick iron bars of the window's cross-frame.

He works feverishly; outside, the sentry goes to and fro with nervous steps, his rifle on his shoulder.

– Five minutes to my relief. Stop. In three days they will bring me back again.

Vagho must stay where he is: he has not been able to saw all the bars through. Like a cat he draws himself back behind the door. There is heard

the measured beat of feet. "*Karaul, stoy*" (Guard, halt!) – the order is heard.[20] They come up; they knock at the door, and the hanging seal swings. "*Karaul, shagom marsh*" (Guard, forward march!). Vagho draws breath. The sentry paces measuredly back and forth.

And so for three days and three nights, once in every two hours, the same business is gone through.

Vagho is hungry, and has no bread; he is thirsty, and has brought with him a single bottle of beer.

On the third day, at midnight, there is a knock at the door.

"It is I." The sentry paces measuredly to and fro before the storehouse. And Vagho has gone back to his work, and in half an hour the window is opened. Its iron cross-bars, all in one piece, are so parted from the wall that it is impossible to see the parting, unless you push hard against it.

Vagho wipes away the traces of the dust, comes out through the window, sets the bars back in their place, closes the window, and out of pure joy kisses the astonished sentry. That same night he presents himself to the colonel, lays the 5,000 before him, and says – "The rest of it later"…

The officer was dumbfounded; he could not understand the miracle that had been worked. The door was shut and sealed, and it was not possible to get out by piercing the wall and the foundation. Vagho misleads him, saying that he had opened the door with a false key and sealed it again with a false seal. So he leads the colonel astray – the colonel, who in the course of three tormenting nights and days had been turned into a skeleton.

Three days later, past twelve o'clock, when the guard withdraws from the depot after the changing of the sentry, three men hidden among the stones come up to the storehouse, having first taken the signals. Vagho lifts out the iron cross-bars, and the newcomers pass inside into the depot. Before ten

minutes are out, Bidza's men come warily up; those within hand out the crates, the others take them on their shoulders and carry them down.

In this way, for an hour and a half, the men outside and the men within work on, without seeing one another and without knowing one another. That operation is performed thirteen times in one month, without a single mishap, until the full storehouse is emptied. One thing only is forgotten: the bag Vagho had brought, with his tools in it, and the empty beer bottle – which was to come to light eight months later.

Bidza is with the carts, four horses to each. When they are loaded and well stowed, he sets the porters, weapons in hand, on the carts, and drives forward. They come up with the empty carts that have arrived from Kars. The drivers are changed on the instant. The men of the loaded carts spring across onto the empty ones and are back in Gyumri by daybreak. And the loaded carts, when they have gone a hundred paces, or four hundred, are met by Hagop's men, mounted and armed, who divide first into two parties and then into more, so that each party may take the goods that fall to its share and hide them in this or that village of the province of Kars, or in a depot – without knowing where those things had been got, or by whose hand. In these last operations many took part; it even fell to my lot to go over the accounts of what was at Meghre and Berna.[21] To me, however, it seemed that the weapons had been bought, or else brought from Tula. Some supposed it a matter arranged with the stationmasters of Gyumri or of Shghzel-Jakhchakh; but there were those who doubted it, the more so as Aramayis had recognized Bidza. Besides, it was not from the stations that the loaded carts had come.

– Be that as it may, these are the devil's work of Vagho and Bidza, – he would maintain.

Whatever the truth of it, this was a fact: we had grown strong in war-material. The multitude felt it, and every man of them, racking his head, wanted to know the source of that "*meden*" (mine), and made up legends of every kind. Some, for instance, said that the doer of it all was Bidza, who carries a soaped rope wound about his waist; and that whomever he suspected of a loose mouth, or of a leaning toward informing, he would take into Vagho's

padval,[22] throw the rope about his neck, strangle him, and drop him into the pit that opens there. And other things of the same sort.

In these unwarranted stories there might be some portion of the truth, since several of the men under Bidza's hand are seen no more. On the other side, the soldiers who helped Vagho likewise vanished away with their rifles, and were never seen again.

The disappearance of Armenian soldiers from the army became a thing that struck the eye. Some said Bidza had done away with them with his rope; others, that Vagho had spirited them off to the Land, so as to lose the track of the theft altogether.

This last supposition is the likeliest, since before long, in Salmast,[23] I was to fall in with two soldiers of the tsarist army from Akhalkalak, by the names of Suren and Grich, who had come there and joined Duman's band. Men whispered to one another that these were Vagho's men and the heroes of Gyumri; but they flatly denied that they were from Gyumri, or that they knew Vagho. Very likely they denied it on purpose, since there was danger of death for them from our side and from the Russian government alike, if they let their secret out.

Before long Vagho's acquaintance the officer vanished without a trace. He could not have earned Bidza's rope, since Vagho alone had dealings with him, and of his theft Bidza himself knew nothing. Afterwards I understood that, feigning sickness and pleading the bad climate of Gyumri, he had asked for a change of post to some other corner of Russia, and had got it.

Before long Bidza too was to vanish out of Gyumri – Bidza, who in the eyes of the people had become a "*bobol*" [a bogey]; whom I saw once, and

whom I am very sorry not to have seen better. Long afterwards I understood that he was from Sivas; and they say that in later years he was martyred in his own birthplace. Where he had gone on working, and under what name, remained unknown to me.

The plundering of the state depot was a fact. The fruit it bore was very great. Some said that tens of millions of cartridges and several hundred rifles had been got. Those figures may be conjecture; but it is no conjectural figure – the load of thirty Molokan[24] carts, which was carried out of that storehouse. What was taken out was used in our frontier fights; it was sent to the Land; it was used in the Armeno-Tatar fights of the Caucasus. But for that stroke of

Vagho's and Bidza's, who knows how feeble our material means would have been, and what would have become of the issue of our struggle.

Vagho, smiling as always, and to all appearance in ignorance of everything that had passed, went on with his usual life in the *padval*, and wondered greatly that his customers had grown so many, and that they looked at him so attentively and so fondly. Now and then, put out of temper, he would grow angry:–

– What are you gaping at (looking at), *oghul*? Do you know me? It is I, Vagho. What are you gaping at?

– Vagho *jan*, I am looking. Are you alive? Are you well? Why should I not look? Pour one out, one for each, that I may drink your health. – And leaving one glass standing on the table, he would toss off the other and go.

The facts were authentic; but not authentic were the stories they gave birth to, which I have set down here – though they pass from mouth to mouth, and are told even by such considerable persons as Sergei and Hagop. They too had heard them, but from others – though they had been with the actual players almost daily, had slept in one room with them and talked with them. There were names – the colonel's,

for instance, and the sentries' – that Vagho alone knew; the carriers' names Bidza knew; and whoever wished to know their secret was reckoned a traitor. And besides, there was no profit in knowing those stories – only harm. The persons and the events, therefore, can be verified only by an examination of the old state archives. That will certainly be come at, for seven or eight months after the theft an inquiry was opened into the emptiness of the depot. But by then there was neither Vagho nor any one of the players left in the town of Gyumri. One bottle of beer, and nothing else, had been left behind in the empty storehouse.

We had come from Kars to Gyumri, but not even we ourselves knew upon what business.

Of my comrades I remember only four – Sergei, Hagop, Rus-Kevork, and Hamo, who had come of his own accord, without being asked. They took us to

the "*nomera*" (hotel) of a man named Kevork, which, oddly enough, put me in mind of the pilgrims' house at Echmiadzin that is called the Ghazarapat.[25] Here there was no monastery, but there was the air of a brotherhood and of pilgrims about the place. Men were lodged in the numbers by groups, according to the parts they came from, and all of them, like us, with the purpose of going to the Land. They looked like representatives neither of the people nor of the party. Some were new Dashnaktsakans, some old; some had already made a name, and some were on the road to making one. It was plain that this was a meeting of travelers bound in different directions – travelers gathered to choose their companions, or to dispose their forces.

"A meeting" – well and good; but I knew not one of them personally. More than that: their pasts and their names said nothing to me either, for I knew nothing whatever of the history of the Dashnaktsutiun, and had no acquaintance with the personalities

then at work. The meeting was of use to a man of Sergei's temper, who was gifted with the faculty of drawing near to the known and the unknown alike and winning them over; but to a man of my hedgehog nature it offered no profit. There was nobody looking for me, and I looked for nobody. So my circle remained what it had been – those who had come from our room in Kars, and Kevork besides, the master of the "*nomera*," who visited everyone and made them merry.

Kevork put one in mind, by his features and his clothes, of the Jews of Warsaw. He was thin and tall; he had a little head on a long neck, and a great nose that hung down over his face. He wore a little Warsaw cap and a long black overcoat that came near to reaching his feet. That garment was neither a *cherkeska* nor an overcoat. Kevork was forever talking, and wanting to raise a laugh, though he never managed it. From room to room he carried the news.

One day he brought us word that the Erevan men had come. Who the Erevan men were, and why they had come, we did not know; but our curiosity was roused. I went out – and, to my astonishment, came face to face with Hovhannes Makarian, one of my comrades from the Seminary, whom, for his narrow brow and his frizzled hair, we used to call the "chimpanzee"(*). I was overjoyed. I ran and threw my arms about him, and we kissed. Calling him "chimpanzee," I asked him for news of the Seminary's teachers and of our

comrades; and he, calling me "gorilla," answered. I asked him why he had come, and who these were that he had at his back.

— The men with me, — said he, — are nobody at all: merchants of a sort, and I have got in with them to earn myself a bellyful of bread. I mean to trade with them; we buy hides, wool, barley, and the rest of it.

I understood, and pressed him no further. In my turn I invented a lie of my own: that I was on leave, being an officer, and that in a fortnight I should be taking up my post in Gyumri. For the present I had hired a "*nomer*"

(*) A kind of ape.

(room) here, and I knew none of these *apur-jupur* (worthless, good-for-nothing) people. Naturally, he did not believe me either.

What were they for, these childish lies between two who stood so close — lies I am sorry for to this day? That very day I learned that one of the men in their room was Tokhmakh, Poghos of Kghi, and another Gayl Vahan;[26] the names of the rest I do not remember. And Hovhannes, who was a novice like myself, had come with them, perhaps without knowing why he had come. Those lies of ours were the reason that I never went into Hovhannes's room, and remained a stranger to his comrades, and they to me. I am sorry for it, because I was never to see those men again, and was never to learn their thoughts and their longings. Every one of them was to be martyred a few months later, in the fighting at Khorun and Mosuni,[27] and I was to hear of their death in the village of Kishmish-Tapa, which lay hardly a few score kilometers from the places where they fell.

Hovhannes was a Zok, from Agulis.[28] In the Seminary they wanted to make of him a meek and Christian man; but he was a rebel, and always ready to find fault with any rule or order that did not answer to his taste. With him I used to race, and to play at "fortress"; many a time we quarreled in the middle of those contests, and out of that an intimacy had grown. More than this about him I did not know. How he had come into the Dashnaktsutiun, and what work he had done, has remained unknown to me. One thing, however, is plain: since he was traveling in the company of Gayl Vahan and Tokhmakh, he must have counted for something. His brothers went on serving the same

ideas, and played a certain part in public life. Of the Makarian brothers, Minas died lately in Tehran; of the others I have no news.

Next door to the Erevan men's room there lodged a restless

man of European features, his face always shaven, who was continually going in and out of the Erevan men's room. Once Sergei said to me:

– Boy, what are you drawing into yourself for? You want to go to Van, and you never look a man in the face. Let us go to Yerkat.

Hagop joined us, and we went together. Who Yerkat was I did not know. I had heard only legendary things about him: that he was an American, and a member of the Responsible Body of Sasun, who had come back for the General Assembly[29] and was going to the Land again. All that made him, in my eyes, a superman,[30] to whom the name Yerkat – Iron – answered exactly. He was of middle height, firm-bodied and broad in the shoulder; his eyes were blue tending toward green, and his hair fair. His kindly smile could not hide the sternness of his nature. His shaven mustache and beard made a strange figure of him in those years, when everyone wanted a long mustache and a thick beard. When Yerkat saw Sergei he brightened; to all appearance he had a great respect for him, or a great regard.

– You show yourself seldom, – he said. – I am busy too; I cannot go hunting for you…

And indeed he seemed very busy. The table was covered with papers; it was as though he had opened an office. He spoke literary Armenian, and did not betray his Armenian peasant origin as the rest of us did. He rounded his words as he brought them out, which must of course have been the effect of America. In general he was not like us: he had a pencil in his hand and a pocket-book, and as we talked he noted down the points worth keeping. He came at a question straight, without windings and without long preambles. Suddenly Yerkat turned to Sergei:

– *Jrsir*,[31] this one at your heels – what fruit is he?

Sergei made me known to him, and declared his admiration, and added that I had it in mind to go to Van. Yerkat looked at me, a little better disposed.

– So it is Van you want to go to? Very good; but can you make anything of it? I was there a few months ago. After me

two young men reached the place as well. Are you not a comrade of theirs?

It was agreeable to me that Yerkat spoke without reserve; but I had no notion either of Van or of those who had gone to it.

– I have not been in Van, – I said; – but I have heard of it. I know that it is Armenia. If I cannot make anything of it, it may make something of me. As for those two young men who went to Van after you, they have never been comrades of mine, nor have I any notion of them.

Yerkat looked at me, and then, turning to Sergei, asked:

– Do you get letters from your Nikol? Do you know that he has refused to have dealings with the Van men? He has taken the name of Ishkhan upon himself, has gone over into the mountains of Rshtunik, and has organized a district of his own, apart from Van. Do you know Koms – the one who was sent to Van as a painter? It comes out that the man is a native of Van himself.[32] That is no bad thing; he can get on with the local men. But there is this drawback to it as well: that Sasun will suffer for it, and the material sent may never reach its place. – Yerkat, a little put out, went on. – They are strange men. I had left some articles and a hundred gold pieces, to be forwarded to Sasun. The men have gone and written after me that it is not worth sending out a special courier to forward them; and in the same breath they add that here too they are in want. – Is this work?

We understood nothing of it, the more so as we had no connection whatever with Van. Yerkat, seeing it, softened his anger and turned to me with a jeer:

– You want to go to Van; but have you settled your name and your standing? You have come late; there is no title left for you.

His words seemed to me insulting, and I said:

– Mr. Yerkat, I settled my name and my standing this very minute. My name is *Asegh* – the Needle – forged out of your Iron.[33] At need

I sew with it; and where the place calls for it, I prick. Are you content with that?

– Hey, boy, this one seems to bite; but what he said was very much to the purpose, – said Yerkat, smiling. Sergei and Hagop were laughing too, and, going on with their introduction of me, told him that I was a Russian officer, like Torgom.

– Since that is so, come with me – but neither to Sasun nor to Van: to the middle place between the two. – And drawing a map out from among his papers, he went on: – We have astonishingly narrow and petrified notions. Where do you wish to work – Van or Sasun? Where do you wish to go – Sasun or Van? As though there were no other place in Armenia to work in, more peopled, more gifted, more solid, than Van and Sasun. We cannot grasp that in fastening our own eyes upon those two places we fasten the enemy's eyes upon them too. We cannot grasp that by not concentrating upon a single point, and by spreading ourselves through all the remaining provinces as well, we spread our ideas among the masses that live there, and grow the stronger for it; while the enemy, on the contrary, grows weaker, not being able to make out which way to turn. Coming at the question from that side, I will say that although I do not know Ishkhan, I hold his decision to be right and useful – that he would not stay in Van, and chose Rshtunik for the field of his work.

After this preface – which was a most interesting view of the matter, and pointed, it may be, at the chief of all our defects – Yerkat opened out the map of Akhlat, Nemrut, Grgur, and Bitlis[34] that he had enlarged with his own hand, and said in a tone of conviction:

– Look at this map. Without fortifying these places, without mastering them, what worth have Sasun and Van? They are pieces cut apart; martyrs to be strangled each one by itself, and nothing more.

Yerkat had been in Van, and in Sasun, and in Akhlat, and for that reason his words carried weight. Besides that,

VAGHARSHAK (KAYTSAK)

his views seemed logical and just. Hagop and Sergei rained further questions upon him about the map. I did not; everything was plain to me.

We were still busy over the map when there came in a man of the same middle height as Rus-Kevork and Yerkat, firmly built, with chestnut hair and

fair mustaches — Vagharshak of Mush.[35] When Vagharshak saw the map spread open, and ourselves bent over it in curiosity, he cried out:

— Yerkat has found himself a new man, and has opened his map, and is riding his hobby-horse. Give him no ear. What he has spread out there is clever; but it is not a thing that can be brought off.

I had never seen Vagharshak. Sergei and Hagop probably knew more of him than I did, but they too were as though they did not know him. That unlooked-for pronouncement had stupefied us. Yerkat sat down in his chair and said nothing. We too were silent. It was Sergei who broke the silence:

— Mr. Vagharshak, but how can it be that you find what Yerkat has laid out clever, and are yet so much against it?

Vagharshak took fire.

— New chicks have come along, and they want to lay iron eggs. You, Sergei — I know you have done a great deal of work to help Sasun; that work you must double. Understand that both Duran[36] and Sasun are under the threat of death. They have no money: money must be got to them. They have no head: a head must be got to them. They have no cartridges: cartridges must be got to them. They have no weapons: weapons must be got to them. If we do not get these things to them, they will all die; and if they are to die, then we will die along with them. That is the pass we are at; and Yerkat spreads out his map, which I have seen a thousand times, and repeats the same thing over again, and puts you off your road into the bargain.

Yerkat stirred in his place and opened his mouth.

— Vagharshak, I understand you, and I take no wound from your rough words. You say the house is on fire, and the water must be run to the place of the fire. That is your meaning, is it not — and other things you will neither hear nor understand.

— Yes; that is it.

— And it is what I want as well; but the water does not go to its place because you wish it. Read this letter. The moneys I have laid by[37] have no way of reaching their place, because we have no means of getting them there. We have made no road for it beforehand. You say we have need of heads: take

this letter, read it, and you will see that the heads we have are shaking themselves loose and want to be quit of it. You tell us we have need of cartridges and of weapons; but

to get them to their place there must be a road as well, and a possibility. It is for that that I do my thinking. You are forcing me to speak of things that are not to be spoken of here. What you had to say to me, you might have said in private. I do not deny it – since the house is on fire, we must run to the house with our water-vessels, and not stop to go into causes; but for that we need, before anything else, to know the road to the house. Why, then, do you fall into a passion every time we speak over this map?

This scene between two important workers from the Land opened an unknown world to us. At the same time Yerkat rose still higher in my eyes – a man whose boundless self-devotion and self-sacrifice were made subject to his reason. And Vagharshak grew greater in my eyes as well – a man who, setting every kind of reasoning aside, ran fanatically toward the fire. We were brooding a while in silence, when Vagharshak said:

– The right is Yerkat's. I am a man newly come out of the provinces; I let out what came from my heart, without thinking deeply.

Yerkat got up from his place again, and asked me:

– Your comrades say that you understand something of the matter, since you are an officer yourself. Tell us, then, what your opinion is. The map is there before you.

That was a hard examination, the more so as the man, after the scene that had passed, had become an authority in my eyes. I had to think for some minutes before I found an answer.

– I hold that thought of yours to be past dispute, – I said, – that all those isolated places are doomed to failure which have no link with the districts about them, and pursue no like aims with them. What you have spread out here I understood in this way: that the revolutionary points are to be bound to one another like a chain, link upon link; and that for that reason the distribution of forces must be over the links, and not concentrated in one place or two. If I have understood you rightly, I find it well suited

to its purpose. One question, however: – have we in the Sea of Van any fleet at our disposal?

Taken by surprise, he answered:

– Of course not; but we can find boats from time to time.

– If that is so, then, by this map, Akhlat and Nemrut cannot serve as a link between Van and Duran. Nemrut is not a place that can serve the people for a refuge and a field of battle. It is bound to Mush and to Sasun, but cut off from Van by the sea, where there is no fleet. It can be bound to Archesh, to Alashkert, to Erevan; but it cannot be bound to Van without Khut-Rshtunik.[38] And as a field of battle, Nemrut is convenient against attacks made by the enemy from outside, but with that crater's mouth of it, it is inconvenient for our self-defense from within. So that it is a trap for those who take refuge there. That is what I think.

Yerkat did not dispute it; he changed the subject and asked:

– So then – do you mean to come with me, or do you hold to your intention of crossing over to Van?

– Not Van; but I should prefer to go to Vaspurakan. Akhlat is in fact a part of Taron, and I have my prejudices about it: it is too much cut off from the world.

– But you are late. Had you been here a few weeks ago, it would have been easy. Now that Haji Levon and Joj Agha[39] have gone, how are you to go?

– The same way as the others who went, – I answered; and with that answer I drove Yerkat to despair. He put on such a countenance as I cannot forget to this day. It was as though with his look he were saying to me: – "Ah, my dear fellow; ah, you good-for-nothing; why will you not come with me? Why are you so past mending?" That look Rus-Kevork and Sergei caught as well.

– We have tried hard to argue him out of it, – they said; – but he has vowed to be a *matagh* for Vaspurakan.

Yerkat's face turned kind.

– Eh, no matter. Let your vow be fulfilled. A good road to you…

That was my first meeting with Yerkat, and my last. One meeting only – but how many new horizons it opened to me. There had stood up before me a

man in whom feeling boiled; in whom there was a great struggle between reason and feeling; and in whom the two came to terms at last, to the profit of the common cause and to the hurt of his own existence. Yerkat seemed to me a great man.

Next day Sergei and Hagop came back to the room with a packet in their hands. They were sad, as though they were coming from a requiem. Sergei looked at the ground from under his heavy brows; Hagop, like a punished child, scrawled with a pencil on a paper. Neither of them made a sound; it was as though they feared that if they spoke one word they would not be able to hold back their weeping. I went up to the packet and saw written on it: "Not to be opened. When I ask for it, send it to me; if I do not ask for it, keep it. – Yerkat."

Sergei said:

– He charged us to say good-bye to you for him. He has gone off with his own people.

Silence settled on us. The word "gone," "gone," turned heavily in my head, like lead; but I could not ask where he had gone, or why. It was not the custom to put such questions. It might well be that they did not know themselves; and if they did know, the answer to be had would be – "How should I know?"...

Of Yerkat I have no certain information. What there is, is general talk, which makes plain neither his worth as a man nor his worth as a party worker. Happily, that packet of papers which Yerkat left behind is still with me. Now that forty-eight years have gone by, I think I will be committing no sin if I open Yerkat's diary – written in cipher and under false

names – and join it to my Memoirs, to throw some faint light upon his life(*).

There was an interesting man, of an intellectual cast of face, who frequented all the rooms and spoke in whispers, and particularly with the men of importance. Whomever he talked with at any length would go away and vanish; while he himself stayed on, to whisper with others and to speed them on their road. That pale, thin man was not much to my liking. He did not live

in our hotel, but came in from outside. I took him for a man of Vahan Zallatian's sort, or, at the very most, for a schoolmaster.

One day the pale man came into our room. Padval Vagho and Rus-Kevork were with me, and we were chattering. When Vagho saw who had come in, he sprang up on the instant, out of reverence. Kevork and I stayed sitting, and greeted him as one greets a stranger and a chance visitor. Neither I nor Rus-Kevork had any notion who Mr. S. Zavarian[40] was, whom Vagho now presented to us. At that date we might well still not know who was one of the founders of the party under whose flag we had vowed to die. Curiosity of this kind was even reckoned out of place, and, on the score of impropriety, dangerous. In the press, in books, in public meetings, the names of the living and conspicuous leaders were not heard, nor were they spoken of. Our leading men stayed always in the shadow. Smiling, in a soft voice, S. Zavarian talked with Vagho. When he began to ask about Rus-Kevork's past, and understood that he was a student of the third *kurs* (year), he grew much interested in him. And Kevork on his side began to put questions and to probe:

(*) See Volume V.

– Sir, may I know what your office is, and what work you are engaged in?

With his kind smile on his face, S. Zavarian answered that he was an agronomist, and, as such, a servant of the state. And while the two of them were calling each other "*kolleg*" and talking about Moscow, I was thinking: who may this Zavarian be, of whom I had heard in an *ashugh*'s song – "Brave Simon Zavarov, in the mountains of Sasun"...?[41] Surely the song is not about this schoolmaster, I thought. Zavarian looked at his watch and told Vagho to be sure to bring all the boys tomorrow. "I will be there in the morning. You come as well; perhaps it will be interesting." Then he turned to me: – "And you will come, will you not?"

– That Vagho knows, – I answered; and that was the first exchange of words between us.

We are deep in the gorge of Zarkagh,[42] far from Gyumri. There is no scent of man here; only the Akhurian, dashing itself against the stones, makes a noise.

Trampling the flowers, we have come here, fifteen or twenty of us. Zavarian is here too; and some behave toward him with great reverence, and others – those who, like me, have never taken note of who he is – with indifference.

Vagho opens two valises and lays out what is in them, piece by piece. We are strictly charged not to smoke. Zavarian speaks, taking pains that what he says will be intelligible to all. For a preface he takes the proposition that in a fight the quality of the men, and new and perfected weapons, are things of moment. He brings examples out of military history, which astonish those of his hearers who knew nothing of them; while those who had some little knowledge make signs of assent. There were some as well, men of high education, who found what Zavarian said elementary, and were bored.

The subject of the second part was the making of black and white powders and their force; and of what compounds dynamite, melinite,

nitroglycerine, and pyroxylin are composed. Two only, I think, were listening with attention: one, a half-lettered peasant, in whose village they made black powder in the primitive way; the other, myself – because I had learned the whole of it, and with tolerably full knowledge, in order to sit the examinations for artillery officer. The rest were bored.

The third part is on the ways of handling weapons, and in this all take an interest. And when from theory it came to the filling of bombs and the throwing of them, it was worth seeing what ardor Vagho and Rus-Kevork displayed, who rose up on one foot and made trial of throwing the empty bomb at the enemy. I myself was particularly interested in the technique of filling bombs, which was to be of use to me afterwards. But the lecturer himself was not skilled in the practical work, and had gathered his knowledge out of books. He said as much himself.

The lecture ended, and we began to scatter, each his own way.

The gorge of Zarkagh is beautiful in the spring. The snowdrop has withered; but the *datikha*,[43] the yellow flower that is eaten, the violet, and other flowers of many colors are smiling, and make an ornament of the green. The yellow flowers that are eaten I draw into my mouth like a bunch of grapes, and eat them: it was a memory of my childhood – in our parts they eat them. Ahead

of me went Zavarian, gathering flowers with a choosing eye. When he looked at me, he said in astonishment:

– Do you eat that?

– Yes, – I answered; – I eat what is to be eaten, and throw away the rest, that is good for nothing.

My answer struck him as strange, and he asked me:

– Was this lecture of any use?

– Of course not. They heard things, but they did not digest them. In one hour it is impossible to digest a whole science.

SIMON ZAVARIAN

Vagho, taken aback by that rude answer of mine, exclaimed:

– Hey, *oghul*, can you not speak like a human being?

– Vagho, – Zavarian broke in, – he gave a right answer to my question; why are you angry? – And then, turning to me, he said: – From your answer I understand that I have gained my end. My end was not to make digestible, in two hours, a science that I have not digested myself, but only to leave those who know dissatisfied, and to tell those who do not know that they should go and interest themselves in these things.

I objected to what he said; but when my eye fell on the great bunch of flowers he was holding in his hand, I thought within myself: – "What manner of man is this? If he is a revolutionary, how can he be making bouquets of flowers, when the question before him is to be a *matagh*?" In those days I was steeped in one idea

only – to kill or to die. I had no faculty of understanding left in me. Zavarian, whoever he might be, was in my eyes a man of another kind, since he took an interest in flowers. If anyone had told me that this was the founder of the Dashnaktsutiun, that this was the man who disposed of our lives, I should not have believed it; and, disenchanted, I should have gone on holding him a schoolmaster. It was only after 1909 that I came to know him as he ought to be known.

Kevork's "*nomera*" had emptied. Everyone had scattered. The last visitor was Sergei, whom I found in a state of considerable agitation.

– I am going back to Kars, – he said to me; – and you are to go.

The word "go" sounded strange to me. I wanted to say that I too would come to Kars, see my mother, and then go; but I was ashamed, and held my tongue. Sergei gave me two letters: one written by himself, the other a paper in cipher over the signature "Anton."[44] I hid the letters upon me.

We parted from Sergei. He kissed me warmly; and I was indifferent.

Next day Vagho came, to send Hamo and me off to Erevan.

– Four valises have been put into the second class. Keep your eyes on them, but do not claim them for your own. It is your business to bring them safe to Sargis's office.

The valises held explosives and other stores.

– Hamo, – I said, – you are the readier man, and you know Erevan besides. Take the responsibility upon yourself and get those valises to Sargis; I am under your orders.

– Why not? For empty business of this sort Hamo

is a ready hand; he can take a responsibility on himself. For other things he is a whelp, – said Hamo bitterly. – Very well, I accept your proposal; only, you are to meddle in nothing. Vagho's arrangement is wrong from the root. How is it possible to bring four valises safe to their place, when they travel second class and with no owner, and we travel third and without the valises? That is cowardice, or else folly.

– Very well, Hamo; do as you please.

Hamo left me and went off. Panting, our train raced on toward Erevan. I cracked sunflower seeds, and littered the place about me like a Russian *muzhik*.

The hours went by, and Hamo was lost and nowhere to be seen. We pass through the plain of Aparan. I am uneasy. At the Echmiadzin railway station I got down from the train to look for Hamo. I found him in the second class.

Russian officers and townsmen were gathered about him; they were pouring down wine and vodka and making a *keyf*. When I saw that, I grew easy, and drew back into my own wretched carriage.

We have reached the station of Erevan. The gendarmes are at their work, scanning the travelers. One of them looked hard at me; I shrank, and got quickly out of the station. All at once I saw Hamo – but he was not alone: he was with an officer I did not know. I was very much afraid, for I supposed that he had been arrested. But I see that the two of them are laughing aloud, and that behind them come the porters with the valises on their backs, calling – "*Faiton*! *Faiton*!" [a carriage]. Hamo noticed me, came up, greeted me, took me by the hand, and led me to the officer, who was busy bestowing Hamo's valises upon the carriage.

– Might there be room in it for my office servant as well? – he asked. – If there is not, let me hire a second carriage.

– No need; there is a seat in front, – answered the officer, and made my acquaintance.

Before long our carriage stopped. Hamo, having made an appointment with the officer for supper that evening, sprang out of the carriage together with me. We took the four valises, full of dynamite. In spite of the officer's protests, Hamo paid the Turkish driver handsomely, and directed him to carry the officer wherever he wished to go. When the carriage had driven off, we shouldered the valises and, walking a few steps, went into Sargis's shabby office of timber and iron.

Notes

[1] Haik the Patriarch – Հայկ Նահապետ, the legendary forefather of the Armenians, who in the national tradition slew the tyrant Bel and settled his people in the highlands. "From the days of Haik" is the Armenian idiom for immemorial antiquity.

[2] Our Lady of the Seven Wounds — the Yot Verk church of Gyumri (Alexandropol), named for its miracle-working icon of the Mother of God pierced by seven wounds; the city's chief shrine and the goal of its pilgrimages.

[3] Anahit — the great goddess of pre-Christian Armenia, patroness of fertility and of the land's increase, whose principal temple stood at Yeriza (Erez) in the district of Ekegheats, near Yerznka. Ancient authors report that girls of the noble houses served in her sanctuaries before marriage; Rouben's aside about "the vow, the sacrifice" recalls that notice.

[4] Kumayri was the ancient name of the town; the Russians renamed it Alexandropol in 1837, after the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. The *stolyar*'s etymology from *gömrük* (Turk., a customs-house) is the popular one; the learned one, which Rouben had from G. Khalatian of the Lazarian Academy in Moscow, derives Kumayri and the ancient district-name Gamirk from the Cimmerians, the steppe people who broke into Asia Minor in the seventh century B.C.

[5] Ani — the capital of the Bagratid kings of Armenia in the tenth and eleventh centuries, "the city of a thousand and one churches," a ruin from the Mongol period onward; it stands about twenty-five miles from Gyumri, and both lie in the ancient province of Shirak.

[6] Aragats — the highest mountain of Russian (Eastern) Armenia, 13,420 feet, its four peaks visible across the whole Shirak plain.

[7] The Transvaal and the Boers — the Second Boer War (1899–1902), in which the Boer republics fought Great Britain; volunteers from across Europe, and radicals of every stripe, went out to serve with them. — The man's later employment is given in the source as «Զինդերի ներկայացուցիչ»; the letters are read here as Զինզեր, i.e. Singer, whose traveling sewing-machine agents were proverbial in America. The reading is probable, not certain.

[8] Avetik Isahakian (1875–1957) — afterward one of the great poets of the Armenian language; at this date newly expelled from the Gevorgian Seminary at Echmiadzin, and dismissed by the young men of the *sad* as a provincial imitator of the Song of Songs and of village song. The manner "of our *Yarjat*," to which they compare him, is unresolved in the printed text; the letters give no known name.

[9] Nadson — Semyon Nadson (1862–1887), the melancholy Russian poet whose early death made him the idol of a generation; the author's own footnote below identifies him. Lermontov — Mikhail Lermontov (1814–1841). To the Gyumri literary set they were the measure of everything "modern."

[10] Aparan — a highland district north of Erevan, named two lines earlier in the same speech; the printed text here reads «Աբրահան», which corresponds to no place, and is emended.

[11] Vahan Zallatian — the chapter's subtitle prints the surname ՋԱԼԼԱԹԵԱՆ, the body «Զալլաթեան»; the display face of this edition does not distinguish Ջ from Զ. Զալլաթ (Turk./Arab. *cellât*) means "executioner," so the name is very probably a by-name rather than a family name.

[12] *Dabakhana* — a tannery; the author glosses it «(սպանդանոց)», slaughterhouse. The proverb behind Sergei's answer is the tanner's: what a hide is really worth is not known until it is stripped and worked.

[13] St. Karapet — the monastery of St. Karapet (St. John the Forerunner) in Taron, near Mush, the chief place of pilgrimage of the Armenians of the Ottoman provinces. With Jerusalem it made the pair of great pilgrimages; to invoke the two together, as Rouben does of a cellar tavern, is deliberate blasphemy of the mildest and driest kind.

[14] Bidza — the man's by-name, not a surname: *bidza* is the dialect word for "uncle," in the familiar, half-deferential sense. His true name, as the author gives it here, was Harutiun, and he came from Sivas — the printed text spells the ethnic «Սվաձցի» and «Սվաջզի» on pp.212 and 222, the letters Ձ/Ձ/Ջ being indistinguishable in this face; Sivas is confirmed by the notice that he was afterward martyred in his birthplace.

[15] Delipudzur — printed «Տելիպուձուրը», evidently the name of a celebrated Tiflis restaurant or wine-cellar. The letters give no known word or name, and no such establishment has been identified. UNRESOLVED; the form is kept as printed and awaits a print-check.

[16] *Entor* — printed «ենտոռը», and always governed by the verb "to do" («ենտոռը չես ըներ», "you do not do the *entor*"). It recurs four times in this one exchange and nowhere else in the book. The word is not standard Armenian, and the letters give no known form; from the context it must be some Gyumri idiom of reproach for keeping away from one's friends — something on the order of "you never show your face." The sense is UNRESOLVED, and nothing is invented for it here: the word is left standing as it stands in the source.

[17] Tula — the great arsenal city south of Moscow, whose state small-arms works armed the Russian army; the "Tula military trains" are the arms shipments coming down to the Caucasus front. The book prints the name with Թ on p.217 and with S on p.220 («Թուլայի», «Տուլայէն»); the two are harmonized here to Tula.

[18] *Dzughak* — printed «ձուղակի». The letters give no standard word, and the phrase — "such a chance will not come again, unless you are in a *dzughak*" — permits several readings (a trap, a joke, a hoax). UNRESOLVED; nothing is supplied for it.

[19] Usul-Mkcho — printed «Ուսուլ-Մկչօն», the by-name of one of the veteran Akhaltskha men. The letters resolve to no known name or word. UNRESOLVED; kept as printed.

[20] The sentry's commands are Russian, and the author glosses them himself in the Armenian: Караул, стой! ("Guard, halt!") and Караул, шагом марш! ("Guard, forward march!"). They are the ordinary formulas of the changing of the guard, and their regularity — every two hours, for three days and three nights — is what Vagho is working against.

[21] Meghre and Berna — two of the Kars-province caches whose accounts Rouben audited; the readings are uncertain («Մեղրէի եւ Բեռնայի»). So too the rail station "Shghzel-Jakhchakh" («Շղզել-Ջախչախի»), which may stand for Ghzyl-Jakhjakh. Flagged for a print-check.

[22] *Padval* — Russ. подвал, the cellar, which the author glosses himself, «(գետնայարկը)». The letters դ and դ are set in all but identical glyphs in this typeface, and cannot be told apart here; the same glyph stands on p.212 and on p.221. There is one word, and it is *padval* — the cellar Rouben describes at length on p.213: a hole in a street, a winding stair down under the ground, no window and no light, a few black tables, casks of wine and beer, a till, hollowed out of stone and earth.

[23] Salmast — the district of Persian Azerbaijan, south-west of Lake Urmia, which was the A.R.F.'s base and crossing-place for men and arms going into the Land; Rouben will come to it in a later chapter. Duman — Nikol Duman, whose band was then forming there.

[24] Molokan carts — the Molokans were a Russian dissenting sect, settled in the Caucasus by the state and known throughout it as carters and freighters; their long four-horse wagons were the standard measure of a heavy load. "Thirty Molokan carts" is Rouben's way of giving a figure he can vouch for, against the millions of cartridges he cannot.

[25] The Ghazarapat — a building of the monastery of Echmiadzin, named for the Catholicos Ghazar in whose time it was raised, and used to lodge the crowds of pilgrims at the Mother See. Rouben had been a pupil of the Gevorgian Seminary at Echmiadzin, and the comparison is his own: a house full of strangers, sorted by the districts they came from, all of them bound on one errand.

[26] Tokhmakh — "Mallet," the nom de guerre of Poghos of Kghi; he appears again in Ch. VII, where Nikol Duman offers him to Rouben as an escort for the road to Van. Gayl Vahan — "Wolf Vahan," the band-leader of Ch. IV, in whose band Minas was killed.

[27] The fighting "at Khorun and Mosuni" — the printed text here reads «Քոռուն եւ Մոսունի». The same pair of names appears in Ch. IV, once as «Փոռուն Մոսունի» (p.154) and once at the death of Minas, "the battles of Khorun and Mosuni" (p.170). The initial letter is not distinguishable in this face (Ք/Փ/Ֆ), and no engagement of 1904 has been identified under either name. UNRESOLVED; the Ch. IV body-form is kept here for consistency. Kishmish-Tapa, the village in which Rouben heard of the deaths, likewise awaits identification.

[28] The Zoks — the Armenians of Agulis in Nakhichevan, whose dialect was so far removed from common Armenian as to be scarcely intelligible to other Armenians, and who were proverbial through the Caucasus as traders. Cf. Levon Kalantarian, the Zok of Ch. I, who gave up his fortune "to go as a *matagh*."

[29] The Responsible Body (Պատասխանատու Մարմին) — the standing directing organ which the A.R.F. set over each of its regions inside the Land; Sasun had its own. The General Assembly is the party's supreme council; the one then sitting was reconsidering the whole of the work in the Ottoman provinces, and had called the field-workers home to it. "Yerkat" — "Iron" — is a by-name, and the man behind it is one whose history Rouben says below he was never able to establish; he promises the diary in Volume V.

[30] "Superman" — the page reads «գերմարդ»: գեր- ("over, super") + մարդ ("man"), the Armenian for the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, a word current among Russian-educated Armenians in 1904. It turns neatly on the by-name: the legendary American was, in Rouben's eyes, a superman whom the name Iron suited exactly.

[31] «Ջրսիր» — Yerkat's opening word, which forms no known Armenian word. The letters are [Ջ/Ձ]-ր-u-ի-ր; Ձ and Ջ merge in the capitals of this face, so the first is undecidable. UNRESOLVED; nothing is invented for it, and the letters are given as they stand.

[32] Nikol — Nikol Mikayelian, who on reaching Vaspurakan took the name of Ishkhan ("Prince") and organized the district of Rshtunik apart from the Van committee (Ch. IV). Koms — Vahan Papazian, sent to Van under cover of being a painter, and afterward Ottoman

deputy for that city. Yerkat's complaint is not against the men but against the geography: what Van keeps, Sasun never receives.

[33] The retort turns upon the two by-names. Yerkat is "Iron"; the needle is the small thing forged out of iron, which sews when it is wanted and pricks when the place calls for it.

[34] Akhlat — the town and district on the north-western shore of Lake Van, under the volcano of Nemrut, lying between Taron (Mush and Sasun) and Vaspurakan (Van): which is the whole argument of Yerkat's map, and the "role and significance of Akhlat" that the chapter's title-page announces. Nemrut — the great extinct volcano above Akhlat, with a lake in the mouth of its crater. Bitlis — the town commanding the pass from Lake Van down toward Mesopotamia. "Grgur" («Գրգուռի»), the mountain named with them, is uncertain in the reading and is not identified with confidence; the form is kept as printed.

[35] Vagharshak of Mush — Kaytsak ("Lightning") Vagharshak of Ch. IV, afterward commander of the cavalry regiment at Zivin; the photo-plate on the facing page gives the by-name in parenthesis, as the book does.

[36] Duran — a district of Taron north-east of Mush; with Sasun it made the ground of the A.R.F.'s work in the Land, and it is the supplying of the two that Vagharshak is fighting for.

[37] "The moneys I have laid by" — the text prints «Զգած դրամներս», which is no word; the sense requires «Ձգած», money set aside or laid by. Ձ and Զ are all but identical in this face. Emended.

[38] Archesh — the town on the northern shore of Lake Van. Alashkert — the plain to the north-west, on the road down from Russian Armenia. Khut and Rshtunik — the mountain districts along the southern and south-western shore of the lake, Ishkhan's ground. Rouben's objection is that without them, and without boats on the lake, Akhlat and Nemrut hang between Taron and Vaspurakan and touch neither.

[39] Haji Levon and Joj Agha — two men who had lately gone over into the Land by the Akhlat road. *Joj* is the Karin (Erzurum) dialect word for "chief, the big one," so that "Joj Agha" is a by-name and not a name; the reading is not certain.

[40] Simon Zavarian (1866–1913) — with Kristapor Mikayelian and Rostom, one of the three founders of the A.R.F.; an agronomist by profession, and within the party proverbial for his austerity and his self-effacement. The point of the scene is exactly that: a founder of the party can stand in the room and be taken for a schoolmaster.

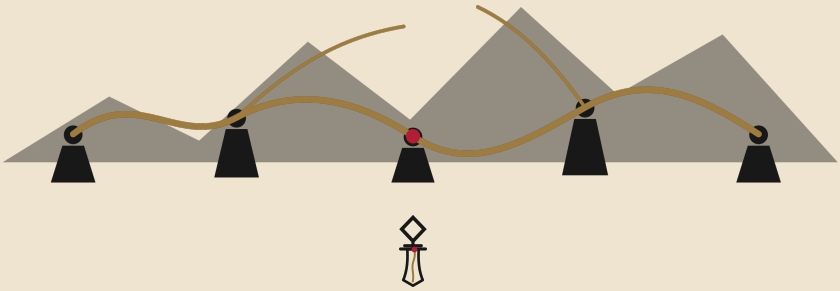
[41] The line is from an *ashugh*'s song, and gives the name in its Russified form, "Zavarov." Rouben had known the song for years without ever attaching it to a living man.

[42] The gorge of Zarkagh — the body prints «Զարքաղի ձորի», the chapter's title-page «ԶԱՐՓԱԶԻ ՁՈՐԻ». The two spellings do not agree, and no such toponym is attested in the Gyumri district; the body form is used here and in the heading. UNRESOLVED. The Akhurian is the river of Gyumri, which runs south to the Arax.

[43] *Datikha* — a spring flower of the Shirak highlands, named between the snowdrop and the violet; the "yellow flower that is eaten" of the next clause is presumably the same. The name is not standard, and the plant is not identified with certainty.

[44] "Anton" — a party cover-name. The word that describes the paper, «խօրզած», is not standard Armenian; from the situation — Sergei is handing over the introductions Rouben

will need in Erevan — it must mean that the note was written in cipher, and it is so rendered. UNRESOLVED.



CHAPTER VII

Erevan and Nikol Duman

Երեւան եւ Նիկոլ Դուման

Erevan to the Persian frontier

IMPRESSIONS OF EREVAN.
SARKIS OHANJANIAN. ADO.
THE OLD AND THE NEW GENERATIONS.
THE EVENING IN HONOR OF NIKOL DUMAN.
MY ROAD IS DECIDED.
FAREWELL TO HAMO. THE BORIAZ.
WITH NIKOL DUMAN TOWARD PERSIA.
KHANLUKHLAR AND SHAKHTAKHTI.

Barely seven months did I stay in the province of Kars, and I can say that of its people I formed a very definite idea, in all their strata. As for the political leadership of that people, I hardly came to know it at all. With Erevan it was otherwise. I had lived for years at Etchmiadzin, and on various occasions had been many times in Erevan and its districts; but having no contact with the people of those parts, I had not been able to know them in all their strata – while on the very first day I came to know the higher leadership of Erevan.

This circumstance made glaring the difference that existed between the two provinces from the point of view of organizational form. Whereas in Kars the people were no riddle,

but their higher leadership was – an intangible essence – in Erevan, on the contrary, the people were a riddle, a thing I could not grasp, while the leadership was a tangible, visible reality. In Kars the will lay with the people, in Erevan with the leadership: which undoubtedly had its drawbacks. From the very first contact I felt it, and fell into a kind of confusion.

With two valises I stepped into the small wooden office, where a handsome, mustached man of the present day was sitting at the desk. He was rather stout, and had a very kindly look about him. When he saw me he asked at once:

– What do you want, my lamb?

But when Hamo came in behind me, his face red and his back bent under the load, he rose to his feet and called out to me reprovingly:

– Help the lad – he's a little one;[1] he'll break his back.

– It won't break, it won't break, *bidza* [old fellow] – *arkhein gats* (don't trouble yourself), – Hamo bristled at once, offended.

– All right, all right; it was for your own sake I said it. What is it you want? Why have you come, and from where?

– We want nothing at all. We want to see Sarkis Ohanjanian.[2] Go and call him; let him put the questions to us.

With a smile he said: – The man you are looking for is myself. Speak.

Hamo, like a man pinned against the wall, objected:

– We want to make what we have to say known to the Central Committee through Sarkis.

Sarkis, knitting his brows a little, answered Hamo:

– The Central Committee is myself as well – and its chairman, too.

Hamo had no way out left:

– You're not joking? You – chairman of the Central Committee?

At last Sarkis lost his temper:

– You young pup, is it a passport you want, or a certificate? Who

are you? That is what you are to tell me.

Understanding before whom we stood, I gathered myself together and kept a becoming silence, while Hamo, who was forever flinging himself forward, went on:

– Since you are everything, then take these four valises that have been brought to you. Vagho sent them – a *hatia* (gift) for you.

– Vagho? Which Vagho? Vagho of Badual? – Sarkis said, half to himself; and suddenly guessing what the valises held, he pulled a sour face.

– Now is that a thing to be bringing here in broad daylight? And what if some mischance had come of it?… What carriage did you come in? Did anyone see you bringing them?…

I kept silent, but hot-blooded Hamo answered:

– You won't take them – very well, I'll carry them back; I can be master of these valises myself. We came by rail; of course people saw us. We hired a driver, who was a Turk, and for a traveling companion we had a Russian officer.

– Vah! Is the boy mad?

I saw that the matter was growing complicated, and turned to Hamo:

– You have finished your business and you have an appointment to keep; go now about your own affairs and leave us here alone.

Hamo went.

I explained the substance of the thing to Sarkis at length – Hamo's resourcefulness too – pointing out that no danger threatened us from the Russian officer or from the Tatar driver. When he had learned how it had gone, his face brightened:

– Well, you should have said so from the start, man alive; then we'd not have had to lecture that raw lad. If that is how it is, sit here in my place, and I'll go and tell the lads of the *Boriaz*(*)[3] to come and get these cleared away.

() Boriaz* was the name given to that fierce wind which rose over Erevan almost every afternoon and covered the whole city with dust. With that apt name a number of over-zealous and eager young men (most of them schoolboys) had christened their own group. Later, during the Armeno-Tatar clashes, it played a great part.

He went, and I fell to wondering why this misunderstanding had come about, and who was to blame for it.

I could not find Hamo guilty. After all, I too, like him, was of the "new generation." And to me as well the attitude the "Old" ones showed us was insufferable – the guardian's part they had taken upon themselves toward us.

Like so many *hayrigs* [little fathers], they even worried that "you may break your back if you lift a heavy valise." These elders of ours did not understand that independence, initiative, daring were dearer to us than their fatherly love – even at the price of breaking our backs. In spirit I was with Hamo.

On the other hand, I wondered what Sarkis had done, that Hamo should christen him with the name of *bidza*. He was an old worker, a man of sacrifice, who but yesterday had been fighting on the plain of Khanasor, and who now was the leader of a whole province, chairman of the Central Committee, and felt himself answerable for the safety of us all. If he did not come at things as we did – we madcaps and hare-brains – that came of the love and the care he bore us all. Was it not ingratitude to feel no reverence for him? I felt myself in the wrong.

These reflections of mine were broken off when two young fellows burst in, asked cheerfully whether these were Vagho's valises, and, without waiting for an answer, took them up and vanished. Of the *Boriaz* they must be, these *chaqu-keshan*[4] (the breakers of every tie, the unbridled ones), who, against the will of the Central Committee, had organized a band of their own, and whose need was always felt in tight days and for daring work of this kind. They too, like Hamo and me,

loved to go unbridled, and would endure neither *khamut* (the horse's collar) nor *palan* [pack-saddle].

An hour passed; Sarkis came back. He looked round on all sides and exclaimed:

– Have they taken them? I forgot to ask – have you no letters, then? What was in the valises? And I never asked you: are you fed, or hungry?

I took out the letters and gave them to him. He read; and when he came to the letter signed "Anton,"[5] his face took on a childlike, happy look, and turning to me he said in a caressing voice:

– So our Simon has taken a liking to you?

– Which Simon? – I asked. – I have brought no letter from any Simon.

– Here is the letter. Have you really never seen him?

Only then did I understand that Anton had been Simon all along. I, disappointed in him, had set him down for a mere "schoolmaster"; and he had written that I "might be of use for making a draft-ox out of a wild bullock."

Sarkis looked the older man of the two, yet he read Simon's letter as though it had come from *durraken*[?],[6] from his adored *hayrig*, lost to him these many years.

All these little things, at a time when I was a yellow-beak and of the new generation, so imprinted themselves upon me that I have not forgotten them to this day. Looking at Sarkis's boundlessly kind face, I concluded that he had such tenderness in him that he took himself for the *hayrig* of us all, and such love that he would not spare even his own life for us. And at the same time he was so patriarchal that he too went looking for a *hayrig* of his own, and believed he had found one in the person of Simon. (A little later I saw that before Nikol Duman as well he became a meek and biddable child, worshipping him and moving at his glance.) I formed the conviction, too, that Sarkis was truly a good *bidza* – kind, disinterested, self-sacrificing. But could he be counted a revolutionary? Could he be chairman of the Central Committee, as he said he was? My answer was no.

My own resolve was very sharp: to free myself from every fatherly guardianship and to walk by my own strength. In Sarkis, on the contrary, tenderness toward the young was so strong that he wished to carry their sorrows himself – which, however, he had no power to do. From this was born that endless conflict between fathers and sons which goes on to this day.

Sarkis, after thinking a little, turned to me and said:

– This evening you will come to our meeting, and you will have your answer. You seem a stranger to the city; I'll commend you to Ado.[7] He is a good head – let him take you in hand; he is to be at the meeting in any case, and you can come together. And see what has become of that madcap, that raw lad. (He meant Hamo.)

Ado was a man of middle height, close to forty, with the look of a schoolmaster. In his face there was an effort to appear venerable; his gaze was directed toward the distances. I was seeing him for the first time (and it was to be the last), but the impression I took from him I kept for long years. What

he did for a living I do not know, and I leave it to those who know to tell it; but to all appearances he was a member of the leading body, and had the thankless duty of taking upon himself the prosecution of the youth and the work of leading them. Ado, as it seemed, performed his part conscientiously. Once he had got hold of me, after a short conversation he noticed at once that my ideas on social questions were wavering and vague, and he laid siege to me with all his powers. He spoke of our social doctrine, set it beside the materialist theories of Marx, brought out the names of Nechayev,[8] of Bakunin, of the men of the French Revolution, and adduced testimonies from history. And all this in such a manner that Galust Aloyan, coming upon our conversation, stood open-mouthed, and with his astonishment seemed to be saying: "You see? We have heads like this among us too." But Aloyan did not hold out long under that downpour of names; and having told

a couple of anecdotes about his wine-works at Tabriz (of which he was one of the founders), he left me to Ado's care and went off, charging us to take supper that evening at his house.

Ado went on with his work of instruction, but I was listening no longer. My mind flew away to the Seminary of Etchmiadzin, where I had been a pupil for long years. A whole company of learned doctors and professors – clerical-minded, it is true, but very thoroughly trained – Kostanian, Karamian, Kanayan, Mandinian, Manandian, Abeghian, Acharian, the two Dikranians, the *vardapets* Karapet and Garegin, the poet Hovh. Hovhannisian, the *grabar* scholar Set Harutiunian, and others: which of them should I name?[9] – all rose up before me. In their learning they left Ado in the shade; he could be compared only with Gevorg Ghazarian, our prefect. I thought how all these men, so rich in learning, had wished to turn the boys of our class into conservative *vardapets*, teachers, inspectors like themselves – and how, of our thirty-four pupils, not one turned out so. Against all their wishing, every one of them became a revolutionary and a Dashnaktsakan. Without entering into explanations, I drew from that fact the conclusion that our teachers' failure lay neither in any clumsiness of theirs nor in any incapacity of the pupils, but in that boyish turn of mind which denies whatever the parents or the teachers hold. Youth wants to find its road for itself. I listened to Ado's words and thought that if he had been my teacher, he would surely, with these stubborn insistences of his, have driven me to give

up all my revolutionary notions and turn cleric. When this thought crossed my mind, I cut Ado's talk short and asked:

– Have they never invited you to be a teacher at the Gevorgian Seminary?

He was taken aback for a moment, and answered:

– Why should those clerical-minded men invite the likes of me?

Within myself I said: "In order that the revolutionary spirit might vanish from the Seminary once and for all, and counter-revolution reign there – which is their aim." And I fancy I was not mistaken; for into what he unfolded Ado did not put the faith and the conviction that Sergei did. It did not appear that what Ado unfolded sprang from his own convictions: they were other men's thoughts that he was selling me. And the goods he wished to sell did not seem to me a very valuable article. So I came to no very good conclusion about him. I doubted whether Ado, presented as the leader of the youth, could gather men about him and carry them behind him. Me, at all events, he drove away – from himself and from his sermons.

I asked Ado to make me acquainted with the *Boriaz*.[10]

– They are a little too much of the *chaqu-keshan* [knife-wielder] sort, – he said, – but they are needed. You will meet them in good time.

But the occasion for it never came.

It is evening. I have lost all trace of Hamo. He has gone off to supper with his officer, no doubt, to the officers' club or to some hotel. I go to the Galust house, where a great many people are gathered. They are the notables of the province, members of the Central Committee and of the other bodies.

In Kars I had often come upon gatherings – under the pretext of a dinner, of a betrothal, or what not – but there the tables were loaded with food for form's sake only: not of any great quality, nor plentiful in quantity, but barely enough to fill men's bellies halfway. Here abundance reigned, and the food was heaped on the table not for form's sake but to honor men and to entertain them as they ought to be. Delicacies and drinks of every kind, whose very names I do not know. I cannot, however, forget the sponge-like

kufta of Erevan, which you can find nowhere else. At the head of the table sat the good Sarkis, who had taken me beside him,

had assumed in fatherly fashion the direction of my share in the meal, and now and then would tenderly stroke my head, as a father does who is sending his son off into foreign parts. Often he whispered with a stern-faced man of his own age who sat beside him; and this man, casting a glance at me, demanded the letters of Sarkis, who drew them from his breast and gave them to him. He read them attentively and gave them back. He thought a moment, and, turning to me, said: "Tomorrow you will come to me early." I did not know who it was that had given me this command, but I did not even ask; I answered: "Very well."

There is an uproar about the table; everyone is talking, eating, drinking. The jests that are made are sometimes sharp, sometimes rather poor ones. I look toward the door, and in fancy I search there for Hagop Zilinkarian,[11] who in Kars used to sit before the door with two girls, collecting money. They are not here; nor is Hamo, who used to come in and empty into the basket whatever money he had. Here men seemed to have come to eat and to be merry; they drank one another's health. And yet every one of them looked with awe and with fear at that dry, stern-faced man seated at the head of the table, with whom they neither joked nor exchanged a word. He was silent; it seemed he did not care to eat, either. Only now and then he carried his wineglass to his lips, and he was sunk deep in his own thoughts. He seemed to be absent from that place. That man was Nikol (Duman),[12] who to me was a legend and a riddle. Attentively, from under my eyes, I watched him.

Two sunken eyes flashed out of two black hollows so in the dark that when he fixed his pupils upon you, you felt them pierce into your inward parts, and you gave way before them. Nikol's face was covered with a trimmed black beard, short mustaches, and thick brows. The wavy black hair of his head was in harmony with his features and gave him the look of a mysterious forest. When the weather was calm, Nikol had the air of a deep and brooding

sage, whom it was not permitted to disturb. When the weather was stormy, Nikol had the look of a bearer of lightning, and there was no coming near him. When the weather was bright, his face was smiling; but that smile was a favor merely, and you did not dare accept it and be caressed by it. Nikol was

tall and thin, like a switch. When I saw him he was already bent – the effect of the rheumatism from which he suffered.

The gathering was in his honor, but he was indifferent to it. When they sang, of the songs dedicated to him, the Song of Derik, his face would brighten; when they sang *Boghaz Keasan* [the Throat-Cutter], he would darken; and when they struck up the Song of Khanasor, he would turn bitter.[13] So the night went by, moving some, gladdening others. Nikol, however, was silent, and by that silence of his he ruled them all. I was stirred, and impatient to know why this mysterious man had wanted to see me the next day.

Early in the morning I go to Nikol. He is at the Torosents house (Galust Aloyan's). I am waiting in the reception room when Nikol comes in, a glass of tea in his hand.

– So, then: you want to go to Van. Not bad. Do you know Torgom, Sergei? You are of their sort; not bad – they are good lads. In short: do you want me to send you to Van with Tokhmakh, or do you want me to take you with me?[14]

I felt that his decision hung upon my answer.

– Tokhmakh I do not know; but I have spoken with Yerkat, and it does not sit with my mind. He wants to get me as far as Akhlat, and my road turns aside from that.

– If that is so, I will take you with me, – said Nikol. And I, without knowing where he would be taking me, felt happy at the command. He, it appears, noticed this, and answered in my stead: "So you agree? The matter is closed. Today until evening you are free; in the evening you will

come here and sleep, and in the morning we set out. There will be no one to see us off, and the hour and the day of our going will not be known. Go about your business."

How am I to see the day out? Nikol's last word was "Go about your business" – but I have no business to go about. If I go to my old acquaintances, what am I to say to them, seeing that I cannot share with them my gladness at

tomorrow's parting, which may be a final one? I put that thought away. An inner voice urged me to go and find Hamo, and not to leave him without a farewell. Was he not my comrade of Kars? Was it not he who brought me through, and got me here without mishap? Did he not long to go with me even to death, and believe that I would never be parted from him? I wanted to see him, to tell him everything, to open my heart, to explain to him why I was going without him – but before my eyes rose Nikol, with his black sunken eyes, who had declared that no one was to see us off, and no one was to know when or where we went. With this thought I wandered the streets. It makes no difference: even if I wanted to, I would not be able to find Hamo – so I comforted myself.

It was the second day that I was in Erevan, and already I had seen a great deal, and what I saw did not resemble what I had seen in Kars. Here there was no "queen bee." The Central Committee was out in the open, and I fell into the midst of it at once. Its members took the place of the traveling workers of Kars, and were themselves men working at first hand. They seemed of a better quality: one was proud of his heroism and loved to speak of Khanasor; another, an old worker, was the founder of a workshop; a third was an intellectual and a theorist; and among their number were the venerable Melik-Musian, Sahak, and others, who to be sure had more service behind them than the men I saw – but with these I never spoke at all. Here everything was the contrary of what I had seen and learned, and that threw me into confusion. Here there was not even the torment

of finding my road. I saw Nikol; and without any long talk, in five minutes he disposed of my fate. There is nothing left for me to decide. It is not I who am to think how I will go, where I will go, with whom I will go, and what will come of it all in the end… Nikol the wind, and I a speck of dust; or he the road, and I riding its back:[15] wherever they send me, there I go with them.

Thinking so, I was strolling about at loose ends when suddenly someone struck me on the back. I turned round: it was Hamo.

– Where have you got lost, boy? It is well we met, or I should have been driven to go to that "*bidza*" and hunt for you.

– Hamo *jan*, do not call Mr. Sarkis *bidza*. He is a very, very good man, a *dardiman* [a man weighed down with cares]. You wounded him, and yet he thinks about you.

– Very well, let that *papa* be yours; you never had a papa anyway, you were left an *etum* (orphan). I have a papa who is a millstone about my neck; let him be a millstone for you too, – said Hamo, laughing. – You tell me: what did you see, what did you do?

I mixed the false with the true and served it up to Hamo:

– After you went, Mr. Sarkis sat me down in his own place and went off to find the madmen of the *Boriaz*. Two *gizhes* – madmen – came and carried off the valises. Mr. Sarkis came back, and after him came Ado and Galust, and we talked long and long. Then they took me off to somebody's house – I don't know whose – and I slept there; and now I was wandering the streets looking for you. Other news I have none.

To this day the thought torments me: why did I deceive Hamo, who had a boundless faith and trust in me? He took my lie for truth – as was plain from the childlike expression

of his face as he listened to what I told him. I in my turn asked how he had spent his day.

– I found Khosrov of Davali, who is in the *Boriaz*. Thinking that that *bidza* – your pardon, Mr. Sarkis – could not settle the business of the valises as it should be settled, I began to lay the matter out for him; but I had not finished when they came and said that Mr. Sarkis was calling Khosrov. I understood at once that it was to get the valises hidden away, and I was easy. Chattering with his comrades, we fell into the streets, and near Saburi (the Russian cathedral) I saw you with Ado. We did not come up to you, because the lads at my back[16] said: "Let us run, or Ado will catch us and start *ironing our heads*." We went into a drinking-house, warmed our heads, and made merry enough. The lads were talking of our elders, and saying that with their years their wits too had given out. "We are sick of the schools' *mangana*[17] (the press), and we show the schoolmasters the pistol and demand with a row that they set us a five-and-cross (the highest mark) without asking us the lesson, and give us the certificate, so that we may be free of it at last – and this Ado of yours

catches everybody in the streets and gives them lessons… they understand nothing."

I did not gainsay him. I saw that he was acquainted with the *Boriaz*, and so I asked:

– *Beriaz*, *boriaz* – so they call it. What is it?

He laughed, and answered:

– Do you not know? Shall I make you acquainted with it? In the *Boriaz* they are all lads of our own age – some still at school, some who have finished, some who left it halfway, some who took their certificate without any school at all; but every one of them has taken blood into his eye, and they do not know what dying is. The *boriaz* is this: that it has hung the *davul* (the drum) on the Central Committee's neck, but the *chombakhs* (the little sticks for beating the drum) it does not give it – it keeps them in its own hand and beats whatever it pleases. There are no fools among them, as we are,

to dance attendance on Hagop Zilinkarian or the Central Committee.

– Hamo, so they are *kashiroghuk*[?], then?[18]

– The fault is not theirs, the fault is the Central Committee's, which wants to be a *zurnachi* without a *zurna*, and wants to be a *davulji* without a *chombakh*.

Hamo stopped a moment, and whispered:

– I am going to tell you a secret; you must tell no man. The lads said that Nikol Duman has come to Erevan. They both fear Duman and worship him; they want him to take them into his own hand. Can you meet with him, and settle our road as well?

I looked at him doubtfully, but Hamo in his innocence set about convincing me:

– Believe it: it is certain that he is here. Last night there was a fine *kef* over his coming.

The thing was taking such a turn that it threatened to lay my lies open, and so I made a show of not understanding, and, changing the subject, asked:

– Where do we go to eat *fifi*?[19]

– We will eat the *fifi*, and swill the wine down on top of it.

Hamo noticed that, against my habit, I was drinking rather much, and that I was looking at him a great deal, sad and silent. There was a struggle within me: I was to part from this comrade without a farewell – but the fault was Nikol's.

– You look at me as though I were a girl. What is turning over inside you?

– Nothing, – I said. – I am to part from you. I have comrades, old acquaintances from Etchmiadzin, and I am to be with them. In the morning I will be at the station; you be there too, and we will go back to Kars together.

– Good, enough. Will you buy the tickets, or shall I? Better that I buy them; I will buy the second one out of my own pocket – only let Hagop not know of it. So I will wait for you; do not buy a ticket.

I left Hamo without looking at him one last time, went out into the street, and came near to sobbing from the pain within me. I do not know whether we should ever meet again, or whether this had been our last meal together.

Before the dawn had broken, the carriage was standing at the door. They are tying the valises on behind. Two of those valises were known to me: we had brought them from Gyumri. I remembered Hamo with longing. Nikol's two intimates, Galust and Sarkis, have come to see him off. When he had climbed into the carriage, and I saw Sarkis's mournful gaze turned toward Nikol, I was envious. Why has Hamo not come?… I was thinking. I remembered our parting. He is waiting for me now at the station… Why did I do it? So carried away was I by these thoughts that, in my utter bewilderment, I forgot to say good-bye.

– Here, *ker-oghlu* [cousin], come and let me kiss you, – the good Sarkis called out, and drawing me by the arm, he kissed me. I kissed him too – but through him I was kissing Hamo.

The carriage moved off; and when we had gone a little way, the sharp-eyed Nikol asked the cause of my distraction. I told him the truth, saying that on his account I had deceived my close comrade Hamo, and that he was now at the station with the tickets in his hand, waiting for me. Nikol laughed; and I saw with astonishment that he too knew how to laugh.

– That Hamo of yours is cursing you now, and calling you a traitor. Let it be upon my head – only let our road be *ughurov* (successful, fortunate).

The horses are running toward the east. The plain of Ararat is magnificent; the farther we go, the narrower it grows, while Ararat changes its face and draws nearer to us. We say "the plain of Ararat," and count ourselves its children. Yet the Armenians are but a little island in it: the road we travel, to the right and to the left alike, is Tatar and nothing else. With these thoughts I remember Sergei,

and think of what manner of man this famous Nikol Duman may be, seated at my side. I do not dare to disturb him. At last Duman, wearied of the silence, it seems, opened the talk, and began to question me: who I was, where I had had my schooling, what aims I had. I told him at length and with fervor. Nikol listened attentively, and now and then encouraged my story with a question of his own.

– You are a young lad. Have you no betrothed? – he asked, and began to watch me from under his eyes. It seemed to me that he was searching for some fault in me, and so, a little wounded, I objected:

– I have nothing of the sort. Did I not tell you that with my comrades I have taken a vow to die?

– Good; but why die?

And I began to make citations out of books, out of philosophy, out of natural science, out of theology, and to expound at great length the essence of death. I must have said things from so high and from so low that I carried away Duman's head altogether.

At last he brought me up short and said:

– You have talked much, but you have explained nothing. Understand this: whatever it is that we do not know, we give it the name of death. You, who keep bringing out Buckle,[20] Schopenhauer, Kant, and the rest of the names – now tell me what learning is, and what reading is.

I began once more to expound theories, and warmly to defend learning and reading. Nikol objected mockingly:

– If you wish not to be independent, and to forget your own self, then read many books. But if you wish not to be a cask, and to be an independent man who stands on his own, then labor to understand the questions within yourself, and only afterward read books – that you may be able to digest them.

I fell silent. I was wounded; I even felt hatred toward this strange man, who, after making me talk for whole hours together, wished with two little sentences to shatter all my thoughts. Other long conversations

I had with Nikol besides, about life and about our national struggle, and of the thoughts he uttered I remember these:

"The world is a *dmak*,[21] and men and nations are the knife. You rail at the Kurd and the Turk to no purpose, for they, being the knife, look on us as the fat, and they carve, and they eat. We who fight – our aim is that the Armenian too should carve the fat that has fallen into his hand, and himself live like a man. And if that cannot be, then the Armenian must be eaten, and let the word of him perish."[22]

To my objection – but where then is justice, and what of the capacity of our people? – he answered:

"Justice is the peculiar property of the weak and of the *tiratsus*; but in life justice is the point of the dagger. Whoever conquers, he is the just man. Thus, for example: whatever we may do on our road, we will be just if in the end we reach our aim; and if we do not reach it, then whatever we may have done – though we had been wound in the shroud like Christ[23] – we will be worthy of hell and of cursing all the same. As for the capacity of the people, of which they all make their speeches, I do not believe in it. He is capable who knows not only how to strive, but how to reach his aim."

These thoughts I did not fully grasp, though in some measure I understood them. I could not have divined then that fifteen years afterward the words "the world is a *dmak*, and men are the knife" would sound in me without ceasing.

Our carriage had passed the Wolf's Gate, had passed Sharur (Շարուր), and, cutting across the Tatar districts, had entered an Armenian island – the village of Khanlukhlar.[24] After Davalu [Ararat] it was the first Armenian

village on our road, some eighty kilometers distant from it. A man's spirits change when he comes into the nest of his own kind. The people of Khanlukhlar seemed to have grown used to their solitude, and felt themselves free and easy, as though in their own house.

Two men came out to meet us, one of whom I had come upon at Erevan the night before last. That was Sahak,

who had come here ahead of us to make the preparations for taking us and our goods across the frontier. His companion was a man of the place: tall, with a black *cherkeska* on his slender, well-made body, a belt drawn about his waist, and a Russian cap on his head. When he caught sight of Nikol Duman, he began to bob and bow about him; he did not know what to do with himself; he wanted to fling his arms about Nikol, to kiss his hand, his shoulder, or his face – but, frightened by that cold face of his, he did not so much as dare to shake his hand, and – I do not know why – he seized me and kissed me. "I am a sacrifice at your feet," he whispered. I understood that this man "for the love of the omelet licks the tail of the pan."

Sahak was talking with Nikol. Giving him some papers, Sahak climbed up into our carriage and set off with our valises, while we went up into the tall man's dwelling. (I have forgotten this man's name. He was the first man of Khanlukhlar – its renown, and the master of the Dashnaktsutiun there. One of his eyes was blind.) In the house they had made ready to receive us – rather, to receive Nikol; while I had merely "fallen into his waters."[25] Comfortable *mindars* [cushioned mats] were spread, the *oghi* and the other drinks were set in a tray in the window, and various other *davdavats*[?][26] were waiting for us. We had hardly sat down when these were brought forward; but Nikol broke in:

– No. First let us shake this dust off ourselves and wash; afterward.

That operation was performed by means of great *lakans* [basins] and *ibreghs* [ewers].

– You are tired; take a glass of something, each of you, – said the master of the house, not daring to say more.

– No. Let us eat and sleep; the belly is not filled with these drinks.

Nikol was speaking out of my own heart. Though I had been sitting in a carriage, and it was the horses that had been running and dragging us along for more than ten hours together, still I was broken and weary. I was not hungry, the more so as I had eaten *gatas* and hens' eggs along the road; but

the smell of the many kinds of dishes was so provoking that I ate with appetite. Nikol took up a morsel of one thing and another, tasted them, and drew back, saying "*Ey, bas*" [that will do].

The host, astonished and a little aggrieved, changed the drinks glass after glass, that Nikol might drink; but the glasses stayed full. The poor man wanted to draw the meal out – whether to display his hospitality, or to hear a kind word, a piece of news, an order, I do not know. Seated at my side, he asked me softly:

– And where are you bound, with God's blessing? What is there in the world, and what is not?

I knew nothing that I might answer; and had I known, it was not for me to speak. But Nikol had turned into an angry bull, whom the poor host was afraid to go near. What I said was an empty thing, sentences culled out of dictionaries:

– Keep your *kef* well rooted;[27] all is well. The gentleman goes on the business of the raisin trade, I believe, and he has taken me on as his *prikazchik* (agent).

Of course he was not one to swallow it; it was well that I sat on the side of his blind eye, and did not notice his vexation. For years he had dreamed of seeing Nikol Duman in his house – Nikol, whom he knew from the Armenian, Turkish, and Kurdish songs and from other men's tales; and today, when that dream had come true and Nikol was his guest at last, the man had turned into a piece of rock and grudged him a smile, a word, even so much as a curse. I too found it strange; but what could I do? I showed a warm and smiling face, the more so as the household were watching our every movement attentively from their corners, to keep them forever in their memories.

The host in his despair made one last attempt:

– Baron Nikol, our lads want to see you, to hear a word from you. Will you give the order – for one minute?

– No. After my return, if there is need. Now I am tired, and I will sleep.

That attempt too had failed; the one-eyed man was beaten for good. We are asleep already in soft beds.

In the morning, before the sun is up, we are in a new carriage, and the horses are running. I remember my *karmagh* theories,[28] and my admiration for the Armenians of the marches of Armenia. Sergei's words wake in me – Sergei, who said that he knew his own country better than I did: two out of every three are of no use to the Armenians; the rest are strong, they are necessary, but they are the walnut's shell, indigestible. I put the question to myself: "This Karabaghtsi at my side, whose fame I have heard – who is he? Of which sort of Karabaghtsis is he? That he is strong, all that is told of him confirms; that he is shrewd, appears from his words; that he is indigestible as the walnut's shell – that too he showed at Khanlukhlar, by his indigestible bearing." I was in the midst of these thoughts when Nikol roused me:

– We have taken our rest; a little later we reach Shakhtakht[29] and cross the frontier. Take this passport and learn your name. You are to be my *geada* (servant) – do you understand? You know neither Russian nor Turkish; you come along behind me, with my things on your back. Not one word: you leave it all to me – do you understand? When we draw near, you will not sit at my side, but opposite me.

– Very well, – I said; and I learned my name off the false passport – a name I have now forgotten.

The carriage stopped before the government offices of Shakhtakht. I jumped down and took the baggage on my back. Nikol, gravely and without haste, as the great khans do, looked about him, and with his finger summoned one of the officials. The official came up. Nikol slowly drew the passports from his breast, and from his pocket a five-ruble piece, and, without so much as changing color, said to the official:

– I understand nothing of formalities; I want to cross the frontier at once. Tell me what I need to do. – Then, turning to me, he called out in Armenian: – Here, *geada*, give me your papers too.

I gave him my papers, and he handed them to the official.

— Why not? — said the man; and pocketing the five-ruble piece, he went into the office. In ten minutes the passports came back, stamped.

Now everything was in order, and we could make for the frontier bridge that stretched across the Arax. Nikol, without hurrying, cast a glance behind him, and I did the same. A cap was waving in the air: that cap was Sahak's, who had come to the frontier to forestall any mischance and to make our crossing easy. Nikol looked that way with indifference and made no sign; and I bore myself as he did. We went forward to the bridge, and when we had reached the middle of it, he smiled and said:

— Lad, your office as *geada* is at an end.

We came up to the Persian officials, with whom he dealt as though with the people of his own household.

— *Ara*, where am I to go to pay the *torvad baspi* (the tax for treading the soil)?[30]

He called out in such a fashion that you would have thought they were his own servants. They showed him the place, and a whole crowd went along with us. Nikol paid such a *torvad basti* as very few men pay, and put a coin besides into the hand of each of those who had come with us. Everything was in order. We were on the soil of the Shah-in-Shah, and the guests of the *tanuter* of Araksu.[31] Nikol Duman might have been coming home to his own country — might have fallen in among his own estates.

Notes

[1] The printed word is «պատիկ», which is not a word; the sense plainly demands «պզտիկ» — "he is small." The transcription keeps the printed form; the translation renders the sense.

[2] Sarkis Ohanjanian — chairman of the Central Committee of Erevan in 1904 and a veteran of the Khanasor Expedition (the A.R.F. punitive raid of July 1897 on the Mazrik Kurds, glossed in Ch. IV). He is not to be confused with Hamo Ohanjanian (Ch. III), the later Bureau member and Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia.

[3] *Boriaz* — one word, printed uniformly throughout the chapter. The 1952 Horizon italic sets the final consonant with a single ambiguous descender-bowl glyph that serves for գ, դ, ղ and զ alike, so no body occurrence settles the spelling; the chapter subtitle, set in capitals, does — it prints an unmistakable Զ («ԲՈՐԻԱԶԸ»), and the word is therefore given as *Boriaz*. The author's own footnote, printed here, is the whole of the definition: the fierce afternoon wind that rose over Erevan and buried the city in dust, and the name a band of over-eager young men — mostly schoolboys — took from it.

[4] *Chaqu-keshan* — Persian چاقوکشان, "knife-wielders," i.e. toughs or bravos; the second element, *keshan/keasan*, is the "cutter" of the song-title *Boghaz Keasan* (Turk. *boğaz kesen*, "throat-cutter") at p.250. Rouben sets the word in the foreign-word face and adds his own gloss in the text: "the breakers of every tie, the unbridled ones."

[5] "Anton" was the conspiratorial signature of Simon Zavarian (1866–1913), one of the three founders of the A.R.F. and the byword of the movement for personal austerity — the "schoolmaster" by whom Rouben had been disappointed at their meeting. The verdict Zavarian sent on ahead of him, in the letter Sarkis is reading, is the one quoted here.

[6] «դուրրաքէն» — printed in the upright roman foreign-word face and unresolved. The letters, at high magnification, are դ-ո-ւ-ր-ր-ա-ք-է-ն: the fifth has no ascender, and the roman ք has one, so the word is not «դուրբաքէն», as it was once read here. It still answers to no standard word in any of the languages of the text, and no meaning is invented for it. The sentence's sense is not in doubt: Sarkis, the older man, read Simon's letter as though it had come from a long-lost and adored *hayrig*.

[7] The chapter subtitle and this first introduction print the name «Ադոն» (Ado); the running text thereafter prints «Աղոն» (Agho). The 1952 Horizon italic merges գ/դ/ղ, and the two are certainly the same man; the name is harmonized here to Ado, the subtitle's form.

[8] Nechayev — Sergei Nechayev (1847–1882), the Russian revolutionary of the "Catechism of a Revolutionary"; Bakunin — Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876), the Russian anarchist. The point of Rouben's list is that Ado's learning was borrowed, not held.

[9] The teachers of the Gevorgian Seminary at Etchmiadzin, where Rouben was a pupil. Several of them are among the founders of modern Armenian scholarship: Hakob Manandian the historian, Manuk Abeghian the philologist and student of the epic, Hrachia Acharian the linguist; Hovhannes Hovhannisian the poet. Some of the names as printed are transcription-uncertain.

[10] Both words of this exchange are the chapter's own, and neither is a new one. The band Rouben asks to meet is the *Boriaz* of the author's own footnote at pp.243–244 (note 3 above); Ado's answer sets it down as of the *chaqu-keshan* sort — the knife-wielders of p.244, with the author's own gloss (note 4 above). The letters are the same in both places: the transcription's earlier «Բորիզ» and «շարու» were misreadings, and there is no unresolved word in this exchange. The plural of Ado's reply («Անոնք… են», "*They* are…") confirms that a band, not a man, is meant.

[11] The book prints the name of the Kars money-collector two ways — «Զիլինդարեան» here and «Զիլինզարեան» on p.254 — the 1952 Horizon italic merging գ/դ/ղ, as it does with Ado/Agho. The same man is meant; the name is harmonized here to Zilinkarian.

[12] Nikol Duman — Nikoghayos Ter-Hovhannisian (1867–1914), of Ghshlagh in Artsakh; one of the most celebrated commanders of the A.R.F., who fought in Persia, Salmast, and Vaspurakan, and who was to lead the defense of Erevan in the Armeno-Tatar clashes of 1905–06. The rheumatism that had already bent him would kill him ten years later.

[13] The songs of the *fedayi* repertoire made about Duman himself. The Song of Khanasor commemorates the raid of 1897, in which Duman took part; "*Boghaz Keasan*" (the Throat-Cutter) is the byname that darkened him. The Song of Derik is not otherwise identified, and the title as printed is transcription-uncertain.

[14] Torgom is Tuman Tumaniants, the former Russian officer turned field-worker of Kars (Ch. IV); Sergei is Aram Manukian (Ch. I). Tokhmakh ("Mallet") and Yerkat ("Iron") are the noms de guerre of two other men of the arms-roads; Akhlat, on the northwestern shore of Lake Van, lay off the road Rouben meant to take.

[15] The print has «մէջքը հածի», which is not a word; the sense of the figure demands «հեծի» — "let me ride its back" (the 1952 Horizon italic merges ձ/ծ/ճ). The image is a pair: Nikol the wind and Rouben the dust it carries; or Nikol the road and Rouben mounted upon it. («ճամբի» may equally be the verb — "let him set out, and I ride on his back" — which keeps the same self-abasement; the printed form is kept and the choice is not forced.)

[16] «հետիններս» — a non-standard form, unresolved in the print; from «հետ» (with, after) the sense is plainly "the ones with me / behind me," and it is so rendered. No meaning is invented for the form itself.

[17] «մանկանաէն (սեղմիչ)» — the printed form matches no standard word, and the author's own gloss, «սեղմիչ» (a clamp, a press), is the only handle on it. It is very likely Turk. *mengene*, the vise or press — the schools' vise, in which the boys of the *Boriaz* felt themselves gripped — but the printed letters do not give that form, and the identification is not asserted here. The "five-and-cross" of the next clause is the top mark of the Russian school system (5 with a cross), as the author glosses it.

[18] Two unresolved forms in adjacent lines. Hamo's «քթին ջուրը քաշեն» is an idiom rendered here by the surrounding sense ("to dance attendance on") and is not certain; and Rouben's answering «քաշիրողո՞ւք» matches no standard word — the letters give ք-ա-շ-ի-ր-ո-ղ-ո-ւ-ք, apparently built, like the idiom it answers, on «քաշել» (to pull, to draw). It is left transliterated with a bracketed [?] rather than guessed at.

[19] «ֆիֆի» — kept as printed. The word is not identified; from the context it is something eaten, and drunk upon, in the taverns of Erevan.

[20] The printed word is «Պոքլ» — Պ-ո-ք-լ, with the roman ք — i.e. Բոկլ, Henry Thomas Buckle (1821–1862), whose *History of Civilization in England* was one of the inescapable books of the Russian-reading Armenian intelligentsia of the period. (An earlier reading of the transcription, «Պուլ», matched no known name and is withdrawn.) With Schopenhauer and Kant (printed «Կանդ»), he is exactly the artillery a nineteen-year-old seminarist would fire at Nikol Duman — and exactly what Duman's answer is meant to demolish.

[21] *Dmak* — the fat tail of the sheep, the prized fat of the eastern table, cut and eaten with a knife. Duman's maxim ("the world is a *dmak*, and men and nations are the knife") is one Rouben says rang in him for fifteen years, and it is left in the author's own image rather than paraphrased.

[22] «Խապաառ կորչի» — a non-standard form: the second word is standard Armenian, «կորչի» ("let it be lost"), the first apparently Turk./Azeri *xəbər*, "news, word, tidings" — hence "and let the word of him perish," i.e. let no trace or report of him remain. Rendered by that sense; the form itself is unresolved in the print.

[23] The printed verb is «պատած» — wrapped, wound, shrouded — where the sense of the sentence expects a word for crucifixion or martyrdom. It is rendered by the surrounding sense ("wound in the shroud like Christ") and the printed form is flagged rather than emended. *Tiratsu* (Ch. V) is the deacon or minor cleric of the Armenian Church; Duman's pairing of "the weak and the *tiratsus*" is contemptuous.

[24] The road from Erevan into Persia: the Wolf's Gate (Գայլի դրունք), then the Sharur (Շարուր) district — one of the four historic provinces of the Nakhichevan region — then Davalu, then Khanlukhlar, an Armenian village standing alone among Tatar ones, some eighty kilometers on. **Davalu** is the historic name of the town now called **Ararat** (Արարատ), renamed in 1935; it was the seat of the Vedi-Basar district. The stations of Rouben's road are given here as he prints them, with the Armenian names noted where one exists: the memoir is a verbatim historical document, and its itinerary is not editorially rewritten. The book prints the village's name two ways, «Խանլուխլար» here and «Խանըխլարի» on the following page; harmonized to Khanlukhlar, the form of the chapter subtitle.

[25] «Ջրերն էի ընկած» — literally "I had fallen into his waters," and so rendered. The page gives Ջ-ր-ե-ր-ն, the fourth letter identical in shape to the second and carrying no ascender; since բ has an ascender, the letters do NOT admit «Ջրբերն» (water-carrier), and that emendation — once adopted here — is withdrawn. The idiom remains unexplained: from its place in the sentence it says that the house was made ready for Nikol and that Rouben was merely carried along in his train. Nothing more is claimed for it. (The servant idea arrives on its own two pages later, when Nikol makes him his *geada* for the frontier crossing.)

[26] «դաւդաւաթներ» — a non-standard form, unresolved; from its place in the sentence, further good things set out for guests along with the *oghi*. Left transliterated with a bracketed [?]. The *mindar* is the cushioned mat of the floor-seated household; the *lakan* the basin and the *ibregh* (Turk. *ibrik*) the ewer for washing.

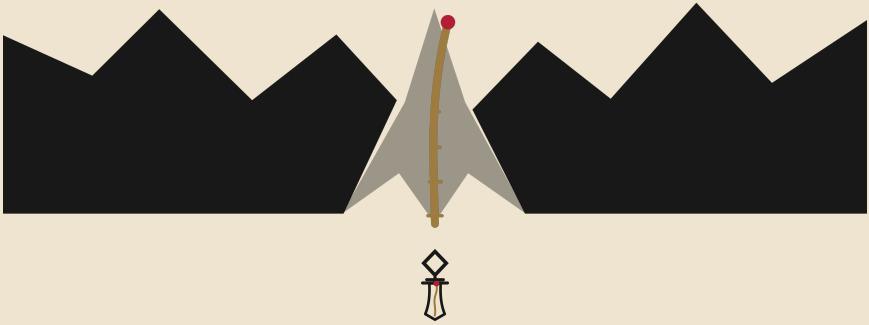
[27] «Քէֆդ քեօք պահէ» — Turk. *keyfini kök tut*, roughly "keep your pleasure rooted," i.e. keep your spirits up. Rendered with the root-image kept, since Rouben is quoting himself talking like a phrase-book. The *prikazchik* he claims to be is the Russian commercial clerk or agent, as the author glosses it.

[28] Rouben is recalling his own *karmagh* — the coarse stone-sieve of Ch. V ("Armenia: a Sieve or a Walnut?"), in which the good grain is flung to the rim of the sieve, i.e. to the border-provinces — and Sergei's counter-figure of the walnut, whose shell is strong, necessary, and indigestible. He now applies both to the Karabaghtsi sitting beside him, and finds the shell.

[29] The body prints «Շահթախթ» / «Շահթախթի»; the chapter subtitle prints «Շախթախթի». Harmonized to Shakhtakht — the Arax crossing at the Russo-Persian frontier.

[30] The Persian frontier toll, which the author glosses himself: "the tax for treading the soil." The word is printed with two different endings on the same page — «Թովրադ պասպի» in Duman's mouth and «թովրադ պասստի» in the narration — and is presumably Azeri *torpaq basdı*, "the ground is trodden." Both printed forms are kept where they stand.

[31] «Արաքսուի տանուտէրի» — the *tanuter* is the headman, the master of the house or of the village. The reading of the name is transcription-uncertain, and the phrase is not otherwise explained: Rouben's point is the jest of it — they had crossed onto the Shah-in-Shah's soil, and Duman moved through it as a landlord through his own holdings.



CHAPTER VIII

Persia and the Khoy Station

Պարսկաստան եւ Խոյի կայանը

Khoy / Salmast night road

WHY PERSIA IS SO NEAR OF KIN.

ARABLU.
I GO TO OUR STATION AT KHOY.
MY RECEPTION. THE INTELLIGENT AND THE INTELIKINTO.
KOSTI.
TER-CHARVADAR.
SARBAZ KHECHO, GRISH, SUREN.
THE WORK OF PROTECTING TRAVELERS.
TOWARD SANAMERIK AND PAYAJUK.
POKHIK.
IN THE VILLAGE OF GHALASAR.

I AM RECEIVED INTO DUMAN'S BAND.
THE BATTLE OF UAZI.
THE RETURN.

It was the first time I had set foot in Persia. Everything was new to me.

When you go abroad, strange questions rise up before you, and strange feelings, which are real enough, but whose cause is unknown and past explaining. So, for instance, when you cross the Transcaucasian frontier by rail and

enter the country of the Cossacks, or any Russian province whatever, then, though you know their language and their manners as well, you feel yourself a stranger, and alone. Here I had no such feeling – though I had come down into a backward corner, and was a stranger to its language, its manners, its religion and its race. Arablu is a place of bigotry, of filth, of ignorance. Perhaps my age was the cause of the conclusion I came to; and to test myself,

I explained it to Nikol, who was twice my years. He smiled – after the fashion of Sarkis Ohanjanian – and gave me the answer, and gave it quite wrong.

– I feel the same, said he; and I know that all Armenians feel the same. True, it is not our country, and they are different from us in everything; but good or bad, they are our "*hamshahirs*" (fellow-countrymen).

Later on we took each other by the throat, we and these "*hamshahirs*." They are not merely no Persians: they are the descendants of the Seljuk, the Tatar, the Turk and the Mongol. And when I came to be in the truly Persian districts – which in face, in speech, in manners put one in mind of the Armenians – I saw that they, kin to me though they were, had not that taste and that smell which I felt in the districts of Artaz, Her, Zarevand and Atrpatakan.[1]

In history I did not go barefoot: I had read the chroniclers and various learned books, and for that very reason questions rose in me that I could not answer. I thought: "It is natural that this country should seem as near of kin to me as our own. When we were Nayiri and were not yet called Armenians, we knew this country; when we were Urartu and had a part to play – and were called Hayasa before that – we had our bond with this country. It was only after us that Darius wrote his history in our letters and gave us the name of Armen. And at last, when none of these were yet and the Medes were in these lands, we knew the Medes; we knew the very birth of Cyrus the Great. Cyrus was younger[2] than our Yervand, and the companion of the first Tigran. Their house of Pahlavi was no stranger to us: the patriarch of that house was the elder brother of our first Arshakuni

king. Our own Saint Gregory, even, was the son of Anak, who was of the house of Pahlavi.[3] The old tongue they used is as intelligible to the Persian of today as it is to us, the Armenians of today. It is plain, then, that we must feel kin to this country; perhaps we are brothers of one blood, or the sons of one father's brother. And if not even that, then we are at all events baptized into one and the same culture, one religion, one usage, and are so close to one another that the ancient Greeks could not tell us apart from the Parthian or the Mede. It was history that made this country kin to us."

Against that explanation of mine a voice rose in rebellion and said: – "The Sasanians were pure Persians; it was they who wished to melt us down, in culture and in nation; they killed the brave Vardan in this very place and

made an end of Armenian independence. But the point is this: those nations – Mede, Achaemenid, Parthian, Arsacid, Sasanian, Persian and the rest – with whom you feel this kinship, have long since ceased to be, and are gone: gone with their language, their culture, their blood, and all that was theirs. The stock that lives here now is not the one you are looking for; they came from far Mongolia, after Genghis Khan. They are Mongols and Tatars, who made Tabriz and Maragha their capitals and a corner of Vaspurakan their summer residence, and who gave the springs of the river of Berkri the name of Abagha, after their leader. They came after the Seljuks and the Turks of Altai and of other far countries, and after the motley elements of the yellow race, of this kind and of that, whom lame Timur brought with him – and none of these has any connection whatever with the blood, the culture, the manners or the understanding of the Iranian peoples. To us they were executioners; they left not one stone upon another, and destroyed everything. The wreckage saved out of their hands is to be found in the streets of the city of Bombay in India, under the name of Gabr;[4] and we, who took refuge in the mountains, are nothing but their captives. History, then, cannot be the cause of your feeling of kinship, of '*hamshahir*-hood.' The answer to the question must be looked for in another direction."

And so there were two men within me, of two different reasonings, risen one against the other and contending; and the gap the one left open the other filled easily – though in what the two of them had opened up there was, on either side, a certain portion of the truth.[5] These contradictions did not settle the question, and I could not understand why it was that, on entering the country of the Shah-in-Shah, I did not feel myself a stranger.

Arablu is a common village on the bank of the Arax, belonging to the broad estates of the Sardar of Maku. Neither the village itself, nor its lord, nor the lord of them all, the Shah-in-Shah of the Persians, understood what it was worth. Near that village a huge iron bridge has been built, below Shakhtakht, which is worth all Arablu by itself – though as yet no railway rushes over that bridge, and no carriages cross it, but only thin traffic on foot, with barley and wheat loaded on their donkeys.

Arablu can hardly be a hundred houses. There is stone there, but the houses are built of earth, like so many mole-burrows, without windows, the doors mere little holes, and everything filthy. The walls of the houses are ornamented with cow-dung, which serves as fuel for the winter. In place of streets there are winding passages that run on from quarter to quarter, filled with mud, with refuse, and with the carcasses of dead animals. In the stench and the filth of these streets the village children play, shaping all manner of figures out of the street-mud with the fingers of their hands and their feet.

The population seems to be made up of children and women; the males show few, and go by slowly, like bulls. They travel rather over the rooftops, so as not to meet the women, and at the same time to keep out of the mud of the street. The women are the braver: they do not fear the mud, and go to and fro through the streets, barefoot. They are moving pyramids, and creatures that present an attraction. You see nothing; but you imagine that under the veil drawn over the

head there is a being, black-eyed, red-cheeked, full-breasted, well-made, possessed of a beauty that it is forbidden to display. To show even their hair is a mortal sin. As in the whole East, so in Arablu, the woman is to be seen with the imagination; in reality you see nothing of her but her muddy feet, bare to the shins and above them, which fill you with disgust. Is it not from this that in the East the woman is not held to be a human being at all, but a beast – while for the covered upper part of her she is held a dream, a vision, and more to be worshipped than the gods?

There was nothing attractive in Arablu. It was a backward and dirty village, repellent from every point of view. No work, no pleasure, no craft, no earning of money. The people lived by theft and by smuggling. The visitors were, every one of them, suspicious characters. For all that, Arablu had made a great name for itself and was reckoned a desirable place, the possession of which had become a standing item on the Russian Empire's agenda.

I do not know what name Arablu bore in old times, but it must certainly have been a place of importance, since it formed the rear of the plain of Avarayr. From that point Yazkert with his armies sought to push into the heart of Armenia, and there Vardan the general kept careful watch on this road.[6] Certainly it was something, lying as it did at the meeting of the river Gaylatu

with the Arax; and over it the roads ran southeastward to Tabriz of Atrpatakan, southward to Khoy, Zarevand and Mesopotamia, and from the west, by way of Artaz, to Baghrevand and all of inner Armenia. It was this position, no doubt, that made that backward and filthy place kin to me. In the directions I have named not one road was to be seen: it was the tracks through the marshes, the mountains and the valleys that served for roads – that showed the patriots their way, that whetted the appetite of conquering

states, and that gave robbers the means of taking plunder and of hiding their plunder within the borders of three empires.

Whatever Arablu might be – since it lay on the axis of the monasteries of the Apostle Thaddeus and of Saint Stephen, since its winds came off the two skirts of Ararat and its waters off the soil of upper and of inner Armenia – I had found out why it was kin to me: it was the underscoring[7] of the wholeness of our lands, and that made even its ugliness and its filth dear to me.

Two days now we have been with Nikol. He is a pleasant companion in talk. He speaks of general questions, and dispels the tedium of Arablu. Nikol is waiting for someone – who did not, however, keep us waiting. It was Thadeos Amirian(*), whom we called Datash. He had settled the business entrusted to him on the other side of the frontier, and had come up with us.

Tados was a fiery young man who had been through a Russian secondary school. Though the hair of his head had thinned and his skull was in a fair way to becoming a moon, his shaggy hat and the *chek*[?] beard[8] on his face concealed the fact. He was not a man to look behind him, or about him. He always looked forward, and was very decided in his resolutions. He was hardly in at the door before he turned to Nikol and said:

– Everything is arranged. If not today, then tomorrow, our

(*) This was that Tados whom Nikol had taken as his aide. In 1905, in the Armeno-Tatar fighting at Baku, he was again Nikol's aide. In 1906 he went with Zavriev to Mush. In the same year he became the scourge of the blackmailers who had appeared in the Caucasus, and re-established order. He took part in the volunteer bands of 1914. In the self-defense of Baku he

played a conspicuous part. At the evacuation of Baku he joined the retreating party of Shahumian's Commissars, and with them was killed in Turkestan.[9]

goods will be here without fail, so there is no need for the three of us to stay. Let the comrade stay and bring them, and we will move on ahead.

— Are you sure? asked Nikol; and when he got an answer in the affirmative, he turned to me:

— Can you get the goods through to Khoy?

— Why not, if they bring them, I said — but in my heart I was displeased.

They gave me the list of the goods, and letters addressed to Kosti and Khecho, and themselves went off to Salmast.

The loneliness of Arablu seemed past enduring. The goods came neither that day, nor the next, nor the day after. I had to wait a whole week. My days went by heavy and tedious.

The people buried in this village held me unclean, "*haram*," and would not lay a hand on my dishes, my clothes, my bedding, nor even on the chair I sat in. I did not yet know that this was prompted by religious prejudice, and supposed that it was because these filthy people held me to be filthy that they avoided drinking water out of the same cup.

At last our goods arrived, and we took the road for Khoy. The road was not one for carriages. Caravans of camels and horses climbed those tablelands, to come up out of the Waters of Maku and the valley of the Arax and to go down into the Waters of Khoy, the valley of the river Tghmut. I was in the neighborhood of historic Avarayr, and the plain showing in the distance must be the plain of Avarayr, where our forefathers gave battle.

Traveling with me were Mashadi Ahmed and Mahmed. They were mounted, with their "*varandil*"[?] rifles[10] at their backs. I had a horse as well, but mine was under a *palan*, loaded with the goods, and I on top of the load.

The road was dull, for I could exchange not a word with my companions: I was an Armenian, they

Tatars. They knew no Armenian, and I knew very little Tatar. All the villages on the road were Tatar, and so were the passers-by. Where I was, what places I was passing through, I had not the least idea. It was dangerous, for our loads

were munitions and I was unarmed; I had only a "ten"[11] hidden inside my clothes at my waist. I went with my heart in my mouth, waiting impatiently to reach Khoy. At last we came to Khoy, passed through the bazaar, went in among the streets, and halted before the door of "Charvadar" Hagop.[12] He took us in and offered my Tatar companions a room. But me he brought down off the horse, mounted it himself, and ordered me to follow him on foot. He led me through crooked, twisting streets, went in at the yard of a house, and rode straight for the stable.

In the stable, where horses stood tied, a young man with a pitchfork in his hand was filling a basket with *khushki* (dried dung). Seeing him, Charvadar Hagop called out:

– *Abi*, take delivery of your *amanats*, which Mashadi Ahmed has brought along with this swallow (pointing at me).[13] I am in a hurry to get home. Let us get the loads down; I am taking the horse.

The young man, smiling with one eye, asked:

– What is inside them?

– That is Kosti's affair, I answered.

– My lad, Kosti is standing in front of you; it is he who is asking.

I hesitated, for I had taken him for the stable-man – though his features were an educated man's.[14]

– Have you the list of these goods?

– Of course.

– Have you a letter?

– I have: one for Kosti, one for Khecho(*).

He went out of the stable and called:

– Khecho, Khecho, come down, and bring four *janavars* [brutes] with you.

A bearded man looked down from the upper floor, and five men like bears came pouring into the stable *akhal-tapal* (in haste).

(*) The Dashnaktsakan Khecho.

– Lads, carry it up to the room. Grish,[15] you stay in the stable and finish the cleaning; I am coming up too.

Each of us shouldered something and went up with the goods. Upstairs the *yapunjis* had been made into beds, the big *papakhs* into pillows, and the rifles hung on the walls. It was a little barracks.

– Khecho, this lad does not believe that I am Kosti. He has a letter for you as well.

– Mo, *khatakar*[?],[16] give him Kosti's letter and mine to me. What is your name? We never even asked. Though – there is no need to learn your name. Let it be Vardan; it is a good name; it was here that Vardan the general was struck down.

And so, for a short while, my name in Persia was Vardan.

Khecho's manner was strange; I felt myself in a hostile air. I did not know what to do, and stood there bewildered, dumbstruck. Luckily I remembered that I had the letters to give up, which I had sewn into the lining at my waist. I took them out and gave one to Kosti, the other to Khecho.

Kosti turned to the lads:

– Come, let us open the *khurjins* one by one and check them. Let us see what presents Vardan has brought.

Khecho did not stir from his place; he took the letter – two lines of writing – and set to reading it long and long, as though it were Holy Scripture. I sat down on a sack of flour and watched.

In the *khurjins* were cartridges for the Mosin rifle.[17] They counted them. "These are good; there are no old ones among them," said the lads. They opened one *khurjin* and many stood stupefied, for inside were empty bombs, and some of them had never seen a bomb. "What are these iron apples?" they said. They opened the next: revolvers. "*Janim*, these are Nagants; I like a Mauser. Why did you not bring Mausers, the whole lot of them?" They opened the next: boxes, and in them dynamite, detonators, sheet tin. "*Janim*, is this *matmalat*[?][18] – the devil's or a man's?" They found there three little spades, made of steel, as if they were children's spades. "What are these toys?" They looked at me with the question in their faces, but got no answer.

Khecho got to his feet, took an empty bomb in one hand and a spade in the other. "This little spade is good for nothing. It has come out of the pot of your brains for a certainty. Put it aside. These bombs, too, are a plague on our heads. Lads, stand back; and no *jghara*[19] – no smoking. In Kars these bangers[20] ate the heads of Nahik and of Khashjan. Our own bombs eat our own heads. Put them aside. The rest are good; share them out among you. Three hundred *fshanks* [cartridges] apiece on your persons, three hundred apiece in the horse's '*dashi*' *khurjin*. What is left, to the load of the '*yevteli*' horse."[21]

Khecho was handsome in his height, like a poplar tree. His hair was *ghruz* (curly), his beard black. The crown of him swayed above me, and it seemed at any moment he would come down on top of me. I could see that for something or other he was displeased with me, as though I were his enemy. He kept giving me black looks. I could bear it no longer, and turned to Kosti:

– Was what I brought complete?

– It answered to the list.

– Then what does this man want of me? I came by Duman's order, and by his order I can go. If he is displeased, let him go himself.

The outburst was unlooked-for. Khecho's eyes, fastened upon me, wounded no longer. It was Sarbaz Khecho who unexpectedly threw himself in:

– You have carried it too far; the lad is right. Not a good-day, not a God-be-with-you – as though some *mtori*[?][22] had come among us.

The big Khecho said:

– If that is how it is, let us sing. "I want *madzun*, and they bring me *tan*; ah lad, cursed be your father's father; you with your snotty nose want a *khzma*;[23] ah lad, cursed be your father's father"...

That song soured me the more. One or two joined in; the others were silent; and Sarbaz Khecho looked at me with pity. Kosti was smiling. Then, coming up to me, he said:

– Keep a wide heart. He is not a wicked or a bad man; his mind is kind, and he has ways of his own of "organizing."

Khecho cut the song off in the middle and, turning to Sarbaz Khecho, said:

– You have seen nothing of the world; you understand nothing. Nikol writes: – "There comes to you an *intelligent* military man out of Moscow, ready to die. Organize him in that little house of yours, and put him in harness." When he is an *intelikent*, how is one to organize him and put him in harness? *Intelikentsia*, *intelikent*[24]… do you know what those are? You do not know; I know, – and Khecho, kindling, poured out his bile. "To curry a horse, they take hold of the *ghashavi() with a glove. A louse gets on them, and they take it for a wolf: they go out to war, and fancy themselves unhappy martyrs. It turns cold, or hot, and they rise up in battle against God. Let them go hungry one day: grumbling,* ghalmaghal *[uproar]. They have no last word: they orate for two hours and can hardly bring out one* lablabu.*[^t25] The salt is not there yet, and already they are making* atar*[?] and setting it alight.[^t26] Let them once get up into the mountains and see two harmless Kurds among the rocks – they take them for an army and make up all kinds of fairy-tales. Their tongue turns to the right and to the left alike. They talk, they preach, they drive men out of their wits; and once they have won a clapping of hands, they already count themselves heroes and martyrs. Let them but pass by a monastery or a fortress and take a liking to it: it was they who built it, they who defended it. And if they have the gift of writing besides, and one lie out of a thousand comes out true, then they are everything, and reckon themselves the managers of the affairs of the world and of the universe. There – that is your* 'intelligentsia,' *your* 'intelligent*'… They are a curse, they are fleas. Understand that!"

Kosti was laughing, holding his sides. I listened attentively, and grew easier. Sarbaz Khecho objected:

– If that is how it is, then only the shepherds are any good. If that is how it

() Ghashavi* – a brush for cleaning domestic animals.

is, then Nikol Duman too is a flea and a curse; for he also, when all is said, has been a schoolmaster with an education, and is now the manager of oil-wells.

– No, I protest; do not turn my words aside. He is no "*intelligent*"; he is an "*intelikinto*." The *intelikinto* is the lord of our heads, the light of our eyes. Is it not so, Kosti?

DASHNAKTSAKAN KHECHO[27]

In Kosti's stead I answered:

– It is so, Khecho.

Years would have to pass before I could test and understand how many bitter truths there were in the judgments of Dashnaktsakan Khecho. At all events, with those judgments of his he "organized" me.

My assent was the cause of Khecho's smiling and kissing me; and from that day until his death – which, on Aram's testimony, is said to have come about in the saving of me – we were faithful comrades to one another.

For the Dashnaktsutiun the *intelligent* was not the ideal; the ideal was the silent and disinterested self-sacrificer, the "*intelikinto*."

Sarbaz Khecho began presenting the comrades to me, name by name, and this was not to the big Khecho's liking.

– If you are going to present them, present them properly to our *intelikinto*. Here you have Kostia: finished the Realschule,[28] read psychology at Moscow, perfected himself in Germany and took his diploma in America – and is at present the manager of a barracks. Here is Khecho, graduate of the zoological faculty of the University of Berlin: himself a *sarbaz*[29] and keeper of the horses. Make his acquaintance – engineer-technologist; *sovet spegdi kotelchik* of Baku;[30] and he himself is Astur.

And so, presenting each man with his titles, he ended by not sparing himself either.

– I too am no common man; I am an educated person. Among the whole of us here the youngest is yourself, and so I beg you to look well after my horse. And another thing: you would do well to unpick that collar of yours and put it away.

I understood that Khecho, in his own peculiar fashion, wished to settle accounts with the conceits and the vaporings of my intellectual class. I submitted with a good grace, and laughed along with the rest.

I had been in the Russian army, where the multitudes were ranged according to their quality so as to make up one whole machine. There a collective, single, fused individual existed – the army; and men were only its living parts.

I had been in the Revolutionary barracks of Kars, where men existed as individuals, and judged and expressed

themselves according to their powers; but there was a natural bond that joined them all together – one and the same moral and ideological understanding, and whoever stood outside it could not be counted a particle of the whole.

What I had not been in was that *cheta* air of men already making ready to go to their death, and it appeared to me a strange novelty. To make it understood, let me present the members of that band briefly.

Kosti was of Shushi, and, as Khecho had said, he had in fact finished the Russian secondary school, had attended the university, had been in the centers of Europe, and had set himself to go so deep into psychology that it would be possible to work on men near and far, and to bend friend and enemy alike to his will. By this means he hoped to hypnotize Sultan Hamid as well,[31] and so to settle the Armenian Question. This educated young man, having of course failed in his scientific researches, had come to the conclusion that freedom could be wrested only by force and by organization. He was the representative of the Dashnaktsutiun at Khoy: he watched over the lines into the Land that passed through this point, sent on the bands as they came, and supplied them; but all this was so narrow a business for his powers that he envied us, who were going into the Land. "Even if we are not killed," he thought, "at least we will be with the people of our own country."

Kosti was our guardian, the man who fed us and cleaned the stable. He fed us a great deal of beans and lentils, and when he noticed discontent he would say:

– You are sworn to die; whatever you eat, the end is the same. Let the economizing be left to those who come after you.

We would laugh, and our spoons went to work. When Ter-Charvadar remarked that he should take a servant for the dirty work, Kosti would say:

– You reckon yourself a disciple of Hayrik and a son of Varag; you must have seen many a night of the Washing of the Feet.[32] You are not so much as the

Apostles – why should I not wash your feet too? You tell me to hire a servant: with whose money am I to hire him – our grandfather's?

Kosti was always cheerful, and wished to keep those about him cheerful. Of all his psychological investigations only this one result had stayed by him. When we opened a book out of his sight, and kept a page and a paragraph in our minds, and asked him to find the page and read the paragraph out, he found it. We would think of something, and he would divine what we were thinking. This faculty inspired fear in one man and astonishment in another. He seemed a wizard, a supernatural creature. With such games we passed the time.

Only a few days did I spend at Khoy with Kosti, and with that our acquaintance ended. In 1909 I saw him once more, at Hamo's (Ohanjanian's) house, but he did not know me, and I too pretended not to know him. That does not mean that I had no news of him.

Kosti Hambardzumian was an enterprising field-worker, hard-driving, intelligent, and able to fit himself to circumstances. And – what is the essential thing – with his broad views and his learning he soon took an important place in our life. In 1905 he crosses from Persia into Transcaucasia and plays his part in the Armeno-Tatar clashes. In 1909, when the Dashnaktsutiun was under persecution, in those hard days he takes it upon himself to hold the organization together in Russia and to save it from final ruin. In 1914 he takes over the relief work of the front under the flag of the Union of Towns,[33] on the borders of Vaspurakan in particular; in 1915–1917 he is at work on the reconstruction of Vaspurakan, and when Aram gives up the governorship of Van, he takes his place, assuming the direction of all affairs. At the evacuation of Vaspurakan he is with the people, as plenipotentiary. He takes part in the fighting in Persia and leads it, and is killed near Salmast, without living to see the independence of Armenia, whose declaration he had already had news of. His brother was the well-known Bolshevik Sako Hambardzumian, who held important posts in the first period of the Sovietization of Armenia and who, with many another, was made a victim of the purges of 1937–38, carried out by Stalin and Beria.[34]

An interesting figure at Khoy was Ter-Charvadar, to whom they gave the names of Hagop and Mkrtich as well. He was no longer young; he counted

himself among the founders of the Revolution, from before ever the parties were formed. He said that he had been a pupil of Hayrik's, in the monastery of Varag. At present, having fled out of the terrors of the Land, he busied himself with muleteering, and carried our goods from place to place besides. He was known not only to the muleteers of the province but to the leading Persian and Tatar men of Khoy. He had the name of an honest man, a man of his word, brave and dutiful. He was the trusted man of the district; and for all his title of "Charvadar," he was the Dashnaktsutiun's "ambassador" among the other races. After Kosti he was the second figure of the Khoy district, and all the practical business rested upon him.

Charvadar Hagop took part in the Persian revolution, and played a conspicuous part in it. In 1908–9 he was arrested several times; and though they called him by the mock-name of Ter-Charvadar, he held the office of vicar-general of the districts of Artaz and Her.[35] In 1914 he crosses into the Land, and is killed in the region of Archesh.

The two men named above were the permanent members of the Khoy station, and we its temporary guests. Several of us had served in the Russian army and had risen to various ranks. The most full of life among them, and the one who had already made a name for himself in Persia, was Khecho of Daralagyaz,[36] to whom they gave the name of "Sarbaz." With him was Grish, from Javakhk, who had finished as a non-commissioned officer in the Russian cavalry.

There was also Suren of Javakhk, who had likewise been a non-commissioned officer, in the infantry. These three had come long since from Transcaucasia into Persia, to work on the borders of Vaspurakan. To my question, why they had left the Russian army, they would answer like men insulted:

– What, did you take us for *hayvans*, that we should leave the work of martyrdom for our own nation and go and sacrifice our lives for the "onions" (the Russians)?[37]

These three, having the same military training, were the more closely bound to one another, and argued endlessly about the merits of the three arms of the service. When they learned that I too was a gunner and an officer, they began

to hold me in a particular respect, new man though I was. That was a consequence of their soldier's traditions. But they were far more experienced than I: in Her and Zarevand and Artaz, the old Armenian districts, they were known men already. They were not only the carriers of our party's goods from the Russian frontier to the borders of Vaspurakan; they had become the scourge of the robbers who held the roads of communication and broke up the traffic.

Khoy lay on a knot of roads. Those roads led on the one hand to Tabriz, on the other to the Sardarate of Maku, and lastly to Salmast as well. Along those roads came Kurdish bands, "*Chrder*,"[38] who, for the right of passage, either took a toll or simply plundered the travelers – even the government officials and the post. At the dangerous passes the government had set guards, but these neither wished to put their lives in danger nor had it in them to prevent the robbery. The "Charvadars"[39] were made up of untrained old men, irregularly armed, helpless and hungry. They often encouraged the robbers to plunder the terrified travelers, and took a small share of the plunder. This was the reason

why travelers, to make their own safety sure, looked for guards of their own. The Armenian *janfedayis*[40] were held a trustworthy and a daring element, and the robbers and their confederates the "Charvadars" went in terror of them. And it was for this reason that the great caravans – often the state post, the officials, the troops themselves – would beg Kosti, or Charvadar Hagop (at Salmast, Samson),[41] to give them trustworthy guard-companions for the rest of the road. The companions were appointed from among the daring, the disinterested, the disciplined and the conscious, and in general every eye was turned upon Khecho, upon Suren, upon Grish and the other comrades. The central figure among the chosen was Sarbaz Khecho, who had been through many adventures and many deadly encounters in the course of his escorts. He had won the name of a man whose road cannot be closed, who cannot be bribed and cannot be forced back. It was a wonder to everybody that he did his duty without payment and without gift. Among the robbers Khecho had the name of the bravest of men; among the people, that of an angel of safety. Many a fairy-tale and unbelievable marvel was told of them, as was natural in those years. They themselves counted all of it a farce, and dreamed only of

the day when they should no longer be obliged to waste their time on the safety of Persians.

In our station there was a second and smaller group besides. These, like myself, were new-comers to Persia. Having been in the Russian army and taken rank there, they had afterward put themselves to work in Baku, on the one hand to make their living and on the other to get a party education. The giant of this group – in body – was called Astur; the second was named Arakel, the next Serob, and yet another bore the name of Jalpapakh (his real name I never learned at all). Their difference from the rest was that they knew good food from bad; and, not having Sarbaz Khecho's adventures to tell, they told of the workers' demonstrations of Baku and of the fat wages of the "*kotelni masterutiun*."[42] They were discontented that they had not been thrown into the fighting at once, and were being kept waiting to no purpose. That impatience was not to the liking of Kosti the "psychologist," who would say:

– Serob, Serob, where are you hurrying? why are you hurrying? Go slowly, and you go far; hurry, and you go a short way.

The short road to keeping the hurrying souls busy had been found by Dashnaktsakan Khecho, who with his inexhaustible jokes and songs left nobody time to think. He made the pastime so engrossing that it seemed knowing was superfluous, and judging a crime.

– I have no head for serious things, he would say; and then he would add: – we are on the road; if we get there, like a *hanadz-varadz*[?] man,[43] we will do our thinking then; and if we do not get there, then it was all superfluous anyway.

So he closed every question. Our band seemed to be in one long *keyf*: we were all of us busy with song, with fable, with laughter and with chatter. It was as though we were the birds of the sky.

One day Dashnaktsakan Khecho received a telegram. His face turned very grave; he was no longer the Khecho of before. They all looked at his face, and rose silently to their feet. And Khecho began to give his orders:

You will be ready by evening. You, Arakel and Serob, will see to the horses. You – turning to me – will count the cartridges and divide them among the horses, and sew the *khurjins* up well; and Sarbaz Khecho will do the business outside.

We all say, "We hear,"[44] and come out of the room. Only then did I understand that our chief was Khecho, and that we were all of us his submissive and obedient instruments.

It is evening. We lead the horses out and stand in a single row, one behind another, holding the horses by the bridle. Khecho comes out in silence, and we all stand to a wordless salute. He comes up to each one of us, looks at our clothes, our rifles, our horses, whispers something in Sarbaz Khecho's ear, and mounts his horse, commanding: "Mount." All together we mount our horses and move off, apart from one another, at set distances. In front goes Sarbaz Khecho; fifty paces behind him, Dashnaktsakan Khecho; and we go after him, two by two and at a slow pace. When we are out of the town we put the horses to it, and so ride on for hours, without a word, in the darkness. I come up to the man beside me and ask where we are going.

– Salmast, I suppose, is the answer.

A high gorge is before us. Sarbaz Khecho draws in his horse's bridle and says something to Dashnaktsakan Khecho, who turns to us and commands: "Ready." At once the rifles come down off our backs and the cartridges go in. The horses move slowly on, while Sarbaz Khecho climbs the mountain with one of us. They had gone far from us when suddenly we hear a noise. We put the horses to the gallop and come up with a party of more than ten men. They were the keepers of the roads, and they had been taken by surprise. We pass on without halting; only Sarbaz Khecho stays to make *khosh-besh() with them, and, taking the* aragh *out of the* khurjins*, offers it to them. The guards were afraid of the* fedayis*, and of Sarbaz Khecho they were downright terrified – and here he is, standing and offering them* aragh*. We wait a little on a height; and when Sarbaz Khecho comes up with us we push the

() Khosh-besh* — to exchange greetings and pleasant words.

horses on, so as to reach Salmast before the light broke.

Wearisome was that road: we went on without a break, ten hours, without coming down off the horses. When we reach a village and I get down off my horse like a dead man, I notice that the others show no sign whatever of fatigue.

— Good; you go and lie down, I will see to your horse, Khecho would say, without my asking it of him.

The village we had come to was Sanamerik. We had crossed out of the valley of the Tghmut and were in the valley of the Zola-chay, whose waters run down into Lake Urmia. Tired though I was, I had no patience: I went up on the roof to see this new world, which was formerly called Zarevand and is now called Salmast. Salmast, pressed into the bosom of *Zaghooshi*,[45] is beautiful to look upon, and its fertile villages are bound to one another by poplar trees and by gardens. It did not show as a desert, like the plain of Avarayr.

The country seemed to be an Armenian world, and its masters the *fedayis*. From the direction of Ghalasar three horsemen appear, coming armed, in broad daylight, toward Sanamerik. I take them for government officials and want to draw back inside; but Sarbaz Khecho, standing at my side, laughs, and, looking through his field-glass, announces that it is Pokhik, Hagop and Gde who are coming toward us. He makes signs to them, and three iron men, blackened by the sun, come straight on for our house. Khecho and Suren, as old acquaintances, embrace them like kinsmen; with the rest of us they are civil. The new-comers get down from their horses and stay to eat with us.

Pokhik, with his square firm jaws, his long moustaches, his hawk's keen eyes, looks the comrades over one by one, and, struck by their huge faces, can find nothing to say. He says only "*mashallah*." Looking at my "*Toysrg*"[?] face,[46] at my bent back (on the journey I had taken a wound in my back from the four rifles that

beat against it), he takes on a black look and turns to Sarbaz Khecho:

– Is this right? The three of us went to Nikol and begged that we might be joined to him and cross into the Land. He did not hold us *layegh* (worthy); he said there were plenty like you in the Land, that we were of no use; and he would not take us. Is it just that this handful of a lad should be worthy to go into the Land, while we, sons of the Land, who have shed our blood, should be unworthy? – He was looking at me, and he was very angry.

– Lose your *sasd* (your voice)! broke in Dashnaktsakan Khecho. Keep your belly-ache to yourself; this handful of a lad outweighs you and your comrades together.

I held my tongue, and understood the heart of the matter afterward. Sarbaz plastered over (smoothed away) the quarrel, and the affair was closed without a fight.

From Sanamerik we took the road in the evening for the village of Payajuk, which we reached in an hour; and they lodged me and Dashnakts. Khecho in the house of Manaterian. Khecho was known in that house.

– Karapet, you are to cure this "*intelikento*'s" back with a *brmbul*[?] bed;[47] he has hurt his back for want of tying a soft belt about it.

The Manaterian family were very rich. Their house was a prosperous one, and at the same time a station – for the *fedayis*, and for the schoolmasters as well. There came to see us there Armenak Aftandilian[48] (to whom, at Tabriz, I afterward dictated these recollections), Gaspar Hagopian and Yeruand Frankian, who were schoolmasters in that village. The whole night went by in *keyf* and in eating and drinking. It was in none of our minds then that in the days to come we should meet again and grow intimate.

In a few days, when I had recovered, we had orders to pass over to Ghalasar, which was very near Payajuk and all but joined to it by its vineyards.

Our center was Ghalasar, where Nikol lived; they called us there. Samson, who was the representative of the Dashnaktsutiun at Salmast, received us as old acquaintances of his.

That day Nikol was to put his soldiers to their final examination. Kolot Sargis[49] and I were judged useless, as men of a feeble build. Our grief was boundless; we were wounded, and we cursed our parents for not having made us a little more robust and sound. The chosen went off to the shooting-trial, and we followed them, downcast and sorrowful. When they had all finished taking their aim at four hundred paces, I too asked to be allowed to try. They were all astounded when I shot better than Nikol, and worse only than Sarbaz Khecho, and took second place among all the soldiers.

The two Khechos interceded for Sargis and me, but Nikol stroked our shoulders coaxingly and said:

– Come, lads, you are still young, you are students; why do you want to die for the sake of one trial?

We begged Nikol again, laboring to persuade him that we could endure it; but it was of no use.

– It is not worth sacrificing you for this fight; you are young yet, and in time to come we will have need of students like you.

Sargis, who had the greater revolutionary standing, and who came from the University of Geneva, said boldly to Nikol:

– And what sort of measure is that? Is Dr. Zavriev tougher than I, then, or of no use for the future? Why do you take him into your band?

– You forget, Sargis *jan*, answered Nikol, that if he is killed, men will at least be sobered by his death; but by your death what do we gain?

This conversation was taking place in the presence of the poor doctor, who said, laughing:[50]

– Look, look at the sort of reckonings he makes.

I explain that as a specialist in the making and the filling of bombs my presence is indispensable, since besides myself only Sargis understands that business. Besides that, I am an officer of the Russian army, and can therefore be of use. At last Nikol softens, and agrees to take us as far as Van.

NIKOL–DUMAN[51]

The next day we are to take the road. At night we gather in the church. Filling the bombs with dynamite with my own hands, I had been poisoned: my head ached, I was sick at the stomach, but I was afraid to show myself ill. Sargis noticed it, but at my request kept silent. Samson noticed too that I had turned yellow, but I explained to him that this was my natural color.

A flag was laid on the table, and on it the emblem of the Dashnaktsutiun, the cross, the Gospel, the rifle and the sword. They pray; Sargis makes a speech; Dr. Stepanian speaks as well. The *fedayis* gathered about the table look thoughtful and sad; behind them stand women and other people, with the tears running from their eyes. They are all silent, and it is as though with their gaze they were escorting the *fedayis* to the graveyard. The *fedayis*, full of sorrow, came up to take the communion; the *ter-ter* read what prayers he read, though perhaps nobody was listening to him. But his voice, in the mysterious half-darkness of that night, seemed to carry us away toward other worlds. Was it heaven, or was it Turkish Armenia, that drew us? One after another we all kissed the Gospel and went out at Nikol's order. We mounted the horses and took the road.

Only when we had gone a good way from the village did I find myself again and look attentively about me. Ahead of me rode Mato, and beside him the invaluable Avo of Van. Both knew those roads thoroughly, and had taken part in many a fight. Mato was a Kurd, and had been in his time our furious opponent (he had even taken part in fights against Nikol Duman); but now he was as furious an opponent of the Turkish government, and a warm friend to the *fedayis*.

Fifty or sixty paces behind them rode Dashnaktsakan Khecho, and behind him Nikol, whom the *fedayis* followed two by two. Last of all rode I, with the bombs loaded on my saddle, and after me Sarbaz Khecho, the rear-guard of the whole band.

On the road, when we had only just come out of Erevan, Nikol had said to me: "What we do not know is called death." I think he was wrong. Our horses were speeding forward toward the unknown, and we ourselves toward the uncertainty of the morrow; and there was in it a mysterious dread that was at

once alluring and terrifying: the unknown was sweet and precious, as precious as life itself. What did it matter that the women left behind in Ghalasar, with the tears in their eyes, called it death?

The band moved now at a gallop, now at a slow pace, through unknown mountains and gorges. All were silent; speaking was forbidden; only the horses broke the silence of the night. Daybreak was near when we climbed one of the great mountains of the frontier*(), and in a hollow of it came down off our horses. This was our station for the day. Quickly we slackened the horses'* dolans *(the girths),[^t52] undid their tails, rubbed their eyes, pulled a few times at their manes, got the* khurjins *down; and my comrade and I began to walk the horses up and down, so that their sweat should cool. The others climbed silently and took up four positions, to guard us from above. Only Nikol and Zavriev, sitting in the heap of the* khurjins*, dozed. When the horses were rested we tethered them to the ground with ropes, that they might graze a little; then we gave them crushed barley out of the* khurjins*. Nikol proposed that we should be sure to sleep. Mato was already sleeping sweetly.

— Look how this savage sleeps in the water, said Zavriev.

But we were so tired that, though the snow-water had gathered under us, we too slept.

It was not yet noon when they woke us. We went up to take the positions, and the others came down to rest. The sheep of the distant villages came near us; the shepherd took fright and made to run when he saw us, but we set his mind at ease.

The dark had not yet fallen when we mounted the horses again and went on our way, though Kurd Mato warned us that there would be fighting the next day if we went forward now. "Not to mount is one

(*) (It was Aratul.)[53]

shame; to come down, two," said Nikol, and ordered us to move forward in the same silence and the same order.

Soon we are nearing the frontier. Down from the mountains we go into the abyss; we pass along tracks where men can hardly move with horses. Happily nobody fell into the abyss; only Serob, I think, hardly got off with his life, and that thanks to Sarbaz Khecho. When we came near the frontier guards, Nikol

ordered the rifles to be kept ready and the men to come down off the horses. Holding the horses by the mane, we climb up through the rocks. From far off voices and the barking of dogs are heard; we bear away to the right and to the left according to those voices, we climb the mountain, we come down again, until we reach the highest peak, and go at a gallop along its slopes. One or two rifle-shots are heard. Have they noticed us, or is it chance?

We hold on our way through a deep gorge, which forks in two. In one of the two we halt, and settle our horses. It is dawn already. We have taken six positions; in the highest position is Nikol; my share has fallen to me – to defend the mouth of the gorge, with Grish and Suren. Opposite us are Serob of Shamakhi, Sarbaz Khecho and little Sargis; above them Dashnaktsakan Khecho, Arakel and a third soldier whose name I do not remember have taken a position; opposite them, above us, Avo and Khuyetsi Khecho;[54] and higher than they, Nikol, Mato, Dr. Zavriev and Tados.

Instead of a *khanjal* hanging at my side I had a little German spade. I wanted to make use of my German lesson, and before sleeping I dug myself a trench, which made a convenient position to lie in. Grisha and Suren made use of my spade as well. An hour later we were ready to sleep. Grish kept watch, and the two of us slept.

When Grish woke us, we saw before us, among the rocks, men, horsemen, parties coming on; with beating hearts we waited to see what would happen. It is hard to explain the strange

agitation a man feels the first time he is beset by an enemy. Your breast rises and falls panting; you want to run forward a moment sooner and strike, or be struck; but there was no order from Nikol, though the enemy was already at four hundred, at two hundred paces from our position. At last the noise of the Kurds was heard from above, and the volleys came down like rain. From all four sides the rifles began to work, and my own rifle was working too.[55] I grew easier, as though the agitation of my soul had gone off with my first bullet.

The fight grew fiercely hot in front of our positions and Sarbaz Khecho's. The enemy wanted to destroy us and take our positions, so as to be able to get into the gorge and carry off our horses. The enemy poured down from the mountains and was at a hundred paces already; some of them have come

close to our horses, and some are under our very rocks. Suren pulls out his "ten," springs out of his trench, and with his bullets drives off the Kurds who had come near us. From all our positions a furious fire rains down on the assailants, who draw back to the other face of the gorge and go on firing from behind the rocks. It seems they have taken fright; we feel ourselves the victors; Grisha begins to sing, and we all join in. The song passes from our position up to the positions above. But from Serob's side we hear no sound of singing: a bullet has struck him in the temple, and, propped against the rock, holding his rifle straight before him, so he has stayed, as though he were alive. His dying in that posture was of use to us, for the enemy kept taking aim at him and wondering that he did not fall. Bullet after bullet strikes him, but to no purpose. The enemy's attention is fastened upon him.

After noon there was another strong attack upon our positions; but because the positions above, with their fierce volleys, would not let the enemy come near ours, this attack too went off unsuccessfully. All they could do was to carry off two horses from us. At three o'clock military bugles sounded; our positions above were pouring out an infernal fire, but we did not know what was happening up there, and that caused us

fear. Avo came past us, carrying water; from him we understood that there was fighting up there. "But it is nothing," he added. The sound of the Mosin rifles comforted us: we knew that our men were still alive, and that we should win. Our men bring the enemy's furious attack to a stand at last; but poor Avo, who had wanted to set our minds at rest, falls on the way back, in Nikol's position, at Zavriev's side, taking a mortal bullet in his side.

It is dusk already. We are glad that the dark is falling: what can the enemy do in the dark? When the dark had fallen altogether, everything grew still. Whether our comrades in the positions above us have been killed, or whether the enemy has fled, we do not know. Kurd Mato comes to our position and orders us, on Sargis's part, that only two of us are to stay at the mouth of the gorge, and to fire single shots, to mislead the enemy. Grish and I stay in our position and fire one shot at a time; I try to roll a bomb down from the rock, but the bomb does not go off. Meanwhile our comrades are gathering at the end of the gorge. At last we too draw back, and mount our horses, coming warily up to the place that had been pointed out to us. I was afraid that our

comrades might all be gone already; but they were there, in the shadow, though few – hardly ten men. We stayed there a little longer, but Mato kept urging us to get out of that pit a moment sooner. Neither Nikol was there, nor Zavriev, nor Tados, nor the Khechos; we knew that Serob was dead, but of Avo we had as yet no news. We climb up a steep slope; if it had been daylight we would perhaps not have dared to drive the horses over those abysses. We reach the summit of the mountain, where there are men; some of them, in their simplicity, are rejoicing and calling out, "Duman! Khecho!" Suren, Mato and I, who were hardly thirty paces off, understood that the enemy was in front of us. They too were taken by surprise, and were struck dumb when we drew our revolvers. The cries of "*Lo, lo, fedayan*"[56] were heard, and hundreds of rifles opened in the dark of the night. We were cutting the chain, following Mato;

the bullets came from every side; one bullet struck my horse in the haunch,[57] another Arakel's horse, which reared on its hind legs and came down on the ground with Arakel. He was in front of me; I halted a little, Arakel caught at my horse's tail, and again we went forward at a gallop and came up with the lads. We were a good way from the enemy by now. Arakel climbed up on my horse's back. Mato in front, Sargis at my side, we rode on. Suddenly the two Khechos came out before us as though by a miracle. At first we thought they were the enemy and made to fire, but we knew him by Sarbaz's voice. The Khechos joined us, and we went on our way.

We notice that in the shadow there is something moving and darkening. It must be the enemy. Without a sound we rode toward the shadow. When we come near, they ask us in Turkish who we are. We answer in Kurdish. They took care not to fire; but when we had gone two hundred paces off, they opened a volley on us. At that moment we were crossing a watercourse. As my horse jumped, Arakel fell off, dragging me with him; but I had hold of my horse's mane and stayed hanging in the air, my head below and my feet above. My rifle had fallen out of my hand to the ground. I saw Arakel come up to me – but instead of lifting me and setting me on my horse's back, he took up my rifle and went off, leaving me hanging. My horse turned his head toward the enemy and was going that way. The bullets whistle. In despair I shout, "Arakel!" Suddenly a horseman comes up to me and, springing to the ground, sets me straight on my horse, in the enemy's very sight. We fly off

toward the comrades, who are waiting for us and slackening their pace. That horseman was Sarbaz Khecho.

Our little band wants to move on. "Arakel may fall into the enemy's hands," I say to my comrades, and propose that we wait. At that moment I suddenly see Arakel – mounted on Sargis's crupper. My astonishment and my fury mixed together, I give him a foul curse, and, drawing my revolver,

shout at him:

– You lose your own rifle and take mine, and leave me there, and get up on Sargis's crupper? Give me my rifle and get down off that horse, or I will not leave you worth a dog's penny.

Arakel, in his wretchedness, gave me my rifle, but did not get down off the horse; Sargis forbade it. Sarbaz Khecho came up to us at this uproar, saying that we would look into the matter later.

Putting Mato[58] in front, we quickened the horses' pace, under fire and under bullets, and moved forward.

Before us the barking of dogs and the shouting of men were heard. We were going by a road that led to Kotur, by which we had already crossed the Turkish frontier and entered Persia. To go in there was dangerous too, and so we climb a mountain and go on driving the horses at full speed, and so drive on until daylight, and reach the summit of another mountain. Mato halts and tells us that the danger is over now. We come down off the horses, which are broken and spent. My horse is swimming in sweat and in blood, and my heart ached and ached for him. But I looked at the wound, and there came before my eyes Serob's pierced temples, Arakel's horse rearing like a statue and crashing to the ground, and Arakel himself holding on to my horse's tail, and how we ran through the fire. I remembered myself hanging from the saddle of this wounded horse, my feet above and my head below, going toward the enemy – and at the last my rescue, thanks to Sarbaz Khecho. The going over of these things again moved me beyond measure. I left my horse and went across to the lads. They were sitting eating bread, and Arakel, his head in his hands, was thinking. In my fury I gave him such a shameless curse as had never been in my mouth before.

– What do you want, brother? I was confused; do what you like. He answered with such despair that I was ashamed of myself.

Sarbaz Khecho had become my advocate, and was telling how it had happened; and broad-minded Sargis said:

– We understand; tell no more of it; the lad lost his head.

The big Khecho cursed us both; and Mato, seeing that a fight might break out, struck up the song of Nikol Duman in Kurdish, and so put the quarrel out. They were all hungry. They ate bread and were filled. My horse, wounded, would not eat. I was troubled, and had no appetite either. There was one more, I think, who did not eat: that was Arakel.

In the distance the valley of Salmast came in sight; we were safe. But after this fight it was not convenient to go down by daylight. There were wounded horses, and so we took the road slowly and on foot, and reached Sanamerik at night. On the road we did not speak to one another; each had his own thoughts, but one thought was common to us all: we had had seventeen men and seventeen horses, and now eleven men and ten horses were left. Where were the six men and the seven horses? That Serob and Avo[59] had been killed was certain: we had taken their weapons and left them lying as they were, in the very positions where they had fallen. Certain, too, that one horse had been killed and two had passed into the enemy's hands, and that at the very first attack. But what became of the three horses that Tados took down below their positions? What became of our band's chief, Nikol Duman, of his aide Tados, and of Dr. Zavriev?

Three Khechos (Sarbaz, Dashnaktsakan Khecho and the Seydavartsi) had gone to Nikol Duman's position, but had found troops there, who received them with bullets. They had barely escaped with their lives. Where were Nikol and the others? Had they been killed, or were they alive and holding the enemy off, cut off from us? These thoughts tormented me. The nearer we came to Salmast, the more the men's anxiety grew.

– What will our position be if tomorrow news comes that Nikol has reached Vaspurakan? said Grish.

– Such a miracle cannot happen, answered

Suren.

– Why not? When have you heard of his turning back from the middle of a road? Then we are all of us lower than a traitor, and deserve to die like dogs.

– Let us be counted traitors, if only he is alive, said the big Khecho.

– That he is alive I have no doubt, Sarbaz Khecho affirmed.

– Why do you think so? Did we not go into the positions and not find them?

– It was at dusk that there was fierce fighting at their position; when they cut them off from us, the fight was still going on. Night came, and the sound of their rifles died strangely away. That was the time when we went to look for them, and came upon the enemy. So they were lost to us. Afterward, as we were drawing away, I heard the sound of Mosins far off, and it seemed to me the fight was going on still; so they had come up against a barrier and cut a road through it. I am convinced that Nikol has not been killed; he is alive.

With these suppositions we came into Sanamerik again. Astonishment, joy, sorrow and fear were in all our eyes. They received us as though we were strangers, as though we were sacrificial oxen run away from the *matagh*. They asked us no questions, and we, with our noses hanging, said nothing. But now there comes Pokhik, his chest thrown out, his face darkened, glowering, with his aides. I thought that after the unpleasant words of a few days before, when he had kept his grudge against Khecho and against Nikol, he would wound us out of spite; but the very opposite happened: that man rose in my eyes, and I saw in him an unhewn greatness.

– Brother Khecho *jan*, lads *jan*, may your vow be accepted, may your suffering be accepted, that you have borne these four days. You look sorrowful; I too am sorrowful. What has happened has happened; there is no use thinking of it now. You are welcome, and you have come upon my eyes.[60]

These words seemed to break the ice, and from under it a clear spring gushed up. Dashnaktsakan Khecho fell on Pokhik's neck and, calling him "*Akhper jan*," began to kiss him; and Pokhik said:

— I heard you had come, and had come short of your number, and that my dear Avo is not with you either. I came with one question only: can I be of any use to those who did not come back?

This mountain man had taken us captive, and had won our sympathy. In my eyes he became a mountain *tsetun*,[61] which, though it was hard to eat, had a taste and a smell that were immortal.

Notes

[1] Artaz, Her and Zarevand are the historic Armenian districts on and beyond the Persian frontier — Artaz in the country around Maku, where the monastery of the Apostle Thaddeus stands; Her and Zarevand in the Khoy and Salmas country. Atrpatakan is the northwestern province of Persia. Rouben's whole argument turns on the distinction: it is in these border districts, and not in the Persian heartland, that he finds "the taste and the smell" of kinship.

[2] The book prints «պատիկ», which is not a word; but «Երուանդէն» is an ablative and makes the phrase a comparative, so the sense demands «պզտիկ» — "smaller, younger." The same printed non-word stands for the same real one at Ch. VII p.242. The printed form is kept in the transcription; the translation renders the sense.

[3] Rouben is drawing on the tradition of Movses Khorenatsi: that the Arsacid (Arshakuni) kings of Armenia and the Parthian house of Pahlav were of one stock, the Armenian line founded by the brother of the Parthian king; and that Gregory the Illuminator was the son of Anak the Parthian, of that same house. The claims are the historian's, not the translator's.

[4] *Gabr* — the Persian name (from *gabr*, "infidel," "fire-worshipper") for the Zoroastrians; the remnant who fled the conquests into India are the Parsis of Bombay. It is Rouben's figure for what became of the Iran he claims kinship with: its survivors scattered in the streets of a foreign city, and his own people "nothing but their captives."

[5] The sentence turns on a pun the 1952 print nearly buried: «մէկի բացը միւսը կը լրէր … երկուսի բացածներու մէջ» — the *gap* (բաց) the one leaves open, and what the two of them have *opened up* (բացած). The glyph-reconciliation pass of 2026-07-12 recovered «բացածներու» from an earlier non-word; the pun is kept here.

[6] The battle of Avarayr (451), where Vardan Mamikonian fell against the armies of Yazdegerd II (Yazkert) of Persia — the central event of the Armenian resistance to Sasanian Zoroastrianism, and the reason Vardan's name is given to Rouben a few pages further on, at the very ground of it.

[7] «ընդագծն» — an author's coinage, and unresolved. The transcription is faithful to the page; the word matches no standard form. It is rendered here by the narrowest available sense —

the line drawn under something, its underscoring — and no authoritative gloss is offered for it. Nothing has been supplied to the sentence that is not in it.

[8] «չէկ» — unresolved. A dialect or loan adjective describing Datash's beard; the letters are confirmed (չ-է-կ), the meaning is not known. It is transliterated and left open. No meaning has been invented for it.

[9] Shahumian's Commissars — the Bolshevik Baku Commune under Stepan Shahumian, which evacuated Baku in the summer of 1918; twenty-six of its commissars were shot in the Transcaspian desert that September. The author's footnote places Datash's death with that retreating party.

[10] «վարանդիլ» — the printed word, in the author's own quotation marks. The rifle is not identified in the book, and no identification is offered here.

[11] «տասնոց» — literally "a ten," i.e. a ten-shot pistol. The make is not named in the book and is not supplied here. Rouben's point is that with a load of munitions under him he was, to all appearances, unarmed.

[12] *Charvadar* (Pers. چاروادار) is the muleteer, the master of a pack-train; here it is a by-name for the man of Khoy whose stable receives the arms, and the chapter subtitle raises it to a mock-title: TER-CHARVADAR, "Lord Muleteer." The book spells the word several ways («Չարվատար» here, «Չարուատար» and «Չարուադար» later); the variants are the book's own and are not harmonized in the Armenian.

[13] The muleteer's speech, and the two loan-words in it: *abi*, a familiar form of address (apparently Turk. *abi*, "elder brother" — named as a possibility, not asserted); *amanat*, goods left in another's keeping, a consignment held in trust. The young man's answering question is printed «Ի՞նչ կայ տանց մէջ», in which «տանց» is unresolved; it is rendered here by the plain sense of the exchange ("what is inside them?"), and nothing is supplied.

[14] The book prints the name with the definite article — «Կոստին» — exactly as it prints «ԽԷՉօն» and «ՍԱՐԲԱԶ ԽԷՉՕՆ»; the oblique forms give the bare name («նամակներ Կոստի ... անուններով», «Կոստու տեղը»), and on p.274 the big Khecho presents him outright as «Կոստիան» — Kostia, Russian Костя, the pet-form of Constantine. He is therefore Kosti in this translation, not "Kostin." — And the joke of the scene is that Rouben, the man of Moscow, takes for a stable-hand a man who has read psychology at Moscow himself.

[15] Grish (Rus. Гриша). The name is settled by the chapter subtitle, where the caps print «ԳՐԻՇԸ» and Շ is unambiguous; the reading «Գրիչ» ("pen") is an artifact of the 1952 italic. He and Suren — named in the subtitle, and entering the narrative in the second half of this chapter — are the two Akhalkalak soldiers of the tsarist army whom Rouben meets again in Persia (Ch. VI); the Ch. VI glossary entry that called him "Grich" carried the misreading forward, and has been corrected to "Suren and Grish" (glossary.json, 2026-07-12).

[16] «խաթաքար» — unresolved. An epithet Khecho throws at Kosti; the form matches no standard word and the author does not gloss it. Transliterated and left open.

[17] The Mosin — the Mosin-Nagant M1891, the Russian service rifle, whose cartridges make up the bulk of the load; the Mauser, the German pistol the men would rather have had; the Nagant revolver (glossed in Ch. II), which is what they got.

[18] «մատմալաթ» — unresolved. Transliterated as printed. The force of the joke — is such stuff the devil's or a man's? — is carried by the rest of the sentence, and nothing has been invented to fill the word out.

[19] *Jghara* — a cigarette (Turk. *cıgara/sigara*); «ջղարայ քաշել» is the ordinary idiom for smoking. Khecho is holding an empty bomb in his hand and telling the men to stand back from the crate and not to light up.

[20] «գրմբոտիչները» — an author's coinage, unresolved, and rendered here only by the sense the sentence forces on it: the bombs, which in Kars "ate the heads" of two men. No authoritative gloss is offered for the word itself.

[21] «դաշի» and «եատելի» — both printed in the author's own quotation marks, and both unresolved. They stand in the division of cartridges: three hundred on each man, three hundred in one *khurjin* of the horse, the remainder to the load of a second horse. The two words are transliterated where they stand, and no meaning is supplied for either.

[22] «մթորի» — unresolved. Sarbaz Khecho's word for whatever has come over the room since Rouben walked into it. The letters are confirmed (մ-թ-ո-ր-ի); the meaning is not known, and none is invented here.

[23] A taunt-song, and the *madzun* (yogurt) / *tan* (the thin sour drink beaten out of it with water) turn on the difference between what you ask for and what you get. «խրզմա» — the ornament the snot-nosed lad presumes to want — is unresolved; possibly Turk. *hızma*, a ring worn in the nose, but that is named as a possibility only and is not asserted.

[24] THE CHAPTER'S PUN. The book prints the word three ways and means all three. *Intelligent* (Rus. интеллигент) is the educated man of the intelligentsia — Nikol Duman's word for Rouben in the letter of introduction, and the thing Khecho cannot abide. Khecho, who cannot say it and would not if he could, mangles it into *intelikent* and *intelikentsia*, and finally into *intelikinto* — a Russian-flavoured mock-word which the 1952 print sets with a roman «o» — and then turns the mangled form into the highest praise in his vocabulary: the *intelligent* is a flea; the *intelikinto*, the man who sacrifices himself in silence and asks for nothing, "is the lord of our heads, the light of our eyes." The forms are the author's own and are printed both with գ and with կ; they are kept apart here, as he kept them apart.

[25] «լաբլաբու» — unresolved. The word closing Khecho's jibe that after two hours of oratory they can hardly get one of these out. Possibly the Turkish *leblebi*, the roasted chickpea — named as a possibility and not asserted. Transliterated as printed.

[26] «աթար» — unresolved. The jibe is at their prematurity — the thing is not there yet and they are already making it and burning it — but the word itself is not known, and nothing has been invented for it.

[27] The caption of the photographic plate printed on p.273. There are two Khechos at the Khoy station, and this is the chief: Dashnaktsakan Khecho, "the big Khecho." The other is Sarbaz Khecho, the Berlin zoologist and keeper of the horses. (A third Khecho appears in the second half of the chapter.)

[28] The Realschule — the Russian реальное училище, the modern secondary school of sciences and living languages, as opposed to the classical gymnasium.

[29] *Sarbaz* — "soldier" (Pers. سرباز). The author glosses the man with the word in this very sentence: a graduate in zoology of the University of Berlin, and at Khoy a *sarbaz* and a keeper of horses. The by-name distinguishes him from Dashnaktsakan Khecho.

[30] «սովետ սբեղդի կոտէլչիկ» — Khecho's comic Russian, and macaronic by design. It is transliterated exactly as the book prints it and is deliberately NOT cleaned up, resolved, or translated: the point of the passage is a man reeling off grand titles he has half-heard, and mending the words would silence the joke.

[31] Sultan Hamid — Abdul Hamid II (r. 1876–1909), the sultan of the massacres of 1894–96. Kosti's project, in the years of his psychology, was to work on men at a distance and bend them to his will — and so, in the end, to hypnotize the Sultan and settle the Armenian Question that way. Rouben tells it deadpan and lets it stand.

[32] Hayrik is Mkrtich Khrimian, "Khrimian Hayrik," who taught at the monastery of Varag near Van and made it a school and a press; a "son of Varag" is a man of that school. The Washing of the Feet is the rite of Holy Thursday, in which the celebrant washes the feet of the congregation. Kosti turns the old man's piety back on him: if the disciple of Hayrik wants a servant hired for the dirty work, let him remember who washed whose feet — and with whose money.

[33] The Union of Towns — the All-Russian Union of Towns (Союз городов), the municipal war-relief organization of 1914–17, under whose flag much of the Armenian relief work on the Caucasus front was carried out.

[34] The purges of 1937–38 in Soviet Armenia; the attribution to Stalin and Beria is the author's own. Sako Hambardzumian, the Bolshevik brother, and Kosti Hambardzumian, the man of the Khoy stable, died within twenty years of each other on opposite sides of the same revolution — and Rouben sets the two facts side by side without a word of comment.

[35] The mock-title sharpens here. *Ter* is a priest's title and *charvadar* the muleteer's trade, so "Ter-Charvadar" is something like "the Reverend Muleteer." But the man had in fact held ecclesiastical office: vicar-general (առաջնորդական փոխանորդ) of the districts of Artaz and Her — the prelate's deputy. The by-name was not invented out of nothing.

[36] Daralagyaz — the district south-east of Erevan, known in Armenian as Vayots Dzor.

[37] *Hayvan* — a beast, an animal (Turk. *hayvan*), and a common term of abuse. The "onions" is the men's own name for the Russians; the parenthesis explaining it is the author's, and is kept where he put it.

[38] «Չրդեր» — unresolved, and printed in the author's own quotation marks. It names the Kurdish bands that held the roads out of Khoy. The letters are as printed; no identification is offered, and none is invented.

[39] The word is used here in a second sense, and again in the author's quotation marks: not the man Ter-Charvadar, but the caravan-men of the roads — who, on Rouben's account, were half in league with the robbers they were supposed to be proof against. Whether they are the same body as the government guards of the sentence before, the printed text does not make clear, and nothing has been supplied to make it clear.

[40] *Janfedayi* — the local form of *fedayi* (with *jan*, "soul, life"), used of the Armenian escorts of the Persian roads. Kept as printed. The whole economy of the chapter's middle section

turns on it: the state cannot keep its own roads, so the state's post and the state's own troops hire the men the state is hunting.

41 Samson — the representative of the Dashnaktsutiun at Salmast, Kosti's counterpart; he receives the band at Ghalasar a few pages further on.

42 Jalpapakh is a by-name; the author says he never learned the man's real name. «կոտէյլնի մասստերութիւն» echoes the «կոտէյչիկ» of Dashnaktsakan Khecho's comic Russian at the presentation (p.274, note 30) — the Baku trade whose fat wages these men talk about instead of adventures. Like that phrase, it is transliterated exactly as printed and is deliberately left unresolved.

43 «հանած-վարած» — an idiom of Khecho's, and unresolved. The letters are as printed. The force of the sentence is plain — get there, and then do your thinking — but the phrase itself matches no standard form, and nothing has been invented to fill it out.

44 «Լսում ենք» — literally "we hear"; the answering formula of the Russian service (слушаюсь), which every man in that room had been through. It is kept literal rather than turned into an English "Yes, sir."

45 «Զաղոոշի» — an unidentified toponym, and one of the chapter's open questions. The page carries SEVEN letters, not six: at 5× the printed word shows two humps between the descender and շ (Զ-ա-[գ/դ/ղ/զ]-ո-ո-շ-ի), and the Armenian text has been corrected accordingly, so that the diplomatic transcription prints what the page prints. THE CORRECTION IS NOT AN IDENTIFICATION. IT IS STILL NOT THE ZAGROS — the fourth letter is a hump, not ր, and the penultimate is շ, not u — and it is not any other named feature. It is transliterated and left standing. No mountain range, no hill, no valley and no other feature has been supplied for it: Salmast is pressed into the bosom of something, and the book does not tell us what.

46 «Թոյսրրգ» — the epithet Pokhik throws at Rouben's face, and unresolved. The letters are confirmed (Թ-ո-յ-ս-ր-ր-[?]); the meaning is not known, and none is invented here. What the word is doing is plain enough from the scene — a mountain fighter looking with contempt at a soft young man out of Moscow — but the word itself is left open.

47 «բրմբուլ» — unresolved. Khecho is ordering a soft bed for a man with a hurt back, and the word evidently describes the bedding; but it matches no standard form, and no material has been named for it.

48 Armenak Aftandilian — a schoolmaster of Payajuk; and, as the author's own parenthesis says, the man to whom Rouben afterward dictated these recollections at Tabriz. He is in all probability the «Ա. Աւտանդիլեան» of the volume's front matter, at whose house in Tabriz Rouben lived in 1921 and to whom he there dictated his memories. The inference rests on the author's parenthesis and on the front matter agreeing in the initial, the city, the year and the act of dictation — but it is an inference, and not a thing the book states: THE TWO PLACES SPELL THE NAME DIFFERENTLY. This chapter prints «Աֆտանտիլեան»; the front matter prints «Աւտանդիլեան». The spellings are not reconciled here, and the identification is offered as probable, not certain. If it holds, it is the one moment in the chapter where the book turns and looks at its own making: the young man on the *fedayi* horse is being introduced, without knowing it, to the man who will one day take down his voice.

[49] Kolot Sargis — *kolot*, "short, stumpy": a by-name, not a surname. He is the Geneva man who answers Nikol Duman back over Dr. Zavriev, and the "little Sargis" of the battle-line. He and Rouben are the band's only two bomb-makers, which is the argument that at last gets them taken as far as Van.

[50] The book prints «ծիծաղելով կ'ըսէր ուսերէն» — literally "said, laughing, from his shoulders." The phrase is defective as printed. The sense is almost certainly a shrug, but a shrug is not what the page says, and under the rule this chapter observes throughout, a gesture the page does not state does not go into the body: the body carries only "said, laughing," and the shoulders are left here. Earlier drafts rendered it "with a lift of his shoulders"; that has been withdrawn from the text. The defect is recorded, not mended.

[51] The caption of the photographic plate printed on p.285, with the author's em-dash exactly as printed. Nikol Duman (Nikoghayos Ter-Hovhannisian, 1867–1914) is the chief of the band Rouben has just talked his way into — and the man over whose fate the survivors argue in the dark on the last page but one.

[52] «դոլան» — the horse's girth, and the author glosses it himself, «(փորակապերը)»; the meaning is carried by his own gloss. The initial letter is one of the ambiguous descenders of the 1952 italic and cannot be read off the page (the Turkish *kolan* is a possibility, named here and not asserted).

[53] The author's own footnote, naming the frontier mountain in whose hollow the band lay up through the daylight. The name is transliterated as printed; it is not identified here.

[54] The THIRD Khecho of the chapter — neither Sarbaz Khecho nor Dashnaktsakan Khecho. He is called Khuyetsi here and "the Seydavartsi" on p.293, and he is one of the three who go up to look for Nikol Duman among the enemy's guns after the fight. The reconciliation pass counts exactly three Khechos in this chapter; this is the third, and he is not merged with either of the others.

[55] This is the fight the chapter subtitle calls THE BATTLE OF UAZI. The place-name occurs nowhere in the body — only in the subtitle — and it could not be identified: the display-caps face of the 1952 print merges Զ/Չ/Զ/Ձ, so the fourth letter of it cannot be read off the page at all. It is transliterated and left unidentified, and no location whatever is proposed for it here.

[56] «Լo, լo, ֆէտայան» — the cry that goes up in Kurdish from the rocks when the band, riding for the gap in the dark, is recognized; after which, as Rouben says, a hundred rifles open. Printed as he heard it, and left as printed.

[57] The page prints «պուտին», which the glyph-reconciliation pass confirms as բուդ, "thigh, haunch," in its voiceless Western spelling. The bullet struck the horse in the haunch. This is a settled reading, not a guess — and the horse, swimming in sweat and blood, is the thing Rouben's heart breaks over a page later, not the men.

[58] The page prints «Մբատոն» here — a broken sort, not a name. The guide is Mato (Kurd Mato), named twice on this very page and throughout the chapter. There is ONE Mato, and not two men. The Armenian keeps the printed form for diplomatic fidelity; the English renders "Mato."

[59] The 1952 print wobbles the name: «Աւոն» earlier, «Աւտոյի» here, «Աւդոն» in Pokhik's last speech. It is one man — Avo the Vanetsi, killed in Nikol's position at Zavriev's side, on the

way back from carrying water down to the men who did not know what was happening above them. The English holds to Avo throughout.

60 "You have come upon my eyes" — the eastern formula of welcome, kept in its own words. Pokhik, who three days before was ready to quarrel over whether this handful of a lad was fit to cross the frontier, comes to the broken band with his chest out and his face black, and asks one question only.

61 «ծեռուն» — the chapter's last word, and the one word in it that the translator must not fill in. The glyph-reconciliation pass of 2026-07-12 checked every one of its six letters against controls on the same page and found the transcription FAITHFUL: the 1952 page really does print «ծեռուն». It matches no standard Armenian word and occurs nowhere else in the memoirs; it is apparently the name of some wild thing of the mountain that is eaten. It is transliterated here, and NOTHING is supplied for it — not a plant, not a fruit, not a root, not a herb, not a rock. The figure stands without it: Pokhik, the unhewn greatness of a few lines before, is a thing of the mountain that is hard to eat, and whose taste and smell are immortal.

CHAPTER IX

Duman and Saint Thaddeus

Դուման եւ Ս. Թադէ

Khoy to Saint Thaddeus

I GO TO KHOY AND MEET NIKOL DUMAN.
IMPRESSIONS OF THE FIGHTING.
THE ASSEMBLING OF NIKOL DUMAN'S BAND.
KACHAZNUNI'S OPINION OF NIKOL DUMAN.
FROM KHOY TO THE MONASTERY OF ST. THADDEUS.
DOCTOR ROUBEN.
VARDAN SHAHBAZ.

That same night a courier came from Ghalasar. Samson was calling Sargis, Dashnaktsakan Khecho and the rest to him; and Sarbaz Khecho and me he ordered to cross over to Khoy at once. For Sargis and his companions the thing was easy: they had only a few kilometers of road to cover, and however tired and broken they might be, they could make the move without trouble. The road Sarbaz and I had was a long one, and my eye had taken fright at that exhausting ride I had been put through a few weeks before.

– Your horse wounded, mine done in, – said Sarbaz, turning to me, – he might at least have written why we are to start at once… Pokhik *jan*, can you let us have two fresh horses, and doctor ours till we come back?

– Is that a thing to ask? On my eyes,[1] answered Pokhik,

and gave orders to Gre and Sahak, who were Assyrians,[2] to make two horses ready for us.

– If that is so, we must sleep a little. Do not let us sleep more than two hours. By daybreak we must be past the "*getatuk*."[3]

It was still dark when we are already on the horses. Gre and Sahak have come to see us as far as the "*getatuk*." That is Pokhik's delicacy. Sahak's nose is large, and gives his face the look of a fighting ram;[4] Gre's neck is short, and his broad-backed body is like a solid stump that it is impossible to break. Both speak Armenian smoothly, and you would never think them anything but our own. There was no time, in any case, to talk with them, for they rode ahead of us, and we could hardly keep up behind, we were so tired. By daybreak we had passed the dangerous point and were standing at the head of the "*getatuk*." We kissed, and parted. That parting was the final one: within a week or two they were to leave this world for good. Neither they nor we foresaw that they would be killed with Pokhik. Of that we will tell later.

We cover the road under the sun. You would think Sarbaz Khecho was the overseer of the roads: he asks every man he meets how he does, and has a sweet word for him. I play the part of his serving-lad; I hold my tongue like a bride, put on a smile, and go along behind Sarbaz. And now we are in the streets of Khoy. We open the door of "our house" and go in.

But what do we see... At the head of the stairs stands Thados.[5] When he caught sight of us, it was as though he had seen a ghost escaped out of the other world. He set up a fearful noise and ran into the room, and we after him. There we saw Doctor Zavriev, who had come out on the road to meet us; and we saw Nikol Duman, stretched out in the bed with a quiet face. Zavriev and Thados kissed us like men who had found what was lost, while Nikol, putting out his hand, invited us to sit down beside him.

Thados and Sarbaz were so moved that they could not have their fill of telling each other everything. That was as well, since Zavriev could not speak Armenian, Nikol, as it was, did not want to speak, and I was so tired and so happy that I felt no need of speaking. I listened in silence to what Thados told, and understood how they had escaped certain death and come down into Khoy.

– The evening attack on our position had been made by regular troops; it was in that attack that our horses fell, which we had tied below the positions. They cut us off from the other positions and dug themselves in fifty to a

hundred paces away. They were shouting "*taalim*."[6] Avo had long since been killed, and the three of us could not hold out against an enemy that grew stronger minute by minute. In the dark they came at us from all four sides, and we were all mixed up together. Our rifles on our shoulders, we fought with the "tens." Nikol suddenly called out, "*Za mnoy*" (follow me),[7] and sprang out of the position, and we after him. He struck so suddenly that a road opened under his fire, and we, leaping from rock to rock, passed through the line and, running down the mountain, reached the gorge. In a cleft of a rock we found one another, and Nikol gave the order: "not another explosion and not another rifle-shot; move fast down this gorge, with the run of this water, road or no road, and pay no attention to anything." Two hours we moved quickly forward, and then halted. Nikol told us we were either in Persia or somewhere near its border. There was still rifle-fire from the place of our fight, but nobody was pursuing us.

All night we went forward at a tortoise's pace, and at daybreak we came out on a highroad; but there was no strength left to walk, we had fallen sick. We hired a donkey from the passers-by, and at last we dropped ourselves down here. Now, Sarbaz *jan*, do you tell what happened to you. Sarbaz scratched the nape of his neck and said:

"*Biz eski sarbaz ak, biz ham scharak, ham kacharak*" (We are old soldiers: we both befoul ourselves and run away).[8]

Laughter took us all; even Nikol laughed from the heart at this Persian saying, while Dr. Zavriev kept asking, – What, what did he say?

Sarbaz told the whole affair in detail, not forgetting even what had passed between Arakel and me – which drew a word out of Nikol, or rather an oath, at Arakel's address. With what Thados and Sarbaz told, the whole picture of our fight was complete, and Nikol said with satisfaction:

– I did not think we should get off so lightly. Two men and five horses, in such a storm, is not so great a loss.

I listened like one struck dumb. I do not know why, but I too spoke:

– I remember Serob's[9] last words, which Suren and this Sarbaz here turn into a joke. "Serob, Serob," said he, "I – your grandfather's ––…[10] Where have you come to? What business have you in these mountains?…" Not one of us knew

any better than Serob where we were going in that fight, or why, or who was against us, or where we were. To this minute I have no answer to those questions.

I remember shooting the boy. There was one boy, a Kurd, who obstinately stayed below our positions and, passing from rock to rock without a stop, came closer and closer to us and galled us badly with his fire. He was already within fifty paces when I fired and nailed him to the ground. From a distance a piteous cry went up – "*lao, lao*;[11] for God's sake, do not shoot, my child is dead" – and crying so, leaping from rock to rock, he flew down upon his son's body. My hands shook; but Suren took aim, and – father or whoever he was – added him to the boy's body. In the course of the fight I forgot it; but toward evening, when I saw Mato, that Mato who saved us by giving his own life, my conscience began to torment me. At present I cannot understand what it is that we have done.

Neither can I understand Pokhik. Before we went to the fight I took him for a vindictive and savage man. When we came back from the fight, he had turned into an angel. He was tender with us, he held our vow "accepted," and he has vowed to go our road and be martyred. Why this vow? I do not understand. Perhaps I am tired and dazed; but all this remains past my understanding.

Apparently I was speaking in agitation. Zavriev came over and stroked my head:

– *Golubchik moy, ty stradayesh…* (my little dove, you are suffering),[12] sleep, sleep and rest.

I slept a heavy, unbroken sleep till the next day. When I opened my eyes I was hungry. I ate, and became a perfectly sound man again. Already I was repenting what I had let out the day before. I thought I might perhaps have wounded Nikol. But I saw that this dry man too is changed: he treats me as an equal treats an equal; he takes me neither for an unbroken calf[13] nor for a puppy, but for a man whose opinion he asks. He had written several letters to Salmast (no doubt those letters are not lost, and may one day come to light among the *Minaret*[14] bundles), and he gave them to me to read.

– Am I to read the whole, or only certain parts? I asked.

— Read parts, and you will understand nothing.

One letter had to do with the survivors of our band, who were to be got away from Salmast to Tabriz at once, and without being noticed. Nikol too was to leave for Tabriz. He wrote that this had to be done so as not to fall into the disaster of Mahlam.(*)[15]

(*) After the Khanasor Expedition, under threat from the Turkish government, the Persian authorities were compelled to take measures against the Armenian revolutionaries. Seven innocent villagers, who had had no connection whatever with the Khanasor Expedition, were beheaded, becoming scapegoats to Turkish caprice.

The second letter had to do with Pokhik and with the bands crossing into the Land. "It was folly, once the thing was past mending," Nikol wrote, "to be training cadres and to be making my own attempt at crossing into the Land — which I made under compulsion. That is why I refused to take many with me, and Pokhik among them. Sasun is no more, all the leaders are killed, the fighters are straining to escape out of the Land, and it is likely that what is left of them will show itself in these parts before long. In such conditions, is it not madness, this notion of Pokhik's of crossing into the Land, of which the lads who have come to me give me their assurances?"

Nikol asked me what my opinion was — what consequences these letters would have.

— It is not hard to guess at the consequences; but it is hard for me to judge what you have written, because there are points in it I do not understand. For instance, if your undertaking was folly, then why did you begin it, and what was it that compelled you? And if Sasun is no more, are we then to wash our hands of everything?

— Leave all that to one side; give me your opinion of the consequences.

— I find your caution right — to leave Salmast and go over to Tabriz. But if an exception can be made in my case, I should rather go over to the Monastery of the Apostle Thaddeus, and from there to Van; I should prefer to pursue my original purpose, if I have your consent to it and you give me recommendations. As to the question of Pokhik and the other bands crossing into the Land, I do not think your negative opinion will meet with agreement.

That work will go on until you write this letter from inside the Land, or until the comrades in the Land themselves grasp that your view is the expedient one. So long as the cries of "Help, help" are

heard from the Land, they will all go out to meet them, and they will not listen to you.

Nikol's embittered eyes fell upon mine; but he did not grow angry, and said in a voice like thunder:[16]

– Yes, they will not listen. Desire and feeling, that reckon nothing up, are stronger than reason and reckoning. Let them think what they please, but let these letters go. They will say that Nikol's eye has taken fright; that Nikol himself did not succeed, and out of envy will not have others succeed… No matter; let them say it.

And the letters went.

Next day Nikol set out for Tabriz with his companions. He left me at Khoy, to go, as I wished, to the Monastery, and from there to Van. I learned that Sargis and Dashnaktsakan Khecho, taking with them what was left of our band, had likewise gone over to Tabriz, according to Nikol's instruction, and had joined him. Because of an incident that occurred in the Armenian village of Muzhumbar,[17] they were scattered away toward Transcaucasia. I did not meet them again until the Ottoman Constitution. Of our band, only Suren had stayed at Salmast, with Pokhik. Before long the two of them too were to be killed.

All these events had worked upon me beyond measure, and they were a turning-point in my life. I began to come at questions with a critical eye. I drew away from the idea of "being martyred," and set the work, and the result got from the work, above it. Nikol's half-confidential talk with me on that last day had helped me toward this; but Nikol's credit had fallen with me. I kept asking myself how it was that this man, endowed with such natural intelligence, with so wide a preparation, so much courage and so much magnetism, could take part in an undertaking that he himself did not believe in – that he even held to be harmful. Nikol sought no justification

and gave no explanation. It was that which astonished me.

It was only years afterward, from the letters out of Sasun and from what others told, that I was to understand the true reason for the step he took. Much later still, in 1918, when we had gone to Trebizond to negotiate with the Turks, Nikol's close friend Kachaznuni(*)[18] told the whole story of the forming of our band, and made plain the character of Nikol Duman.

In 1904 the Land was in a grave case. Vaspurakan had been left without a head, and Sasun was under siege. In those days of extremity they remembered Duman; they called upon him to come and take over the leadership of Vaspurakan.

But that invitation came when "the thing was past mending." In May of 1904 the rising of Sasun had been crushed, Hrayr had been shot down, the fighters were scattered, and the shadow of death hung over the Land. It is just then that Nikol Duman receives the order to leave his post at Baku and set out for the Land.

"When they laid the state of the Land before Nikol," Kachaznuni told us, "many of the very men who had written those letters were already killed, and those who were left alive had scattered and were looking for a way of escape out of the Land. And now they invite Nikol to go into the Land and take the whole responsibility upon himself – and on condition that he save it, at that. The thing was enough to make a man rebel. Nikol asked me:

– Is this a thing to do? Hayrapet makes the wedding, and Karapet is to take the punishment?[19] I was there; they knew my address. In these five years, instead of blowing the *zurna*, they might at least have asked my opinion of what was and what was not, since at the last minute they meant to come to me. They ought, from the first,

(*) Kachaznuni was a colleague of Nikol's in the oil company at Baku.

to have given weight to Hrayr's warnings. There was sense in coming to me a year ago at least; then it might have been possible to make the Hayrapets understand that without a bride there is no wedding. Now, when the wedding has been held – even if without a bride – what am I to go and do?

"Dodging the question he had put, I said:

– Nikol, you are the experienced one; you know better than the rest of us.

"There are men who take a decision and afterward think about the means of carrying it out and about the consequences; such men decide easily, but as a rule they stop half-way and take new decisions, and new ones again. And there are men who take a decision with great difficulty, and take it only when they have pictured to themselves in detail the means of carrying it out and the consequences of those means. Such men take two decisions within themselves – one for the case of success, one for the case of failure – and their decisions are past examining and are final: they are no longer subject to any counsel or any opinion. Of this last type was Nikol; and nobody knew what he would do, or how, or through whom, to accomplish the purposes his comrades had hung upon his neck.

"Nikol looked me in the face and said nothing. But when Zavriev began his sermon in Russian – that one must not waver for the sake of the dead and the dying, that one must go and be sacrificed – Nikol darkened, pressed his long hands hard on the table, and said drily:

– Cut it short, Yasha (Hagop),[20] everything is finished. If you have all fixed your eyes on me, then it is from there that I will begin, – and turning to me: – If there is to be a going into the Land, let me go this hour, before they reach our frontier. There is no time for falling this way and that. Since I have decided to cross into the Land without more ado, it will be senseless if I do not take suitable men with me.

As we must move fast, and my own strength is in pain and weakened, both I and the comrades I take must be mounted. Every horseman, with all his equipment, will cost about a thousand roubles. Now then, Ohannes: you will settle the account with the Bureau, and you will write the letters. But today, by ten o'clock, from wherever it may be, you will have fifteen to twenty thousand roubles ready. At that hour Khecho and Thados will come and take the money from you. Your business is done. Go now, and get the money ready.

"Then he turned to Zavriev:

– Yasha, I accept all your exhortations about taking the responsibility upon oneself. No doubt you too are convinced of the counsels you give. Therefore you will be with me, exempt from penalty,[21] under my command.

"Zavriev sprang up and kissed Nikol, who had grown colder still, as though he had turned into a statue.

– Since you agree, you will do the following at once:

A. – Until daylight you will shut yourself up in your house and write your will – above all to those comrades and friends of yours in Petersburg who have risen to great positions in the empire. Explain your views to them, so that they may know that in the name of our cause it is not only brigands like me who are killed, but noblemen and educated men like you.

B. – In the morning you will see Thados and take money for your purchases and your expenses.

C. – Today you will get your passport ready; the next morning you will set out and go to Persia, to Tabriz, and there you will wait for my orders.

"Hard as it was for me to find twenty thousand roubles at once, in less than two hours I had found sixteen thousand and given them to Thados. Hard as it was for Dr. Zavriev, too, to write his will and to be on the road within thirty-six hours, the next day he was on the Tabriz road. On the fourth day Nikol was no longer to be seen in Baku.

"Nikol was an uncommon man. Man and beast are one and the same thing. Man is ashamed to confess it, and for that very reason he is the baser of the two. The purpose of the existence of both – be it by instinct, be it by reason – is one thing only: to secure their own existence and that of their offspring. That is to say: to keep the belly full by every means, to tremble for life, to guard oneself from dangers, to breed, to lay up a store against the hard day and to cling to it as to one's own person and one's own offspring. Nikol was an exception among them. Life for him was a *veg*[22] that he played with. Position, wealth, glory he held to be empty things. The established order and the accepted customs seemed not to concern him.

"He was no ordinary man in another way as well. Baku is a place of contradictions. One day you see the hut turned into a palace; the next day you see the palace burnt down and turned to ashes. One man you see

swimming in gold, and the next day in the mud. You see one whose belly is bursting with fat, and another whose belly, from emptiness, is stuck to his ribs. The swollen bellies trample the weak and pass on. Man has become a wolf to man, and eats him. And before such spectacles some men are moved, and look for a remedy. But not one of these shattering contradictions worked upon Nikol: he looked on as though he were in a theater, as though the whole thing did not concern him in the least. He watched them as a man watches the scene of their fist-fight[23] in passing, and followed their fall and their rise almost with indifference. One day I wanted to understand what this strange man felt. And what does he go and answer?

– Ohannes, I took you for a serious man; I see that you are like the rest. Men have come out to a contest – whether that is good or bad I do not know. Some sow wheat and fill the granary with the grain, without knowing whether they will be able to eat it and finish it. The buffalo lies in its

avutanots,[24] eating and chewing away, without knowing that the one who will slaughter it is rejoicing.[25] The donkey eats the thistles at the edge of the fields; if it eats the lucerne it gets a blow. The goat has gone up the rocks and eats branch and leaf, feeling that there is nobody there to lay a hand on it. So each is at his own business, according to his taste. They are the actors, and I a spectator who pays nothing. Think of the day when the wolves will come out and tear every kind of beast to pieces. Then this drama of self-forgetfulness may come to an end...

"But that was not the line that decided Nikol's character. His strangeness, his *hyunarb*[26] – the gift of resourcefulness – lay in another thing. When the packs of wolves came down from their dens into the public square; when all the beasts were thrown into confusion; when the heroes of the fair day and the chattering magpies turned into hens fallen in the water; when the rich man with his nose in the air and the poor man alike lost hand and foot, and, creeping into their holes, begged for help – then Nikol appeared. He was calm and silent. He looked to the right, he looked to the left, and came down into the middle of the square as though a leopard had come out into the open. His appearing caused fear and astonishment, admiration and awe together. Enemy or friend, a man was nailed where he stood in spite of himself, and awaited his will. That idle world was now the spectator, and Nikol the actor.

"I have told you how, in his travail over going into the Land, he found the way out of what he had to do. He was able to compel me to pay out money without a request and without an order. He was able to make Dr. Zavriev write his will. These are small things; the more important ones will be told from Van, from Boghaz-Keasan,[27] and from this place and that in Persia. I did not see them with my own eyes. What I saw with my own eyes was in the days of the Armeno-Tatar fighting, when the collaboration of Tatar and Russian against the Armenians became plain, when the veil was torn from that fable that "Christian tsarist Russia

is the pledge of the Armenians' happiness." You should have seen what confusion, what disappointment and despair had come over the Armenian bourgeois, clerical and intellectual classes. They had become a boat without sail and without rudder. At the sight of the Tatar storm they read curses and blasphemies over the crooked Russian cross that yesterday they had worshipped. And in spite of themselves they turned their eyes toward us. You should have seen the so-called "left" and the so-called "revolutionaries," and how absurdly they reasoned, given over to terror at the sight of the Tatar mob that was threatening to wipe out every Armenian without distinction.

"It is natural, they said, that reactionary tsarist Russia should join hands with the reactionary Tatar mob. Our salvation is in a revolutionary, free Russia, and that is what you do not understand. Let the Dashnaktsutiun leave off its passivity and put itself at the head of the revolution, and a Russia in revolution will destroy this reactionary mob.

"Our own people too, at that moment of responsibility, had lost themselves and did not know what they were to do: they struck now at the *nal* (the horseshoe), now at the nail.[28] But the time was not passing idly. Heart-wearing news came every minute, and paralyzed us the more. It was at that moment that I understood who the true leader is, the man of the crisis. It was Nikol, who always listened in silence. He rose from his place, calm and hard, and turned to the right – toward the clerics, the bourgeois and the talkative intellectuals – and said:

– Cut off your voices. Understand at last that the *selap* (the flood)[29] will carry away all the work you have done to this day. Your calculations are wrong from the foundation. What I tell you, that also you are to do.

"Then he turned to the left:

– You too, straining your heads, talk *verasia, verasia* (things on credit, things without foundation).[30] Within a few

hours, if we do not stop it, every one of your mothers will be weeping. Go on, go and look for the sweetness of garlic and onion! There is no sweetness in them. And if it is revolution you want, there is nobody holding your hand. Here is your *gubernator* (the provincial governor), here are your commanders, joined with their dogs to the Muslim Tatar mob, and they mean to butcher you like cattle. Get up, kill them, and I will say *aferim*[31] to you.

"He turned to us:

– The enemy is armed, and he has already passed Ermenikend and reached Parapet.[32] And you sit there beating your *chanke* (your jaw).[33]

"At last, addressing them all, he said:

– Disperse, and let every man go to his work. The women to the house; whoever has *bolojik* (kidneys, courage)[34] let him go down into the street. What I do, what I say, that also you are to carry out – unless you want your wool taken off you, beneficently.[35]

"They all turned into lambs. Without any resolution being passed, Nikol had become the head of them all. Within the hour we had word that Nikol was in the fighting, and that he had fallen upon the Tatars and was cutting them down. We waited for his victory without a fear.

"This is the leader – the man who can change everything in a single hour."

Why our band did not go from Salmast by the straight and short road; who the forces were that fought against us; and what losses we inflicted upon them – all this was soon made clear through the frontier troops, and through the Kurds and the Armenians who had taken part in the fighting. First, as to the road. Nikol had known that the Turkish representative at Dilman had reported our band's crossing from Salmast to Van; it was known too that we were being waited for by the Thakortsi and the Maghriktsi

ashirets[36] and by the Turkish troops. Taking that into account, Nikol changes the road from the mountain of Araul (where we had spent the night), and

decides to reach Mount Varag by way of the heights above Kotur, through the points of Radi and Salakhaneh.[37] Those who fought against us until midday had been men of the Mlantsi and the Haidarantsi tribes, and the local people and the frontier troops as well; afterward the troops of Saray came up. Their number is to be reckoned ten times ours. It was our luck that they had not been waiting for us in the neighborhood of Radi. The losses they suffered were eight soldiers and frontier guards and twenty-three Kurds. What we saw with our own eyes we could not count at more than seventeen bodies. Be that as it may, we owed our lives to Nikol's quickness.

At Khoy I was under the guardianship of two aged veteran field-workers. Both were blue-eyed and of middle height, and over both of them the years seemed to be passing rather to temper them than to wear them out. The only thing that betrayed their age was the white threads that had come into their *chek*[38] hair; but for that, I should have taken them for grown young men.

One of them was named Rouben, and his surname was Derdzakian.[39] I will not vouch, however, for the genuineness of either. He said he was a man of Constantinople and by descent of Taron – which likewise stood in need of verification. It is beyond doubt that he had taken part in Kukunian's band and had been exiled to Sakhalin, from which he escaped after various adventures and came to Persia and joined his Sakhalin comrades – Yeprem, Balajan, Movsesian – whose story, taken man by man, might turn into a legendary novel; part of it Amurian has written down.[40]

In those days this fugitive from Siberia was a "doctor" (more exactly, he had the repute of a doctor), and a man much sought after in the province of Artaz. He was conscientious, disinterested, devoted to the people. If he had no medical diploma, still, between Sakhalin and Persia, he had treated – and no doubt killed – so many men that he might have stirred the envy of many a man of science.

But all this was so much pretext for carrying on his revolutionary work as a legal man. The Sardar of Maku[41] held him to be a person indispensable to the province.

Doctor Rouben was a living man; he seethed like boiling water. If there was no work to do, he would talk, joke, scuffle and swear as they swear in Sakhalin.

My other guardian was called Vardan, and his surname was Shahbaz.[42] He too had old histories behind him. Doctor Rouben connected his past with the affair of the Ottoman Bank,[43] but Shahbaz himself was displeased at this and kept silent about it. As a rule he was against talking, and held everything to be "warbling." He was thoughtful, and only by moving the lashes of his eyes rapidly did he betray how highly strung he was. Vardan had lately come out of the Land. After passing an agitated life in Vaspurakan, he had shouldered the name of "Jatak"[44] and had come out with Yerkat[45] to go to the General Assembly. Returning from it, he had fallen into Doctor Rouben's hands, so that he might get him to Van by way of the Monastery of the Apostle Thaddeus.

Such were the two experienced men I was with. There was nothing for me either to think out or to do. "With their waters I can find my road," I thought, and I was easy.

We stayed a few days at Khoy, and Doctor Rouben began to be bored. Once he turned to Vardan and said:

– True, the times are confused and there are conflicting reports in plenty; but the work that has to be done is better done sooner. We take five horses, two for the loads, three to ride. We take the stocks of the rifles off the barrels and lose them among the loads. To you I give "*varandil*"[46] rifles, as being my servants. I go in front, and you behind me, as my *gholams* (servants).[47] We go by way of Zeyva, of Zurava, of Teghnut.[48] Before we reach Teghnut we turn by way of Krghltagh and go to the Monastery of Thaddeus. The whole district is sons of dogs. Is it agreed?

Vardan was silent, and at last answered:

– Let it be as you say.

Doctor Rouben, dissatisfied, looked at me questioningly. I answered:

– Let what you say be.

Doctor Rouben grew angry:

– Dogs, sons of dogs, what is the difference between the two things you have said? Say something, that we may understand something.

And he said it in such a way that laughter took us.

– Very well; if it is a quarrel you want, then let it not be as you say, answered Vardan.

But the question, and what we were to do, had been settled already; and the next day, in broad daylight, as the doctor's servants, with the "*varandil*" rifles thrown over our shoulders, we were going through the bazaar, dragging two pack-horses after us. We went always toward the north-west, along the banks of the streams that were making[49] to spill into the Tghmut. The mountains were forested,[50] and here and there there were gorges. Often we came upon wretched little villages lost in the ravines, many of whose names were Armenian, though the inhabitants were every one of them Tatars or Kurds. In spite of that, Doctor Rouben, who rode ahead of us, appeared to be known to them all. Crying "Hakim Bashi,"[51] they want to swallow him whole; but he promises to call on his way back. Zevan and Zuravan behind us, we come near to Teghnut, where we halt, to rest the horses and to settle the road we are to take.

There is sun in the sky still. Vardan has put together the parts of the "Mosin" rifles, and we have changed our weapons. Skirting the village of Krghl-Tagh, we climb its mountain; and leaving behind us the barking of the dogs and the sound of a stray rifle-shot here and there, we come out upon a tableland whose waters flow not southward to the river Tghmut but northward, in the direction of Maku – that is, into the river Gaylatu. Our climbing and descending lasted several hours, and was tiring, above all for the horses. "From here on it is freedom," Doctor Rouben kept saying; "ride as you please; in two hours we can reach the monastery."

The morning star shines above the grassy field; the horses snort and graze, panting. Leaning against the loads, we eat cheese wrapped in *lavash*.[52] From far off, from very far off, comes the sound of a bell. The sky turns blue, and the blue mixes with orange, and with the paling stars. It is the bells of the monastery, ringing in the mildness of the morning. It is the Monastery of Thaddeus, calling the Christians to prayer and to faith. Nowhere can a bell sound so full of mystery and so beautiful. Here its voice comes from the other

world, from heaven, and it has another accent, a hopeful one of a different kind, as though it were calling the dead to their feet.

It was there, at the place from which that voice comes, that the Apostle Thaddeus was killed two thousand years ago by our unbelieving King.[53] And every morning the bells sound, and nobody comes to pray. This country has remained unbelieving; all are Muslims, and enemies of that ringing. Yet for centuries the bells go on sounding, and you do not know who it is that rings them, or why they ring. It is as though they rang to proclaim the victory of justice — but justice there is none, and none.

— The horses have eaten their measure of grass, said Doctor Rouben, and rose from his place; let them pray a little longer in the monastery, so that the black-robe[54] may not be left alone.

When the sky had turned to red cast iron, and the cocks were calling their last cock-a-doodle-doo, we saw the dome of the magnificent monastery. It was like a shepherd fleeing the hail.

Notes

[1] «Իմ աչքի վրայ» — "on my eye," the eastern formula of ready assent: gladly, it is as good as done (cf. Turk. *üstüme, gözüme*). Pokhik is being asked, at midnight, for two fresh horses and for the doctoring of two broken ones, and this is his whole answer.

[2] The Assyrians (Nestorians) of the Urmia and Salmast country, of whom there were then still substantial settled communities on both sides of the Persian frontier. The book prints the first man's name both «Գրէ» and, on the same page, «Գրրէի»; the variant is the author's own and is kept in the Armenian, while the English uses one form, Gre, throughout.

[3] «Գետատուկ» — UNRESOLVED, and left so. The word occurs three times on this page, always inside the author's own quotation marks. What the page establishes is only this: it is a fixed point on the road out of Khoy, it is to be passed by daybreak, and it is where the two Assyrians turn back. (The book does not say it is the «վտանգաւոր կէտը», the dangerous point, of the sentence that follows; the two are coordinated, and they are left coordinated here.) Of the letters, only «գետ-» ("river") yields a real morpheme, and the initial glyph is one of the merged descenders of the 1952 italic; the word as a whole matches nothing standard. It is transliterated, and nothing is supplied for it — no ford, no bridge, no crossing, no pass, no river.

[4] «Կռուազան» — the form is open. The page confirms the hyphenated split «կռուա-|[descender]ան»: the stem «կռուա-» ("fight-") is certain, and no reading of the descender gives a standard Armenian word. The rendering above takes the fight from the confirmed stem and the ram from the sentence, and nothing else is built on the word.

[5] Thados: Nikol Duman's man, and very probably the Thadeos Amirian called Datash of Chapter VIII — Duman's aide, and the right man in the right place at the right time. The book nowhere makes the equation, and it is offered here as an inference, not as a printed fact.

[6] «Թաալիմ» — the shout of the attacking troops, printed in the upright roman face, which in this book marks a loanword. Pers./Turk. *ta'lim* — drill, instruction, the word of command — is the likely source; it is named as a possibility and not asserted, and the word is kept as printed.

[7] Russian «за мной» — "after me!" The author glosses it himself, «(հետեւեցէք ինձի)», "follow me," and his gloss is kept. Duman gives the command in Russian, as Dr. Zavriev, who could not speak Armenian at all, receives the whole story in it.

[8] The proverb is Turkish, though Rouben calls it Persian and his word is kept. It is SELF-GLOSSED in the text — the parenthesis is the author's own — and no other rendering is attempted here. The second letter of «սրչարաք» is ը or ր at the resolution of the scan, and the transliteration above follows the printed line.

[9] This is the Serob of Chapter VIII — the man of the second, smaller group of the Khoy station, out of the Russian army by way of the Baku oil-fields, killed at his rock in the Battle of Uazi and left propped upright with his rifle, drawing the enemy's fire after he was dead. He is not Aghbyur Serob of Chapter III, and the two are not to be conflated.

[10] The printed Armenian is «ես քու պապու գանկ...» — word for word, "I your grandfather's *gank*..." — and the author breaks it off there, on the page, with his own ellipsis. It is the opening of an imprecation of the common Caucasian type, in which the verb is the obscenity and the idiom suppresses it; what Serob is saying is a curse, and he does not finish it. The English keeps it broken off, and supplies neither the verb nor an object: «գանկ» is NOT rendered literally, and no reading of it is asserted here. (The word is the ordinary Armenian for "skull," but taking it at face value in this sentence would produce a phrase the Armenian does not mean, and the reconciliation pass rules the literal rendering out.)

[11] «Լաo» — the Kurdish father's cry as he comes down the rocks onto his son's body. Kurdish *lao / lawo*, an address to a boy or a son ("my boy"), is the likely sense; it is named as a possibility and not asserted, and the scene supplies the rest.

[12] Russian «голубчик мой, ты страдаешь» — "my little dove, you are suffering." The parenthesis is the author's own gloss and is kept.

[13] «Խամ մոզի» — the unbroken calf: *kham*, the raw, the untilled, the unbroken (Turk. *ham*); *mozi*, the young bullock. Duman's earlier measure of Rouben, and the measure of the change: the boy who crossed the Shakhtakht bridge as his *geada* is now asked what he thinks of Duman's letters.

[14] «Մինարէթի ծրարներուն մէջ» — UNIDENTIFIED, and left so. What «Մինարէթ» was, the book does not say and this translation does not guess: no building, no archive, no journal,

no institution is supplied for it. The word for the bundles or files, «ծրարներուն», is itself a reconstruction of the glyph-reconciliation pass.

[15] Mahlam is transliterated and not identified. What "the disaster of Mahlam" was is told in the author's own footnote below, and nowhere else in the book: the reprisal that followed the Khanasor Expedition of July 1897, when the Persian government, pressed by Constantinople, beheaded seven villagers who had had nothing to do with it. Duman is moving the survivors out of Salmast so that no Persian village will pay for them again.

[16] The 1952 page prints «որոտում կերպով», which is not Armenian; the sense demands «որոտուն», "thundering." The printed slip is kept in the Armenian transcription and rendered here by its sense.

[17] Muzhumbar: transliterated as printed and not identified. What the incident in the village was, Rouben does not say.

[18] Hovhannes Kachaznuni (1868–1938), who was to be the first Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia; at the time of this account he was in the oil business at Baku, and Nikol Duman's colleague there — as the author's own asterisked note above says. Rouben heard the account from him at Trebizond in 1918, at the negotiations with the Turks. FROM THIS POINT TO THE END OF THE SECTION THE NARRATING "I" IS KACHAZNUNI'S, NOT ROUBEN'S: it is Kachaznuni who is ordered to raise the money, and Kachaznuni who finds sixteen thousand roubles in two hours. The English marks the running quotation by opening every paragraph of his account with a quotation mark and closing it only at the end, where it returns to Rouben's own voice. Duman addresses him throughout by the colloquial form of his name, «Օհաննէս» — Ohannes — which the book prints as he said it, beside the «Յ. Քաջազնունի» of Rouben's own sentence.

[19] «Հարսնիքը կ'անէ Հայրապետը, պատիժը պիտի քաշէ Կարապետը» — a rhyming saw: one man makes the wedding and another pays for it. Hayrapet and Karapet are two ordinary Armenian men's names, and the whole force of the thing is in the rhyme, which cannot be carried over. Duman then keeps the figure running through the rest of the speech — the wedding held without a bride, and the "Hayrapets" who ought to have been told that without a bride there is no wedding.

[20] Yasha (Hagop) — Dr. Zavriev. The gloss «(Յակոբ)» is the author's own: *Yasha* is the Russian familiar of Yakov, and Yakov is the Russian of the Armenian Hagop. Duman, who gives his commands in Russian, calls him by the Russian name and the book supplies the Armenian one.

[21] «Անպատժան» — "unpunished, exempt from penalty." The word is printed plainly and is kept; what its force is in this sentence is not certain, and nothing is asserted here. Duman may mean that Zavriev, coming under his own orders, will answer to nobody else; the irony may as easily run the other way. What the passage plainly does is take Zavriev along and put him under Duman's command.

[22] «Վէգ» — the knucklebone used as a playing-piece in the children's game; a real word, and not one of the chapter's doubtful ones. Life, for Duman, was a knucklebone he played with.

[23] The 1952 page prints «կրոփամարտի», which is no Armenian word; the sense demands «կուփամարտ», a fist-fight. The printer's slip is kept in the Armenian transcription and rendered here by its sense, and nothing is built on it.

[24] «Աւուտանոցը» — UNRESOLVED, and left so. The place-suffix «-անոց» is certain, and so is the plain fact of the sentence: the buffalo is lying in an enclosure where it is fed. The stem matches no attested Armenian word and could not be identified; it is NOT «ախոռանոց» and NOT «մսուր» — neither of those is on the page. It is transliterated, and NO structure is named for it: no stall, no byre, no manger, no shed.

[25] «Մատաղորձը» — the sense is secure, the form is not. The stem is «մատաղ-», the votive sacrifice, the slaughter of a beast; the final «ձ» is confirmed on the page against a control in the same line, which rules out «մատաղացու» (the beast destined for sacrifice) and with it the inversion that would have made the buffalo itself the one rejoicing. The compound «-որձ» is unattested. The parable settles what it means — the ox at the thistles, the goat on the rocks, and the wolves who will come out and tear them all apart: each beast fattens in ignorance, and the one who will slaughter it is glad. The English renders that sense and NO MORE: no butcher is introduced as a character, and no object is supplied.

[26] «Հիւնարբը» — set in the upright roman face, which in this book marks a loanword, and SELF-GLOSSED by the author, «(հնարագիտութեան շնորհքը)», the gift of resourcefulness. The author's gloss is the only thing that carries the meaning here, and it is kept. The final consonant is «բ» or «ք» at the resolution of the scan and cannot be settled; the romanization above follows the transcription and asserts nothing. Turkish *hüner* (skill) is a possible source, named as a possibility and not asserted.

[27] Boghaz-Keasan: transliterated as printed and not identified. Kachaznuni names it as one of the places from which the more important stories of Duman would be told, together with Van and "this place and that in Persia." Cf. the *keasan* of Ch. VII.

[28] «Մէկ նալին (պայտին) էին զարնում, մէկ՝ մեխին» — to strike now the shoe and now the nail, i.e. to hedge, to try both ways at once (cf. Turk. *bir nala bir mıha vurmak*, named as a parallel and not asserted). The author glosses the loan-word «նալ» with the Armenian «պայտ» — both are the horseshoe — and his gloss is kept.

[29] «Սելափը (հեղեղը)» — the author's own gloss, «հեղեղ», the flood or torrent, carries the meaning and is kept. Turk./Pers. *sel*, a torrent, is a possible source, named as a possibility only.

[30] «Վերասիա» — SELF-GLOSSED by the author, «(ապառիկ, անհիմն)»: on credit, and so without foundation. His gloss carries it. Turkish *veresiye*, "on credit," is a possible source, named as a possibility and not asserted.

[31] *Aferim* — "well done, bravo" (glossed at Ch. VI). The meaning is not in doubt. The spelling is: the book prints «ափարիմ», and the initial glyph of the 1952 italic serves both «փ» and «ֆ», so that «աֆարիմ» cannot be excluded from the page. The printed form is kept in the Armenian and the locked English rendering is used here.

[32] Ermenikend and Parapet — the two Baku localities of the Armeno-Tatar days of 1905: the Armenian quarter and the square. The book prints «Երմանիքեանդ» and «Պարապետ», and both are kept exactly as printed in the Armenian.

[33] «Չանկեայ (ծնօտ)» — the author glosses the word himself: the jaw. To beat the jaw is to wag the tongue, to sit talking while the enemy comes on. Turkish *çene*, the jaw, is a possible source, named as a possibility only.

[34] «Պոլոճիկ (երիկամունք, քաջութիւն)» — the author glosses it twice over in his own parenthesis: the kidneys, and so courage. His gloss carries it, and no etymology is asserted. The romanization follows the Western values of the letters as printed.

[35] «Եթէ ձեր բուրդը բարերար չէք ուզում հանել» — the syntax of the printed line is broken and the sentence cannot be construed cleanly. «Բարերար» ("beneficent; a benefactor") was verified letter by letter on the page and is kept. What the threat means is not in doubt — to be shorn like a sheep — and the sarcasm of "beneficently" is Duman's; beyond that nothing is asserted, and no benefactor is identified.

[36] «Աշիրէթ» — a tribe, a tribal confederation (Turk. *aşiret*). The Thakortsi and the Maghriktsi are the tribes of Thakor and Maghrik; the names are transliterated as the book prints them and are not identified.

[37] Araul, Kotur, Radi, Salakhaneh, Saray, Varag, and the Mlantsi and Haidarantsi tribes: all transliterated as the book prints them, and none of them identified or located beyond what the page says. The route is Duman's answer to the ambush that had been laid for the straight road.

[38] «Չէկ» — UNRESOLVED, and left so. The same word, in the same kind of phrase, is used of an ageing man's beard in Chapter VIII («չէկ մօրուքը»), so it is a real word of the author's and not an artefact of the scan. The initial letter is confirmed on the page as «չ» and not «շ», which rules out «շէկ» (sandy, reddish-fair) — the reading that would have fitted both passages best. NO sense of color, cut or texture is supplied for it here, and it is NOT rendered "red-haired" or "fair-haired." What the page establishes is only that white threads had begun to show in the hair.

[39] DOCTOR ROUBEN — Rouben Derdzakian — IS NOT THE AUTHOR. He is one of the two old field-workers into whose hands Rouben Der Minassian is given at Khoy, and he is the "doctor" of the chapter's own subtitle. The book prints his name simply «Ռուբէն»; the English says "Doctor Rouben," using the author's own word for him (p.313, «բժիշկ Ռուբէնը»), for the single purpose of keeping the two men apart on the page. Nothing else is added to him.

[40] Kukunian's band: the volunteer expedition of Sarkis Kukunian, which attempted to cross the Russo-Turkish frontier in 1890 and was broken up, its men tried and sent to Siberia. Sakhalin was the far-eastern penal island. Yeprem, Balajan and Movsesian are named as Doctor Rouben's fellow convicts and fellow fugitives, and Amurian as the man who wrote part of their story down; the book says no more of any of them, and neither does this translation.

[41] The Sardar of Maku: the hereditary Persian governor of the Maku khanate, on the Turkish frontier, in whose province the monastery of St. Thaddeus stands.

[42] VARDAN SHAHBAZ. The book prints the name two ways, and both are the author's own: «ՎԱՐԴԱՆ ՇԱՀՊԱԶ» in the display capitals of the chapter's contents, and «Շահբազ» in the body. Both were verified on the page. The Armenian keeps both; the English uses one romanization, Shahbaz, throughout.

[43] The seizure of the Ottoman Bank at Constantinople in August 1896 by an armed party of the A.R.F. Doctor Rouben would have it that Shahbaz had a hand in it; Shahbaz himself would not talk about it, and the book leaves the matter exactly there.

[44] «Ջատաք» — Shahbaz's nom de guerre, TRANSLITERATED ONLY. The initial letter is one of the merged display capitals of the 1952 fount, in which «Ջ», «Չ», «Ջ» and «Ձ» cannot be told apart; the word cannot be settled and its meaning is not known. Nothing is supplied for it.

[45] Yerkat — "Iron" — the nom de guerre of the field-worker of Chapter VI, whose Iron gave Rouben the answering name of Asegh, the Needle.

[46] «Վարանդիլ» — a rifle, printed in the author's own quotation marks and NOT identified. The gun the three of them carry openly through the bazaar as the doctor's servants, while the Mosins ride in pieces among the loads. No make, model or maker is supplied for it.

[47] «Ղոլամներ» — the author glosses it himself, «(ծառաներ)»: servants. His gloss carries it.

[48] Zeyva, Zurava, Teghnut, Krghltagh: transliterated as the book prints them, and NOT identified. The author gives the first two villages in two forms — «Զէյվայի, Զուրաայի» in Doctor Rouben's plan, «Զէվան ու Զուրաւան» in the narration of the same march — and the variance is his own; both are kept in the Armenian, and both are transliterated here where each stands. «Կրողլլտաղ», printed also as «Կրողլլ-տաղ», is a *-dağ* name — a mountain and the village under it — and it too is transliterated and not identified. NO Armenian name is supplied for any of them.

[49] The page prints «կուղային», which is not a word; the sense demands «կ'ուղղային», "were making for, were directed." The slip is kept in the Armenian transcription and rendered here by its sense.

[50] «Անտառապուրկ» — verified as printed, and matching no standard word: a coinage, or a slip for «անտառապատ» (forest-clad) or «անտառապուրակ». Only the certain part of it is rendered — «անտառ-», forest — and nothing is built on the rest.

[51] *Hakim Bashi* — "chief physician," the honorific the villagers give Doctor Rouben as he rides through.

[52] *Lavash* — the thin unleavened sheet-bread of the Armenian table, in which the cheese is rolled.

[53] By tradition the Apostle Thaddeus was martyred in Armenia under King Sanatruk, and the monastery is held to stand at the place of his burial. Rouben's "our unbelieving King" is the pagan king of the tradition, and he leaves him unnamed.

[54] «Սեւաւորը» — the man in black, the monk. Doctor Rouben's word for whoever is keeping the office in the monastery ahead of them.

CHAPTER X

The Monastery of Saint Thaddeus

Ս. Թադէի վանքը

Saint Thaddeus / gathering bands

IN THE MONASTERY OF THE APOSTLE THADDEUS.
ENDZAYR VARDAPET.
THE MONASTERY'S PART IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WORK.
NEWS OF THE FIGHTING.

HAJI LEVON'S BAND.
THE BAND OF YERKAT AND TOKHMAKH.
POKHIK'S BAND.
THE HUNCHAKIANS' BAND.

PREPARATIONS FOR CROSSING INTO THE LAND.

When the Monastery of the Apostle Thaddeus was built, and who built it, and for whom – of that I know nothing. It is plain that it was built in the Armenian style, like all our monasteries; but there is another sweetness in it: its carvings and its ornament are like nothing I had seen until then. They could be the subject of a study and an appreciation all their own, which is beyond my understanding – so let us leave the monastery where it stands, since it has no wish to be gossiped about by us.

There were many rooms in the monastery, but few of them habitable. The brotherhood consisted of an old steward with sore eyes, a miller who was at the same time the servant, the sacristan and the man who saw to everything, and a *vardapet*,

come from Bulgaria; his eyes too were sore. Doctor Rouben[1] talked, joked and swore, and raised an uproar in that silent brotherhood as though there were no *vardapet* standing in front of him.

– You go and finish your work, put out the candles, and come and let us drink a good *chay* (tea).

We gathered round the table with the *vardapet*, gave him his letters and newspapers, and he buried himself in them. The *vardapet*'s name was Gevorg Nalbandian, but that name was not used. Vardan called him Endzayr, and Doctor Rouben stubbornly called him Antsayr.[2] The Holy Father accepted both with indifference.

– Antsayr, this is no time for reading the paper; have you nothing for us? Has no courier come from the Land? – Rouben asked impatiently.

The *vardapet*, without answering, went out of the room and gave Vardan a sealed packet; to Rouben he said, "I am sorry to say there is nothing for you."

At first sight Gevorg Vardapet seemed a pitiable man. What was it that had forced this churchman, still young, full of energy, a man who had seen the world, to come and shut himself up in this monastery, which we rightly called the Solitary?[3] Doctor Rouben would probably have had a livelier and a merrier life in the penal settlement of Sakhalin than this *vardapet* had here, where the society consisted of two persons only – a truly dull and tedious life. Gevorg Vardapet appeared to me as a kind of voluntary exile, and I wanted to get at the secret of his life. Was it faith, or was it the care of preserving the Monastery of Thaddeus, that had brought him here?

Three times a day this man looks at the sundial cut into the front of the monastery, and by its shadow pulls the bells – in place of the bell-ringer, who is far too busy with other work. Three times a day he goes into the church alone,

whether there is anyone there or not, performs the whole of the office, and when he, all by himself in that huge church, turns from the altar with the cross in his hand and calls out "Peace unto all,"[4] it seems strange and it seems laughable, and you think: "In this peace, why and for whom is he saying this prayer?" There is nobody there, twelve months of the year, and no one watching either; so this *vardapet* believes in something, since he does his duty

without a fault. When the office is over he takes the broom and sweeps out the Monastery of Thaddeus; then he goes out, locking the heavy iron doors fast behind him.

I envied the *vardapet* for having so full a faith.

– You are a lucky man, *vardapet*, I said to him one day when we were alone. I have been at Etchmiadzin and seen how they pray for show, or to cheat people; you are not of that kind, you are not able to cheat either God or anyone else. It is your inner faith that tells you to pray to four walls and a dome.

The *vardapet* looked at me from under his heavy lids with a fond look, and then, thinking, said: "I do not want to deceive you."

– I have not been deceived, I saw it myself: I came in at the open door of the church and hid behind a pillar while you were saying the Liturgy to four walls, all alone, in the middle of the lighted candles. It was laughable, your saying the Liturgy in your *veghar*,[5] but it was the sign of your inner faith, and it was full of mystery, and it was great.

The *vardapet* looked at me and said sadly:

– If I had one tenth of your faith I should truly be a happy man. I have not so much as a glimmer of faith; I am an unbeliever. But I know that faith is the greatest weapon and the greatest self-defence, at least for the brute crowd, and for that reason I am not against it. I serve it without faith.

I saw from his face that he was not lying. I looked at him in astonishment, and it made him uncomfortable.

– It is you who are the lucky one – you do not believe in religion, but you have faith in the nation, and you are ready to give your life for it as this Thaddeus was. I too have some of your faith; but not so much that I forget myself. I am only a drifter[6] made out of the two faiths.

– If what you say is true, why did you come and drop into this prison? You take the broom and clean up the dust, you go hungry and drink *tanjur*,[7] you look at the face of a bleary-eyed steward,[8] there is nobody here and you talk to the devils. Is the world a ruin? Was Bulgaria worse than this, that you came here to put up with us? I do not understand.

– Do you know what a hungry soul means? I am not merely a *vardapet*, I am something greater – I am a *Tsayragoyn*,[9] and I know the road to being a Bishop and an Archbishop; but my soul is hungry. The hungry man is always a servant, a dog at another man's door. New apostles come and go from this place, as you have come and will go, and some of them will go for ever... I am the one who receives them and I am the one who sends them off; but I feel it, I envy them, because their souls are full, while mine stays empty. The cartridges, the weapons I send out from here, I count one by one, and over each of them I think: where will the man who carries this rifle be martyred, and whose body will this bullet pierce and kill? More than that I am not able to do – though even this is something.

All the soldiers and the field-workers who came and went before me and after me met this interesting man, so let us leave a little of the talking to them, that they may fill out what is missing. Let me say first of all that this man's faults struck the eye more than his unfeigned loyalty and his services did. That is how we have learned to reward faithful servants – or, as he put it himself, dogs, whose mistake is to bark for nothing, or now and then to bite.

The Monastery of Thaddeus is about 100 kilometres from Khoy, 25 from Maku, 40 from Bayazit,[10] and 25 from Alagan, on the Turkish frontier. It lies off the main roads and out of the way, and for that reason we called it the Solitary.

From that point it was possible to reach the Turkish border in a single night – the Aladagh, or Alagan, mountain.[11] By the first road one could cross to Bagrevand, by the second to Van, by way of Abagha. For our work this mattered.

Along the Persian and Turkish frontier, beginning at *Maskhen*[12] and running as far as the country opposite the Monastery of Thaddeus and on to the neighbourhood of Kotur, lay the Haydar tribe; and to the north, the Jelali. To have these two tribes with us meant wiping out the frontier that ran between Persia and Turkey and establishing free passage from Erevan into Persia and from Persia into Turkey. From that point of view the Monastery of Thaddeus was a very important observation post – the more so as[13] it was only 15

kilometres from the Kurdish centre of Kareni,[14] which was the seat of Mustafa bey, the chief of the Haydar tribe. The monastery had to be made into a station of Armeno-Kurdish friendship.

Only 25 kilometres from the monastery was Maku, the centre of the district of Artaz. There sat the Sardar, who was nominally the Shah's subject and felt himself an independent king. To have the Sardar's friendship and goodwill was as good as freedom.

How many inhabitants Artaz had was hard to make out, but the Sardar's villages were said to be about 300. Among them there were Armenians in three places only: some 100 houses in Maku, about 100 houses in Kishmish Tapa,[15] and 30 houses in the village near the monastery. So the Armenians were, in numbers, a trifling quantity among the Kurdish and Tatar elements. Nor was their quality very high – not one school; plain

villagers, a few small traders and an artisan. Above all of it stood out the magnificent dome of the Monastery of Thaddeus, the tallest and the most splendid thing in the province – and its head, Gevorg the *Tsayragoyn Vardapet*, who was himself dome-shaped, in his imposing *veghar*.

The Dashnaktsutiun drew an advantage it could not have replaced from that ancient monastery and from its unbelieving servant, "Antsayr" *vardapet*. This is how.

Once or twice a month, and always on the holy days of the Shia confession, our *Tsayragoyn vardapet* would put on his going-out clothes,[16] set the awe-inspiring *veghar* on his head, and mount his horse. Two armed men – Hovhannes and Melkon – rode behind him, and this "procession" would set out for Maku, the Sardar's capital. First they would call on Mehrob,[17] who was the *vardapet*'s trusted agent and the Dashnaktsutiun's at the same time. Together with him they would go to pay a visit to the chief head of the Shia confession. Gevorg Vardapet knew the Shia religion and its history better than he did. There would begin a mutual pouring-out of feeling about brotherhood and about the kinship of our two unhappy confessions. Was not the Apostle Thaddeus a man of the same Allah, a man who came to carry the word of the Prophet Isa, and who was martyred in these very mountains, and over whom the monastery is built? And was not the Prophet Isa the forerunner of the Prophet Muhammad, and of Ali, his successor and heir,

who was likewise martyred by unbelievers in the deserts where Kerbala is built? The two martyrs became a bridge for binding the men of the two confessions to one another and for establishing love and concord between them.

Then they would go together to visit the absolute ruler of the district, the Sardar, who was everything – after God. They expected no gift from the *vardapet* of Thaddeus; they knew that he was merely the guardian of four bare walls and had nothing, no income and no people to bring him revenue. It was they who wanted to help this *spavor*[18] with a gift or with money, but the *varda-*

pet would not take it.[19] That became the reason his credit rose, and that he became a *vardapet* with no interest of his own, a living martyr, a faithful servant of the martyred Thaddeus. The pith and marrow of what he said was plain and easy to understand. It was not false, even if there were errors in the argument.

– Your mourning for the death of Ali is our mourning too; it is the tyranny of Turan over Iran, and together we shall bring Turan down. We are at your side, and ready and faithful in your struggle. As Arshak and Vagharshak were brothers, so are we your brothers. We want nothing else of you; only know that we are your own people.

The *vardapet*'s words were not spent for nothing. Those he talked with knew all this from other occasions and in other formulations. They also knew that the Armenians were with them in practice as well, in every circumstance. Watching and weighing the facts, they found that this learned *vardapet*, who had seen more of the world than they had and knew everything, was with them too; they had confidence and faith in him. And for that reason the small Armenian population and the Monastery of Thaddeus were placed in a privileged position in that rebellious and tyrannized country. The Armenians were reckoned loyal men and props of the Sardar; their coming and going and their safety were respected with a particular care. Vagabonds were forbidden to cross the Armenians' boundaries and do violence to them. The Armenians were given the right to arm themselves and, if the case required it, to defend their lives and their property. The Turks too were kept within certain limits and their arbitrary acts checked. The Sardar considered the

Armenians his protégés, and had only one expectation of them: he wanted the men who carried arms, who were the soldiers guarding their own houses, to be at his side in a tight place, as his own "*sarbazes*."

At that time, the *vardapet*'s and the Dashnaktsutiun's ambassador at Maku – unofficial, of course – was Mehrob, whom I met afterwards in Vaspurakan.

Once a month the *vardapet* would come out of his monastery for a few days and take the road to Khoy.

– Nothing is to be understood from letters; let me go and see what my superiors want of me, and what is going on in the world.

The "superiors" were the Dashnaktsutiun's representatives at Khoy and Salmast. At Khoy in those days it was Kosti (who was replaced by Malkhas), and at Salmast, Samson.

After seeing his official acquaintances, he would announce right and left that he had come to make purchases for the needs of the monastery... Without his *veghar* and without ceremony he would meet the men he had come to find, and although he had come without pack-horses, he went back with horses loaded – and what was in those loads only he knew, and where those loads were hidden, that too only he knew.

The rest of the time he did not leave the monastery; he stayed alone with the bleary-eyed steward and the servant. He spoke little – and indeed, with whom was he to speak? For that reason they called him the Friday-mouth[20] and thought him inhospitable and ill-natured besides. No pilgrims came to the monastery. Where from, and how, in a country where a man's head was cheaper than a head of onion? And if they had come, they would have had nowhere to lodge, and would have been forced to shelter in the village. The guest-houses the monastery had once had were in ruins, and the *vardapet* had no intention whatever of repairing them. There were only two rooms in repair, in which he lived himself and into which the unavoidable and indispensable passers-through had to squeeze. Men he did not know, of whatever nation, had no place in the monastery. "They may be more of us

than we are,[21] stronger than we are, and they may *aghel* our heads,"[22] he would say; "they will eat up our stores, and they will understand what our solitude means."

The villagers, who were a kilometre away, did not come to the monastery either, so as not to see the inhospitable *vardapet*. There in the village lived Hovhannes and Melkon, who were the *vardapet*'s trusted agents, his *sarbazes* and his deputies. Those who came to the monastery applied to them first, and then obtained the right to enter it. They had rooms in which to receive the monastery's guests, whether foreigner or Armenian, courier from the Land or fighting man. Only "gentlemen" like ourselves were sheltered inside the monastery, when the "guests'" identity was already clear to the *vardapet*. This behaviour of his was incomprehensible and repellent to strangers, and for that reason he was not liked at all.

It is not to be concluded from this that the monastery was cut off, and that its *vardapet*, drawn back into his shell, was left without news of the world, or that he was sewn away from the people and from the work. At the nearby point of Kareni he had Kurdish friends, from various strata, whose duty it was to visit the monastery's village once a week and give information about what had happened. The same at other points. They would come to Melkon's house, empty out their sack of news, eat, drink, and go away with the sack at their belt filled with a little flour and wheat. They went in order to come back again. Besides that, Mustafa bey of the Haydarantsi, the *kaymakam*[23] of the Hamidiye[24] regiments, had – so they say – fallen out with the Turkish government along with his tribe, and had settled along the Persian frontier, with his centre at Kareni.[25] Alak of Bitlis (Armenak Okhikian) had established himself in his tribe as the Dashnaktsutiun's ambassador, and had so won Mustafa bey's heart that he had become an intimate of his family; under the name of a doctor he travelled about the districts under his

influence. While I was at the monastery he was arrested, at that very time, near the Turkish frontier, and taken to the prison at Van. Mustafa bey was making efforts to have him freed.

Opposite Mustafa bey's tribe, on the other face of the Alaghan mountain, the lord and master of the district of Abagha was again a Haydarantsi, the man called Mehmed Abdyl ("Gui Mahmad"), with the rank, I think, of a colonel of

the Hamidiye. He was very sympathetic to our work and our aims. Khashan was his centre (in Abagha), while his official centre was Berkri. What business was carried on in that district belongs to the history of Vaspurakan; but it was from that district that, thanks to Gui Mahmad's goodwill, a regular courier and transport road had been opened toward the Monastery of Thaddeus. These "guests" passed through the nest of Hovhannes and Melkon, and the important ones the *vardapet* received, while to the unimportant Hovhannes and Melkon showed the road.

There was a third point as well, of the greatest importance for the intelligence, for the courier work, and in part for the transport work. Under his staff was the village of Kichmich Tapa; it lay 30 kilometres from Bayazet, and the same distance from the Tsaghkants mountains. The Tsaghkants mountains (Aladagh) were inhabited by Haydarantsi tribes, among whom Ali bek and his family were very sympathetic to us and worked with us. With him was Poghos of Kghi (whom they called Geghetsik Poghos);[26] he was there on behalf of the *Ken. Ken.*[27] of Erevan and of Yerkat. That point was a station for the couriers, for arms and for passing men through, and a centre of all the news. When the lines were endangered, Poghos would make use of the Tsaghkants mountains to get in touch directly with Kichmich Tapa, where the man who waited was Lid-mouth Hovsep,[28] loyal to the *vardapet* and to Poghos. The *vardapet* was very anxious, because he had had no word from Poghos of Kghi for a long time, and Hovsep too had written that he was very anxious about him.

From the explanations above it will be understood that the Monastery of

Thaddeus, isolated though it was, a hermitage fallen away out of the roads, had its affairs so arranged that it was at work night and day.[29] The "Solitary" was a source of the world's news, thanks to the Kurds and the couriers. You will wonder at what I have set out here[30] if you do not know the character of the Kurds.

The Kurd, and above all the wandering Kurd, is thirsty for news, because he cannot talk to his flocks; he starves for speech. Speech is necessary to him for his own existence and for the safety of the district as well. And so, whether he

is on a mountaintop, or on the road, or in a village, he takes the measure of the traveller, weighs him, and gets information out of him, from the important down to the unimportant. He passes the news to his neighbour at once, and it spreads from mouth to mouth immediately; important news he shouts at once from mountain to mountain, signals it from his tent[31] with signs, tells what he knows to acquaintance and stranger alike, asks questions – and the news goes through the air like lightning. No horseman can keep up with it, nor can a telegram overtake it.

The news "turns from a needle to a beam as it passes from mouth to mouth," but in essence it kept the kernel of the truth, and was never fabricated or false. Afterwards the couriers would reach the monastery with letters, in which the news, sifted of its exaggerations, gave the events in their nakedness. So the *vardapet* of the Monastery of Thaddeus knew all that passed in the Land, and what had happened and what was coming in the Caucasus and in Persia alike.

It was on the basis of this intelligence that the porters, the field-workers and the armed bands were sent off toward the Land. Some – the lucky ones – arrived; some stayed halfway. That depended on the valuing of the news collected. The Monastery of Thaddeus was in general seldom wrong, and its affairs went well, which gave a value to the judgment of Gevorg the *Tsayragoyn Vardapet*.

The *vardapet* was a modest man. He considered himself a servant of the Monastery of Thaddeus, and in that quality he submitted to his spiritual superiors – though they were no authority for him. He also submitted to the party hierarchy, and carried out the orders of men less worthy than himself. But the one authority for him was a certain person called Rostom, who had put him there and pushed him toward the Monastery of Thaddeus, and whom up to that time I had neither seen nor known who he was.

We had been at the monastery ten days already. Doctor Rouben had gone back to Khoy long since. No more uproar, no more laughter, not even conversation. Shahbaz Vardan had gone completely dumb; whoever looked at his face had his fill of that worried look. He went constantly to the

monastery's mill, and had made work for himself – mending what was broken and breaking what was built. There was no talking with the steward, apart from exclamations. The *vardapet*'s assistant was always busy. With whom, then, was one to talk? Only the *vardapet* was left, if I could make myself agreeable to him. In this I succeeded, and little by little he began to open himself to me.

It astonished me greatly that he knew the details of the fight at Thadi[32] better than I did. He knew the roads we had come by, which I did not know; he knew the circumstances of our crossing the frontier and being spotted, which not one of us knew; he knew the enemy's forces, and he named the dead by name, above all the Kurds'. If I had kept in my mind what the *vardapet* said, I would have understood the character of the fight at Thadi in detail, without poetry.

I began to take an interest in past events, which were a little different from what I had heard until then; and mixing what I heard with what we already knew, I want to set out what happened on the frontiers in 1904, as much of it as has stayed in my memory.

Haji Levon's band. Levon was no *haji*, but that is what they

called him. He was a man of Akhaltskha, of that band which deserves to be called a band of heroes – Aslan, Usul Khacho, Ashrg[33] and the others, modest, self-sacrificing and brave. Back when I was at Gyumri they had told me I was too late to go to Van: "Haji has gone already." This is how it was. –

Haji Levon's band, which consisted altogether of six horsemen, was carrying munitions with it. On the 17th of April, at the thaw, they set out from Salmast toward the Turkish frontier. The first day passed without mishap; on the second day six friendly Kurds came out to meet them and warned them that they had been betrayed and that the roads were held by the enemy. But to turn back was against honour. They call on God and go forward.

Reaching the Kurdish districts, the band is pursued by the Kurds. On their swift horses the *fedayis* push forward, and, laying a few Kurds out on the ground, open a road and reach the neighbourhood of the village of Lim. The Kurds give them no rest here either; they surround the *fedayis*, who are forced to dismount, take up positions and accept battle. Some of the horses

are killed by the enemy's bullets, and the rest are slaughtered by the *fedayis*' bullets so that they may not fall into the enemy's hands. So the fight goes on until evening; a few more Kurds and gendarmes are laid out on the ground; but Hovhannes of Van, Joj Agha,[34] is killed – he who was in such haste to reach Van and be the first to report to the comrades on the decisions of the General Assembly.

In the night the band breaks the enemy's chain and reaches Varag safely, where it was already out of all danger.

The arsenals of Van are put in order – but the most indispensable thing of all for Van, its delegate to the General Assembly, was missing: he had been killed by the enemy.

The band of Yerkat and Poghos of Kghi. If it had so happened that he had persuaded me and I had decided to go with him to Nemrut, I would no longer have been in existence – so I thought, listening to the stories about him.

In the middle of May Yerkat and Poghos of Kghi take up munitions, money and 35 *fedayis*, and set out from Igdir. They cut across[35] the frontier mountains, cross the plain of Alashkert, and reach the neighbourhood of Mirdajan,[36] where, after resting, they take the road in the last days of May toward Akhlat, with Sasun for their goal.

Near Archesh, by the Armenian village called Soskun, in the valley of Khojalu, the band takes its rest, in the caves opposite. Poghos of Kghi (Tokhmakh) goes down with the two Abros to the mill of Soskun to bring back bread. He is recognized by Kurds who are there, and is killed without warning, along with one of the Abros; the other Abro barely escapes.

The Kurds raise the alarm, and soon tribesmen, gendarmes and troops surround the valley of Khojalu from every side, and, holding the mouths of the caves, demand surrender. The *fedayis* of course defend themselves, and put up a furious fight. They kill a good many Kurds. But now a bullet falls in the place where Yerkat was, and strikes a hand-grenade, which explodes and with it blows up the heaps of powder and bombs. The cave, with the men inside it, is shaken out of its place, and the rocks spit out the shattered fragments of the *fedayis*' bloodied bodies, burying under them the bodies of gendarmes and Kurds as well. Of the whole band, barely seven men are left

alive; taking advantage of the general shouting and clamour, they leap out and climb the mountain. That little band puts up a good fight until evening and kills a few dozen Kurds and gendarmes. One of the seven *fedayis*, an old Russian soldier from the Kanaker country, called Gaspar, I think, wins a great reputation among the Kurds by his feats. He kills a good number of Kurdish "grandsons."[37] When night comes on and the fighting stops, not one of the *fedayis* is able to find the road; only in the morning, when Masis[38] appears, do they take it for their guide.

The Kurds, however, will not leave the *fedayis* in peace, and they, who will not surrender at any price, are again compelled to fight the enemy the whole day. Holding their positions behind rocks, they roll a great many Kurds on the ground, but they too are wasting away. In the end only two men are left alive, and Gaspar among them. Tired and hungry, they set off in the direction of Masis. The next day they are caught in a fight again with the pursuing Kurds. This time Gaspar's comrade is killed, and Gaspar himself falls half-dead into the hands of the Kurds, who, in honour of his boundless courage, do not kill him, but tend him and take him to the Pasha of Bayazit as a present. Gaspar stays in prison until the Constitution, and is then freed. What became of that hero is not known. To this day his feats are glorified in the songs of the Kurds.(*)

It was in the days of the disaster to Yerkat's band that Nikol Duman's band was at the same time attempting to cross by way of Thadi toward Varag. That we have seen already.

(*) At the end of 1908, when I passed through Bayazet, I saw Gaspar's prison, but he himself had got out. They told me again about his legendary courage – seasoned with superhuman legends.

I think that the hero mentioned in Y. Sargsian's childhood recollections must be that same Gaspar.

When, coming back from there, I was already at the monastery, one black day Gevorg Vardapet came back from his agents in the village like a man in mourning, and, barely able to hold himself in, said:

– Pokhik and his horsemen have been cut to pieces; not a man has escaped...

At that news I was struck dumb and turned to stone, as though a bullet had come and hit me in the head. Vardan, who was shaving a piece of wood with his knife and making something out of it, looked at the *vardapet*, blinked his eyelids rapidly, and called out:

– A man cannot leave his nest for more than this...

– Do not talk like that, Vardan *jan*; you too will fly up out of your nest one day, when the comrades in the Land call out "Help, help..."

Vardan did not answer; he threw the wood he had been shaving on the ground, folded up his knife and went away from us. I went away too, without a word. And the three of us became three separate parts; each of us was thinking about what had come down on his own head. The bleary-eyed steward's *tanapur*[39] was going cold; it would not go down anyone's *bok* (throat).[40]

These exclamations settled hard on my heart, like two heavy stones.

That night we have sent Melkon to Khoy; in the small hours the *vardapet* has disappeared – he has gone to Kareni to gather news. At midday the *vardapet* came back and said:

– The report is confirmed. The black news that came from various sources has been verified, and there and then we learned the following. –

The annihilation of Pokhik's band. Word comes from Van to Salmast and Khoy that Sasun has long since fallen, but that now the fighting is beginning in Van. "Alive or not alive, come to our help." When Pokhik and the lads hear this, they are of one word and decide to cross into the Land at once. There is talk, too, that Nikol is against crossing into the Land in arms; but there were men who objected that Nikol is not of the Land, that his heart will not ache for it, that he let off a couple of *pshots*,[41] ran back and disappeared, and that this is why he is against going into the Land

at all. Saying so, they decide to go by the skirts of Mount Araul,[42] but to avoid crossing Jukh,[43] and to go instead under Saray, straight toward Varad.[44]

They are fourteen horsemen. The guide is again that Mato who had saved our band by his loyalty and his coolness. There were also Sahak and Gre, of the Assyrians of the Saray country, both of them old and brave *fedayis* and

familiar with all the local conditions. Except for a few, the members of the band were old soldiers, grown up in the mountains of the Land and veterans of many fights, so that they were all confident of reaching their goal. That confidence, however, was not justified, and they all died – in my opinion for a very simple reason, which they had failed to take into account and which was the object of Nikol Duman's chief anxiety. Nikol's instruction was: "go by such deserted roads that neither the sound of the horses' hooves is heard, nor is there anybody to see us, by night or by day; or, if they do see us, let them at least see us late." That was possible only in winter, up to the month of April or the end of it. But at that season the snow hindered the marching. Travel was possible, then, at the end of May, according to the weather, skirting the heights of Araul, when shepherd and nomad have not yet gone up into the mountains. At other times the road taken was inevitably made out hour by hour, was noticed quickly, and that became the cause of the death of those who went.

Pokhik set out a week or two after us; the mountains were already covered with shepherds and nomads, and his band's movements were noticed everywhere. Although Mato was taking them by the same road by which he had guided our band, that road was already a trap, and it led into the gorge of *Uaghi*,[45] where the troops of Saray, the frontier guards, the Hamidiye regiments and the mob were waiting beforehand. At daybreak Pokhik's little band was already in a heavy fight, and by midday

its account was closed.

Nobody of the band escaped who could give even an approximate idea of what had happened. Those who told the story were the Kurds, who remembered that fight with respect. "They had taken almost the same positions in this fight as the first time. But this time we were ready, and we knew how many of them there were and how they were disposed. When the sun rose we had come up to them without a sound, to within a few hundred paces. At the signal given by the troops of Saray we attacked from all four sides, each man at the position marked out for him. Of the three positions we took two; nobody would surrender, and we killed them. One position was left, held by four men, with a flag run up over it. We got in among them, and we were all mixed together in the rocks. They fought with the Mauser and with

the knife. Not counting the wounded, eight bodies were left in the position, and the flag still standing. After midday we attacked again, and this time we found two bodies of the die-hard *fedayis*. We took the flag down, but the other bodies we did not find; we thought they had run off and got away. A hundred paces off, in a cleft of rock, we found the place of the two of them. Do what we would, they would not surrender. One was a Russian; the other cursed in Kurdish. There were men who understood, and they said that this one was Mato, Kaghdatsi Mato.[46] However much we tried to persuade them, they would not surrender. 'Agh jan Fidanam,' he was calling; 'Agh bav e Haydarbem,' he shouted.[47] One bullet reached his head, and he died. We took the head off him and carried it to the Vali of Van as a present. The Russian fought to the end, and even came near to breaking out through the middle of us. One soldier came up behind him and got him in the back with a dagger, and the fight was over. We gathered up our own bodies – far more than their number."

From these accounts it was possible to conclude that in the position over which the flag was hung it had been Pokhik. That Mato was at his side was certain, and so was Suren, who by his stubbornness recalled the brave men of Gugark.[48] I became greatly attached to him at the time of our fight, when my hand shook at shooting the father over his son's body, and he was not afraid but struck the old man down, guided by the principle that in a fight there is no sparing. So much for what I heard about the fight.

A few words too about the men I knew who took part in Pokhik's band. They were: Pokhik; Hagop;(*) Suren; Mato, who was a Kurd; and Gre and Sahak, who were Assyrian by origin and Nestorian by religion, but were more Armenian than the Armenians and spoke our language. The rest I saw, but I have forgotten them and never spoke with them.[49]

I have already spoken of the meetings and the conversations I had with Pokhik and Hagop. At first they made a bad impression on me, but afterwards I was impressed by them in the best way possible. These two were each other's opposite in appearance: Pokhik was dark, Hagop fair, like a German; but the jaws of both were broad and firm, as headstrong men's jaws are. They were broad-shouldered, burnt by the sun, and grim-eyed – though the one's eyes were dark and the other's blue. The reason for the likeness

between the two was that out of the same country – out of the chasms of the Lernapar[50] – they

(*) Hagop was the man who carried out the terror-act against Darmo. He had killed his own old comrade, by decision of the party. Darmo was one of the soldiers of Vaspurakan and was known for his courage. But he had one fault: he would turn other men's wives' heads, and sometimes used violence on the common people as well. That was unpardonable, both by the Party's rules of discipline and by the conduct and morals rooted among the comrades. And so they brought the order for a death sentence, which Samson signed, and it was carried out.

had been born. When they talked to each other I understood nothing of it. These two were intimates. They were the comrades of Zato, of Shero and of Bagik,[51] and so they were old soldiers. They loved the big Vardan, who said his last word after everyone else; but Nikol they did not much love, because he said his last word first, and said it to your face. For that reason, though they respected him, they had no taste for him. Pokhik and Hagop had for a long time been the comrades of Nikol and Vardan – or rather their soldiers. They had taken part together in the Derik fights, and had been through many adventures in the transport bands. In the end it was thanks to them that Vardan had become commander-in-chief at Khanasor, Nikol only a commander of fifty, and Pokhik, who was his soldier, a commander of a hundred. Pokhik was astonished that at our coming he was not accepted by Nikol even as a plain soldier; he did not find it insulting and did not explain it by spite, and he understood that the sole reason for it was that he was not thought necessary for the Land.

For long years their close comrades had been Kurd Mato, Gre and Sahak (the Assyrians) and Avo, who was killed in our fight. They had shared in Pokhik's adventures, and in these two fights they were united again in the other world.(*)

Suren was not their old comrade. He was younger

(*) If we have many victims for the Kurds' sake, Mato was of those Kurds who were martyred for the Armenians. Just as the blood of Seydo and of Zaven is to be valued in the name of the Kurdish cause, and those men will one day be precious to the Kurds – as Tokhmakh and Poghos of Kghi will be, or Keri of Dersim and his comrades[52] – so too, for us Armenians, Mato's blood will be precious and of worth, and more to be valued than that of all the old Armenian comrades who fell with him.

and, for them, "from a foreign country"; but for all that he was much valued as a trained military man. He was a section-commander and a drill instructor. Pokhik had need of him, and so separated him from his pair – from Grish and Sarbaz Khacho.[53] What his real name was we never knew. He was a man of Akhalkalak, from the village of Khanchali, I think. What I knew about him I have said already, but his handsome face I can never forget. He ought not to have died such a death, even if he did know the trade of killing well.

The loss of Pokhik and of his band weighed heavily on all of us, and Vardan and I, who had come here to go by that same road, thought that to hurry and to be stubborn was to do the devil's work. And we were patient.

The mountaintops are free of snow and covered with green. The shepherds have climbed the mountains step by step with their flocks.

– There is no moving; we must wait, if we do not want to fall into the state of Yerkat and Joj Agha, said Vardan.

I agreed with him. And now a new black report came from the direction of Maku and Kishmish Tapa.

The Hunchakians' band. – It was not the Dashnaktsakans alone who were possessed by the violent urge to help Sasun, but the whole Armenian population of Transcaucasia; even the organizations opposed to the Dashnaktsutiun were straining toward Sasun. At the beginning of July a Hunchakian band of fourteen men crosses the Russian frontier and enters Alashkert, meaning to go on to Sasun and the Plain of Mush. The Kurds and the Turks get word of the band and surround it near Uchkilise.[54] A long and desperate fight takes place, in the course of which the band puts up a heroic

resistance. In the end they are all killed, taking more than twenty of the enemy to the grave with them.

This news came to complete our grief. It is true that we had no information about who the men of this band were, or who led them, but it caused us the same pain and drove us to re-examine the value and the purpose of dying.

– The common purpose and the common pain drive all Armenians to the same martyrdom, said the *vardapet*. But without speaking out loud, I was reflecting within myself: "Martyrdom is a mindless bullet torn out of a rifle's muzzle." I grew savage and grew bold; I wanted to change something, but I did not know what was to be changed.

I had come to certain conclusions about the ways of crossing into the Land. I thought it out of place to throw one's head away for the sake of a journey, for the sake of having sold *chalum*. "We shall have to fit ourselves to the conditions, since the conditions will not fit themselves to us." Thinking so, I took my clothes off me and, stripped naked, sat down in the sun. I had made up my mind to scorch my whole body in the sun, to blacken it, and to look like the village *chluts*.[55]

The little brotherhood was thrown into agitation. The bald steward laughed and covered his eyes; the miller-sexton looked on in astonishment, evidently taking me for a man gone mad; the *vardapet* asked me, "What is this for?" and, getting no answer, looked into Vardan's face. Vardan only smiled and did not utter a word.

In a few days my body was tortured and blackened all over, and filthy. The hardest of all were my hands and my feet: my fingers were thin, and my palms would not grow hard. I worked them to make them thicken and harden, but blisters opened, sores formed, and still they would not turn into a labourer's hands. My feet were more obstinate still. Where there was soft mud and dung it was very pleasant to tread, and to walk along a dusty road; but off the road, the stones that fell under my foot tormented me and forced me to sit down.

Vardan asked me nothing, but he read my mind without any explanation from me. One day he said to me: "Let us go for a walk." We went out and

made for the mountain, over grassy meadows, over soft ground. It was pleasant to skip barefoot among the flowers. A man's spirits rise too, and grow lively, when he is pressed to nature with his whole body and kisses it. I am already framing theories and looking for the reasons for the happiness of animals. I began to boast to Vardan that he could not keep up behind me, with his heavy boots and his clothes. Vardan, sweating, made signs of agreement.

– Let us go back by the short road, and take in the mill on the way, he said, and changed the road. I followed him through stones and thickets with my teeth clenched. The stones, sharp as knives, had made my walking unbearable, while Vardan, without looking back, was flying along in his thick boots like a mountain goat. I limped, my feet were bleeding, I wanted to scream with the pain, to protest, but I held myself in. At last I am forced to sit down. Vardan was crying with laughter, and I was crying too, but from the pain. He took off his socks, gave them to me to put on, and added:

– Dog, son of a dog, what did you think, then – is it easy to have a mountaineer's feet? It takes a long time yet to turn a foot into a donkey's hoof.

At that point I explained that I wanted to travel in disguise. He listened, and closed the question by saying "perhaps."

Three travellers stopped in front of the monastery gate. When they saw me naked they shied a little. I was watching one of them attentively, who was walking on bare feet with his *trekhs*[56] hung over his shoulder. I envied him, that the wearing of *trekhs* had become a burden to him.

– Is the Holy Father "*da i*" (is he here)? I understood that

he was an Armenian and was speaking Armenian.

– The Holy Father is "*derr dagh e*" (there he is),[57] I answered, and led him in.

The half-naked newcomer, lost in his tatters, who was coming from Abagha, drew a packet out of his sacking and, kissing the Holy Father's hand, held it out to him. I had a violent longing to touch those letters, to read them, to kiss them. So many comrades had been martyred before the altar of the Land, so

many comrades had died and gone without ever seeing the Land, that a scrap of paper from the Land, a letter, was reckoned a holy thing. To take them in one's hands, to read them, to understand them, was for hierophants, and was not permitted to ordinary men. I turned to the *vardapet* when we were left face to face alone.

– *Vardapet*, I suppose you do not doubt my resolve to sacrifice myself for the Land. I have made this one attempt; nothing came of it; I will try again, and perhaps something will come of it. Only, without reading the Land's letters, without understanding its pain directly, if I am to die, perhaps at the last moment I shall be in great pain. *Vardapet*, those letters are not addressed to me, I have no right to read them, but I very much want to read them seriously, and, if it is fated for me to die, to pass my last moments without pain.

The *vardapet* looked, and looked into my face, and his eyes filled with sadness; then he stayed standing a few moments and, holding the packet out to me, said:

– I know that you are one of the sworn. Whatever may be written in them, it becomes you to know it better than the man to whom these letters are addressed. I have no right, and I do not read what is not addressed to me. Do as you like.

I wish he had not had that confidence in me. I went off alone and tried seriously to understand the situation in the Land. The letters were a few, written in convulsive days; they left the impression neither of an arsonist's letters nor of a fireman's, but of a wretch surrounded by fire, on whom the flames are closing in, who screams "*yandum, yandum*"[58] and

calls for help. But he himself is so confused that he pours the naphtha into the fire and the water into the naphtha, while the fire devours the country.(*)

These letters left a very bad impression on me. I have to say that at that time a kind of break had come about in me. My being shut away in the monastery[59] and cut off from the world on the one hand; the failure of our band on the other; and finally the information I had had from Van, that my fellow seminarians there – Hamazasp (Bagheshtsian), Zelund (Meloyan), Artak (Darbinian) – were not Dashnaktsakans at all but conservatives,

ringleaders of the Armenakans[60] – all this had become the reason why I began to doubt whether revolution and insurrection were suited to their purpose. I had, as it were, turned conservative, and in my mind a rank counter-revolutionary. I had begun to incline toward the notion that the cultural level of the people must first be raised, the Turkish-Armenian people prepared, and only then the Turkish system of government gradually changed. Although baptized in battle, I wanted to fall back and become a teacher like Portugalian,[61] or go into business like Slak.[62] These two had become an example to me, though I had never seen them.

My mind was storming in these doubts when a letter came signed by Koms,[63] in which he said

(*) Here ends that part of Rouben's recollections which he himself reworked. The material that comes after this, which goes into Volumes I and II (Volumes III, IV, V and VI, which were printed earlier, have been reworked throughout by Rouben), consists of his notes, which he used in putting his recollections through their final editing. There are also several passages reworked by the author which come after this point in Volumes I or II. We shall note each of them in its place. (Editor's note – A. Kh.)[64]

that the situation of the Land, and of Sasun in particular, was very grave, and that it might fall if quick help did not come from outside; and so he proposed sending bands into the Land, or making attacks along the frontiers, so that the whole Turkish force should not be concentrated against Sasun.

I wrote a letter in reply, explaining that in present conditions Transcaucasia could hardly bring any substantial help to the Land, and that even if attempts were made in that direction they would fail and would give occasion for new and useless victims. Setting out my doubts and my reflections, I advise taking a stand on the ground of peaceful activity.

Notes

[1] Doctor Rouben (Rouben Derdzakian) — NOT the author. He is one of the two veteran field-workers into whose guardianship Rouben Der Minassian was given at Khoy (Ch. IX), and the man who led the ride to the monastery. The book prints his name simply «Ռուբէն»; the English says "Doctor Rouben" throughout, using the author's own word for him (Ch. IX, p.313), for the single purpose of keeping the two Roubens apart.

[2] The author's own joke, and it is preserved unharmonized. Vardan calls him «Ընծայր» (Endzayr) and Doctor Rouben insists on «Անծայր» (Antsayr); the chapter's display-caps subtitle prints ԸՆԾԱՅՐ. Both are plays on his real title, «Ծայրագոյն Վարդապետ» (see below): «անծայր» is an Armenian word meaning "boundless, without end." The two forms are not reconciled here because the book does not reconcile them.

[3] «Մենաւոր» — the Solitary. The name Rouben and his companions gave the monastery, and the author repeats it three times in the chapter.

[4] «Խաղաղութիւն ամենեցուն» — the celebrant's greeting in the Armenian Divine Liturgy, in *grabar* (Classical Armenian). Rendered in its established liturgical English form; this is the one licensed archaism in the chapter, and it is licensed because the Armenian span is itself a marked liturgical formula.

[5] *veghar* (վեղար) — the tall, pointed hood of the celibate clergy of the Armenian Church, worn over the head and falling down the back. It is what makes the *vardapet* "dome-shaped" a few pages later.

[6] «աւարա» — a drifter, a good-for-nothing, a man with no fixed place (cf. Turk. *avare*, Pers. *āvāre*, named as a likely source and not asserted).

[7] «թանչուր» — a thin soup made with *tan*, the diluted sour-milk drink (see Ch. VIII, *madzun / tan*). On p.329 the author writes the same dish «թանապուր» (*tanapur*); both forms are his and both are kept.

[8] «ճպոռոտ» — bleary-, rheumy-eyed. The monastery's old steward is introduced on p.314 with the words «աչքերը ցաւոտ» ("his eyes sore"), and this is the standing epithet for him. The 1952 print garbles the word differently on each of its three appearances (pp.317, 321, 329); the reconciliation pass settled it, and the English uses one rendering for all three. The «ճաղատ տնտեսը» of p.335 is a different word — *chaghat*, bald — and is rendered as printed.

[9] «Ծայրագոյն Վարդապետ» — *Tsayragoyn Vardapet*, "supreme *vardapet*": the higher of the two degrees of the celibate doctorate in the Armenian Church, above the ordinary *vardapet* and below the episcopate. His full name is given in the chapter as Gevorg Nalbandian.

[10] The book prints the name of the town three ways — «Բայազիտ» (p.318), «Բայազէթ» (pp.320, 328 note) and «Պայազիտ» (p.328). The variance is the author's, is kept in the Armenian, and the English uses one form, Bayazit, except where the author's own footnote prints Bayazet.

[11] The author gives the mountain two names himself: «Ալադաղ կամ Ալագան լեռը» ("the mountain of Aladagh, or Alagan"), p.318; he writes «Ալաղան» on p.323, and on p.320 he glosses «Ծաղկանց լեռներ (Ալադաղ)» — the Tsaghkants mountains, with Aladagh as his

own parenthesis. All the forms are transliterated where each stands, AND THE MASSIF IS NOT IDENTIFIED here: no range is named for it and no modern equivalence is proposed.

[12] «Մասխէն» — UNRESOLVED. The letters are clean on the page, but the toponym matches nothing attested. TRANSLITERATED ONLY: no place is named, located, or identified, and no Armenian name is supplied for it.

[13] The page prints «մանաւանդ որ որ ան», with «որ» set twice — a compositor's slip, kept in the Armenian and rendered once here.

[14] «Կարէնի» — Kareni, the Kurdish centre and the seat of Mustafa bey, fifteen kilometres from the monastery. TRANSLITERATED; not identified and not located beyond what the page says.

[15] The book spells the village «Քիշմիշ Թափա» here and «Քիչմիչ Թափա» on p.323 (the 1952 italic merges շ and չ). It is one village; both spellings stand in the Armenian and both are transliterated where each stands. The place is not otherwise identified.

[16] «դրսնաւոր հագուստները» — UNRESOLVED. The first letter is one of the ambiguous descenders of this fount and no reading of the word yields an attested Armenian form; only the plain noun «հագուստ», "clothes," is certain, and the sense of the phrase — the clothes he put on to go out in — is taken from the context and not from the word. NO GARMENT IS NAMED FOR IT: not a cope, not a cassock, not a mantle, not a cloak, not a vestment of any kind.

[17] The book prints the name of the Dashnaktsutiun's man at Maku «Մեսրոբ» here (p.319) and «Մեհրոբ» on pp.320–321 (the ս/հ confusion of this type). It is one man; the English uses one name, Mehrob.

[18] «սպաւորին» — UNRESOLVED, and kept diplomatically. It is almost certainly a printer's slip for «սպասաւոր», "the servant" — the word the chapter uses for the *vardapet* again and again, and the word he uses of himself — but the letters ս-ա are not on the page, and the reading is therefore NOT asserted. TRANSLITERATED.

[19] The page prints «ընդուներ» for «ընդունէր» ("would accept") — a printer's slip, kept in the Armenian and rendered by sense.

[20] «ուրբաթախօս» — literally a "Friday-speaker," from the fast-day: a sour, grudging, ill-omened talker. The point of the sentence is that the villagers took his silence for ill-will.

[21] The page prints «շատուոր» (for «շատաւոր», "numerous") — a printer's slip, kept in the Armenian and rendered by sense.

[22] «աղել» — UNRESOLVED. The verb as printed matches no standard form, and NO SENSE IS SUPPLIED FOR IT HERE: neither "grind" (cf. «աղալ») nor "salt" (cf. «աղ») is asserted. What the *vardapet* fears is plain from the two clauses that frame it — that strangers stronger and more numerous than his household would eat up his stores and find out what his solitude is for — and that is all the English carries.

[23] *kaymakam* (գայմագամ) — in Ottoman usage the governor of a district (*kaza*), and used here of Mustafa bey's rank in the Hamidiye.

[24] The Hamidiye — the Kurdish tribal cavalry regiments raised by Sultan Abdul Hamid II from 1891, officered by the tribal chiefs themselves. The page prints the name «Համիտիէ»

here and on p.323 (with խ) and «համիտիէ» on p.330 (with տ); the printed spellings are kept in the Armenian and are not mended.

[25] A REPORTATIVE PERFECT in the Armenian («խոռվեր էր … եւ հաստատուեր»): Rouben is passing on what he was told about Mustafa bey's break with the Turkish government, and he does not vouch for it. English surfaces the stance, as it must wherever the -եր perfect appears.

[26] Poghos of Kghi — the *Tokhmakh* ("Mallet") of Ch. VI. The by-name in the parenthesis is the author's own pun: *Kghetsi* ("of Kghi") against *Geghetsik* ("handsome"). Both are kept.

[27] «Կէն. Կէն.ի» — printed as an abbreviation, with the points, and DELIBERATELY NOT EXPANDED. It is almost certainly the name of a party body at Erevan, but the book does not say so and the abbreviation is not resolved anywhere in it; NO body, committee or organ is named for it here.

[28] «խուփի բերան Յովսէփը» — the author's own by-name: «խուփ» is a lid, and the man is the tight-lipped one. Kept as the author coins it, and not normalized.

[29] The page prints «ցորեկ» for «ցերեկ» ("day") — a printer's slip, kept in the Armenian and rendered by sense.

[30] «բացածներուս» — "at what I have laid open"; the alternative reading «բացատրածներուս» ("at my explanations") gives the same sense, and nothing is built on the difference.

[31] The page prints «վրանդը», where the sense wants «վրանէն» ("from his tent") — a probable slip, kept in the Armenian and rendered by sense.

[32] «Թադի / Թադիի» — the book spells the name of the fight this way, NOT «Թադէի», although the monastery a few lines above is «Թադէի վանք» (Thadei Vank). The middle letter is one of the ambiguous descenders of this fount. Transliterated as printed and not silently normalized; the fight is the one described in Ch. IX.

[33] «Աշրրգը» — a *fedayi* by-name, TRANSLITERATED and NOT identified. The men of the band (Aslan, Usul Khacho, Ashrg) are named and no more.

[34] Joj Agha — a by-name, not a name: *joj* is the Karin-dialect word for "chief, the big one" (the Ch. VI lock). THIS chapter supplies the fact that the man is Hovhannes of Van, Van's delegate to the General Assembly, who was killed on the road home.

[35] The page prints «Կը կորեն սահմանի լեռները», where the sense demands «կտրեն» — "they cut across the frontier mountains." The n is round on the page, not տ; the slip is kept in the Armenian and rendered by sense.

[36] Mirdajan (p.327), and with it Soskun, the Armenian village, and the valley of Khojalu, in the same passage: TRANSLITERATED ONLY. No place is identified or located, and no Armenian name is supplied for any of them beyond what the author himself gives.

[37] «քիւրտ թոռուններ» — UNRESOLVED IN SENSE. The word means "grandsons, grandchildren," and it is given here in its plain lexical meaning, in quotation marks; NO idiomatic or contemptuous force is asserted for it, because none can be established from the page.

[38] Masis — the Armenian name of Mount Ararat, which the seven survivors take for their guide when it comes up at first light.

[39] The author's second form of the *tanjur* of p.317: see [t7].

[40] «բկէն (կոկորդէն)» — the author glosses his own dialect word «բուկ» with the standard «կոկորդ», the throat, and his gloss is what carries it here.

[41] «երկու փշոց զարնելով» — UNRESOLVED. The noun is TRANSLITERATED and NOT translated literally, because no reading of it yields a word that can be trusted. What the objectors are saying is plain from the clause around it — that Nikol fired off a token shot or two and then got out — and that, and nothing more, is what the English carries.

[42] Araul (Առաուլ) — the frontier mountain of Ch. VIII–IX (which spells it «Առաատուլ» once). Transliterated as printed; not identified or located.

[43] «Ջուխը» — TRANSLITERATED; not identified. Nothing is named for it: not a village, not a pass, not a river.

[44] «Վարադ» — TRANSLITERATED AND NOT IDENTIFIED. The page prints -դ, control-checked. The expected place on this route is Varag — the book itself prints «Վարագ» on p.326 — but the two spellings are NOT harmonized here and the identification is NOT made: it is the reading of the page that stands.

[45] «Ուաղիի ձորը» — UNRESOLVED, and one of the high-risk words of the chapter. The gorge that was the trap, and the place where Pokhik's band was destroyed. No reading of the word yields an attested toponym. TRANSLITERATED ONLY: NO ford, pass, wadi, river, valley or feature of any kind is named for it, and none may be supplied later without evidence from the page.

[46] «Կաղդացի Մատոն» — the by-name carries two consecutive ambiguous descenders and cannot be settled. TRANSLITERATED; NO place is named for it, and it is not identified. The man is the Kurd Mato of Ch. VIII — the band's guide over the frontier, who saved Rouben's own band.

[47] Mato's cries as the Kurds report them, kept exactly as the book prints them and NOT translated. No language, sense or source is asserted for either.

[48] Gugark — the historic province of northern Armenia (the Lori–Tashir country).

[49] The page prints «մոռացած» ("forgotten"), crop-verified, and it is so rendered. The sense of the sentence would sit more easily with «մօտեցած» ("approached, gone near"), and that possibility is recorded here; it is NOT adopted, and the page's reading stands.

[50] «Լեռնապարի» — printed with a capital. The word is the ordinary Armenian common noun for a mountain range, and WHETHER IT IS A PROPER NAME HERE IS NOT SETTLED. It is left as the page has it and NOT identified with any district or massif.

[51] Zato, Shero and Bagik — old *fedayis*, named and no more. «Բագիկի» carries an ambiguous descender and is TRANSLITERATED; the man is not identified.

[52] The author's note names Kurds who died in the Armenian cause and Armenians who died in the Kurdish one. Seydo, Zaven and Keri of Dersim are given as printed and are not identified further here.

[53] «Սարբազ Խաչօ» — the page prints Խաչօ (Khacho), NOT Խէչօ (Khecho). It is rendered as printed, and it is NOT silently identified with the Sarbaz Khecho of Chs. VIII–IX, although the by-name *sarbaz* ("soldier") is the same; the book makes no such equation.

[54] «Իւչքիլիսէ» — TRANSLITERATED. The place is not identified and NO Armenian name is invented for it.

[55] «չլուտներուն» — UNRESOLVED. Apparently a dialect word for the ragged or half-clad peasantry, but the sense cannot be established from the page. TRANSLITERATED ONLY: NO garment, NO condition and NO degree of undress is supplied for it.

[56] *trekh* (տրեխ) — the rawhide peasant sandal of the Armenian highlands, laced up over the foot. The traveller is carrying his over his shoulder and walking barefoot, which is the whole point of Rouben's envy.

[57] The traveller's dialect, which the author glosses himself in his own parentheses: «դա՞ ի» = «այստե՞ղ է» ("is he here?"), «դեռ դաղ է» = «ահա այնտեղ է» ("there he is"). The dialect is transliterated and the author's own gloss carries it.

[58] «եանդում, եանդում» — set in the upright roman face, which in this book marks a loanword, and given NO gloss by the author. It is left untranslated in the body, as he leaves it. Turkish *yandım*, "I am burning," is NAMED HERE AS A POSSIBILITY and is not asserted.

[59] «մեկուսակութիւնս» — UNRESOLVED IN FORM. The stem «մեկուս-» ("apart, set aside, cut off") is certain, and the chapter itself uses the ordinary word «մեկուսացած» ("isolated") of the monastery; only the certain stem is rendered here, and NOTHING is built on the unattested suffix.

[60] The Armenakan party (founded at Van, 1885), the oldest of the three Armenian parties and the most cautious of them: it held that the people had to be prepared before it could be armed. That Rouben's own seminary friends turned out to be its leaders is what starts the crisis of the last page. «Զելունդը (Մելոյեան)» is TRANSLITERATED EXACTLY AS PRINTED: the initial is one of the merged display capitals of this fount and the name is unattested, and it is NOT "corrected" to any known Armenakan name. Artak Darbinian is the Armenakan writer and memoirist.

[61] Mkrtich Portugalian (1848–1921) — the Constantinople-born schoolmaster whose school at Van and whose journal *Armenia* (Marseilles, from 1885) gave the Armenakans their name and their programme. Rouben had never met him.

[62] «Սլաքի» — TRANSLITERATED. The person is NOT identified; the book names him only here, paired with Portugalian, as the second of the two men Rouben briefly wanted to become.

[63] Koms — the pen-name of Vahan Papazian (1876–1973), the A.R.F. leader in Van and later Ottoman deputy for the province; already in the glossary from Ch. IV.

[64] THIS NOTE IS THE EDITOR'S, NOT THE AUTHOR'S. It is signed «(Ծանօթ. Ա. Խ.)» — A. Khondkarian, the editor of the 1952 edition — and it marks the exact point at which Rouben's own reworked text ends and his raw working notes begin. Everything in this volume after this page is Rouben's notes, not his finished prose, except for the few passages the editor promises to mark as he comes to them.

CHAPTER XI

Return to the Caucasus

Վերադարձ դէպի Կովկաս

Frontier return to Kars

RETURN TO THE CAUCASUS.
EREVAN. THE BANDS OF GAYL VAHAN AND MIHRAN (THE BATTLES OF PORUN AND MOSUN).
ALEXANDROPOL. KEVORK'S NOMERA AGAIN.
SERGEI BRINGS WORD OF THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL THE KARS BANDS.
THE DZHOKHK BAND (VAGHARSHAK).
TOUMAN'S ORSKAN BAND.
I GO HOME – TO KARS.
THE BANDS ARE AVENGED.
THE KILLING OF BIKOV BY JANPOLADIAN.

From Van there came a very dry and admonitory answer to my letter, the gist of which was that men in such a frame of mind were superfluous there, and that standing at the frontier and handing out advice was likewise a superfluous thing. The letter was, in truth, to the point.

After that, of course, I was to leave, to go away and not enter the Land. Vardan too agreed with me. He gave me a letter to Kishmish-Tefik, and another to Mehmed agha at Arablu, so that they might pass me across to the Caucasus. He also gave me four *qrans*[1] in all, as travel-money as far as Erevan, and letters for Erevan that had come from Vaspurakan.

I changed my clothes to look like a refugee, put *charukhs*[2] on my feet and an old Persian *kecha*[3] cap on my head, and set off for Kishmish-Tefik. That village was a strange one. You might say the whole village had a single roof,

and the houses were joined to one another by holes, so that without stepping out into the street one could pass from one end to the other. It was self-defense, no doubt, that had forced the villagers to build a village of that kind. Bayazet[4] was not far off, only a few hours' road away.

Here they were telling how there had been fighting at Porun and Mosun, which had left great havoc both among the troops and among the Kurds. Fighting had also, it appears, taken place near the monastery of Gharakilise (Uch-Kilise).

We do not wait long at Kishmish-Tefik, and since a good opportunity offered, we set out for Arablu. Hovsep, who was from that village, leads me, and I go to Mehmed agha's house. I give the two *qrans* to Melik as tobacco-money, and I stay at Mehmed agha's house only one day. The next day he takes me to the crossing, where I wait two days more. Bales of sugar had been dumped there, and when they make us a sign from the other bank, we shoulder the sugar and cross at once to that side. I had taken two sugar-loaves on my back, but they fall into the water and get soaked. As I climb out, they give me a good blow on the back of the neck.

With two *qrans* I buy about ten *p.*[5] of bread and set off for Erevan on foot. I reach the village of Khanlukhlar, where I hope that the tall, one-eyed man who, together with Nikol, had once *patvadz*[6] me will feed me and give me a place to sleep. But he did not know me in my clothes, and I did not care to reveal my identity to him, thinking he was bound to recognize me. He offered me a place to sleep on the stone benches (*saku*)[7] of the market. The whole night the mosquitoes

gave no rest, the more so as I was lying in the street. Midnight had not yet come when I, rather than be tormented by the mosquitoes, decide to go on with my road. The next night, at daybreak, I reach Erevan.

In the morning I go to the house where Darvish (Galust Aloyan)[8] lived. I had left this house a few months before, to set out with Nikol for Persia. But Darvish no longer lived there; he had changed his house. I am obliged to be extremely careful. I cannot question everyone, the more so in my rags and Persian clothes, under which, sewn onto my shirt, were secret letters. I am forced to go back to the "boulevard" (the tree-walk), to find someone I could ask for Darvish's address. To ask the *gorodovoys* (the street police) was

dangerous – and besides, in what language was I to ask? They are Russians, and a man in my clothes cannot speak Russian; he would know only Turkish. But the trouble is that, although I have even shaved my head like a Turk's, I do not know Turkish. And as I sit waiting on one of the benches in a hopeless state, a *gorodovoy* comes up to me and asks in Russian, saying:

"Clear off – what business have you here..."

Frightened, I get up from my place and slink off, silent as the grave, to another street. Suddenly a student passes by me and calls out to someone in Armenian. An Armenian student would be trustworthy, and I decide, come what may, to ask him for Darvish's address. I was not wrong. The student looked at my clothes and walked with me as far as Darvish's house.

On the way I cannot avoid conversation, and from the few words I let fall he understood, apparently, that I was someone in disguise. His look seemed to say to me: "You, my friend, are no Persian Armenian, and you even look like an *intelligent*..."

When we reached Darvish's house, I walked boldly in, but they told me he was not at home. The wife did not know me. I

had already stepped into the front room, but the lady turned to me and said, "Don't dirty it – stand outside." My heart was in my mouth; I could bear no more. My clothes had become the cause of misfortune for me. I quickly drew the letters out from under my things and gave them to the lady, telling her to hand them to Darvish.

I went out of the house, enraged and in despair. What was I to do, where was I to go? And here I see that the same student is standing in the street, waiting for me. I was greatly moved by his behavior, and I opened my heart to him. I told him Darvish was not at home, they had not let me in, had treated me worse than a dog, and now I did not know where I was to go or where I was to pass the night.

Who that kind student was, I do not know. He behaved very well toward me.

– You're not hungry, are you? he said.

I answered that I was not.

He took two rubles from his pocket and gave them to me. I thanked him and promised to return the money when I got it from Darvish. Of course, what I said was not true, since I would never meet Darvish again. The student pointed out to me a *khan* (a common inn) where I could pass the night, and added that he had not given me the money on condition of its being returned. He asked that, in exchange, I tell him about the state of the Land. I promised to do it the next day, and we parted.

The eating-houses (the common cook-shops) I feared to go near – they might question me: who was I, where did I come from, and so on. I preferred to make do with bread and cheese, and I went down to the Ghantar (Erevan's central market) and ate my fill. Toward evening I went to the boulevard (the avenue), where the people of Erevan take their stroll, but I passed by on the side. I saw my former schoolmates, who were now teachers at the Erevan diocesan school, strolling there. I did not dare go up to them, not wishing to betray my identity. I did not care to see Darvish any longer either, and I made my way to the station to leave for Alexandropol.[9] We came to terms with the conductor of a freight train, and I left by that train. I had barely passed a few stations when they put me off, and I was forced to continue my road on foot as far as Alexandrapol.

To finish with the Erevan part – a word or two about the expedition organized by the Central Committee of Mrdastan.[10]

The Bands of Gayl Vahan and Mihran(*).– In view of the* fedayis*' failures at the frontier, and attributing them to the Russian frontier-guard troops, the Erevan (Mrdastan) Central Committee of the A.R.F. decides, after the annihilation of the band of Yerkat and Tokhmakh, to carry out several terror-acts against the Russian frontier officials. As a result of that decision, among other things, the Armenian-hating Russian district-governor Pokulavkin is killed at Igdir. At the same time, with the aim of taking revenge for the destruction of the Armenian bands, the Central Committee decides to wipe out the Turkish frontier barracks of Mosun and Zor together with their troops. To carry out this plan, two bands are formed, under the names Artavazd and Masis, made up of 112* fedayis*. The commander of Artavazd becomes Gayl Vahan (Minas Tolpashian), and of the Masis band, Mihran of Bayberd, who later became the leader of the notorious Mihranakan movement. In both these bands there were educated young men

as well – such as, for instance, Hovh. Makarian and Nikoghayos Ter-Khachatrian.

The two bands cross the frontier together in safety and reach the height called Unsi-Domeri, where they divide into two parts and press forward by different

() *The account of the fighting of the bands of Gayl Vahan and Mihran, as well as of the "Dzhokhk" band and of Touman's band, was reworked by Rouben (*Hairenik*, January 1925).

routes. The Artavazd band journeys toward Mosun, under the leadership of Gayl Vahan, and the Masis band, under Mihran, toward Porun, against the Chilantsi *ashiret*.

At two o'clock in the night the Artavazd band lays siege from a distance to the Turkish barracks of Mosun, having first cut the telegraph wire of Payazit and drawn into the ring of the siege the two military tents a little way from the barracks as well. Four *fedayis* enter the barracks in the dark and climb up to the roof, where many soldiers, more than a hundred and fifty, lie sleeping. The sentry notices them, but drops on the spot from the *fedayis*' bullet. At once four bombs are thrown among the sleeping soldiers. The bombs burst, and at that signal the *fedayis* open fire from all four sides. The Turkish troops, caught by surprise, are thrown into panic, and before an hour has passed the whole Turkish force is turned into a heap of corpses. The Turkish soldiers in the nearby Armenian village are killed as well, so that the Turkish soldiers in the barracks, in the tents and in the village are utterly wiped out. The Armenian villagers, fearing the reckoning of the next day, make for the Russian frontier before the light has broken.

The Masis band, dividing off from the Artavazd band, goes and seizes the *hrshakayk*[11] of Zor[12] and the valley where the Chilantsi Kurds had pitched their *oba*.[13] The Armenian *fedayis* wait for the venture at Mosun to begin, so that they too may attack at the same moment. When, at two o'clock in the night, the sound of bombs is heard from afar, the sentry at Zor hears those sounds and raises the alarm with a crack of his rifle. At that very instant the *fedayis* lying in ambush open fire and attack the barracks and the Kurds. Before an hour has passed they have taken both the barracks and the *obas*. A large part of the troops and the Kurds is killed, while the rest escape by flight.

In this way both ventures are crowned with complete success. When the light breaks, the *fedayis* find themselves faced with new difficulties and far heavier responsibilities. The Armenian villages are uprooted, afraid to remain any longer in their old places, and they make for the Russian frontier; they must be brought safely onto Russian soil. As far as Chinkil[14] the *fedayis* escort the Armenian emigrants, keeping the Tatar troops and the Kurdish *ashirets* from attacking them and cutting off the emigrants' way. With great heroism the *fedayis* save the people from the enemy's assault, but they give up as sacrifices Gayl Vahan, Nikoghayos (Babgen) and many other selfless *fedayis*.

Yet a new misfortune meets the *fedayis* and the emigrant people. This time the Russian frontier-guard troops, the Cossacks and the Kurds, seizing the roads of retreat, open fire on the *fedayis* and the people. Many fall there under the Russian bullets; some escape and get away, while the remaining part of the *fedayis*, together with the people, fall captive into Russian hands.

In the course of all this fighting, of the 112 *fedayis* 36 are killed.

The news of this expedition spreads as far as Kars, and many – among them even some of the comrades, who did not know where I was – supposed that I was the Minas (Tolpashian) who had been killed during the expedition, since my own real name is Minas. In several places, as well as among my own household, they even hold requiem services for me.

Reaching Alexandropol, I go straight to Vagho's *paghlal*,[15] but I do not find Vagho there. In his place his brother was sitting there. When I ask him about Vagho,

GAYL VAHAN WITH HIS COMRADES-IN-ARMS

he answers that he has gone off to Russia. With bold steps I made for Kevork's hotel. Here I was no longer a stranger, as in Erevan, and I had nothing to fear either, since I knew them all. I go into the hotel, tired and *tezradz*,[16] and, without hesitating, I present myself not to the servants but directly to Kevork and say, "Give me a *nomer* (a room)."

He looks at me and says, "Go to the *obshchin*" (the common room), and orders the servant, too: take him to the *obshchin*. I say in a loud voice:

– Give me the first *nomer*.

– *Zanita* (it's taken), you, hey, what first *nomer*?

When I insist stubbornly that he give me the first *nomer* and go straight to it, he curses me, shouting:

– *Ghurumsagh*,[17] where are you shoving?

I pay him back in the same coin. Then he comes up to me, looks, and sees that it is, as it were, a familiar face. A moment more and he knows me at once, and, unlocking the *nomer* – which of course was empty – he gives it over to me. He tells me too that my brother is here. A little later my acquaintances gather, they laugh at my strange clothes and above all at the shaved patch in the middle of my head. At once they take me to the baths and dress me in new clothes. At last I am rid of the lice, and that night I sleep in peace.

I am in that room where a few months before we had gathered and worked out our plans for going to the Land, where we made every kind of joke, even about death. Now all those comrades of mine, who used to make a jest even of death, have gone as sacrifices to their ideas. Killed were Kaytsak Vagharshak of Mush, and Padval Vagho of Alexandropol, and the lion-like Rus-Kevork, and Touman – the center of gravity of all our souls – and many others of those comrades of ours, such as Yerkat and Hovhannes (Makarian), with whom we used to weave lovely dreams, dreams that were now scattered within me. Abandonment and despair now reigned in my soul. And I was so disillusioned that I now counted it senseless to go the same road and do the same work.

While I lie in a feigned sleep, the blanket drawn over my head, wanting to weep in secret and to rest a little, suddenly Sergei comes in, the last remnant of my comrades. He looks at me in silence, as if he feels the suffering, penetrates into my soul, understands me. Was it, perhaps, because he too feels the same pain, that he too is tormented at the sight of me, who was the last remnant of our little circle?

– How did it end, how did you stay alive? Probably you too have the luck to be a black owl like me.

And poor Sergei began to weep. He had the right to weep, for one after another we had lost the young, idealistic comrades of ours, steeped in one spirit and one idea, working in one direction. In this one year, of our schoolboy or revolutionary lads, with whom we had sworn to work together and die together, nearly all were dead: gone were Yergor,[18] Isajan, Khachik, Touman, Vagho, Vagharshak, Yerkat, Hovhannes, Rus-Kevork. The others had been arrested or had fled. We who were left were the weak ones; the good ones were all lost. Sergei told in detail all that had passed at Kars, the loss of hundreds of comrades, personal and party, the martyrdom of our bands. What he told was shattering.

First comes the band of Vagharshak of Mush.

The *Dzhokhk* (Hell) Band.– While the Yerkat-Tokhmakh band was thus being martyred on the road to Akhlat, another band was preparing, in the Basen district of Kars, to cross into Sasun, under the leadership of Vagharshak (Kaytsak).

Vagharshak is already known to us as well; we saw him at Mush and during the fighting at the Monastery of the Holy Apostles.[19] He was one of the *fedayis* working in Sasun, and had a great organizational ability besides. He too had gone to the General Assembly at Sofia as a delegate for Duran-Bardzravandak. He was hastening to Sasun again with 29 horsemen, among whom were several university men – Dr. Khachik, Rus-Kevork (of Derbend), who, though he was only half Armenian-speaking, had sworn to die for Armenia. With Vagharshak were also many choice soldiers, such as Vardan of Arakinj,[20] comrade of Seyo Poghos, Baghtasar of Mush, Gevorg, Nato and others.

In the dark of night, well provisioned, Vagharshak's band crosses the frontier; it is noticed by the enemy; it has a small fight with him, but succeeds in getting across the frontier and resting on a hill, within the old fort of Khorum and Zivin. At early dawn the band is besieged by the frontier-guard troops and the Kurdish *ashirets*. The Russian soldiers watch from the Russian frontier this fight that has begun with the Armenian *fedayis*, which goes well until noon, the enemy taking losses and failing to come near the *fedayis*' positions. After noon the enemy receives fresh auxiliary forces and begins more furious attacks on the *fedayis*. Vagharshak, mounted on his horse, rides

round the positions and gives his soldiers heart to resist to the end; but the *fedayis* are powerless to hold off the assault of the enemy's thousands of fighters. Vagharshak is mortally wounded; after him a whole row of other *fedayis* fall shot. The upper positions are taken, while below the resistance still goes on. In the end those left alive make for the Russian frontier.

The Turkish and Kurdish multitude gathered on the hill moves forward, to kill

the *fedayis* who are still alive as well. Among the bushes there are wounded men of the *fedayis*, and among them Vardan of Arakinj. This last buries the bombs and the dynamite on the road of the Turks and the Kurds and lights the fuse. The bombs burst, and their fragments send scores of the enemy up into the sky. Vardan himself, creeping through the bushes, through the gaps in the rocks, reaches the Russian frontier two days later all alone.

The remnants of the *fedayis*, under the leadership of Rus-Kevork, have already reached the Russian frontier before this, where the Russian frontier-guard troops stood. Russian-speaking Kevork, sure that the Russians would not lay a hand on him and his comrades, goes forward; but the poor man was cruelly mistaken. The volleys of the Russian soldiers meet him and his band, and, falling between two fires, Kevork and his comrades are all shot down. Of the 29 men only two wounded escape. Yet, as some maintain, this band of *fedayis* perished having destroyed 300 of the enemy with it. Even if this number is exaggerated, in any case it can be said with complete confidence that the enemy's loss was more than 90, for so testify the Turkish officials who took part in that fighting. And by the Russians' testimony the Turks' loss was near 250.

So this band, with its whole company, is wiped out, taking precious forces with it, and all of it before Sergei's very eyes. Our men had killed more than their own number of the enemy – Turks and Kurds – but what use, when our loss was the more keenly felt, when the band had not reached its goal? And, what is the chief thing, we had lost several important comrades who held promise for the future.

Then comes Touman.

Touman's Band.— Touman (Torgom), when he returns from the General Assembly, forms with Hunter Gevorg the 61-man

Orskan ("Huntsman") band. This time, however, Touman would not be able to repeat the successful venture of his *Mrrik* (Whirlwind) mounted band.

Sasun had already fallen. Touman did not want to lag behind his comrades, and thought that if he attacked the Turkish frontiers, he might perhaps draw off part of the Turkish forces toward the frontier, and so ease Sasun's plight.

Into the band come a fair number of intellectuals — a student, a doctor, a priest. There were also sons of wealthy families, such as, for instance, Levon Kalantarian, who had left the oil-wells of Baku and come to fight for Armenia. In the band was Vagho, the man who gave up a high government post. There too were Anushavan and, like him, many selfless men.

As was the accepted custom, the band's banner is consecrated at night, under the dim light of the church candles; all take the oath and receive communion. The next night they set out from the district of Olti. A *verst* and a half from boundary-post No. 68 they cross the frontier unnoticed, climb a mountain above a spring and take up positions. Four Russian soldiers come to that spring to drink water, and there they see two men with packs on their backs, asleep. They steal the pack of one and carry it to the guard-house. When the porters wake and see that they have been robbed, they climb the mountain at once to bring word to Touman. The hidden Russian soldiers follow the guileless porters and learn the *fedayis*' position. Some 150 frontier-guard troops surround their positions, at the same time sending word to the Turkish forces. On the Olti side, too, the Russian frontier commander Bikov arrives with reinforcements.

The Russians make the first attack, and force the *fedayis* to draw back toward the Turkish frontier.

So that no misunderstanding should arise, Touman gives orders not to fire a shot at the Russians,[21] but to fight the Turks alone. At the same time he sends a delegate to the Russian commander, to explain their purpose and make him understand that their business is only with the Turks. The Russians cut the delegate (Anushavan) down. After Anushavan goes Levon Kalantarian, but he too is led off to prison.

By Bikov's order, the Russian troops besiege our lads from three sides, while on the fourth are the Turkish troops. Caught under a crossfire, the band does not know whom to fire on. The Russians, taking no harm, grow the more heated and open a furious fire. Only the Turks suffer, losing some ten *askaris*. The fight lasts until four o'clock. At last the *fedayis* count resistance senseless and decide to surrender to the Russians. The band's priest, cross in hand, goes forward to meet them, but is shot down. Touman too is killed, with 10 comrades. Hunter Gevorg is wounded and gives up his last breath under the bayonet-thrust of a Russian soldier. So the whole band is destroyed or taken captive.[22] Of the *fedayis* 27 are killed, 6 are wounded and 14 fall captive; the rest flee through the woods.

Bikov, while *halatselov*[23] their corpses, has himself photographed with his soldiers, as a matter of pride, and earns the thanks of both the Russian and the Turkish governments.

This event was significant in that the Russian and Turkish troops fought together against the Armenian *fedayis*, showing that both governments were hostile to the Armenian liberation movement. It was the expression of Lobanov's[24] policy, which would later go on in the day of the Lenins and the *Ledrans*.[25]

Sergei, in his dejection, told the details of the death of those comrades whom he had sent into the Land with his own urging,[26] and who had nearly all been killed, while he alone had the misfortune of living on after them.

– Their death gives me no rest, he said, and I want to go to the Land and add my own corpse to their corpses. After so many sacrifices, anything more[27] is a shame for us.

And when I revealed to him my dejection, which had brought me to the opposite conclusion, he did not object, and did not say that I was wrong.

– Do as you judge best; I, for my part, am resolved, at whatever cost, to go by the Ishkhan road to Vaspurakan, and the road you have turned back from, I shall go on. You have already been baptized in battle; I too will try the same in the Land.

We had the same grief, but that grief had divided us and our roads. It had carried me toward dejection, and had driven Sergei to an extreme

stubbornness. I gave Sergei the details of the roads and told him that the easiest and most convenient thing was to cross into the Land by way of Thadeos the Apostle, from where I could have crossed, had I wished.

Sergei went from Alexandrapol to Tiflis, to receive his instructions for the Land, and from there set out straight for Vaspurakan. And I, together with my brother Yeruand, went to Kars. On the road he told me that he had been elected a member of the Kars Central Committee.

The old body at Kars had undergone changes, and now on the Central Committee were Norhatian, Sev Karo, Karo Kazanjian and, I think, Bznuni too.

My people, as I said, supposed that I had been killed, and had even held a requiem service. My unhappy mother had already made her peace with the thought of my death, the more so as

hundreds of men, in the space of a few months, had been sacrificed before the altar of the fatherland. And that woman had an extraordinary patriotism and was fervent in her faith. Knowing personally all those who had been killed, my death seemed light to her beside theirs, and she was partly consoled that I had been killed for the fatherland. My brother warns my mother, telling her that I am not dead but heavily wounded, and shall reach home alive. This preparing of her does her no harm. After subjecting her for an hour or two to these agitations, they tell her that my wound is not very serious, that I am well, and that I shall be home tomorrow. Tomorrow then becomes two hours more, after which they present me to her.

When she saw me, she turned to stone; standing motionless in her place, she could neither speak, nor rejoice, nor weep. And long minutes passed in a petrified silence. At last she said:

– My son, all your comrades went and were killed, God rest their souls; but when a man takes a road, he must go on with it. I do not curse those who have stayed alive, but whoever does not go on with the dead man's road is unworthy of the dead. You know, *oghul*, Rus-Kevork too was killed; the *chorer*[28] too are near; I will go and embrace his mother, let her be comforted...

And she began to weep.

I tell of this thing that happened within our family, because my mother's words of that day became the one commandment of my life. I began to feel ashamed before my *morer*.[29] My mother did not know that I was in despair. From that moment I changed entirely and became convinced that Sergei had been standing on the truer road.

Only a few days had passed since I had returned home when I noticed that I was being tracked, to be arrested. Though matters went on as before, we could no longer walk about as freely and boldly as before. Gone were the days when Sergei was stronger even than the governor, and no one dared lay a hand on a revolutionary.

To escape arrest, I was forced to flee our house again. I took shelter first in Bori-Mahle,[30] and then in a house in Berdi-Tagh, where Sako of Sev-Kar was in hiding.

Few of my former comrades were left in the province of Kars. Most of my acquaintances had been killed, or arrested and fled. Outsiders were seldom seen in the city. Hagop Zilinkarian was still there, but he too went away, since they wanted to seize him as well. It was new forces that were at work. All of them worked in secret; only Plo Tapalur, as before, with his old *shamata* and *ghalmaghal* (bluster and uproar), sewed *shrhnik*[31] in his shops and talked freely and boldly. It was as if they forgave him his free talk and, now and then, his free action; they attached no particular importance to him and did not care to arrest him.

Though outwardly under this changed form, inwardly the work went on with the same drive. The Central Committee was planning to take revenge for Touman and his band, both on the Russians and on the Turks. It was for that purpose that Sako of Sev-Kar too had come. It is decided to form a band of five men, who, armed only with ten-shot pistols and bombs, were to go and approach the Turkish barracks in secret, and on a dark night throw the bombs in through the windows. This plan is first proposed to Tubrakh,[33] but then Harutiun,[34] come from America, takes it upon himself to carry out – a man who was an expert in preparing and using infernal machines and bombs.

They go to the border, cross it,[32] fall on the barracks with bombs and do damage, but not as much as they wished. The plan as decided – to raze the barracks and destroy them utterly – was not fully carried out. But that too was a punishment, and the revenge was in part taken on the Turks.

While that operation was being carried out, thought was also being given to Bikov.

One day a young man came to me, wearing greasy and paintSAKO OF SEV-KAR

smeared clothes, himself all in paint. I barely recognized that this "painter" was Hamo (Janpoladian). We embraced and were very glad to see each other again. But Sako gave us no peace. Drawing Hamo into the corner, he began to whisper something to him, after which that paint-smeared young man, letting out a single "*tsə*,"[35] went out. At first I thought he had probably gone out for a short while and would soon come back. Later we understood that he was going to his death. Just as I had deceived him, making him wait at the Erevan station, so he made me wait at Sako's side. Sako said nothing to me. Only five days later did he reveal that we were to leave Kars for a time. And he told the glad news, too, that Hamo had killed Bikov and taken the revenge for our comrades.

Here a few words about Hamo and that *teror*. Hamo was the youngest, and, as I said, he was despised as a *Frans* (*pchramol*).[36] He had not managed to get into a band at Erevan and go to be martyred. Neither Vagharshak nor Touman had taken him. He had wept before Touman and complained why they had not taken him into a band, had insisted[37] that he too was brave and ready to die. But both Touman and Hunter Gevorg had wounded that young man: "Wait, grow a little bigger, and when you leave off weeping, then you will be not a soldier but a band-leader." At that time he had, as it were, prophesied and declared that the one to take the revolutionaries' revenge would be Hamo. And when he hears of Touman's killing, he runs from Tiflis to Kars, to Sako, and tells him his grief, Hagop's opposition to his "martyrdom," begs to be sent on some task, and proposes to carry out the killing of Bikov. Sako, without telling the Central Committee, agrees, lends his help, *kə dnē payn*.[38] And Hamo – his face blackened, his hair tangled, *yemeni*[39] on his feet, in torn clothes, in the guise of a chimneysweep – reaches

Olti all alone. Reaching Olti, he sets himself to track Bikov and understands that Bikov keeps himself very carefully. Probably, after the attack made on the local barracks, he had suspected that he too might be subjected to a *teror*. For that reason he strengthens the watch over the barracks, and himself frequents only the officers' club, which was a few steps away from the barracks. Hamo studies Bikov's comings and goings, and once, when Bikov comes out of the barracks to go to the club, he strikes him with a hunting-rifle and lays him flat on the ground. Not content even with that, he goes up to him and, with a few pistol-bullets, closes his account.

After that he flees and goes into a house and hides in the chimney. When darkness falls, he comes out of his hiding-place and, after three days wandering in the woods and mountains, reaches Kars and reports in person to Sako that he has taken Touman's revenge. Receiving orders from Sako, he crosses from Kars to Tiflis. Both Hagop and the Central Committee remained displeased with this, for though the thing had been necessary, it was punishable for having been irregular.

After this Hamo was no longer a slip of a boy, nor an *apaghan* "*baylsd*."[40] To him is entrusted the carrying out of the responsible terror-acts of Transcaucasia; a whole row of men fall under his bullets, and he becomes a tiger. And, as the pitcher is broken on the road to the water, so too Hamo's pitcher was shattered on the road to the water. Hagop and Hamo, now become equal comrades, both won the martyr's crown in the same year.

Little by little both the governor of Kars and the administrator grow cautious and soften their

excesses. Kars returns again to its former bold state, such as it was in Sergei's time. Soon the soldiers arrested by Bikov's hand, too, are freed one by one.

The Central Committee went on with the same activity we described at the outset. Now too, after the killing of Touman's band, and above all since the Caucasian Project had received the approval of the General Assembly of 1904, it had spread its activity wider, and the idea had grown deeper that the Russian and the Turk had torn away our country and seized our freedom by force. In 1904 the necessity of working in the Caucasus becomes more striking, without forgetting, of course, the interests of the Land. The new Central Committee went on with its activity, following the former way of

working, with only this exception, that now they had become less tolerant of the scattered Hunchakian soldiers and the sympathizers of that party. These, though they did not represent a force of their own, yet there was a tendency to settle accounts entirely with that party within the province of Kars. As a consequence of this, certain extremes were committed, and the struggle against the Hunchakians gave way even to killings.

After Hamo, Sako too left Kars, and a few days after Sako I also departed from Kars for Tiflis.

Notes

[1] *qran* — a Persian silver coin (Pers. قران), the standard currency unit of Qajar Persia; in the memoir it is the small change of the frontier country. This is its first appearance in the book.

[2] *charukh* — the rawhide peasant sandal of the highlands, laced over the foot; part of Rouben's refugee disguise.

[3] *kecha* — a felt cap (Turk. *keçe*, felt), named as a likely source and not asserted. The exact form of the word is uncertain in the 1952 scan; it is transliterated and nothing is built on the reading.

[4] The author spells the name of this frontier town two ways, and the two spellings are kept as two English spellings, not harmonized: «Բայազետ» (p.341) → Bayazet, and «Պայազիտ» (p.345) → Payazit. Both are attested English forms of the town (Ottoman Bayazıt, modern Doğubayazıt).

[5] «10 փ.» — the quantity is left as the abbreviation the book prints. The unit is ambiguous (it could stand for *pud*, *para* or *punt*) and IS NOT NAMED here; ten *p.* of bread is all the page warrants.

[6] «պատուած» — UNRESOLVED. The literal reading does not fit the sentence; the sense is roughly that this man had, together with Nikol, once helped or sheltered Rouben — 'sheltered' and 'sent' are named as possibilities and neither is asserted. The verb is transliterated and its object is not invented.

[7] *saku* — the raised stone platform or bench built along a house-front or in a marketplace (Turk. *seki*), used for sitting and, here, for sleeping on.

[8] Darvish — «Դարվիշ» ('Dervish'), the by-name of Galust Aloyan (Torosents), the Erevan field-worker at whose house the evening in Nikol Duman's honor had been held (Ch. VII). The name appears only as «Դարվիշ» in this chapter.

[9] The author spells the town two ways within a few lines, and both are kept as two English spellings, not harmonized: «Ալեքսանդրապոլ» (with ե; the chapter heading and pp.346, 348) → Alexandropol, and «Ալէքսանդրապոլ» (with է; pp.344, 354) → Alexandrapol. Both are attested English spellings of the city (Gyumri, then Alexandropol). It is the same town throughout.

[10] «Մրդաստան» — UNRESOLVED, and apparently a party-internal designation for the Erevan/Ararat Central-Committee region; it matches no attested toponym. It is transliterated and NOT identified or glossed as a place.

[11] «հրշակայք» — UNRESOLVED, a non-standard word. Only the plain frame is rendered: the Masis band goes and seizes some position or works at Zor. No square, depot, structure or building is named for it.

[12] «Զօր» / «Զօրի» — the Turkish frontier post paired with Mosun. The word is transliterated; it is NOT rendered 'valley' (the display capital Զ could be read Ձ, «Ձոր»), and the post is not otherwise identified.

[13] *oba* — a nomad tent-camp of the Kurdish or Tatar herders (Turk. *oba*).

[14] «Չինկիլ» — a border mountain pass (very likely Çingil / Չինգիլ), transliterated as printed; the geographic identification is not asserted.

[15] «պաղլալ(ը)» — UNRESOLVED; no real Armenian word (the line breaks it «պաղ-|լալը»). It is the place at Alexandropol that Rouben goes straight to, expecting to find Vagho. It is transliterated, and NO place, dwelling, shop, cellar or lodging is invented for it.

[16] «թեզրած» — UNRESOLVED, a non-word standing in parallel with «լոգնած» ('tired'); possibly 'wet' or 'sweated' («թրջած»), named as a possibility only. Transliterated.

[17] *Ghurumsagh* — a term of abuse (cf. Turk. *kurumsak*), named as a likely source and not asserted; kept transliterated as the insult Kevork throws at the seeming stranger.

[18] «Երգոր» (Yergor) — an unidentified comrade in the roll of the dead. The form is unattested, and it is expressly NOT normalized to «Գէորգ» (Gevorg): the list already qualifies its Gevorgs (Rus-Kevork, Hunter Gevorg), the initial Ե is not Գ, and no page image was available to recheck. Transliterated and left as a distinct name. Isajan, in the same list, is likewise kept as printed.

[19] The Monastery of the Holy Apostles («Առաքելոց Վանք», Sourb Arakelots) — the medieval Armenian monastery near Mush, the scene of a celebrated fedayi engagement referred to earlier in the memoirs.

[20] «Առաքինջցի» — the origin-epithet of Vardan, Seyo Poghos's comrade; possibly «Առինջցի» (of Arinj), named as a possibility only. Transliterated ('of Arakinj'); the village is not identified.

[21] «որ պէս ___ գնդակ չարձակել» — one or two words between «որ» and «գնդակ» are unresolved in the scan. Only the clear sense is rendered: Touman orders his men not to fire on the Russians, but to fight the Turks alone. The missing word is not invented.

[22] «գերիման» — the form is non-standard, but the sense is fixed by the next clause (14 men fall captive): 'taken captive.' Rendered by that sense; the form is footnoted, not built upon.

[23] «հալածելով» — UNRESOLVED in this context. The ordinary sense ('persecuting, pursuing, hunting') fits ill with corpses; 'gathering' («հաւաքելով», i.e. to pose over them) is named as a possibility only. The gerund is transliterated and nothing is asserted.

[24] Lobanov — Prince A. B. Lobanov-Rostovsky (1824–1896), the Russian foreign minister of the mid-1890s, a byword in Armenian memory for a policy hostile to the Armenians.

[25] «Լեդրաններու» (the *Ledrans*) — an UNRESOLVED proper name, paired with 'the Lenins.' It is transliterated and NOT identified; in particular it is NOT silently rendered 'the Stalins.'

[26] «յորդորանքով» — 'with exhortation, with urging.' Whether the shade is encouragement or instigation («դրդումով») is not settled; rendered by the minimal sense ('with his own urging'), the alternative named and not asserted.

[27] «աւելը» — the subject is unclear (whether it is to live on, or to remain, after so many deaths). Only the minimal lexical sense of the word ('the more, the surplus') is rendered — 'anything more is a shame for us' — and no specific subject is supplied.

[28] «չորերն» — UNRESOLVED, in the mother's speech. Transliterated ('the *chorer* too are near'); no meaning is supplied.

[29] «մօրերէն» — UNRESOLVED. Two readings are possible — 'before my mother' or 'of my despair' («մորմոք») — and neither is chosen; the word is transliterated and footnoted.

[30] «Բոռի-Մահլէ» and «Բերդի-Թաղ» — quarter-names of Kars (*mahle* = quarter; *berd* + *tagh* = fortress-quarter). Transliterated as printed and not further identified.

[31] «շոհնիկ» — UNRESOLVED, and HIGH-RISK: evidently the thing Plo the tailor sews in his shops, but the word is a non-word in the scan. It is transliterated, and NO garment, article or object is invented for it.

[32] «սահման(ապահ)» — the batch reading «սահմանապահ» is meaningless here; only the plain sense is rendered ('they go to the border, cross it').

[33] «Տուբրախ» (Tubrakh) — the man first offered the bombing plan. He is PROBABLY the veteran Kars field-worker «Տուրբախ» (Turbakh) of Ch. I (glossary; itself transcription-flagged), by a metathesis of ր. The two chapters spell the name differently, and the two are NOT unified here; the probable identity is noted only.

[34] Harutiun, "come from America" — the expert in bombs and infernal machines who took on the barracks-bombing. He is NOT the Bidza (Harutiun) of Sivas of Ch. VI.

[35] «ցը» — a curt exclamation, kept verbatim in quotation marks and NOT interpreted or translated.

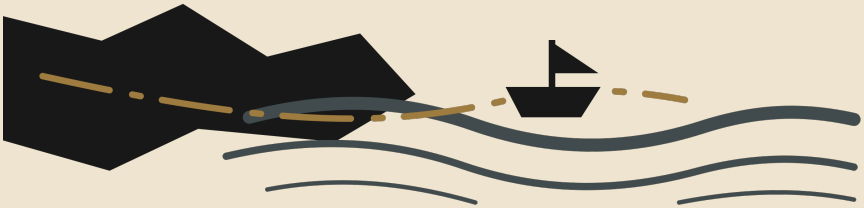
[36] «Փրանս (պչրամոլ)» — the scornful by-name for the boy Hamo. The author's own parenthesis «(պչրամոլ)» carries the sense — a preening fop, a dandy given to coquetry — and «Փրանս» itself is unresolved and kept as printed, not over-rendered.

[37] «բռած» — likely 'insisted' («պնդած»); rendered by that sense and footnoted.

[38] «կը դնէ պայն» — UNRESOLVED. Possibly 'arms him' («կը զինէ զայն») or 'sends him' («կը ղրկէ զայն»); neither is chosen. Transliterated and footnoted.

[39] «եմենի» — a light shoe (Turk. *yemeni*); the sense is stable (footwear of the chimney-sweep disguise) but the form is uncertain. Transliterated.

[40] «ապաղան «բայլըսըդ»» – «ապաղան» is unclear, and «բայլըսըդ» is a foreign (evidently Turkish) colloquialism set in the author's own quotation marks. Both are kept verbatim; no meaning is invented for either.



CHAPTER XII

Batum

Պաթում

Tiflis / Batum / Black Sea

BATUM.

MY FIRST JOURNEY TO BATUM, IN THE YEAR 1902.

ALYOSHA.

A SURVEY OF THE SITUATION AT BATUM, OF THE PREVAILING CURRENTS, AND OF THE DIRECTION OF THE DASHNAKTSUTIUN.

BATUM IN 1904. MY PART IN A TERROR-ACT.

AN ILL-CONSIDERED INITIATIVE, AND AN AWKWARD POSITION FOR ME.

Reaching Tiflis, I presented myself to the Bureau, which decided to send me to Batum[1] as a field-worker.

It was the second time I was going to that city to work. The first time I went there was at the end of 1902, when one foot of mine was in the Dashnaktsutiun and the other was still groping about in uncertainty.(*)

I remember that in those years (1902) I presented myself one day to Hamo (Ohanjanian) at Tiflis, who was a central figure in the Dashnaktsutiun, the youngest of them and the most

(\) *The pages that follow, which describe Rouben's first journey to Batum (in the year 1902), were written in 1948, for* Hairenik*, but were not sent. The second part of Chapter XII (1904) is taken from the notebooks. (A. Kh.)

beloved. He had known me from childhood, when he used to come to our house to play with my elder brothers. When Hamo saw me he was delighted. He proposed that I go to Batum. "For young men like you," he said, "the fit place to do *abadz*[2] is Batum, where the revolutionary ferment is fierce. There are two revolutionary currents: one is Sasun, in Turkey; the other is Batum and Guria[3] – outside Transcaucasia, and throughout Russia. We have a strong Body[4] at Batum, but it has not grasped in any depth the importance of its own ground; fresh forces are needed there. Some while ago I sent Alyosha; you go too, put yourself at the Body's disposal, and work according to its instructions."

Though I had completed my twenty-first year and had already been through a great many trials, into a test of this kind I had never fallen. I was to go and work in the name of a party which, though it was the most attractive of all in my adolescent gropings, was one whose essence was unknown to me. I was grown, but I knew that I was not prepared for the charge given me. All the same, I accepted Hamo's proposal.

Arriving at Batum, I put up at the inn where men of my sort lodged. I easily made the acquaintance of Alyosha, who was better prepared than I and more experienced in the work. He came from a Russian university, and was my own age. Sometimes he wore a student's cap, when he went into the workers' quarters, and sometimes a broad-brimmed hat, like the poets. His spectacles were inseparable from his nose – they made up one part of his face – and in his hand he carried a thick walking-stick. Only, out of that childlike, dreaming face, goodness and pity poured. He was always smiling; he smiled even in anger and in rage. He was a pleasant comrade. From the very first minute I opened myself to him as to an old and intimate friend.

– Alyosha, you want information from me about our comrades, but I shall tell you that I know no one, because I am a newcomer in the party family.

Alyosha smiled kindly. He had taken on the look of a happy man, and it seemed that Hamo's regard for him had made a great impression on him.

– Don't lose heart. Hamo did well to send you to this "furnace." He sent me the same way, with this difference, that here there was no second Alyosha to whom I could make unreserved confessions such as you have made to me. I shall tell you one thing, and mark it: frankness and *inknazhgahutiun*[5] are,

among Armenians, synonyms for weakness and nullity; among Russians, on the contrary, they are signs of strength and progress. I miss my[6] comrades. Don't be that frank with anyone else again – you will lose your credit.

Alyosha spoke Armenian with difficulty, mixing Russian in as he went. This *intelligent* had in fact become Russian in soul, though within him the *datrin*[7] Armenian spoke. He went on:

– If that is how it is, let me explain to you. Batum is a new city of more than 40,000, where the winds blow from one side out of Europe, from another out of Transcaucasia and Asia, and from a third out of Russia. It is the meeting-point of three cultures. It is the one mouth of Transcaucasia for export and import. Here the newly created industry is growing. Without Batum, Baku is a worthless fortune. So I have given you an idea of the place. Let us come now to the population.

"More than half the city are Armenians; after them come

the Georgian tribes – Gurians, Mingrelians, Ajarians and the rest; then the Greeks, and last of all the Russians. So it is a city Russian in form, Georgian in speech, and Armenian in essence. An "*ashak sandal*,"[8] in which the master is the Armenian.

"The Russians are the fewest in number, but the administrative helm is in their hands. Policeman, officer, governor – these are they, and they occupy almost all the state posts besides. A small part of the Russians are in the free professions or are skilled workers. Nearly all of them are "*chernosotentsy*" (Black Hundredists, Russian chauvinists).[9] There are a few students and workers outside those ranks who are gold. These hate the government.

"The Greeks are in general merchants. From the national point of view they consider themselves guests in Batum, and feel themselves a part of the greater Greece. From the social point of view they are against revolution, and by their confession they are bound to Russia as well, so that they must be judged in the ranks of the Black Hundredists. They are counter-revolutionaries, and serve as a prop to the police.

"Let us come now to the Georgians. They are divided into various tribes, so far apart from one another that one might reckon them different nations. But at present these different nations are on the road to mingling and forming a

single nation, thanks to the Georgian parties and particularly to the Social-Democrats. The Ajarians, who surround Batum – which in truth ought to be reckoned an Ajarian city – are Muslim by religion, and for that reason they are bound to Turkey. They are against the Russians, and against the Armenians too, because we are against the Turk; but they are not against the Georgians and the Christians, and that is thanks to the working method and the labors of the Social-Democrat party.

"There are many Gurians in Batum, and their country lies close to this city. They have become the axis of the Georgian tribes and of the social struggles. They have for their motto 'One nation (Georgian), one culture.' They put forward education, economic freedom, administrative autonomy, the abolition of despotism and other demands of the kind, and they have covered their country with consumers' and in part producers' *kooperativs* (cooperative societies). This element, which is forever running the names of Marx and Engels through every case, does not serve Marx; it makes Marx serve its own ends.

"The Mingrelians and the Imeretians, who are still much attached to their nobility, are waking at the sight of the Gurians' example. The national currents formed among them do not speak to the heart of the lower layers, and are confined to the compass of the nobility alone – a consequence of the pressure exerted from below. There is a Federalist current as well, which tries to gather the Georgian tribes under one roof, but it is destitute of economic and social foundations, and that becomes the cause of its weakness. The Federalist current is attractive to the humble layers only for its national aspirations; those, however, are not enough to bind the masses to it. In this condition, since it serves the inner aspirations of the Social-Democrats by leveling the antagonism of the tribes, they do not disturb the Federalists' work; but at the same time, by stressing the social and economic factors, they are turning that current into a branch of their own.

"I admire the Gurian group. Zhordania[10] and his comrades have found the way to do, under the label of international socialism, the very work the Dashnaktsutiun does – with this difference, that they are outwardly socialist and in essence nationalist, while we are outwardly nationalist and inwardly socialist."

Alyosha, having finished his cup of coffee, went on.

– Now let us come to our own people. Till now I have given you an idea of its surroundings.

"The Armenians of Batum are as old as

Batum itself. They trickle down upon Batum with the river Chorokh – Artvin, Artanush, Khopa, Borchkha and the rest. To that have been added those who came from Transcaucasia, particularly from Akhalkalak and Akhaltskha. We must count in the Armenians who fled from Lazistan and from the districts of Trebizond, and the refugees who came from the other parts of Turkish Armenia, chiefly from Akhalt[11] and Bayberd – and we get the melting-pot of the Armenians of Batum and its surroundings.

"The Armenians are not of one religion; they are Turk, Frank and Armenian – in other words Muslim, Catholic and Gregorian. These are as far from one another as we and the Turks, as we and the Russians, and that without exaggeration. Though all three are pure-blooded Armenians, yet, to our heart's sorrow, our Muslim and our Christian churches strive to push them further apart; and our own party, which is called to abolish the barriers, has fallen in behind great affairs and neglected these everyday questions. If we accepted the essence of our program, according to which 'Religion is an individual question matter,'[12] if we accepted liberation from confessional traditions, from the influence of the *parakhanner*[13] of Catholicoi and *ter-ters*, the confessions could not become an obstacle to our gathering our national sections into one and forming a single nationality. We must take example from the Georgians. Azarik and Simon assure me that the number of Muslim Armenians on the banks of the Chorokh and on the skirts of Pontus is greater than that of those reckoned Armenian. The question, then, does not concern the men of Khopa and Borchkha, who may become a nucleus; the question is broader and more serious. Here is a field for us, to sow and to reap.

"The Armenians are not of one tongue, though the majority are Armenian-speaking. In this small city alone you see Georgian-speaking and Russian-speaking Armenians whose number is no quantity to be overlooked. My grandmother was Armenian-speaking, my mother Georgian-speaking, my father Circassian-speaking, and I Russian-speaking. Armenian I learned

later, and imperfectly enough at that; but I am no less an Armenian than those who

know no language besides Armenian. To be fully an Armenian it is of course a necessity to know our language; but to conclude from this that whoever does not know Armenian is not an Armenian is the greatest and the most dangerous error there is. I have felt it, above all when ignorant usurers or *tiratsus*, who understood nothing of Armenian-ness, mocked my accent, laughed at my mistakes, and reckoned me a worse Armenian than they were. In the end, language is only a weapon to a man, to carry his thoughts to those around him and to receive theirs. Why reckon less Armenian those who have escaped dying, or escaped becoming dumb beasts? The Circassian-speaking, Turkish-speaking, Russian-speaking, Georgian-speaking Armenians, and those who speak other languages still, have become so because they have not had the chance of living together, because their fatherland has not been free and they have been driven – so it is said – out of the ancestral nest, because Armenian-ness, reckoning them lost and assimilated, has neglected their Armenian upbringing. From this one may conclude that there are three means for the reviving of the language: the Armenians' living together; the freedom of the Fatherland; and the organizing of schooling and of school-work for those who have lost the language. If the first two can today be no more than guiding ideas, to carry out the third is within our power. But we have no Armenian literature, history and school in foreign languages for the foreign-speaking Armenians, so as to keep an Armenian by origin an Armenian and draw them into the Armenian fold. Here is a broad field to work in. We must reform the purposeful distribution of the Armenian schools, and must develop and spread a many-tongued Armenian culture. In that way we should save a third of the Armenian people from loss."

Alyosha went on with his lesson:

"The Armenians of Batum divide into two classes – the bourgeois and half-bourgeois on the one side, and on the other the proletarian and poor class. As a class they are opposed to one another, but on the other hand they remain bound to one another

by their patriotism and their compatriotic unions. A strange phenomenon, and one peculiar to the Armenian alone. For the Armenian proletarian a

Mantashev, a Tsaturov[14] are not opponents but a national pride, because they are rich and are Armenian Gregorians; just as for these the Armenian proletarian is no enemy, because he is their compatriot. Among Armenians there is no class antagonism; the Armenians are *mianabar*[15] against the foreign classes and against their very existence. It is not so among the Georgians and the Russians, who are divided from one another by noble, bourgeois and proletarian barricades. The Armenians of Batum are divided according to cafés.[16] Every district or province has its own café. The Akhaltskha man, the Mush man, the Van man, the Trebizond man, the Akhalkalak man, the Akhaltskha man,[17] the Khotorjur man has his own separate corner, where the compatriots gather without distinction of class and where all are equal; often the poorest man there carries more authority than the rich man, or than one who is conspicuous in other fields. From these[18] two conclusions must be drawn, which I have come by through my own experience.

"The first is that only with great difficulty can the Armenian proletarian class be brought out against the Armenian bourgeois class; but it comes out with one voice, and taking every sacrifice upon itself, against the Russian, Turkish or Georgian exploiting class, having with it the Armenian half-bourgeois and even the bourgeois layers.

"The second is that the compatriotic groupings do not lead to clan-chieftainship and to the breaking up of the wholeness of the nation. To appearance it seems so, but in essence it is not. The provincial groupings are the steps of a staircase, formed of themselves, and those steps carry the Armenian people toward the idea of the completing of a common fatherland. Only, those groupings must be made conscious, so that they do not afterwards turn into feudalities.

"These two conditions of fact place us in a very delicate position. On the one hand the Armenian is so proud of his origin and his past that he wants to be sovereign and to have his national independence, above all in Turkish Armenia, for which he is ready for every sacrifice. On the other hand he is so conscious of his personal and social interests, so full of initiative and of revolutionary flight, that he cannot endure the despotic regime and the capitalist order. With his left hand he has come up to the field of socialism,

and with his left hand he clings to it[77] as to an anchor of salvation. In that way the Armenian is both socialist and national, and that quality of his – contradictory to appearance – has an altogether different content than it has, for instance, in Russia or in Turkey. The Armenian is an individuality, like the gazelle come down from the mountains or the bear of the forest; while the Turk and the Russian are like the bee of the hive, whose individuality lies in the whole, and which, if one particle be torn from it, is subject to being melted down and annihilated.

"Freedom is for the Armenian individual a necessary condition of growth; what it is for the Turk and the Russian is a word the individual cannot understand. The Armenian can form a collective body and stand forth as a nation only by way of democracy; he cannot bear theocracy, or aristocracy, or despotism of any kind. For the Turk and the Russian, on the contrary, real democratism lies in the will of their emperor, their chief, their leader, and in the murmurless obedient discipline of their subjects. In a word, our people is the sum of independent units, while they are the contentless particles of an independent sum – like ciphers.[19] Out of this contradiction comes the following: that if you string ciphers behind[20] a Nicholas, a Marx or a Plekhanov,[21] a giant sum is obtained, an unbreakable force. But with us, string as many ciphers as you like, you get only ciphers, since our birth is not from the individual or from the idea, but

from our own worth. Erase from within the Turk or the Russian his leader or his leading idea, and another remains in the place. Here is the secret: that they have no possibility of enduring and of forming a world-wide flock, like microbes;[22] whereas we, like all the old and crystallized peoples – the Jews, the Greeks – are like grains of wheat, which taken one by one are individualities. Mix a grain with other seeds and leave it under the ground, and out of it, though *volot*,[23] you get wheat again. Do not mix it with other seeds, and sow it in the soil it loves, and you get a wheatfield, exactly like the seed. That wheat can be burned, can be eaten and wasted, but annihilated it never can be. Let a few grains only be spared, and they multiply again and endure. The strength of the Armenian people is its mastery over the breadth of time; the strength of the others is their mastery over space and over force. Why is there no Roman of the deified Augustus and of Caesar? Why are there no Assyria and Babylon of Ashurnasirpal and Nebuchadnezzar? Why are

there none of the mighty empires of Chinggis, of Lenktimur,[24] of the Huns, the Alans, the Kushans and the others, which we have tasted – and why are we here? It is simple: their greatness was a string of ciphers, while we are an individuality, and we remain so forever.

"All this by way of preface, so that you may understand the Dashnaktsutiun.

"The Dashnaktsutiun is not a doctrine, only a genuine psychological product of the Armenian people's aspirations. The Armenian people has two different aspirations, and the Dashnaktsutiun too, at bottom, has a duality to which it wants to put an end.

For the Armenian people the individual is the foundation of humanity and of progress, and for that reason the Dashnaktsutiun is against not only every despotic authority, but also

all those parties which – like the orthodox Marxists, for instance – deny the value of the individual and want to cast everyone in a single mold. For the Armenian people the family is a holy temple, a footing for the gathering of individuals and for social and national unity. For that reason too the Dashnaktsutiun is not only the keeper of the traditions of the patriarchal Armenian family, but is itself a party-family, formed on those same patriarchal lines. The gathering of families is the nation; the domain of the nation is the Fatherland. Against the idea of the despotic states, that outside the bounds of allegiance to the state there exists neither the idea of a nation nor of a fatherland; against the view of the present socialist currents, that the national idea is, like religion, a counter-revolutionary, anti-progressive prejudice, and that class consciousness alone is real – the Dashnaktsutiun holds nationality and fatherland to be real, as the different genera of animals and plants are real, and in whose harmonious and parallel development it finds the pledge of progress and well-being. That is an unavoidable good for the peace and progress of mankind. At bottom, the Dashnaktsutiun leads toward the independence of nations, under the mottoes of "reforms and federation." It wants to soften the Turkish and the Russian blow, but it deceives itself more than anyone. The enemy sees that, and for that reason concentrates its blow against the Dashnaktsutiun, as against a separatist. The

socialist Marxists see it in the same way, and for that reason they too are against us, even were we socialists. That union of the left and the right groupings against us has its justifying reasons, given that our aspiration is to go, by a federation of independent nations, toward a universal human harmony, while theirs, on the contrary, is to create a homogeneous mass by violating the boundaries of independent nations, or by annihilating national longings, and in that way to reach harmony."

Alyosha felt himself master of the ground, since I was devouring his ideas, which were for the most part new to me.

"One fundamental question more, and everything becomes clear. Tomorrow, when you have dealings with the circle outside or with our own, a question will at once be put before you: 'Are we socialists or not?' The answer to it is yes, since 70 per cent of the Armenian people are either propertyless workers or peasants tilling the soil, and all the rest are hunted emigrants who, so as not to be beaten in the struggle of life, have become small and large merchants, artisans and men of the free professions. But we are socialists of our own kind, just as in the religious view we have a confession of our own kind. We can be as much against the violent regime that oppresses the class forming the majority as the Russian socialists are; but we, if you like, are more opposed to that regime than they, because we are hunted as Armenians as well, because that regime is against our national existence. The Russian socialist currents, taking Marx's theory for their starting point, have not made the liberation of nations their aim. On the contrary, they hold national aspiration to be a backward prejudice. Now, a socialism of that kind is at bottom no different from the tsarist regime. In essence it wants to reform the tsarist regime, to give it new vitality and new strength, so that, leaning on the majority and not on the minority, it may make its world-expansion more effective; so that it may be able to dissolve all nations in the Russian sea; and so that it may establish the supremacy of the lower class in place of the upper. This is neither evolution nor revolution, but merely a change of authority. With socialists of that kind we can travel the same road

as far as the overthrow of the tsarist power; but their subsequent rule is in no way to be wished for, given that the power stays the same and has only changed its clothes. They are, consciously or unconsciously, the abettors of

the annihilation of the freedom of the individual, of democracy and of the *aghker*,[25] of the sole rule of hangmen, and the vanguard of world-expansion. We tie the establishing of a socialist order to the individuality of the person and of the nation; for us, without the freedom of the individual and of his fatherland there can be neither socialism nor humanity – whereas for them the precondition is to be a dumb *drast*,[26] so that mankind may become a bee-like or an ant-like workshop. We want the workshop to serve us; they want us to serve the workshop. These are the fundamental disputes, which for many, however, are past understanding, and for that reason we stand at present before a very heavy and delicate situation. You will see it in this small city, and you too will be forced to undergo the test, as I have undergone it several times. Here the tests are still in the germ, but they can spread and become the cause of fissures arising in our party and of its breaking up to *payn*[27] extent, if the consciousness of our party is not raised.

"There are many works at Batum, chiefly bound up with the oil industry. I think 8,000 workers are employed in those works, and among them Armenians too – *dororinak*,[28] Mantashev, Tsaturov, Mirzoev and so on, who keep Armenian managers and, for the most part, Armenian workers. There are other works-owners of *tsarber*[29] nationality as well, of whom the chief are Rothschild, Nobel, Shibaev[30] and so on. Only a small part of their workers are Armenians, and the greater part are of other nations, among whom the Georgians hold the chief place. The Armenian workers, and even their managers, are for the most part organized and come into the ranks of the Dashnaktsutiun. Of the organized foreign workers, a minority come into the Social-Democrat party. The antiquity of these two parties dates from the years 1894–95. When the closing of the Armenian schools and the seizure of the church properties[31] take place, Smbat, the secretary of the Central Committee, who was at the same time the director of Mantashev's works, proposes that there be a general strike at Batum. Zakaridze and the leaders of the local Georgian Social-Democrats of Batum[32] refuse it, arguing that this is your internal Armenian question, the defense of your national rights. The same proposal, I think, was made at Tiflis too, but with no result. The Armenians struggled, while the Social-Democrats and the Georgians only looked on.

"At the beginning of this year a noticeably energetic work began among the workers, and among the Georgians in particular. A secret press, leaflets, workers' clubs and unions and the rest. Among the propagandists were Armenians too. Bedrosian, who had come from Tiflis, wanted there to be cooperation between the Dashnaktsutiun and the Social-Democrats. We were not against that proposal, on condition that, first, they should help so that the Armenians scattered through all the works came into the Dashnaktsutiun, while we for our part pushed the non-Armenians toward their ranks; second, that every practical step should be taken by the agreement and the decision of the two parties; and third, that in those places and those works where the one side or the other formed a negligible percentage, they should be free to make their own undertakings without agreement. Bedrosian went off to Tiflis pleased, reporting to the local body the success of his mission. A man by the name of Goghashvili came to express his thanks for the line we had taken, and declared to Smbat and to Saribek (Harutiunian) that they would faithfully respect the agreement concluded.

"A few weeks later Goghashvili informs the Central Committee that Rothschild's workers' union and they themselves intend

to present demands about the shortening of hours and an increase in daily wages. And he asks our support. He is answered that the carrying out of such a demand could only be on an all-Russian *masshtab* (scale), which does not exist. Some while back we had proposed making movements on an all-Caucasian *masshtab* on the occasion of the school and church oppressions, attaching workers' demands to them as well, but that was not accepted. Now, since there is scarcely an Armenian among Rothschild's workers, and the majority are you, do as you know how; we and our workers stay in the part of onlookers, and if you are in the wrong we shall stand for our few Armenian workers only. And if it should happen that disturbances spread in the works where we form the majority, thanks to the steps taken by your minorities, we do not guarantee their protection.

"At the beginning of spring, Rothschild's workers are in revolt. The administration dismisses 400 workers at a stroke, without compensation. Hunger, idleness, misery. A request is made that the workers be taken back, but it is refused. Fifteen Armenian workers who were among those wretched

men are saved, being taken on at Mantashev's works. The rest, driven to it, resort to demonstrations and want to be taken back into the works. Goghoshvili comes to me and asks that we advise the workers of the works under our influence to strike and to demand that the dismissed workers be taken back. I refuse his proposal. – You, I tell him, did not accept our appeal for a general strike and for attaching the workers' question to the national educational question, saying that the persecution raised against the schools was your internal affair. You, without taking the general workers' question into account, without our agreement, undertook to strike in one works only, which comes to the same thing as making the workers of that works wretched; and now you have got up, like a *tiratsu*,

and want by your pressure to better the workers' hopeless position. That is not a revolutionary stand. Since you are answerable for this misfortune, you must either provide for the workers, or go into the works and demand that they be placed, or else that works must stay shut and you must let no worker go in and work there. When you carry out one of these three courses, then it will be possible to reckon with you. We on our side can forbid the Armenians to enter Rothschild's works, and those who are there we can place and provide for. You think about the rest.

"Present at this conversation, along with Smbat, was Temirian too, one of our good comrades. Fired up, he turned to the Georgians and said:

– A revolutionary does as comrade Alyosha advises; and it is left to you either to withdraw from the field or to take the road that befits a revolutionary. We are forbidden as a party to be with you, but personally I shall be with you, if you take the revolutionary road, according to Alyosha's advice.

"Goghashvili, in Zakaridze's name, has put himself at the head of the dismissed workers. Either they will go inside the works, he says, to work, or the works will come to a stop and be ruined. A crowd of some 500 workers, armed with stones and clubs, have – so it appears – besieged the works. The works asks for auxiliary troops, and when it brings them up, it is stoned by the workers. Our Temirian takes part in the demonstration and *stakatsne*[33] the attack of Gogho, who is standing at his side. The troops open fire and 40 men are laid on the ground.[34] The crowd scatters, many are arrested, and among them our Temirian and Gogho.

"This event, of which I was an eyewitness," said Alyosha, "shattered not only the workers' lives but turned my thoughts and the wholeness of my soul upside down. I came to the conviction that a people, if it has a national individuality but has not its independence, cannot have universal human socialism for its ideal. The experience I have gained at Batum shows that without being independent and free we cannot serve socialism with our full strength. There is, then, an order of degrees among the national and the socialist ideals. First the solving of the national question, and only after that socialism. When the soul of a nation under despotism is wounded, it is not the wounding of its body or its pocket that speaks from its heart. Only by way of the freedom of nations will it be possible to arrive at socialism, and oppressed and unfree nations will not travel the road of socialism with their *yerknts*[35] full strength, unless they wish to fail or to be subjected to degeneration. Kamo's[36] example is the proof of it. Kamo was a plain and crystal man, and you cannot know how attached he was to our *janfedayis*. A few years ago he wanted to cross into the Land with Aslan, Mejo and the others. In the end he fell into the claws of the Social-Democrats, was carried away by socialist ideas, and now he is lost to us. Or our Temirian, who became the hero of the Batum working people – through a plain misunderstanding, and in order to keep up his Dashnaktsakan *tasib* in front of Goghashvili – do you know what happened to him? After the demonstration(*) they imprisoned him together with Goghashvili, and only thanks to Smbat's appeals was he able to get clear of exile and prison. But when that comrade of ours came out of prison he was altogether changed. Some while ago, Azarik and a student come from Tiflis and I were talking with Temirian. He was saying: 'To speak frankly, we are like the hunter who, gun in hand, does not fire on the wild ducks and waits for the geese to come. The geese, however, do not come, and he goes home empty-handed. Here the laboring class suffers; the capitalist, the tsar, is in front of us; we do not strike, and we say "The Land, the Land," and stay idle.'

(*) The Bolsheviks now boast that Stalin orgaThe student gave him his answer:

– No, we do not stay idle; but the point is that we are one, while our pain is two. I have found my road: in the Land I am a Dashnaktsakan and I am ready

to die for it, while here, and above all in Russia, we are to be with the Russian revolution.

"When I began to argue with them, Azarik came to my help:

– *Cho*,[37] what have you poured water into the mortar for, and gone on pounding it? The water, as I see, has not thickened; but you – and above all Temirian, since he sat in prison, he has turned right round. Let us say it is winter, the windows of the house and the doors are *zardadz*,[38] the roof fallen in, the wind blows and the snow comes inside, the children are freezing with cold – are the parents going to think about buying gloves and stockings, or are they first of all going to *vaghen*[39] to mend the doors and cover the roof? Our house, the fatherland, has fallen in, and we must first build a house. And is that talk, what they say – that the workers' business does not interest us? It interests us very much, but everything in its turn. Building the house comes first of all, and inside the house there shall be no parasites. We shake the *ojil*[40] out in the *tonir* so as to be rid of them. Those parasites too are like lice, and we shall shake them out in the *tonir*. But for that, first of all, we must have our own *tonir*, and not the Russian's or the Georgian's. Do you follow, my *brat*?[41]

"When Azarik with his peasant's reasoning had put an end to the differences, blue-eyed Simon of Bayberd came in, one of our comrades, who was harsh and coarse, to the point of vulgarity, because he was frank beyond all measure. His view of the world was narrow, and for that reason he was a fanatic. I had taken his measure, but our companions judged him by his words, not guessing that his word was not his own,

nized this strike, and every year they celebrate its anniversary. (A. Kh.)

but that of his fellow-townsman Mihran,[42] whom he loved and respected. The moment he came in, he turned to Azarik.

– Azarik, what business have you[76] with ticks? The whelps have got up and are playing at "social"! Hey there, you dog's whelp Temirian – if you are not a tick, if your blood is Armenian blood, why do you not shed it for the Land, and go off to shed it for Rothschild's *kambal* (lazy) workers?

"These heavy words were cold water, and stunned everyone. Temirian turned deathly yellow, and we felt that he would burst; there was a smell of blood in the air. Azarik rose from his place.

— You be quiet, the words are addressed to me. Simon, if there is a tick here, it is you. If there is a dog's whelp here, it is your schoolmaster, who has made a tick of you and blows through your mouth. Draw in your tongue, bring your wits back to your head, or else you have driven the knife to the bone.[43]

"Simon stood there petrified. Azarik turned to the man serving in the café.

— What are you standing there like a *hayvan* and listening for? Quick, bring us four glasses and a bottle of cognac.

"Azarik's distorted face brightened again. He drew up his chair and turned his back, *kar korads*,[44] to Simon. Then he addressed us gently.

— Boys dear, may I be a sacrifice for your souls; forgive me[45] whatever I have said amiss. There — Simon has made me lose my thread. Let us say I am a man of Trebizond or of Bayberd, that I have left house and home, ploughing and sowing, and fled from the Land and landed up in Patum. Let us say I am your own, and I am helpless and have no work; let us say that you are my classmates. One of you is young and goes to his studies (he looked at the student); one of you works and barely brings his mother her dry bread (and he looked at me); one took a rifle and went as far as Khastur,[46] fought, and came back beaten, without having been able to free our fields (he turned round and looked at Simon, standing over his head); and one more, the most stout-hearted of all and the best, seeing that his own belly was empty, seeing that at home they were starving, gathered all the hungry about him and fell upon those men

who had been the cause of his own hunger and his household's; let us say his blood grew hot and he scattered and plundered all the shops of Patum like a brigand; let us say that this brigand too is our Temir. Now you tell me: is our Temir a bastard, or the true child of his family?

"Before he was answered, he filled his own glass and the others' as well, except Simon's, who by now had no glass, and then he turned to Temirian.

— Temir jan, you are not a bastard; you are the truest son of our house. You went toward death with our blessing, and with our blessing you came back

from it. I am older than you, so make my words a ring in your ear. Your *lragd*[47] is good, but do not forget one thing: that until our country is freed, until we have house and home, your efforts go with the wind. Your health – may I die for your soul.

"While we were emptying the four glasses to Temir's health, Simon *kuatsav*[48] and kissed Azarik.

– Godless man, then why is there no glass for me?

– When you kiss Temir's forehead, you shall have both a glass and a chair to sit with us.

Simon came up and kissed Temir's forehead."

Alyosha, who told what he had seen very vividly, drew his conclusion:

"I have explained to you, from top to bottom, what I have seen of the melting-pot here. I have told all of it frankly to Hamo too, and asked for some remedy. Tomorrow, in a few days, you will *anchamb*[49] see these opposing elements. Wholeness and unity are kept neither by me, nor by you, nor by the Central Committee – and I will say more, not by the Bureau either. From what I have told you, you have seen that the ring of unity is the Azariks, who are sound in soul and stand firm on two legs and a walking-stick. But can the Azariks bind the Simons forever, who are sliding down a slippery

road toward a narrow sectionalism? Can they hold Temir, *degh*,[50] you, who feel the weight of both the national and the social questions? Many are already sliding toward denationalization. You must carry these anxieties too, and must for the present give strength to the Azariks' view, until it crystallizes and becomes a conviction to the right as well as to the left.

"I have talked a great deal; you have listened the whole time. I think I have fulfilled Hamo's wish. Take what I have said into account, and find your road accordingly."

Alyosha was my first serious teacher. I think those three hours gave me three years' maturity and opened new horizons before me.

There are meetings and conversations that at first rouse only a confused interest and seem to us to pass by, but that in the course of time crystallize and shape our thoughts – like the clear spring flowing over the rock, which

opens fissures in it and at last wears it away and gives it a new form. The lesson Alyosha gave me was, in my whole life, that spring which wore away what was there and shaped what was new.

Who was I to Alyosha, that he sowed the seeds of his ideas in my soul? Only a stranger, since he did not even ask who I was (I was living under a false name at Batum; my name was Vardan, and my surname I have forgotten). About me he knew only that I was the one Hamo had sent, and that was enough for him to be unreserved with me.

And who was he himself, Alyosha? To this day I do not know. Perhaps he too was under a false name – that big-eared, handsome young man, on whose face and eyes his whole soul could be read. To all appearances he must have been from the North Caucasus; he wore a university badge on his breast.

Where are you, Alyosha, who met me at my dawn, and whom at my dusk I am seeking? Whether you are alive or not, I have no word. Perhaps, worn out by the oppositions of Simon of Bayberd and of Temir, you withdrew from the field to rest in your family. Perhaps, as you foresaw, you too parted from us, and the current cast you into the Russian revolution, and you were melted down there among millions of young men like yourself. Perhaps you are alive even now and are my enemy. Whatever it may be, the seeds you sowed I keep within me.

In the end it is the seed of the bread we eat that matters, and not the sower of it.

Alyosha took hold of it a good half-century ago and then vanished, without another man to give his approaches[51] general currency; but life came to confirm that his approaches were prophetic. And men argue to this day over whether one must go toward socialism by way of the solving of the national question, or whether the national question is to be solved by the establishing of socialism. And today the opinion that prevails is the first, which was Alyosha's opinion. He used to say that the right and the left wings of the Dashnaktsutiun would wither and fall. And a few years had not gone by when out of the right there arose the Mihranakan movement,[52] and Khatur's[53] fighters became enemies of the Dashnaktsutiun; while out of the left there sprang Separatism, and the Levon Atabekians[54] went off to mingle in the ranks of the foreigner.

Alyosha used to say that unity would stand above confessional, religious and other distinctions. And in fact the Dashnaktsutiun went by that road, given that[55] the *Dzyuraghs*[56] and the Hasan-Jalalians[57] became its pillars. In that direction, however, there is still much work to be done, so that those narrow-minded prejudices may be abolished which still weaken the efforts that have been made.

Alyosha used to say that the difference of languages too would not become a cause of the breaking up of national unity. And in fact the part played by the *Javriens* (Russian-speaking) and by the *Khans* (Turkish-speaking)[58] in the Dashnaktsutiun proves it. What, however, is the means of binding the foreign-speaking Armenians to the nation? That means is constantly being sought, but the sure road has not yet been found.

Alyosha used to say that without the soil of the Fatherland there is no nation. And in fact the Dashnaktsutiun went in the direction of freeing the soil of the Fatherland, and with very costly sacrifices was able to free the soil of the Fatherland in part and to strengthen the nation. But the firmness of the nation and of the Fatherland becomes doubtful if the nation is not the sole and supreme master of its Fatherland, because the wholeness of the Fatherland and of the nation is the precondition of its firmness.

Alyosha used to say that the federation of nations that have come into their independence is the precondition of peace, and that it is what leads toward socialism. Though it is still too early, against the facts as they have been, to set aside that view of Alyosha's, yet one cannot set aside the reality that the efforts of Rostom–Yeprem[59] in Iran, and the efforts of Aknuni,[60] of Rostom and of the field-workers of the Land in the Ottoman Empire, gave in that direction meager results and boundless harm. On the other hand, Russia and Germany, under the name of socialist and independent, went in the direction of Stalin's and Hitler's despotic, nation-destroying and socialism-destroying course, and became the grave both of freedom and of elementary rights. Where the road lies, experience can say; and Alyosha's reasoning has been necessary to me in order to arrive at that experience.

In 1904, when by the Bureau's charge I came to Batum a second time, I found everything changed. In that year the members of the Central Committee were Kristapor,[61] Saribek Harutiunian and others. These were not *darachukhali*[62] men, like those I had seen till then. They belonged to the higher intelligentsia, or to the class of works managers. Working at Batum as free field-worker comrades were Diran of Bolis, who was a *frant*[63] young man and a sweet-natured field-worker, and the student Krpo.[64] Here our party ranks were chiefly workers, the greater

part of them Turkish Armenians, hunted from every side. There were two opposing currents in this city. The Turkish Armenians and the fighting men[65] lived *zad*[66] the life of Turkish Armenia and of the Land, and, having turned the cafés into clubs, held meetings continually and had stirring conversations about the Land. "Everything for the Land" – this was their motto. And sitting in the cafés, while they played *nard*,[67] they paid their dues for the Land, and gathered round the *finjans* (cups) of coffee they collected gifts for the fighting men. Every movement, every word turned about the fighting and the Land. The consequence of these dispositions was the armed bands they organized, which by way of Artvin–Artanush marched under the leadership of Mihran and of Turtsik-Gevorg[68] toward the frontier districts, and, giving battle and killing many of the troops and of the population that resisted, came back to the Russian frontier. This spirit, which was very strong, was master in that circle. But beside it there was also the working class, which took an interest in the workers' movement. For these, Krpo and other comrades read lectures in their *kazarmas* (dormitories).

I too, as circuit-rider and field-worker of that district, had to give lectures, chiefly on two subjects: the question of Turkish Armenia, and the defense of workers' rights against the exactions of the bourgeoisie. The working people, as I have said, lived chiefly by the life of the Turkish Armenians, and the freeing of that country was to them a desirable ideal. For that purpose they did not grudge bringing their material help, which was done in the form of monthly payments and gifts. Just as a poor widow would not spare her last kopeck to put into the alms-box before the image of Yotverk[69] (Alexandropol), so these did not grudge setting aside a share out of the morsel in their mouths for Turkish Armenia. That share, I must say, was not

so abundant as that of the Turkish Armenian circles. But that working class, organized within our party, did not forget its own interests either, and followed with interest the lectures read on workers' rights, and was ready to take steps to defend its interests and to come into its rights.

A large part of the Turkish Armenians, at a time when the Mihranakan movement did not yet exist, protested against the work carried on by us among the workers in the direction mentioned above, and against the Caucasian program, saying that in that way our forces were being sapped and the impetus to help the Turkish Armenians weakened. They insisted that we must fix our forces on the question of Turkish Armenia and on nothing else. At the head of the current were Simon of Bayberd, Arakel, and a rich man of Mush who even had a two-storey house. In the other current, however, there was no emphatic contrary opinion that we must fix our attention on the workers' question alone and put the Turkish Armenian cause in the second rank. That being so, the men of the first current pointed out above looked with an unfriendly eye on those field-workers who occupied themselves with the workers' question; and these last, in their lectures, dwelt equally on both subjects. The said section of the Turkish Armenians would not lend an ear to it and did not want to hear our lecturers. Toward me, however, they were more indulgent, and gave weight to my words, because they knew I had newly come from the frontier, that I was one of the candidates for going to Turkish Armenia, and – the chief thing – they knew that I had fallen in battle for that purpose. With this last argument I managed to convince the most stubborn of them and to hold their agitation in check.

The Batum district was rich, and our party's money income was abundant. The rich, the workers, and those belonging to the Turkish Armenian section all paid their share of dues and their gifts regularly. A general enthusiasm reigned. Ready for sacrifice

were even the ladies and the young women, who often got up evening and afternoon entertainments and secured considerable sums for the party.

It must be taken into account too that the district was a fairly large one, taking in the shores of the Black Sea. Though the district was far from the mother country, yet thanks to the Dashnaktsutiun's all-pervading

organization it was more closely bound to the Center than were nearer districts.

The Central Committee of Batum occupied itself closely with affairs relating to the Land, on which it had concentrated its chief attention. Through the Central Committee, connection was kept up with Trebizond and Constantinople. The Batum organization kept vigilant watch that all those authors of the Armenian massacres who passed through Batum or appeared within the Committee's district should be struck down. Of such was B.,[70] after whom a terrorist is sent from Batum, who, however, kills himself at Simferopol.[71]

An act of *teror* took place at Batum as well, in my time there. One day Martiros Margarian (Safo) came to Batum with a man unknown to us who was a spy of the Russian government. Martiros, passing through to Constantinople, leaves a note for the Central Committee charging it to kill that man. The stranger had put up at a hotel, from which he meant to leave in a few days. I went to the same hotel, took a room, and at dinner-time made his acquaintance. I promised to show him about the city, and at the same time I told Sarkis of Alkhat[72] to follow us and, when I made the sign, to kill the man I was with.

We went together to the boulevard along the shore. There was music[73] there, and a dense crowd was strolling. We mixed with that crowd and began to stroll likewise. I turned round and saw that Sarkis was following us. I wanted to make him understand by a sign that this was the man he was to subject to *teror*. But the good-for-nothing Sarkis came up to us at once and, in the middle of the crowd, put his revolver to the man's nape, laid him on the ground with a single blow, and himself, mixing with the fleeing people, disappeared. At first I was bewildered by that unlooked-for blow. For about a minute I stayed nailed to the spot, but coming quickly to my senses I began to run myself. The police were whistling from every corner and firing shots – at whom, I do not know. I hear the whistle of one of those bullets over my head; but mixing with the bewildered crowd, I slip away round the street corners and go into a café, where I see Sarkis sitting quietly, drinking his coffee, as though nothing had happened. I give him no sign of recognition, I say not a word to him, and I come out silently by the other door and go to the house of

a man of Mush I knew; and there too, without saying a word to him, I lie down to rest and to hide my agitation. I feign sickness there until the afternoon of the next day, when I get sure news that two Georgians have been arrested as the terrorists. Revolvers had been found on them too. On that news I disclose to my host the reason for my feigned sickness (he had already begun to suspect that I was not without a part in that affair). All danger being past, the next day I go back to my work.

I said above that I was succeeding in reconciling the two currents in the Batum organization. There occurred, however, an event which created a heavy situation for me and made my reconciling part impossible from then on. The event is this. I went to Kutais to collect the membership dues, and by rousing a few rich men I succeeded in raising 8,000 roubles and bringing them back with me to Batum. On my return I organized the workers of Mantashev's works and persuaded them to declare a strike and demand increases. On this question we came to an agreement with the Georgians as well. The strike lasted some time and the workers' money ran out. The workers asked me to lend them money until the end of the affair, that is until they should succeed in compelling

the works-owner to give way and grant increases. Without long thinking about it I gave them 5,000 roubles as a loan out of the money brought from Kutais, which I was bound to pay into the Central Committee's cash-box and which could only be taken out by the Committee's decision. On this matter I contented myself with telling Diran alone, and we agreed that the question should not go to the meeting of the Central Committee, the more so as one of its members was one of the works' managers. I must say that even without this there was already dissatisfaction with me in the Central Committee.

I do not know how, but a *provokatsia*[74] was spread that the money gathered for Sasun[75] was being handed out to the workers; and when, as usual, I visit the cafés at the back, they look at me that day with a scowling eye, and Simon (of Bayberd), before them all, turns to me and says that Sasun has fallen for want of money and cartridges, and here you are handing out the money to this man and that. Excited, they shake their fists at me and threaten to make me *tifa-tifa* (to pieces).

By all this I am much shaken, and, despairing both of the Central Committee and of that failure of mine, I leave everything and go to the station and, taking a train, set off straight for Tiflis. I never did learn what became of the question of the 5,000 roubles. Probably Krpo and Diran closed the accounts, recovering the money from the workers, who, I think, were successful.

Coming to Tiflis, I declared to the Body that I had come from Batum without authority, without a word to anyone, forced to it by the compulsion of the awkward situation that had been created; and I ask to be released from Batum, given that I have decided to cross into the Land.

Notes

[1] The author spells the town two ways, and the two spellings are kept as two English spellings, not harmonized: «Պաթում» — everywhere in the chapter, including the display caps and the whole of Alyosha's lecture — is rendered **Batum**; «Բաթում», which the book prints only twice, inside Azarik's rustic reported speech at pp.379–380, is rendered **Patum**. It is one city throughout. Batum (Georgian Batumi) is the Black Sea oil-export port at the terminus of the Baku pipeline and railway, and in these years one of the most heavily industrialized towns in the Caucasus.

[2] «ապած» — UNRESOLVED, and verified against the page image at high magnification: a clear four-glyph word standing before «ընելու» in Hamo's sentence, matching no standard form. By sense the slot wants something like 'a career' or 'work' («ասպարէզ/գործ ընելու»), but the letters support neither, and NO object is supplied for the verb. Transliterated.

[3] Guria — the western Georgian province inland of Batum, in these years the center of an exceptionally well-organized peasant movement led by the Georgian Social-Democrats; from 1902 onward it maintained what amounted to a parallel administration of its own.

[4] The Body («Մարմին») — the local executive organ of the Dashnaktsutiun in a town or district, standing under the Central Committee of the region; not a metaphor. First use in the book with this sense.

[5] «ինքնաժզահութիւն» — UNRESOLVED. The core of the word reads …ա-ժ-զ-ա-հ-ութիւն and matches no standard form. From the sentence it is a self-directed quality that Armenians count a weakness and Russians a strength; 'self-criticism' («ինքնաքննադատութիւն») and 'self-abasement' («ինքնախոնարհութիւն») fit the sense

but not the letters, and are named here as possibilities only. Transliterated; neither is asserted.

[6] «ուս ընկերներուս» — the word «ուս» before 'my comrades' is doubtful and matches no qualifier that fits; it may be a broken «իմ». Only the plain sense is rendered ("I miss my comrades"); no qualifier is invented.

[7] «դատրին» — UNRESOLVED, a non-word. The sense of the sentence wants something like 'the hidden' or 'the inner' Armenian («թաքուն» / «ներքին»), and those are named here as possibilities only. Transliterated; nothing is asserted.

[8] «աշաք սանդալ» — kept verbatim, inside the author's own quotation marks. A foreign (Turkish or Georgian) phrase for the mixed, melting-pot city. It is NOT glossed, identified or etymologized here.

[9] *chernosotentsy* — Russ. черносотенцы, the "Black Hundreds," the violently monarchist, antisemitic and anti-minority street organizations of the late Russian Empire. The parenthesis is the author's own gloss and is kept as his.

[10] Noe Zhordania (1868–1953) — the leading Georgian Social-Democrat (Menshevik), later head of the government of the independent Georgian Republic (1918–21).

[11] «Ախալթ» (line-broken «Ախալ-|թէն») — UNRESOLVED toponym in the list of the refugees' places of origin. It is expressly NOT assimilated to Akhalkalak or to Akhaltskha, both of which the author names in the same passage as distinct places. Transliterated; the place is not identified.

[12] «Կրօնքը անհատական խնդիր գործ է» — kept verbatim as printed, doubled noun and all. The party slogan is attested as "Religion is an individual matter" («անհատական գործ») or "an individual question" («անհատական խնդիր»); the book prints both nouns together, and the reading is NOT silently corrected to either canonical wording.

[13] «փարախաններու» — UNRESOLVED, a non-word (it reads …արախաներու). The frame is plain — some influence exercised by Catholicoi and village priests over the faithful — but the noun itself is not identified. 'Anathemas' and 'sermons' have been suggested by the sense; NEITHER is asserted, and no churchly object, pronouncement or institution is supplied. Transliterated.

[14] Alexander Mantashev (Mantashyants, 1842–1911) and the Tsaturov family — Armenian oil magnates of Baku and Tiflis, among the largest producers and refiners in the Russian Empire; Mantashev was also the period's greatest Armenian philanthropist. Mirzoev, named a few pages later, was another of the Armenian Baku oil houses.

[15] «միանաբար» — UNRESOLVED as printed; the intended form is very likely «միասնաբար» or «միաբերան» (unitedly, with one voice), and that is named here as a possibility only. Transliterated in the body.

[16] The word is «սրճարան», *café*. It first entered the transcription as «արձարան» and was carried into an earlier state of this translation as an untranslatable italic; the page image resolves it on sight (ս read as ա, ճ read as ձ — both merges this typeface is known for). The reading is confirmed by the sentence that follows, in which each province keeps its own corner where compatriots gather, and by the chapter itself, which prints the same word cleanly four more times and renders it "café" each time (pp.379, 384 twice, 388). The

scan-form is recorded here only; nothing about the sense is in doubt. Batum's compatriotic societies really did organize themselves around particular cafés, one to a province of origin, and the café scene that follows is the chapter's centrepiece.

[17] The Akhaltskha man is named twice in this list, as the book prints it («Ախալցխին … Ախալցխացին»). The repetition is left as printed and not tidied away.

[18] «Բացներէս» — the third glyph is one of the ambiguous descenders and the word is unresolved; the sense is plainly deictic ("from these things, from these points"). Only that minimal sense is rendered, and no noun is supplied.

[19] The word is «զէրո», a cipher, a zero — Russ. ноль by way of the French. The scan-form was «գործ» ('work, affair'), and the arithmetic of the passage was consequently lost in an earlier state of this translation. The page prints an eight-glyph word opening on the descender this typeface uses indifferently for գ, դ, ղ and զ, and continuing է-ր-ռ; «գործ» contains neither է nor ռ. Rouben's figure is the schoolroom one: a Nicholas, a Marx or a Plekhanov is the 1, and the mass ranged behind him are the zeros that multiply him into a giant sum — whereas Armenians, being each of them a unit, add up to nothing when they are strung together and everything when they stand apart. The four occurrences are here, twice more in this sentence, and in "a string of ciphers" on the following page.

[20] The word is «ետեւէն», 'behind' — a տ/ւ misreading that produced the non-word «եւեւէն» in the scan and left this sentence, in an earlier state of this translation, impossible to parse. The same word is printed and read correctly later in the chapter (p.386, "after whom a terrorist is sent"). It is what makes the arithmetic work: the ciphers are strung *behind* the 1.

[21] Georgi Plekhanov (1856–1918) — the founder of Russian Marxism and the chief theoretician of the Russian Social-Democrats; here named, with the Tsar Nicholas II and Marx, as the type of the single figure behind whom a mass ranges itself.

[22] The sentence is rendered as the book prints it, negative and all («չունին»). Read against the sentences on either side of it, the argument seems to want the affirmative — that it is *they* who spread like microbes, while the Armenians are grains of wheat. The negative is NOT reversed here; the difficulty is recorded and left with the reader.

[23] «վոլոտ» — UNRESOLVED. The letters are clear but match no standard word; the parallel in the sentence wants some diminishing adjective (feeble, scrawny — cf. «վտիտ»), and that is named here as a possibility only. Transliterated; nothing is asserted.

[24] Lenktimur — Timur the Lame (Tamerlane, 1336–1405), whose campaigns across Armenia and the Caucasus at the end of the fourteenth century left a lasting mark in Armenian memory.

[25] «աղքերու» — UNRESOLVED, a non-word standing as the third item in a genitive chain governed by "annihilation." The Marxist frame would give 'of classes' («դասակարգերու») or 'of the poor' («աղքատներու»), and the letters support neither cleanly. The list is rendered plainly and the word transliterated; NEITHER reading is chosen.

[26] «դրաստ» — UNRESOLVED, a non-word. The bee-and-ant image of the sentence wants 'slave' («ստրուկ») or 'captive' («գերի»), but the letters do not give either. Transliterated; no slave, drudge or captive is supplied.

[27] «պայն չափով» — «պայն» is doubtful; it may be «որոշ» ('a certain') or «այն» ('that'). Transliterated; neither is chosen.

[28] «դորօրինակ» — a non-standard form of the ordinary 'for example' («օրինակ», «դոյզն օրինակ»). Its function in the sentence is not in doubt — it introduces the list of Armenian works-owners — but the form is not a word, and it is transliterated rather than smoothed.

[29] «Ցարբեր» — UNRESOLVED, a cap-and-descender merge. The sense of the sentence is 'works-owners of other (or various) nationality' («ուրիշ» / «զանազան»); the word itself is transliterated and neither reading is asserted.

[30] The Rothschild, Nobel and Shibaev firms — the three great foreign and Russian houses of the Baku–Batum oil industry. The Paris Rothschilds' Caspian and Black Sea Company and the Nobel brothers' *Branobel* between them controlled most of the export trade through Batum; Shibaev was a Moscow merchant house with refineries at Baku. The Batum works of the Rothschild company was the scene of the strike Alyosha goes on to describe.

[31] The closing of the Armenian parish schools, and the seizure of the properties of the Armenian Church, were the two great acts of the Russian government's campaign against Armenian national institutions — the school closures beginning in the mid-1890s, and the confiscation of church properties by the ukase of June 1903, which provoked mass resistance across the Caucasus. Alyosha dates the parties' rivalry from 1894–95; the book gives no closer date.

[32] Zakaridze and Goghashvili are the leaders of the Batum Georgian Social-Democrats in this account. The book's «Գողաշվելի / Գողոշվելի / Գողո» is the author's own wobble on one name, and the three forms are carried into English exactly where each stands.

[33] «ստակացնէ» — UNRESOLVED, a non-word. Candidates by sense are 'takes charge of' («ստանձնէ») and 'strengthens' («զօրացնէ»); NEITHER is chosen, and no object or action is supplied for Temirian beyond what the sentence itself carries. Transliterated.

[34] The Batum strike and the shooting at the Rothschild works took place in March 1902; the troops fired on the crowd besieging the works and a number of workers were killed. It became one of the founding episodes of Bolshevik hagiography in the Caucasus — hence the annotator's footnote on the facing page.

[35] «երկնց» — doubtful; possibly «երկրի» ('of their country'). Transliterated in place; neither reading is asserted.

[36] Kamo — Simon Ter-Petrosian (1882–1922), the Armenian Bolshevik of Gori, Stalin's associate and the organizer of the 1907 Tiflis bank expropriation. Rouben's Alyosha is speaking of him some years before the exploits that made his name.

[37] «Ջո» — a curt dialectal vocative, kept verbatim. The capital is one of the merged descender-caps and could be read Ջ- or Ջ-. It is NOT translated or interpreted.

[38] «զարդած» — UNRESOLVED. The winter picture wants 'shut, blocked' («զոցած / փակած») or 'frozen' («սառած»); neither is asserted. Transliterated.

[39] «վաղեն» — doubtful; very likely «վազեն» ('rush, run'). Transliterated in place, with the likely form named and not asserted.

[40] «ոջիլ» ('lice') is secure from the sentence that follows it, where the parasites are said to be like lice. But the sentence-initial form as printed («Ոջիլը», possibly «Ոչինչը») and the

verb «ազատինք» (possibly «ապատինք») rest on the parallel alone. The plain sense of the image is rendered — the lice are shaken out over the *tonir* to be got rid of — and the two doubtful forms are recorded here.

[41] *brat* — Russ. брат, 'brother'; the printed «բռատս» carries the Armenian possessive, hence 'my *brat*'. Azarik, a villager speaking to a student and a party organizer, ends his speech with the townsmen's Russian word.

[42] Mihran of Bayberd — the fedayi leader named in Chapter XI, who afterwards led the schism known as the Mihranakan movement. Simon of Bayberd is his fellow-townsman, and, in Rouben's judgment, only repeats his words.

[43] "you have driven the knife to the bone" — the threat-idiom is kept in its own image, as the book has it («դանակը ոսկրին հասցուցեր»): patience is at an end. The verb «հասցնել» is causative ('to bring, to drive'), not the plain «հասնիլ» ('to reach'), so the menace is personal — Azarik is telling Simon that *he* has pushed it this far — and not the impersonal 'the knife has come to the bone'.

[44] «քար կորած» — kept as printed and transliterated. The idiom the sentence expects is «քար կտրած» or «քարացած» ('petrified' — the very word used of Simon two lines above); that is named here as a possibility only and is NOT substituted.

[45] «եւել պակասը ինձի հալալ արէք» — literally, 'make the too-much and the too-little lawful (*halal*) to me,' the ordinary formula for asking pardon for anything said amiss. Rendered by its sense.

[46] «Խասթուր» — UNRESOLVED, and here filling the slot of a PLACE, a destination reached with a rifle. It is expressly NOT unified with «Խատուր» at p.382, which fills the slot of a PERSON, a captain of fighters (see [t53]). The ս/տ merge makes the two forms look joinable, but a place and a captain are not one thing on the evidence of the page. Transliterated; neither is identified.

[47] «Լրագդ» — UNRESOLVED noun. Possibly «Ծրագիրդ» ('your programme') or «Լրագիրդ» ('your newspaper'); NEITHER is chosen. Transliterated.

[48] «կուացաւ» — UNRESOLVED, a non-word. The reconciliation frame implies that Simon wept or softened («լացաւ» / «կակղացաւ»); neither is asserted. Transliterated.

[49] «անճամբ» — UNRESOLVED adverb; the sentence expects something like 'surely, inevitably', and «անզամ» has been suggested as the form. Transliterated; nothing is asserted.

[50] «դեղ» — UNRESOLVED, standing as the middle item of a three-part list ("Temir, ___, you"). A pronoun would fit the slot, but the printed word is not one, and it is NOT emended to one. Transliterated.

[51] «մօտերը» — a non-standard form, evidently for 'his approaches, his way of seeing it' (cf. «մօտեցում»). Rendered by that minimal sense; the form is recorded here.

[52] The Mihranakan movement — the right-wing schism within the Dashnaktsutiun led by Mihran of Bayberd, which set itself against the party's Caucasian and social work in the name of concentrating everything on Turkish Armenia.

[53] «Խատուր» — UNRESOLVED, and here filling the slot of a PERSON: a leader of fighters who went over in the Mihranakan schism. Expressly NOT unified with «Խասթուր» at p.379 (see [t46]). Transliterated; the man is not identified.

[54] Separatism («Անջատականութիւն») — the left-wing secession from the Dashnaktsutiun, whose members went over to the Russian Social-Democrats. Levon Atabekian is named as its type; the plural ("the Levon Atabekians") is the author's own.

[55] The phrase is «տրուած լինելով որ», the standard connective 'given that' — a ա/տ misreading of the initial produced the non-word «արուած» in the scan. The author uses the same connective twice more in this chapter, and it is rendered "given that" both times (p.373, "given that the power stays the same"; p.388, "given that I have decided to cross into the Land"). Scan-form recorded here only.

[56] «Ձիւռաղները» — UNRESOLVED, a proper or collective noun paired with the Hasan-Jalalians. «Ձիաւորները» ('the horsemen') has been suggested by the shape of the word and is named here as a possibility ONLY; it is NOT used. Transliterated, and the family or group is not identified. The transcription gives «Ձիւռաղները»; the page image reads «Ձիւաղները», without the ռ. Both forms are recorded, since the extra consonant would mislead anyone trying to identify the group; the word stays unresolved on either reading.

[57] The Hasan-Jalalians — the princely house of Khachen in Artsakh, descended from Hasan-Jalal Dawla (13th c.), builders of Gandzasar and, in later centuries, its Catholicoi; the type in Armenian memory of an ancient lineage that kept its standing under Muslim rule.

[58] «Ջաւրիեններու (ռուսախօս)» and «Խաներու (թրքախօս)» — the Russian-speaking family or type named first is UNRESOLVED; it is paired with the Turkish-speaking «Խաներ». Both are transliterated and NEITHER family is identified. The parentheses are the author's own.

[59] Rostom–Yeprem — Rostom (Stepan Zorian), one of the three founders of the Dashnaktsutiun, and Yeprem Khan (Yeprem Davtian, 1868–1912), the Armenian commander who led the constitutionalist forces in the Persian revolution of 1908–09 and took Tehran. The party's part in the Persian revolution is what Rouben is weighing here.

[60] Aknuni — Khachatur Malumian (1863–1915), Dashnaktsutiun leader and publicist, one of the architects of the party's cooperation with the Young Turks after 1908; killed in the arrests of April 1915.

[61] Kristapor — the name is given without a surname in the book, and no identification is made here; the reader should not assume Kristapor Mikayelian, the party's founder, who was killed at Sofia in 1905.

[62] «դարաչուխալի» — UNRESOLVED adjective. The contrast the sentence draws is between these educated Central Committee men and the rougher sort Rouben had dealt with before, so the word carries some depreciating sense; it may echo «չուխա», the peasant broadcloth coat. 'Rustic' is expressly NOT asserted, and no trait is invented. Transliterated.

[63] *frant* — Russ. франт, a dandy, a young man of neat and stylish appearance. First use in the book.

[64] «Կրպո(ն)» — a comrade's by-name, consistent across all three of its occurrences in the chapter (pp.383, 384, 388). The form is unverifiable and is transliterated as printed; it is NOT expanded into a fuller name.

[65] «զինուորները» — the word is the ordinary one for 'soldiers', but here it means the party's own armed men, the volunteers who crossed the frontier in bands; the dues and gifts collected in the cafés go to them, not to any regular army. Rendered 'the fighting men' to keep that plain.

[66] «զատ» — as printed ('apart, solely'); «զուտ» ('purely') is an equally strong reading of the same descender. Transliterated in place; neither is chosen.

[67] *nard* — backgammon, the standing café game of the Caucasus and the Near East. First use in the book.

[68] «Թուրցիկ-Գէորգ» — a fedayi by-name; the first element's initial is ambiguous (Թ or Չ; «Չուրիկ» is an alternative reading). Transliterated as printed; the man is not identified.

[69] Yotverk — the church of the Holy Mother of God of the Seven Wounds («Եօթը Վերք») at Alexandropol (Gyumri), and the miraculous image kept there, a great object of popular devotion in the Russian-Armenian provinces.

[70] «Բ.» — the author's own single initial, standing for a named author of Armenian massacres. It is kept exactly as he prints it. The man is NOT expanded or identified here.

[71] The book prints «Սիմֆիրապոլ»; the city is Simferopol in the Crimea, and the English gives it its conventional form. The printed vocalization is recorded here.

[72] «Ալխաթցի» — an UNRESOLVED origin-epithet. Akhaltskha, Akhalkalak and Alashkert have all been suggested as the place behind it; NONE is adopted, and the village is not identified. Transliterated ('of Alkhat').

[73] «նուազ» — resolved to «նուազ» ('music, a band playing') on the ordinary զ/զ descender ambiguity of this typeface, the printed form giving no sense in the sentence ('there was less there'). The printed reading is recorded.

[74] *provokatsia* — Russ. провокация, in the revolutionary vocabulary of these years not merely a provocation but a planted rumor or a set-up, generally understood to be the work of the police or of an agent inside the organization. First use in the book.

[75] Sasun — the Sasun rising of the spring and summer of 1904, in which the Armenian fighters of the mountain districts held out for months against Ottoman troops and Kurdish irregulars before being crushed. Money and cartridges for Sasun were being collected across the Caucasus at exactly the moment Rouben lent out the Kutais money.

[76] The book prints a first-person «ես» here — «Ազարի՛կ, ես տիզերուն հետ ի՞նչ գործ ունիս» — against a second-person verb («ունիս»), which the pronoun cannot govern. The English renders the sentence as the verb requires ("what business have *you*"), and the unmetrical printed pronoun is recorded here rather than passed over in silence, on the same principle as the doubled Akhaltskha at [t17].

[77] The book says "left hand" both times: «Ձախ ձեռքով մօտած է … եւ ձախ ձեռքով կառչած է անոր». The sentence is built on a two-handed antithesis — the Armenian holds the national thing in one hand and the socialist thing in the other — so the repetition looks like

a typesetter's slip for "right … left." It is rendered as printed and NOT emended; the page gives no warrant to change it.

CHAPTER XIII

Salmast and Khanasor

Սալմաստ եւ Խանասոր

The Khanasor arms corridor

ON THE QUESTION OF THE SUKHUM–SOCHI EMIGRANTS I SET OUT FOR PERSIA. THE ORGANIZATIONAL METHODS IN PERSIA. DECENTRALIZATION.

ARMENO-ASSYRIAN COOPERATION. THE REVOLUTIONARY AIMS. THE MOSIN RIFLE.

THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE-SHIP OF ATRPATAKAN. THE CULTURAL, MILITARY AND LIAISON WORK.

FROM THE PAST OF SALMAST AND ITS DISTRICTS.

THE FIGHTS OF THE MONASTERY OF DERIK. THE SUCCESSIVE ZINATAR BANDS – VARDAN; NIKOL'S FIGHT AT DERIK; THE MARTYRDOM OF THE BANDS OF PETO, AVETISIAN AND MARTIK.

THE KHANASOR EXPEDITION, ITS MORAL AND PRACTICAL VALUE. SHARO. THE AFFAIR OF THE VILLAGE OF MAHLAM. THE ACTIVITY FROM 1899 TO 1904.

While I was still at Batum, the question of the roughly 30,000–40,000 Armenian emigrants of Sukhum–Sochi had been raised.[1] Either they would accept Russian subjecthood once and for all and settle in those districts, or they would give it up, leave Russia, and go to settle wherever they pleased. For three reasons the emigrants did not want to accept the Russians' offer. First, they were attached to their homeland, the province of Trebizond, and were waiting rather for the day of returning to their own country, whereas by accepting Russian subjecthood, they believed, that would become impossible for good. Second, they did not want to perform military and other

obligations. And finally, there was a strong propaganda on our side, and I too was a warm partisan of the view that our people must not bind itself permanently to these far-off provinces cut away from Armenia. And the people stood ready to leave those districts and cross into Turkish Armenia or Persia. It was these emigrants who, in order to find themselves a new homeland, had chosen me and seven specialists in tobacco and soil, headed by Janik Efendi, to settle the question.

I, as one who had been in Persia, pressed hardest of all for them to go and settle in Persia.

Even when I was there, I had kept thinking how good it would be, and how easily our problem would be solved, if the districts of Her and Zarevand had not been emptied of Armenians. There we would have had a solid base for linking up with Vaspurakan. Plans of that order were not new; they had existed as far back as the nineties. Some of our field-workers had dreamed of filling the whole neighborhood of the monastery of Derik (right on the border), and from there on toward Kotur and as far as Maku, with 40,000 people. My views, then, had a history behind them, and they were shared both by the party and public men of our day and by the Bureau.

A meeting took place at Tiflis, at the house of Hambardzum Arakelian, editor of the paper *Mshak*. Public men of every rank had been invited to it. The decision was taken that I should lead the delegation into Persia. There were hardships of the road, and Janik Efendi, who was a delicately reared man, left the whole business on my shoulders and himself turned back under various pretexts.

I arm myself with testimonials of every kind, which I obtain from Hambardzum Arakelian, from the Party, from the Catholicos, from the Prelacy, from the Armenian national foundation of Persia, and from the government as well. At the same time I give the Bureau notice that if this business does not succeed I will cross into the Land, and I take letters of recommendation to the comrades of the Land besides. Receiving Khrimian Hayrik's blessings and his recommendations, toward autumn I set out for Julfa and reach the Monastery of the Nakhavka, which is very close to Julfa.[2]

The Monastery of the Nakhavka lies all alone on the bank of the Araxes, ringed by Turkish villages; at its side it has one Armenian-inhabited village,

Darashamb. From the nineties on, that ancient monastery and the village had been put to revolutionary uses, given that a transport road opened from there out of Transcaucasia toward Tabriz, Khoy, Salmast and the Monastery of the Apostle Thaddeus.

My own wish was that the representatives of the would-be emigrants should agree for the people to settle the villages lying on the Nakhavka–Khoy and Khoy–Thaddeus roads, many of whose khans (landlords) would have smoothed the way for that resettlement with great joy. Unfortunately, the representatives did not take to the climate or to the kind of soil, saying that the region was unsuited to tobacco plantations.

After that we pass on to Tabriz, where I present myself with my letters of recommendation to the Central Committee of the Dashnaktsutiun; with Hambardzum Arakelian's letter, to Nazarbek, who was *tajer-bashi* (chief of the merchants); and through this last to the *valiad*, that is to say the Heir Apparent, who at that time was Mehmed Ali.[3] All of them are interested in the question of the emigrants' coming to Persia, though each from a different point of view. The Central Committee's motive was plain. The valiad, who was a thickset man with the look of a butcher (I was disillusioned that Shahs could be men of that kind), was interested in having a hard-working people that would be a counterweight against the Kurds, who troubled him without pause. He met my proposal with joy and gave letters of recommendation to the governors of Khoy, Urmia and Salmast, commanding that every kind of assistance be shown me. Nazarbek, for his part, hoped to people with Armenians the villages that made up his property and to draw a sufficient profit from his lands. The Kurds and Turks who live in his villages did not answer so well.

Thus the field of choice lay open before us. But there was, of course, no thought of settling our people either at Sochdagh[4] or even at Urmia. Those places offered no advantage over Sukhum and Sochi, given that they too were far from the Armenian centers, and those emigrants would likewise have been given over to loss. There remained, then, Salmast, which was suitable in every respect – if only there had not been other circumstances of an obstructive kind.[5]

Armed with the same recommendations, we go to Salmast. The representatives of those wishing to emigrate take to Salmast's soil and water. From there we go on toward the borders of Derik, Jatali, Salani,[6] and in those places too they find everything good. Nor do they halt before the difficulty of having to contend with the Kurds, because they trust in the fighting mettle of their own people. But suddenly an unlooked-for obstacle comes up in the middle. The Ottoman Consul has already caught the scent of our undertaking. He puts questions to the Persian government, and on the other side he puts it about in every quarter that the Armenians have come to drive all the Kurds out of their places and sit down there themselves. It soon became clear to us that we had gone wrong in our reckonings – that the Persian government is so weak that it will be unable to show us any positive assistance, and is powerless to resist Turkish interference and the intrigues it had strung. Even if we brought the emigrants onto the land

and settled them there, in spite of the Turks, the latter would turn the place into a ground of continual war, and if they did not succeed by means of the Kurds, they would intervene with forces of their own. Forced to it, we give up the plan of creating a base. My fellow representatives return to the Caucasus, and I stay on at Salmast, to carry out my plan of crossing into the Land.

I stayed at Salmast a month or two as a circuit-rider. I went round the villages and came to know the people and the party organization. From there I passed to Tabriz, where likewise I worked a month or two as secretary of the Central Committee. But the monotonous, tedious activity of that region did not fire me, so I resolve to drop everything and cross into the Land.

But before I tell the story of my crossing into the Land, let us look at the method of organization applied in Persia and at the party work carried on there.(*)

One day at Khoy, in 1904, Nikol Duman was giving counsel:

– There is no revolution where there is no cause and no aim for it. The cause and the aim are worthless things when there is no force and no organization to carry them out. Force and organization are harmful if they are [sic?][7] the true image of the aims of the revolution and of the interests of the people. I

have no *havas* (desire) to explain this to you; when you come across Hovnan and Kotot (Rostom),[8] they will tell you.

There was no need to see them, since the traces of their works were plain to be seen.

Long before the year 1904, the Armenakan party, born in Van,

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(*) From here begins a passage reworked by Rouben. A. Kh.

grown swollen and out of its own borders, had, by all accounts, spread across Persia. To it had been added the Hnchakian party as well. The eye-catching figures of these parties – Khan-Azat, Nerses, Avetisian, Paramaz and others[9] – had captured the field with their visits and become familiars of the people. To all appearances, there was to be no room left for the newborn A. R. Dashnaktsutiun to work and find a place. A field was found, however. Within a very short span of time the Dashnaktsutiun won a supremacy over the whole of Persia that approached a monopoly – thanks to Rostom, who, being a Goghtn man, knew that country, and thanks to Hovnan Davtian, who was a Gharadagh man (Persia), educated at Shushi.

Of these two founders of the Dashnaktsutiun we know very little, and even what we know is generalities. Of Hovnan we barely know the name, though the Program and the Rules that he and Rostom drew up we know by heart, like the gospel. These strange founders would appear like ghosts in different parts of Persia and then be lost. They did not come out into the open; they neither preached, nor disputed, nor wrote. Only – wherever they visited, life would begin to boil behind them, a newly created organization of the Dashnaktsutiun would come forward, and the Armenakan and Hnchakian parties would melt away and vanish like the snows of spring. The cause of that swift and stunning success lay in the work of those strange masters and in their way of drawing near to our aims.

"We are not a Catholicos, to keep preacher, *vardapet*, *ter-ter*. We have no government, to hand down binding laws. Among us there is neither agha nor servant, that we should wait upon command and compulsion. We are all of us equal, without distinction of sex, age, creed, class, services or sacrifices. We read this Program of the Dashnaktsutiun, which is a few pages long, and we

became believers. You, who are more schooled and cleverer than we – we ask that you

read it and, if it is wrong, argue us out of our error; but if it is right, become believers like us, and let us know of it. And this is the Rules, written for the believers – so as to form a brotherhood, a force. Now: we have no center; the real leader is you. We have no king, no ruling power, no authority, no interference. The part of all those belongs to you. We have no binding blueprint of activity for each locality. That hangs on you and on your initiative. It is *you* who must decide what you are to do, according to the conditions of the place. We have no binding forms, material, physical or other. The one to decide that must be your brotherhood. Since all this concerns you, and you are independent, the decisions you take must be binding for you – and for us, unbreakable law. One thing only is binding: to accept the program and the rules of the revolutionaries unchanged, to accept them of your own free will, and to vow to remain faithful to them"…

This unreserved trust toward the sworn, this decentralized form, were deadly to the centralist parties propped on the spell of authorities, such as Armenakanism and Hnchakianism were. The Dashnaktsutiun breathed and thought with all the parts of its membership, and as a consequence of that, Dashnaktsakan kernels sprang up of themselves like mushrooms, with their manifold undertakings, schools, arms workshops and so on. In fact the Bureau had only one piece of work left to do – namely, to tie the kernels of the different localities to one another and to bring their initiatives into a single channel.

That form of organization we owe first of all to Hovnan, and after him to Rostom. And it led to initiative, to victory and to the spreading of the ideas.

This organizational form did not lead to anarchy, but to the decentralization of rule. Those decentralized bodies were not "Branches" but in fact independent units – joined to one another by the Dashnaktsutiun and by its common aims. And this proved deadly for the other organizations, and became the cause of the new party's growing strong and spreading wide.

The centralist Hnchakian party rapidly gave ground before the decentralized newborn Dashnaktsutiun. The Armenakan party, the moment the Dashnaktsutiun appeared, melted into it. The "philanthropic" rifles, which

had already become objects of use among the small number of Dashnaktsakans of Van, stamped with the Dashnaktsakan emblem, made it mysterious and legendary.

The transport line of the Apostle Thaddeus, and above all Derik, which was so close to the border – the legendary stories of the Dashnaktsakans' fighting spread from mouth to mouth and stirred wonder. Already in Vaspurakan they could hear the voice of the *saz* of Sako of Sev-Kar, who had made the roads of Van secure. Van had drawn so near to Persia that by way of Chukhi or Boghaz-Keasani[10] one could reach Hayots Dzor or the districts of Aghbak in a single night, from which the road on to Van is a free one.[11]

Years later, in 1909, when I came to know Hovnan Davtian in Geneva, he and his Armenianized wife, Hortans, were suffering from consumption. I remembered Nikol's charge, and I asked Hovnan about our aims and our Rules.

– What am I to tell you? Let me say it in one word: without the Federation neither our country nor our people will be saved. I have done nothing; I have only grasped what I saw. Our Rules are the image of the Federation made real. If you want to understand more – you have come to Switzerland: look around you and you will be convinced. Khazhak came, and was convinced.

According to what Nikol said, this sick man and Kotot (Rostom), from the 1890s onward, breathed inspiration into men – they did not make speeches. "We are Armenians, but we are not to impose our Armenianness on anyone. We stand for the freedom and the independence of all nations. We are enemies of all those who violate the rights of nations. Russia and Turkey are a slaughterhouse of the small nations, or else their prison; for that reason we must be the enemy of those two. All the oppressed nations are our brothers, be they Armenian, Yezidi, Assyrian, Jew, Kurd or Arab. Their freedom is a factor of civilization and of peace. Their brotherhood, and their alliance with one another – a factor in the downfall of tyranny."

These inspirations that Rostom and Hovnan breathed did not stay hanging in the air as empty words. They became an echo in the souls of the first generation. That is why the leader of our first fighting band became Kukunian of Ulkha,[12] and, as his soldier, a Jew of Urmia whose name I have forgotten. That is why, among those who went toward the Land and did not

spare their blood, there were Kurds like Muto and Aldo,[13] and there were Assyrians like Gre and Sahak. It was the fruit of that inspiration that the khans Tatar Baghir and Sattar made common cause with Nikol-Duman and with Keri, and the Bakhtiar Persians with Yeprem.[14] That is why a handful of Armenians, under Rostom's breath, became the leaven of the new regime in Persia – against the Russian empire, against the ruling elements[15] – and brought joy to those who wanted free, democratic order and stood for Persia's freedom and progress.

They would say: "We are of the Illuminator's faith, and we have our traditions. That is a matter of our conscience, and we do not want anyone to meddle in the affairs of our conscience. But neither are we going to mix in the affairs of anyone else's conscience. All religions and confessions, taking unbelief in among them, are

consolations of the conscience; so in that solace let men be free. We are an exploited nation and an exploited class. Our interest is to be with the exploited and to be against the exploiters."

It was in this atmosphere that Nikol-Duman and Vardan, when they landed at Salmast and found there doctors, as well as men of other schooling – even an architect, Dikran Beglarich[16] – said in astonishment:

– What have you turned the country of the "Hamsharis"[17] into? You have done everything here, finished it all.

And I exclaim in spite of myself: "Sixty years have passed since those old days. Instead of going sixty steps forward, have we not gone sixty steps back from Hovnan and Rostom and from those days?"

The provinces of Salmast and Urmia – between the lake of Urmia and the Zagros chain – are Persia's border provinces with the Ottoman state. They are beautiful, fruitful, well-watered provinces. Crossing the border from their districts of Targavar and Margavar, one can go straight to the valley of the Zab, to the Assyrians' center – Kochanis, Diar-Diub.[18] And crossing the border from Salmast's districts of Jara[19] and Kotur, one can go to the Armenians' center – Van.

These provinces, then, may be reckoned the door of Armenia. On that doorstep lived some 40,000 Christians, Armenian and Assyrian taken

together. Their relations with one another were so close that they seemed one nation belonging to different confessions and dialects – understanding one another, each grasping the other's tongue and culture.

This closeness, however, was being poisoned on one side by the Russian consul and the Orthodox churchmen he brought in, and on the other by the European Christian missionaries, who broke down the undivided authority of Mar Shimun[20] to such a degree that, by the power of money, they brought forth within Assyrian

families three religious confessions – for the one side a source of income, for the other a prop of influence.

The same corruption had less success in the community of the Illuminator's faith. The short-sighted missions had become sowers of discord, and not of union.

The Dashnaktsutiun met this ill in advance with the principles it had set forth: "Religion and confession are a matter for the conscience of the individual and of the community. We take no interest in them; but we judge it a thing to be condemned that men should want to turn conscience into an object of trade and profit. Against that we set the freedom of all the oppressed peoples, and their brotherhood, in accordance with the principles of the A. R. Dashnaktsutiun."

These principles became a balm to those provinces. The Assyrian Dr. Abraham, who had been reared and schooled thanks to the missionaries and had officially accepted Protestantism, had become for all that a fervently nationalist Assyrian and a defender of Nestorianism. He had joined the Dashnaktsutiun and stood for an Armeno-Assyrian-Kurdish alliance. And – what was essential – he was a member of the committee of those districts, a fellow-laborer and an organizer of those delivering the Land. Nor was he alone: he had his Assyrian comrades, whose luminous faces are before my eyes at this moment, though I have forgotten the names.

In 1904, when I was going with Nikol Duman from Davalu to Araksu to cross into Persia, I put a question to him:

– What sort of country is Khoy – Salmast? When I get there, what work am I to do?

Nikol laughed and said:

– Ten years before this, when I was going to Persia for the first time, I put that same question of yours to Hovnan. And what do you suppose he up and answered to a question I thought so serious? "We know that country little. We have scattered a handful of seed and passed on. We do not know which

seed has sprouted and spread, and which has taken no root. You have two eyes – you are not blind; you have nostrils – you can catch a scent; you have ears – you will hear. If the seeds have put down roots, do not sow new seed over what is there; if they need water, you will water them; if they have shot up tall, you will weed around them. More than that, what am I to say?" Rostom was present – a man I counted for nothing at all: he sat snuffling into his nose. But he proved the more open-handed; he drew out his notebook, gave the names of an Armenian or two, an Assyrian or two, a Tatar or two, and of others, and said: "You know how to write and read. And if there is nothing to write, nothing to do, then – to get to know the place – you will write to us. You will be a schoolmaster in the village, and you will write about your condition."

– Do you know why the laughter comes over me? he asked.

– No, I answered.

And without waiting he began to explain:

– From Hovnan I had taken the impression that he was a real *choban*[21] (shepherd); from Rostom, worse still – that he was a poor, meek, wordless creature. In Shushi our young men had split into two. We came to blows with one another. We were few, they were many, and they had us pressed hard. Rostom and Hovnan looked on like spectators and took no part in the fight. Suddenly Hovnan flared up, snatched a cudgel into his hand, and called us to pull back behind him. There was no coming near him from any side, so fast did he keep the cudgel wheeling round his head. So, all alone, he advanced on the adversaries, who stood massed together. The tip of the cudgel caught one of them in the small of the back, and he was stretched flat on the ground; another's arm, and his arm was broken. They scattered, but Hovnan kept calling: "Don't scatter! Come along now, gather round, and carry on the

meeting like decent men!" From that hero of the cudgel I expected no other kind of grace, – Nikol recounted, and laughed like a child.

By now I could keep his laughter company myself.

– Do you know, Nikol went on, when Hovnan and Rostom gave so indefinite an answer to my question and sent me on my way with generalities, without practical instructions, I did not understand the meaning of it, and I explained it to myself another way. I thought: "These men solve the indefinite with the indefinite; and the fool is I, who wait for thought-out, planned orders and directions from these *chobans*." I crossed over to Salmast. And what should I see there! The Dashnaktsutiun, then only beginning, had already spread and organized itself there. The Armenakan and Hnchakian parties were like a block of salt or a sugar *ghand* (loaf), and the Dashnaktsutiun the water that was melting them into itself. There I saw men who had paced out the whole of Russia and other countries in trade and other business. I saw intellectuals from outside and from within, whose equal did not exist in Shushi. Arghutian was there, and Vardan, and Sako – men one could talk with. What amazed me was the conversation I had with the Assyrian Dr. Abraham. He explained to me the principles of the Dashnaktsutiun and the results it had won. He said to me: "Of course Persia is weak, backward, feudal. This country would be strong if all that were not so. But let her be weak or strong, one thing has to be clear, and it is this: that she stands in danger from Russia and from Turkey, who are the executioners of us all. And for that very reason we must count Persia our natural friend. Our salvation is in the brotherhood of all the oppressed nations. For the Assyrians and the Armenians, that must be counted a thing already realized. On the other side of the border, Mar Shimun too is in sympathy with it. Nor is it hard to bring the Yezidis as well into that brotherhood. As far as Sinjar, Mar Shimun has ties and influence. Already our own (the Dashnaktsutiun) are friends to the Yezidis along the road that leads to Van. There remain the TatarTurks, who are both number and quality. They, by good fortune, are Shia; as such, they can be regarded as our natural allies, since they are against Turkey, which is a state of the Sunnis. The *mushdeids*[22] we must regard as being every bit as useful as our own clergy. Our insoluble and difficult problem is the Sunni Kurds, who have taken hold of the mountains and the roads and part us from our masses in the

Land. To have them with us and to part them from Turkey was tantamount to our ideas and to victory over Turkey, and.[23]

To have them for an enemy is tantamount to our failure. There is our task."

When I looked in astonishment at the Assyrian Dr. Abraham, who in this backward province was voicing thoughts of that kind, I could not help asking:

– Where are these programs from? Are they personal, or the views of the whole?

Dr. Abraham, lowering his voice, said:

– Can it be you have not seen Hovnan and Rostom?

– I saw them, but they said: "Go, look, and write about what you see." I understood nothing from them.

– They told you a great deal. That is their way of making a man. They give you the rice – the making of the pilaf they leave to you. They give you the bread – the chewing they leave to you. And my opinion too is this: if you like, be a schoolmaster for now among the Assyrians, in the village of Khosrova; if you like, among the Armenians, at Havtvan or at Ghalasar. And if you know Kurdish and Turkish, we will send you round their villages – until your water falls into its own channel.

It was very hard to come down from heaven and walk on the ground. But that is what I did. I became a schoolmaster, and I wrote to Rostom – who had become another man in my eyes. I wrote likewise that I had nothing to do here, since the Assyrian is even more of a Dashnaktsakan than I. I received no answer, because, as I learned afterward, he had crossed into the Land.

Nikol, without answering the question I had put, seemed to have found his occasion to bury himself in what he carried within him and not to look me in the face. And I kept searching for the meaning of his story, thinking to myself: "What sort of men are these, Hovnan and Rostom, whose names were all I had ever heard? Why have they grudged counsel and direction to a close comrade of theirs? Why did Nikol, instead of answering my question, tell me this story of his – a story ten years old by now – and fall darkly silent? Can it be that this man, who is a legend to us all, has resolved to cross into the Land,

where there is a going and no coming back, and wants to learn my *taran* (my weight) and send me on to his Assyrian Dr. Abraham?"

I was not mistaken. He kept me under trial until the fight of Kotur, of Raghi,[24] whose story I have already told.

The essential thing, in what Nikol told, is to know the atmosphere and the works that went forward in Salmast and Urmia from 1890 until 1897 at the least. To Salmast had come, out of Caucasian Armenia, from all its corners, man by man, intellectual and fighting sworn men. They were brisk and merry, and they were like the bulls led to the altar of St. Karapet.[25] Sako of Sev-Kar, never parted from his rifle, would strike the *chongur*.[26] The Hambarak[27] Hovsepians and the Khechos told fables and sang songs. Vardan, with his kind smile, gave encouragement, while somber Nikol, with his deep-sunken black eyes – you could not tell whether he was laughing or angry. To this company had been joined another little band, come out of Turkish Armenia, which was the complete counter-image of the first – heads hung low, sad, as though they were the tired pack-horses of St. Karapet. They were in the main the *voshiks*[28] of the Taurus – *andradet*,[29] stubborn, brooding – and they spoke a tongue through whose rasp you could barely make out that it was Armenian. Among them were Zato and Shero, Darmo and Pokhik, Agho and Akhper[30] and many others, who would shake their heads and say: "With these *gharibakans* (that is, the Caucasus men) everything is in its place; one thing only is wanting – they do not speak our tongue."

Beside these two companies there was yet another, small group. They were not Armenians: they were Assyrians, like Gre and Sahak, and Kurds, like Mato. They felt themselves kin to them all, but they preferred the *voshiks* – as though these were of their own blood.

At the sight of these three different groups joined together and become one body, Vardan – laughter on his face, bustling hand and foot – wanted to make his happiness plain to everyone, while Nikol, his quills up like a hedgehog's, watched and, deep in thought, kept his own reckonings within himself.

These men of different tongue and different origin felt what their aim was, but it was not very clear to them how those aims were to be reached. They thought:– "We have understood: every house has its hearth and its chimney,

and all of us are equal. But every flock, when it takes the road, must without fail have a *keosh* (a lead goat). Which is our head – who is our leader?"

Whenever the question came to this difficult point, all eyes turned toward Vardan and toward Nikol – who later earned the name of Duman. On these two the glances were bent, not because these two were the most idealistic, the bravest, the most tested, the best loved, nor because they had a *tayfa* (a following) of their own. No. These two Karabagh men became the axis for them all, and every man trusted his life and his mind to these stranger Armenians, because on the hardest questions they had neither wavering nor any "if," but a plain and clear either "yes" or "no." They thought and acted by the following logic, which formed the working blueprint as well:–

1.– We are first of all for the Land – with our everything, and with those aims of ours which our Program has formulated and fixed. Whoever finds that objectionable is not of us; with him we have no business.

2.– When the wheat has been poured into the barn, but there is no sower to cast it on the ground, and no eater to make bread of it and eat, that wheat will stink and rot. The Land has need of the sowers of our Program, of schooled field-workers. Those forces we have. If we do not pass those forces into the Land, on the one hand the Land will lie untilled, and on the other those forces will rust and turn into a curse. Therefore: whatever we have must be got through to those who fight.

3.– These are wishes, and they become real when we open a safe road at least as far as Van; and if we cannot open one, then we too are superfluous, and our work with us. The roads we have, if they are not safe, if they are long, must be changed. The Salmast–Derik–Van road is about 160 kilometers, and Derik–Van, 100. Khoy–Apostle Thaddeus–Van is 200, and Apostle Thaddeus–Van, 100 kilometers. Therefore: Salmast and Khoy must be counted the rear, and – whatever it costs, in whatever way – our point of departure must be made the ruined monastery of Derik and the still-standing monastery of the Apostle Thaddeus. By this, the link with the Land will be shortened by half and twice quickened.

4.– Carrying arms over for the Land is a necessity, so long as no internal market has been created there – and there is no hope that one will be. There are no arms worth the name in Persia, and the ready-made arms out of

Russia, with their transport costs, come so dear that they are beyond our pockets. Without arms, our existence and our intentions come to nothing; so our believing craftsman comrades must be called to the work: workshops must be opened in Tabriz and in Salmast to make the wooden stocks of the arms and those of the iron parts that can be made. By this, half the cost of purchase and transport, and half the dangers, will be spared. Those parts of the rifle – barrel, bolt and so on –

which it is impossible to produce by our own means and which must be bought with money, one must not hesitate to obtain from the works of Oryol and of Tula, by bribery or by theft, and to transport over – at less cost and with fewer dangers.

It is known that these different works came off side by side, and the workshops were opened, where Toros, Karo, Samson, Bedros and the rest worked. From 1893 on, the Russian Mosin rifles were assembled in the workshops of the Dashnaktsutiun and, stamped with its emblem and under the name "philanthropic," they outclassed the Turkish Martini rifles.[31]

No one has written the full history of those thankless labors. The players are dead, killed, and their worth has remained unfixed. Only the Kurds sang:

> *They had long black garments, like vardapets,*
> *On their heads poch-poch[32] papakhs, on their feet krgma;[33]*
> *They shouldered great rocks and drew walls around Derik,*
> *They struck the sagh and called on Allah like Drmdrm.*

In this passage the singer has been struck by Sako's *cherkeska* and by his *chongur*.

> *Their elder sits with Injil and Quran open before him, and he is in oroj (the fast);*
> *His face holds neither mirth nor wrath.*
> *The sər kyullan[34] at his side, he gives command:–*
> *"Entry into Derik is forbidden,*
> *Until Injil and Quran become sister and brother."*
> *Duman's fight is a terrible thing.*

In this passage the singer expresses, by his own understanding, Nikol's true character and countenance, which the magic cap (*sər kyulan*) gives him.

They have rifles that have no voice:
They fire, but they have no smoke.

The bullet they cast, however far you be, circles on and on:
Till it has pierced the man it wants, it will not fall to earth.
It draws no blood and it leaves no wound,
But then and there the soul is given up.
Of this rifle no one else has any:
Jafar agha has one for a gift.

The singer's imagination has been kindled, with good reason, by the *fedayis*' rifle.

The "philanthropic" rifles fitted out in our workshops were nothing other than the Russian Mosins, whose bullet carried to 2,700 meters – against the Martini, *dapakhsli*[35] and Berdan rifles of the same period, which were used by the Turks and the Kurds, with a top range of 800–1,200 meters. While the rifles inside Derik killed at a distance of 800–1,200 meters, those of the men who came against it killed at 200–400. While the rifles of Derik's fighters gave out a short, sharp *nəlləst*[36] sound and had no smoke, the rifles of those who came against it roared and, throwing out smoke, betrayed the rifleman's position. So one side saw where its enemy lay and killed from afar; the other could not fix the place, and, without ever dislodging him, got killed.

This inequality of arms turned into legend for the one side and condemned it to helplessness, while into the other it breathed disdain and audacity.

I have paused on these side questions so that it may be understood how a handful of fighting men, twenty to fifty souls, were able to make their nest in the monastery of Derik and keep it in their hands for years on end. It was a miracle, and it was brought to pass by Vardan's and Nikol's plan and with their own part in it. To climb the mountains of Zaghosh,[37] to enter their winding folds, where the fortress of Dzaran[38] stood sentinel, where sat Jafar agha of Avdo (the father of Simko),[39] whose country neither

the Persian nor the Turk had been able to enter, and to settle in a ruined monastery – this was a thing like a miracle. To carry the line of the Land's link some forty kilometers forward, and to be ringed by Kurds who followed like wolves, was downright unbelievable. But it was reality.

In 1909, when I was with Nikol at Varna, I said to him:

– Of all your adventures and all your works, the most fruitful, the most audacious, was the settling in at Derik. But I have not understood the reason of the success.

He felt deeply pleased and happy.

– No one has made that appraisal, he said; I too am of that conviction. But you – why do you think so?

– From Derik's position, and from the legends told of it, I answered.

– You are right, and so are the legends they told. Take this and hang it on your ear like an earring: when you have neither numbers, nor quality, nor force, do not strike at your enemy – deal your blow so as to set his imagination on fire. Look into the eyes of the beast that springs at you: he will draw in his tail and turn into a sheep. This is the secret of Derik's success.

In these approaches of Nikol's lay the secret of the miracles he worked – at Derik, and just so in the fights of Boghazkeasan and of Baghu.[40] But his formula would have been better [sic][41] had it been put so: "If you have neither numbers nor force, but you have quality, look the beast in the eye so boldly, and make a leap so unlooked-for, that he is dazed and dumbfounded. If you have no numbers, do not fight your enemy with an equal weapon; have one weapon that he does not have, and that is the greater. It is that weapon that beats numbers."

That weapon Derik had, in the person of the Mosin "philanthropic" rifle, whose fame had taken hold of the world and captivated not only the Kurd but the Armenian as well.

I count it superfluous to give a description of the many Homeric fights and adventures that took place on the Persian and Turkish borderlands and around Derik. They are sung by the Kurds. About them there exist fragmentary writings too. Here it is enough to say this much: that Nikol and Vardan, nested in that place, Sako and Khecho, Pokhik and Darmo, Zato and Shero, Gre and Sahak (Assyrians), and their comrades, in the beginning did not let a day pass without a fight. Those fights led, in the end, to the free coming and going of the *fedayis* from Dilman to Derik – which was exactly what our men were after.(*)

The center of the Central Committee of Atrpatakan[42] was at Tabriz. Being the capital of Atrpatakan and a safe place, it could keep contact with the world abroad, with the Caucasus and with Turkey. From the Dashnaktsutiun's first beginnings, party work had been done here at the hands of certain field-workers, and, if I am not mistaken, a few numbers of *Droshak* saw the light here. From Tabriz, literature went into the Caucasus, and even a telegraphic link was kept up by way of Tabriz between the world abroad and the Caucasus. The chief thing of all, however, was the Tabriz arms workshop, which was being founded there in the 1890s.

Among the field-workers of the first period are Fatanian,[43] Ishkhan Arghutian,[44] Miss Satenik Madinian (in the future Mrs. Arghutian), Dr. Hakovbian and others, who busy themselves with the party's organizational affairs and, in step with them, with teaching and medicine as well. Toros (Galust Aloyan),[45] Samson, Levon and others worked without interruption in the arms shop until the year 1896. The count of the arms they turned out must have been past a thousand. It was thanks to this arsenal that the Dashnaktsutiun was in a condition to mount large military undertakings on the border.

That workshop, with more or less success, wor-

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(*) Here ends the passage reworked by Rouben.

ked on until the Turkish Constitution.[46] Its most brilliant period, however, was the years around '97, when Toros, Samson, Levon and Karo (Zorian) worked there.

After the year '97, all the forces named above were either killed or gone from the field. At that time begins the participation of local forces in the party's affairs. And to the local men were added new forces from outside, who came to Tabriz to teach in the city's Armenian schools.

Tabriz, so it is told, had for whole decades been divided into two quarters, and along the line of those quarters there had been two currents in the city. The quarter of Lilava always stood under the influence of the Dashnaktsutiun, and the Ghala under the Hnchakians'. And between those

two quarters the struggle was never wanting, both on party ground and over the school and prelacy elections. In Lilava the Dashnaktsakans always carried the day, and its teaching staff was Dashnaktsakan. After 1898 the schools grow strong with our teachers, among whom were old comrades such as Hovnan Davtian, Dikran Rashmajian, Martiros Harutiunian, Mikayel Zarafian, Dr. Pashayan and so on. And later, down to the year 1908, of the field-workers from outside there were there Stepan Stepanian, Doctor Stepanian (the dentist), and, as gunsmith, Bedros, with a few of his apprentices. These forces, following one upon another, had managed to prepare, in the schools and outside them, a revolutionary generation which not only ran the local organization's affairs with a sure hand, but also gave modest and well-prepared field-worker comrades for the far corners of Persia and for the Caucasus. In 1904, when I was at Tabriz, affairs were being run almost wholly by the young local forces – Vahan, Zora, etc. – who were helped by Doctor Stepanian and Stepan Stepanian (Balajan). And Bedros wanted to help as well, but he was more

of a hindrance.

What were the aim and the worth of the Central Committee-ship of Tabriz?

Subject to it, from the party point of view, was the Armenian population of Persia from Tabriz to Gharadagh, Resht, Ghazvin, Maragha, Tehran, Ispahan and even Meshed. In those far-off places, where the Armenians' tie to the Illuminator's confession had slackened and where the danger existed that the Armenians might melt away, the Dashnaktsutiun had become a confession in its own right, and its preachers and field-workers filled the place of *vardapets* and priests. In all those who were bent on their selfish interests and had forgotten public and national consciousness, it woke patriotism, and it bound them fast to Tabriz.

The party's second chief work was to raise the educational level of that people, given over – and yet to be given over – to loss. This it did by helping not with money and subsidies, but by supplying idealist teachers at very cheap pay, and at times for nothing. The party did this with two aims: first, because it bound the people to itself and saved it from assimilation and loss; and second, because its field-workers, under the name of schoolmasters, making the teaching serve as a screen, carried their revolutionary work

forward – the more so as they were expected, as far as might be, to live on their own means. The party could place its field-workers in the schools with ease, because these men, for all that they held the higher schooling, did not think of high pay, and were willing to serve for the most modest daily keep in the most backward of villages – provided those places were fit to become a prop of the revolution, or lay on a transport line.

Enjoying a certain measure of freedom, and being in a peaceful state, Tabriz kept up regular relations by letter with its distant districts and its most remote corners. It reported on the most burning questions of Armenia and of the Caucasus, and carried news back in return. Thanks to that regular tie, it put the farthest corners into relation with the Land and with the Caucasus. And there was one more circumstance that favored this. The point is that among Persia's telegraph clerks the Armenians made up a great number; they were organized, and through them the Central Committee kept contact with the various districts and received its information with speed.

Tabriz was the overseer-in-chief of the districts of Salmast and Khoy, which stood as the center of Atrpatakan's living activity. There the party's significance was not cultural and moral only. Salmast and Khoy were a kind of depot of the Land's fighting forces and of its munitions alike. Those districts have rendered great services, and without them, perhaps, the activity of Vaspurakan would not have had the sweep and the color that it had. Taking this circumstance into account, it is worth pausing briefly on the revolutionary history of the Salmast–Khoy districts.

It was still at the end of the eighties that there come to these provinces of Persia the first heralds of our revolution – Agripasian and Goloshian,[47] who take upon themselves a purely propagandist part. Staying there a short while, they cross into Turkish Armenia, to build something more fundamental. But before they have reached Van, at the *gedük* of Zukhi[48] they are killed by Kurds.

Their worth must be looked for in their idealism and their self-sacrifice. It was they who, for the first time, opened the road of death with their own blood; sacrificing their lives, they became an example to the generations that

followed, handing down the lesson that for the salvation of the Fatherland it is necessary

to be sacrificed. That is the reason these fore-runners are always remembered with reverence by those who take their stand on the road of dying for the fatherland.

Agripasian and Goloshian showed no separate activity of their own, but their death draws the attention especially of many idealist field-workers of the Caucasus and of Armenia, who come one after another to Salmast and the surrounding provinces with the aim of working for the Land. This goes on in the years '90–94, when the parties were still being confounded with one another and no plain and clear division yet existed between them in men's consciousness. It is from those times that there come to Salmast Dikran Beglarich, Bagrat Vardapet (Tavakalian), Ishkhan Arghutian, Avetisian (Armenakan), Sako of Sev-Kar, Peto, Vardan, Jallat, as well as Toros, Yervand Taghianosian, Sarkis Ohanjanian, Movses, Dr. Hakobian and others. Their aim was to send field-workers for the Land, to get forces through to it, to organize, and then to establish courier relations with the Land. For Salmast to be a firm base for the Land, the people of that province too had to be organized and won through with revolutionary ideas. Thus the axis of their whole activity was this – staying at Salmast, to become a support for the Land. It is from there that the first strong field-worker, Peto, is sent to Vaspurakan. So that the organization should be far from the eyes of the people and of the Turkish and Persian governments, they decide to make the monastery of Derik their anchor, and to that end they take its renovation in hand. The monastery and its surroundings were in fact subject neither to the Persian nor to the Turkish authorities. There were only Kurdish *ashirets* (tribes) there. A few tens of *fedayis*, taking over the monastery, found there a kind of half-independent rule of their own. The *fedayis* spread their protection over a few villages lying near Derek[49] as well (Hakhveran,[50] Parik, Aslanik and so on).

Derik was under Kurdish attack without cease, fallen as it was almost into the very heart of Kurdish country; but the soldiers gathered there, who were famed for their bravery, threw those attacks back. The monastery had thus become a living training-ground for growing hardened to battle. There were

Vardan, and Sako of Sev-Kar, who – the *chungur*[51] on his shoulder, together with his rifle – went round those dangerous roads and kept the watch. There were Shero, and Zato – who was killed inside the monastery of Derik by chance, through the bursting of a rifle. There was Movses, who had raised a name for bravery among the Kurds (but who is killed in the course of a clash of his own with Kurds), and Karapet the Vanetsi, and many others, who went by turns into the Land and came back again.

In the year 1894, when the *fedayis* had already grown strong both at Salmast and in the monastery of Derik, it is decided, in order to help Peto, to send the first *zinatar* band. Until then, the carrying of arms was done by men singly, one by one, or was managed through Kurds. Vardan crosses to Van, where he stays with his band until the fights of '96. This successful trial becomes the cause of other bands' being formed.

The Armenakans were strong in Van. They had force enough at Salmast too, the more so as that party's animating spirit and its leader was to be found at Salmast. Emboldened by Vardan's example, Avetisian forms a large band, about 100 men, among whom are the Armenakan field-workers Ughun,[52] Sev Lach, Zarvadar,[53] Arsen, Mushegh and others. That band reaches Van by the same road.

After that band, the Dashnaktsutiun decides to send a second band into the Land, under the leadership of Nikol, who at that time was at Salmast as a teacher. About 60 soldiers gather, and in October, when it was already

about to snow, they set out toward the Land. They were in haste, because there were whispers of massacre. With the band was Teroyan, who had come from the Land. To the band are joined 12 men of the Armenakans as well, among them the well-known Usta Panos.

When the band takes the road, the snow begins to fall and to cover the ways. On reaching Khoshab, some propose turning back, but Nikol digs in and decides, cost what it may, to cross into the Land. They move forward and reach Saray. Some ten men go into a barn, to shelter from the cold. The other part stays on the mountain, under the snow and the blizzard. The Kurds and the troops notice them, and they come and lay siege. A furious fight begins, which lasts the whole day. It was there that Usta Panos's feet froze.

The band, giving a few victims, succeeds by night in tearing through the enemy's chain, and moves forward toward Vaspurakan. In a river the soldiers are soaked through, and one man in ten of them freezes and stays on the road. Teroyan, who with 12 men had sheltered among the barns, succeeds in reaching Van by another road, while Nikol, with the remnant of the band, enters the village of Boghazkeasan. They have barely taken a little rest when the previous day's fighters come up and besiege the house where the band has taken refuge. A fight takes place fiercer still. The Kurds and the troops bring brushwood, set it around the house, and light it. Out through the fire and the flame the *fedayis* leap, and with point-blank fire they kill numerous Kurds, among them two tribal chiefs, Sha and Jndi.[54] The Kurds are thrown into terror and confusion by this fight, the most furious of all, and the band, profiting by it, comes out of the village and carries on the fight, climbing the nearby mountain. Cleaving the snow, hounded by Kurds all the while, the *fedayis* move forward and, losing their trace in the night, reach Varag and are saved.

After that band's hard crossing into the Land, they do not sit idle in Salmast, and they begin with greater force to prepare men and munitions. That winter passes

in preparatory work.

In the spring of '96 those who had gone return from Vaspurakan, so as to carry new forces out of Salmast. The hero of Boghazkeasan, Nikol, gathers round himself some 10 riflemen and some 40 unarmed soldiers, to arm them and take them back to Van. The Armenakan Nerses likewise returns, by the Khoy road, with 10 to 12 men, to carry arms over. Misfortune befalls both of these bands. Nerses, though he reaches Khoy safely, is arrested there; and Nikol reaches Derik – which in the spring of '95, together with a few villages, had been razed by the Persian government, under the compulsion of the Turks. Nikol shelters in the ruins, but there he is besieged by Kurds. Our men try to persuade the Kurds not to fight; they, however, counting this a sign of weakness, all the more boldly press the ring of the siege tight around the monastery, seize the commanding positions, and kill Shero and one comrade of his.

Armed with only eight rifles, the *fedayis* defend the doors of the monastery. The Kurds fire from the ruined dome. Nikol fills the monastery with hay and *daler*,[55] sets it alight, and shields himself with the smoke. When night comes down, the *fedayis* leap out through the monastery door and, killing a few Kurds, get free. A small part of the band goes to Sanamerik, and the rest enter Kohna-Shahar,[56] where all of them, Nikol among their number, are arrested. Later, by bribery, they get free of the Persians' hands. In this way the bands' return to the Land is delayed. And that deals great harm to the fights of 1896 in Vaspurakan.

A little after Nikol's and Nerses's coming out of the Land, the massacres and the fights of Vaspurakan begin. In those times, work went forward at Salmast with united forces. Men had gathered there from every side, field-workers and soldiers of all the parties, who were preparing to cross into the Land. A great band is organized, made up of Armenakans and Dashnaktsakans. At that very time word is received that at Van the fighting and the massacre have begun. A few men of Mushegh's band, the vanguard of Avetisian's, escaping the Turks' and the Kurds' pursuit, come and tell of the fights of Van. They report that Van has been emptied of revolutionaries, and that the bands of Avetisian (Armenakan), of Peto (Dashnaktsakan) and of Martik (Hnchakian) have been caught on the road in fighting with the Kurds. At once the soldiers gather from all the villages of Salmast, about 200 men; within twenty-four hours all the horses are put under *rekvizitsia*[57] (requisition), and they take the road for the Turkish border, to help the bands retreating from Van. But it was already late. The united bands of Peto and Martik had been cut down entire on the Kotur road (a single Assyrian had escaped); of Avetisian's great band, the greater part had perished near the Monastery of Bartholomew,[58] the small part – 30 to 40 men – had fled to Salmast, and the remainder had fallen back again toward Van and its surroundings.

As I have said, numerous field-workers and soldiers had come to Salmast from every side, with the aim of going into the Land and of carrying arms. There had gathered there, so it is told, of the old field-workers the comrades Ohannian,[59] Ishkhan Arghutian, Satenik, Nikol, and of the new, Semerjian,[60] Gurgen and others. There were also numerous soldiers, Turkish-Armenian and Russian-Armenian. The little province of Salmast, which economically was in a wretched state, was unable to keep those hundreds of strangers, who

were without any means of livelihood of their own and were fed at the local people's cost. And to the soldiers and field-workers must be added the people and the soldiers who had fled in consequence of the fights and massacres that had taken place in the Land, and who likewise weighed upon the inhabitants of Salmast.

All this had brought forth discontents on either side in Salmast, and had created an atmosphere from which mutual love and concord were absent. To come out of this situation, some way out had to be found. The question was put

thus: after the failed fights of Van, when the forces there were coming out of the country, was it right, after all, to go there with bands, or to send arms to Van?

On this question opinions differed. One part of the field-workers at Salmast, grounding themselves on the letters of Vardan and of Teroyan sent out of Vaspurakan, said that help must be got through and force sent there; the others thought that the forces gathered at Salmast should be given over to organizing a great expedition and taking vengeance on the *ashirets* that had cut down the bands. Warm partisans of the first view were Semerjian, Karo, Gurgen, Aramayis and the great part of the Turkish-Armenian soldiery, as well as Vaspurakan's provincial field-workers – the Haji of Nor Gegh, Baghik of Shatkh,[61] Yokhni[62] and so on. For the expedition were Nikol, Dr. Ohannian, Ishkhan, Satenik. Around those two questions real passions were stirred. The keeping of the soldiers was running into difficulties because of the economic straits, and if it was necessary to send them off, it had to be done soon. In the end a halt is made upon a middle road. It is decided to send one part of the soldiers into the Land at intervals, and to scatter the other part about the district.

The first band, it is decided, will be sent in mid-August under the leadership of Bedros Semerjian. Into that band go Gurgen – the future leader of Sasun – Aramayis, Khecho, Nikol, up to 13 men in number. These reach Van safe and unharmed, and there they join Teroyan's band. When this band arrives, and when, from the other side, word is received from the Land that the Dashnaktsutiun is not dead, that Vardan and Teroyan are both alive, a second band, of more than 35, is sent by Semerjian's road; and by way of the Apostle

Thaddeus, through Abagha, a little band of 7 men, under Sahakian's leadership. Sheko's band takes the road toward September, by Semerjian's road, and arrives safely (they meet with one or two light and

insignificant incidents). But the band going by Abagha comes out later, when the cold had already set in. It is besieged by Haidarantsi Kurds; a furious fight takes place, and the band, after wresting from the enemy twice its own number in victims, is wiped out entire.

After these events a great band is made ready, of about 80 men, which under Karo's leadership was to cross to Van, to join Vardan and Teroyan. The band was already set to take the road when a telegram comes from Khoy that Vardan and his band have returned to Salmast. It comes out that the bands of Semerjian and of Sheko, on reaching Van in safety, drew the government's attention onto Van, and in the city fighting begins anew; after which they find themselves forced to leave the city and come out of it and, after giving one more fight near Gemi,[63] to take refuge in Salmast – leaving Teroyan behind in Vaspurakan, in a sick state. Once the bands that had gone to the Land are forced, leaders and all, to leave the Land and come out of it, the sending of Karo's band loses its sense. Again that current grows strong which held that the forces gathered at Salmast should be used to organize an expeditionary force against the Kurds, to take the revenge of Avetisian, of Peto and of Martik. Nikol presses that view all the more strongly, though the idea of going into the Land and strengthening the Land was defended by a number of men, the greater part of them Turkish Armenians. The winter coming on puts a temporary end to these differences, by making impossible both the expedition and the sending of bands into the Land. They find themselves forced to disperse one part of the soldiers, sending them as far as Tabriz and the Caucasus, so that Salmast's condition might be lightened until the coming of spring.

That winter Sheko is killed at Tabriz by his own soldiers. He was an exceedingly rough man, though a very self-sacrificing one, and he could not deal with his soldiers and comrades. Over a common question – of tobacco or of

food – a quarrel takes place between him and his soldiers, one of whom, out of all patience, strikes him on the head while he is washing and kills him on

the spot. They bury Sheko at Tabriz. For one of the soldiers who killed him, it is decided to cast him out of the comradely ranks until he should perform some great act of courage; for the other, *teror* is decided, and he is killed at Salmast by Karo's hand. The first soldier goes with Paramaz to the Land and is killed on the Van road.

The differences between the expedition and crossing into the Land go on until spring, and the question, I think, is decided at the last by the General Assembly, in favor of the expedition. But the struggles take on a sharp face, and the Bureau sends Shahrikian[64] to Salmast, to smooth out the quarrels and give force to the preparations for the expedition. (Before that, they had also called Teroyan out of the Land, so that he might settle the matter; but he had met with failure.) In the consultations held with Shahrikian's participation, they decide to organize a punitive expedition, but at the same time also to send into the Land field-workers and a store of arms, for Vaspurakan and for Duran.[65] When the mountains come free of the snows, they prepare to send two bands into the Land in June – one under the leadership of Teroyan, and the other of the Hnchakian Paramaz. Into Teroyan's band go those forces which were to pass from Vaspurakan farther still – on toward Duran. Among them were Gurgen, Parsadan, Andranik and the others. This band takes the road and arrives safely, while Paramaz's band, before it has reached Van, is caught up in fighting on the way, in consequence of which the greater part of it is cut down, and only a few men, together with Paramaz, succeed in reaching Van.

While those bands were going on their road, energetic preparations are to be seen for the expedition. The fighting and all the other forces of Atrpatakan are concentrated at Salmast. From Tabriz come Toros, Samson, Arghutian, and the other field-workers of Salmast, such as Dr. Ohanian, Karo, Nikol, Vardan, Pokhik, Aramayis, Akhper, Sako, and other comrades and military men of different schooling and different standing. Among the gathered there were inner ferments against this or that individual. There was great discontent above all toward Nikol, to whom many did not warm (chiefly those who stood for passing a band through to the Land).

For Nikol the essential thing was to carry the expedition to success. Though he was the one man worthy to be the expedition's leader, or at the least to be

the leader's deputy, they appoint him a mere commander of fifty; as leader of the force they choose Vardan, as his deputy Ishkhan Arghutian, as captains of hundreds Pokhik, Akhper and others whose names I do not remember; and leader of the horsemen becomes Sako. So a force of about 400 men takes the road toward the border in the middle of July. That was the first and the greatest band in the whole course of the Dashnaktsutiun's activity.

There is a mountain, Aravul,[66] which parts the border of Turkey from Persia; on that mountain's flanks is Khanasor, where the Mazrik *ashiret* had gone up to *zozan*[67] – the tribe that had cut down Avetisian's band. The decision is given to root out that *ashiret* together with its tribal chief, Sharaf bek.[68] For two days the force goes its way unseen through the mountains and keeps hidden in the folds of Aravul, and, marching by night, it surrounds the *ashiret* of the Mazriks. Before daybreak has yet opened, the force falls upon the Mazriks and cuts down whatever comes to hand. The Kurds, taken unawares, can show no resistance, and they begin to flee, abandoning everything. Sharaf bek too contrives to slip away, leaving his *ashiret* in the *fedayis*' hands. Of the Kurds many are killed; and our men, while the surrounding *ashirets* had not yet cut their rear, begin to fall back toward Salmast. From every side horsemen come up and labor to cut the roads of retreat. The *fedayis* fight, and they give of their own number 19 killed and

lost – among them Karo.(*)

The force, having solved the task it had set itself almost with success, turns back to Salmast. But the Turkish government had already begun to make representations to the Persian government, demanding that curbing measures be taken against the Armenian *fedayis*. Serious complications might arise. Besides which, there was no longer any sense in keeping so many soldiers and field-workers in Atrpatakan. On these considerations, it is decided to move the soldiers by various roads over to the Caucasus and to other places, whereby Persia is emptied of *fedayis*. At Salmast there remains only one small company. The field-work-

(*) What really happened to Karo, no one knows: there are opinions that he was killed by Kurds, while some suppose that he took his own life. No one

saw him after the attack was over, during the retreat. Karo had already been seeking death for about a year. He carried a deep grief of soul, which had come of the love he bore toward Maro. Maro was a schoolteacher at Tabriz, and a Dashnaktsakan. She, for her part, was in love with Karo like one gone mad. But since in those times there reigned there (as in Turkey until quite lately) a psychology by which love and marriage stand as an obstacle to the revolutionary's free activity, and love, like a chain, fetters the flights of the sworn revolutionary, Karo and Maro strove to smother their natural feelings. And so that Maro might free the ardent Karo, forever straining toward the Land, from love's fetters, she takes her own life, and she leaves Karo a letter, telling from what motives she takes this step. Karo, after the death of the girl he loved, far from feeling himself freed of a fetter, is given over to deep despondency and torments of the soul. Life becomes empty and worthless to him. It is by that that his untimely and mysterious vanishing must be explained. Perhaps he went after Maro – went to look for her…

ers too withdraw to the Caucasus – except Samson, who stays on there to the end. Bribery on the one hand, and the Persians' traditional indifference on the other, become the reason that these events pass unnoticed. Only some ten men of Aghbak are arrested and handed over to the Turkish consul, who, seeing that they are no *fedayis*, sets them free – and with that the affair is closed.

The moral worth of the Khanasor Expedition proved great, from the standpoint of the party's revival and of making friends with the Kurds. After the year 1896 a general despondency ruled among the Armenians; the credit of the revolutionaries had fallen in the people's eyes. The Hnchakian party, which was the oldest and the strongest among the Armenian revolutionary parties, lay exposed in the greater measure to the blows of the reaction. The despondency had seeped not only into the people but into the very Hnchakian party, and while that party, under the weight of it all, was all but drawing its hand back from the Turkish-Armenian question, the Dashnaktsutiun, by the Khanasor Expedition, declared by deed that it would carry on the pursuit of the Armenian Question until that received a satisfying solution. The great event of Khanasor gave life to abandoned souls. The Dashnaktsutiun, thanks to that expedition, wrested large sections away from the Hnchakian party, and took them in and melted them into itself.

The expedition had a great effect on the psychology of the Kurds as well. They saw that the Armenian can punish the one who massacres him, and can do it organized and by means of forces of considerable size. They began to be afraid of the Armenians, and they understood that in the future they would be answerable, every time, for their acts against the Armenians. A deep impression was left on the Kurds, too, by the strength of the *fedayis*, which echoed in exaggerated shape in their imagination. From now on the Dashnaktsutiun figured to them as a state – one which, though weak by comparison with Turkey, had demands that were

just, and that might one day be realized. The Armenians, the Kurds supposed, might come to hold rule, and punish them. As a consequence of this they grow more cautious, they lean toward neutrality, and they even begin to nurse a certain sympathy toward the Armenians. These changes brought forth in the psychology of the Kurds were to serve in the future as a foundation for the principles of friendship and concord. For the Armenians, but for the Kurds above all, physical force is a thing to be prized and worshipped. If a man has no force, and leans only upon fine sermons, in the Kurd's eye he represents no worth at all. By the event of Khanasor, all the Kurds along the border felt that the Armenians could represent force as well. It is by this that one must explain the circumstance that after the year '97 the relations of the Kurds toward the *fedayis* did not worsen but, on the contrary, bent toward friendship or neutrality – in consequence of which, too, the activity of Salmast and of Vaspurakan changed root and branch. Until then, the transports of munitions were carried out by means of bands which, each man taking a single rifle, for the most part fighting their way through, and in the course of it giving victims in great number, went as far as Van. From there, one part of the band, leaving the arms behind, and the other part, in order to protect the crossing,[69] taking along a portion of the arms that had been carried, returned again to Salmast, so as to arm themselves anew and turn back to the Land. Of the munitions carried over, only 15 to 20 percent reached their goal; the rest either was lost, passing into the Kurds' hands in the course of the fights, or was spent on the road in those same fights, or came back once more to Persia. The Land, in truth, drew very little profit from those bands; but there was no other means, so long as the Kurds, prompted by the Turkish government, irresponsibly searched and plundered every

caravan that went, arrested every stranger, and killed every man, be he Armenian or Kurd, if he

fell under suspicion of transporting arms, letters or literature.

After the Khanasor Expedition, however, all the Kurds kept themselves in check, and, when the government's direct pressure was not upon them, they held a neutral stance and at times even helped our transport work. So that if, down to the year 1908 – for some ten years – the fights were few and few bands crossed toward Vaspurakan, our work was very fruitful. By way of Salmast and the monastery alone, millions of cartridges and thousands of arms are said to have been carried across, and the count of human victims and the losses of arms were far smaller than in the years '90–96.

In 1897 there remains in Salmast Levon, a teacher by the name of Hovhannes Khanadian,[70] who writes and sends the letters and carries on the work of keeping contact all by himself. As there were no other men in Salmast to catch the eye, the attention of the Turkish and Persian governments drifts away from this point. Within that interval the Salmast men themselves had already stepped to the head of the work – among them the well-known Sarkis of Ghalasar. In 1898 Samson too comes, and sets the transport work, and the keeping of contact with the Land, upon firmer foundations.

At that time Vazgen Teroyan was in the Land. To help him, Sharo is sent with a band made up of 10 to 15 men. At Abagha, Sharo is caught up in a fight with the Kurds. The Kurds do not succeed in exacting the Mazriks' revenge; on the contrary, Sharo's little band works wonders, and by that it fastens all the more firmly the idea of the *fedayis*' power and invincibility. Though Sharo loses three of his soldiers – Amre,[71] Karapet (the third one's name I do not remember) – he wrests from the enemies more than 20 victims and reaches his goal. The crossing of Sharo's band becomes the cause of the Turkish government's turning its attention once more

upon Salmast: searches are carried out, and a few men, local and from outside, are arrested, Sarkis among them; but soon, by bribes and fines, all of them get free.

After Bagrat Vard. Tavakalian, it was an Armenakan vardapet of Van, Arsen by name, who shepherded Salmast. In 1899 he is succeeded by Khachik

Vardapet, with whom comes Yeprem – as a servant. In that year the Persian government, under the Turks' pressure, was turning a sharper attention upon Salmast. On the other side, the temper of the people of Salmast, in a good many villages, ran against the revolutionaries. Even leaving aside the general despondency that had come over the Armenians because of the failures of Turkish Armenia, there were certain justifying causes as well. First, there weighed upon the men of Salmast so great a number of soldiers that their keep was beyond the strength of that small and poor district. Second, the soldiers scattered through the villages at times committed disorders and acts of violence,[72] and that, with justice, bred discontent among the people. The some 500 soldiers quartered in Salmast were not, all of them, persons pure in ideals and afire with the revolutionary spirit; in among them had slipped men highly suspect too, in their habits and in their conduct. Apart from that, the Persian officials, on the pretext of arresting *fedayis*, often came to the villages and took fines. This economic and psychological condition had become the cause of a certain antipathy toward the revolutionaries taking shape among the people – though the number was not small, either, of those who had stood firm in their sympathies and went on working together with our party.

In those times the Armenakan party vanished from Salmast altogether. As for the Hnchakians, they had remained in one village only, Payajuk, and there too in insignificant number; while in all the other villages,

if it was not master there, the Dashnaktsutiun at the least enjoyed sympathy. And the Dashnaktsakans, under the clothes of a teacher (like Samson), of a servant (like Yeprem), or of a plain villager and refugee, carried their labors on.

The party's work was carried in two directions. First, effort was poured into keeping up the transport relation with the Land, sending there *zinatar* bands formed by means of Kurds and of Armenians, "goods," and at the same time soldier bands as well. The party's second care was the cultural activity, to which it was harnessed with great zeal.

Of the bands sent into the Land, let us recall the band of Pokhik,(*) which with about 15 men crosses unharmed as far as Van. But Teroyan was there no longer – he had been killed at the fight of Kurubash – and the keeping of a soldier band inside Van had become difficult. There too, in those times,

hopelessness and despondency ruled. Pokhik finds himself forced to leave Van and turn back with 10 men toward Salmast. On the way he is caught in a fight, but he succeeds in slipping away and taking shelter in Mahlam, a village of Salmast.

The villagers of Mahlam take counsel and decide not to receive Pokhik's band, and they propose to them not to enter their village. But the soldiers, worn out and spent, their feet swollen, cannot go far from the village (and where were they to go?), and they settle down outside the village, among the vineyards, in the open air, while

(*) So that the government should pay less attention to Salmast, and the people too be left in peace, Samson, apart from Pokhik's band, sends to Van also the band of Akhper (in which was Darmo), by the road of the Monastery. This band, made up of 12 men, does not cross into the Land, however, and settles in the monastery and its surroundings, because word is received that Van is in a hard strait and the roads too are closed.

Pokhik, who was gravely ill, they carry to Ghalasar, to be doctored. The "great ones" of the villagers of Mahlam come to the representative of the Dashnaktsutiun, Samson; they tell him what has passed and they ask him to remove those soldiers from the village – in the contrary case, they will themselves go and give notice to Zardam[73] and to the government. Samson persuades them to give at least a day or two's grace; but the village's representatives, thinking that he wants to gain time so that the soldiers, little by little, may find their feet again and enter the village, go straight to Zardam and ask that the *fedayis* be turned out of their village, or else imprisoned.

Of the 8 soldiers settled in the vineyard of the village of Mahlam, only 3 were with rifles. At daybreak, Persian *sarbazes* come and surround those soldiers. In Persia it was forbidden to make a fight against Persians; so our men, without a fight, try to move off and climb the mountain. On the way one of them is killed, and the others go and get inside a tower. There the Persians kill or wound one or two men, though ours show no resistance whatever, and then they arrest the others. Those unfortunates supposed that they would not be killed and would be able to buy themselves free with a bribe, as had been

the way till then. But they had miscalculated: they kill them all, cut off their heads, and carry them to Dilman, declaring that they had killed them all in battle. At that news Yeprem, that very day, gathers 6 or 7 of the soldiers – among them Sarbaz Khecho, Darmo, Gre and the others – and, taking no account of the fact that Zardam's soldiers were seated in Mahlam so as to protect the traitors, he goes by night to that village, enters the house of Mughsi Davit,[74] who was one of the authors of the soldiers' killing, and puts Davit and all the members of his family to the sword. Then, in secret again, he comes out of the village. In the morning, when Mughsi Davit's door does not open, the people, and the Persian soldiers who were in the village, go in from his house-door and see the terrible picture. This killing so works upon the *sarbazes* that, instead of continuing to stay in the village, they come out of it and go away. As for the traitors, who were two men – Arakel and Stepan – they flee from Mahlam. But they do not escape either: the one is killed soon after, while the other, who had fled to Russia, they succeed in killing only in the year 1905.

From the year 1899, when this event took place, until 1902 there pass altogether peaceful years. In those years they renounce the former system of sending men and arms into the Land. Many of the important comrades, such as Vardges and Vahan of Sasun, cross into the Land in disguise, by means of Kurds, without fighting and without *ghalmaghal* (uproar). In those years the "goods" (munitions) were received on the one hand from Tabriz, in special carts built there, and on the other they came from Julfa, by way of Khoy, and were kept, through Sarkis, in the stores. And Samson, who was the overseer-in-chief of all the works, prepared courier and transport lines, using for that purpose hired Kurds or Persians, and at times Armenians as well, mixed in among the Kurds. These went and came continually, and they carried and brought munitions, literature, letters, and now and then men.

At the same time the people – having caught its breath a little from the heavy duty of feeding the soldiers sheltered there till then, as well as from the Persian government's fines – was in a condition to give itself to cultural, and to peaceful revolutionary, labors. In that backward province regular schools are opened, libraries are founded, and theatricals are organized. And, life entering so natural and peaceful a channel, the Land's work too is carried forward more fruitfully and with greater vigor – by way of Salmast.

In the years 1903–4 a stir and bustle ruled in Salmast. Out of the Land,

more often than before, men came out to go, by way of Salmast, toward the Caucasus and the Balkans, and to take part in the General Assembly. In their number let us recall Yerkat, Joj Agha and others. And from outside, new forces and new field-workers entered the Land – such, for example, as Koms, Ishkhan, Sergei (Aram) and so on. Transports of arms were carried out more often and in great quantity. The greater part of the cartridges stolen from the depots of Alexandropol, and the arms that were bought from Tula and from Siberia, were concentrated at Salmast, in Samson's hands, in Sarkis's stores, and from there, by night or even in daylight, by means of Kurds' and Persians' caravans or of porters, they were carried unharmed as far as Van.

The transports were carried out in three directions. First, by means of the Monastery of the Apostle Thaddeus, of which I have spoken before this. Then, straight over Khoy and Kotur, without entering either the Monastery of the Apostle Thaddeus or Salmast. And finally, the third point was Salmast itself, which filled its stores by both roads. At each one of those points special men were at work. They wanted to open a fourth line as well, from Urmia toward Lernapar.[75]

The work was to continue in the direction described above until the year 1908. In those years the idea is conceived of establishing contact – with a view to joining them to us – with the Assyrians of Julamerik and Mar Shimun, and with the Kurds' Sheikh Tahia,[76] so that in Vaspurakan a movement might be created with Armenians, Assyrians and Kurds together. In the years '95–96 that idea had smiled upon the Dashnaktsakan field-workers, and to that end they had sent two comrades to Urmia, to negotiate with Mar Shimun. These, however, had reached no practical result. A new attempt is made thereafter through Malkhas, who negotiates with the sheikh of Shamdinan and with the Assyrians, so that these should come out together with the Armenians against the Turks. Those negotiations, though they gave no great practical results, had this consequence: that the antipathy toward us which had existed was lifted, and possibilities were created of linking up with the Land, at times, even by those long roads.

The border Kurds, who held the stretch running from Masis to Urmia, bore us no hostile attitude and were even friends. Even Sharaf bek, the Madrik[77]

chief, labored to be a friend, and that friendship of his had given our men such boldness that at times they traveled even in open day. Of their number was Shavo,[78] who, dressed in Caucasian clothes and a *cherkeska*, with a few Kurds, sets out alone by way of Abagha toward Van. But when, bent over a spring on the borders of Abagha, he goes to drink water, he is killed by the Kurds escorting him. That killing is done, however, purely out of the urge to make Shavo's goods their own. A like sad fate falls to Joj Agha, who was returning from the General Assembly toward Van with a small band (5 men). On the way he is caught in a fight and killed, without ever being able to give his report on the General Assembly. But these small events were no hindrance to the transport and liaison work's running on in its own normal road.

Everything was thrown into disorder, however, by the fight of Duman's band – in which I too took part, and of which I have already told above.

Notes

[1] Translator's note. The Armenian colonists of the Sukhum and Sochi coast – most of them, as the text says, migrants out of the province of Trebizond, settled there from the later nineteenth century – were at this time being pressed by the Russian authorities either to take formal Russian subjecthood or to leave; this is the 'Sukhum–Sochi refugee question' of the chapter's opening.

[2] Translator's note. «Նախավկայ», 'the Protomartyr': the monastery of St. Stepanos Nakhavka (St. Stephen the Protomartyr), on the Araxes near Julfa. The book's own name for it is kept.

[3] Translator's note. *Valiad* (Pers. *vali-ahd*), the heir to the throne, who by custom governed at Tabriz: Mehmed Ali – Mohammad Ali Mirza, Crown Prince under Mozaffar-ed-Din Shah, and himself Shah from 1907 to 1909.

[4] Translator's note. «Սոչդաղ» – the glyphs are confirmed on the page image, but the place is unidentified; it has expressly not been assimilated to Solduz, Savujbulagh or Gharadagh. Transliterated only.

[5] Translator's note. The page prints «արգելատի[թ]», a non-word; «արգելատիպ», 'of an obstructive kind', is the only real word the glyphs allow (probably broken type or a 1952 misprint), and the sentence is rendered by that sense. The form remains unresolved.

[6] Translator's note. «Ճատալի», «Սալանի» – readings flagged in transcription; border localities near Derik, unidentified. Transliterated only.

[7] Translator's note. The page prints «հարազատ պատկերն են», 'if they are the true image'; the sense of Duman's maxim evidently wants 'are not'. Rendered as printed, with the transcription's [sic?] carried.

[8] Translator's note. «Քոթոթ» — Rostom's by-name, behind the Ch. III gloss *kototi*, 'bear-cub'. Rostom is Stepan Zorian (1867–1919), one of the three founders of the A.R.F.

[9] Translator's note. Khan-Azat — Ruben Khan-Azat, one of the founders of the Hnchakian party; Paramaz — the Hnchakian leader Matteos Sarkisian, hanged at Constantinople in 1915. Nerses and Avetisian return later in this chapter.

[10] Translator's note. «Բողազ-Քեասանի» — the page's hyphenated form of the chapter's own Boghazkeasan (pp.415–416; cf. the Ch. VII *Boghaz Keasan*): the reading is evident on the page image and settled by the chapter's attested vocabulary (the transcription's earlier «Բոզաղ-Թեասանի[?]» was a misread of the same glyphs). Whether this route-point is the village of Nikol's fight itself is named as a possibility only; the route remains unidentified. «Զուխի» remains flagged: its initial capital belongs to the display family in which Ջ/Շ/Ջ/Ձ cannot be told apart, so it cannot be distinguished on glyphs from the p.412 «Ձուխի» — no unification is asserted. Transliterated as printed.

[11] Translator's note. The page prints «ձրի ճամբայ», literally 'a free (gratis) road'; the reading is flagged in transcription and is rendered literally.

[12] Translator's note. «Ուլխացի» — origin-epithet unresolved; the place is not identified. Kukunian is Sarkis Kukunian, leader of the armed expedition of 1890 intercepted at the Ottoman frontier.

[13] Translator's note. «Մուտո», «Ալդո» — readings flagged and the men unidentified; Muto is expressly not unified with the Mato of Ch. VIII, who appears under his own printed name at pp.404 and 419.

[14] Translator's note. Sattar and Baghir — Sattar Khan and Baghir Khan, the celebrated commanders of the Tabriz resistance in the Persian Constitutional Revolution (1908–09), beside whom Nikol Duman and Keri fought; the Bakhtiar tribesmen joined the revolution under Yeprem — the same Yeprem who reappears at p.426 of this chapter as Khachik Vardapet's 'servant'. The alliances named here belong to years later than the chapter's main narrative.

[15] Translator's note. «տարրերուն» ('elements') — form flagged in transcription; the plain sense is rendered.

[16] Translator's note. Printed «Բէգլարիչ» here and «Բեղլարիչ» at p.413 — almost certainly one architect, the two forms produced by a vowel wobble and the merged descender glyph. One romanization, Beglarich, is used, and the variance is recorded here.

[17] Translator's note. «Համշարի» — the same word as the *hamshahir* ('fellow-countryman') of Ch. VIII, in another of the book's printed forms; kept as this page prints it.

[18] Translator's note. Kochanis was the seat of Mar Shimun; «Տիար-Տիուբ» is unidentified and transliterated as printed.

[19] Translator's note. «Ճարա» — reading flagged; the district is not identified. Transliterated only.

[20] Translator's note. Mar Shimun — the hereditary Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East (the 'Nestorians'), seated at Kochanis; the office passed within one family, each holder bearing the name Mar Shimun.

[21] Translator's note. *Choban* (Turk. çoban), a shepherd; the reading is flagged in transcription at both its occurrences, and the ordinary loanword is rendered as printed.

[22] Translator's note. «Մուշդէիդներ» — evidently the mojtaheds, the Shia doctors of the law authorized to interpret it; the printed spelling is kept as read.

[23] Translator's note. The book's errata leaf (ՎՐԻՊԱԿ) marks the line «մեզ հետ ունենալ եւ Թուրքիայից բաժանել՝ համազոր է» — a near-duplicate, inserted by the compositor, of the line two above it — as superfluous. The Armenian text preserves the duplicated line as printed, with a [sic] tag; the English carries the sentence once, keeps the tag in the duplicated line's position, and mirrors the page's line breaks — including the stray 'and.' that the insertion produced.

[24] Translator's note. «Ռաղիի» — the merged descender permits both Raghi and Radi; Ch. IX prints «Ռադի» for what is evidently the same point on the road. Kept as this page prints it, not unified. The fight is the one told in Ch. IX.

[25] Translator's note. St. Karapet — the monastery of Msho Sultan Surb Karapet in Taron, the great pilgrimage shrine of the Armenians, to which votive beasts were led for sacrifice.

[26] Translator's note. «չոնգուռ» (p.406 «չօնգուռ»; p.414 «չունգուր», flagged) — evidently a stringed instrument, carried on the shoulder and 'struck'; the long-necked lute known in the Caucasus as the chonguri or chungur is named as a possibility only. Each printed form is carried where it stands (*chongur*, *chungur*).

[27] Translator's note. «Համբառակ» — reading flagged; no meaning or place is supplied for it. Transliterated only.

[28] Translator's note. «վոշիկներ» — unresolved; in both its occurrences the word stands for the men of the Taurus country, and no meaning is supplied for it.

[29] Translator's note. «անդրադէտ» — unresolved; by its place in the list, an epithet alongside 'stubborn' and 'brooding'. No meaning is supplied.

[30] Translator's note. «Ախպեր» (pp.421 and 427 «Ախպէր») — by-name unresolved; the dialect 'brother' is named as a possibility only. One English form, Akhper, is used.

[31] Translator's note. The Martini — the single-shot Peabody-Martini of the Ottoman forces; at p.407 it is named beside the Berdan, the Russian single-shot service rifle that preceded the Mosin.

[32] Translator's note. The song is the author's Armenian rendering of the Kurdish. *Poch-poch*, the *sagh* and 'Drmdrm' are left as the page prints them, unexplained in the book. *Injil* is the Gospel; *oroj* carries the author's own gloss, '(the fast)'.

[33] Translator's note. «քրգմա» — unresolved; the line places it on the feet, and nothing more is asserted. Transliterated only.

[34] Translator's note. «Սրռ քիւլլան» in the song, «սրռ քիւլան» in the author's parenthesis — both carried as printed. Unresolved; the author's own parenthesis equates it with the 'magic cap' (թասակ).

[35] Translator's note. «դափախսլի» — evidently a rifle type of the period, unidentified; transliterated only.

[36] Translator's note. «նըլլըստ» — unresolved; evidently the sound-word for the Mosin's report. Transliterated only.

[37] Translator's note. «Զաղոշի լեռները» — cf. the «Զաղոոշի» of Ch. VIII, likewise unidentified there. Not the Zagros, which this chapter names separately at p.398 («Զագրոս»); the printed forms are carried where they stand and are not unified.

[38] Translator's note. «ձարան բերդը» — reading flagged; the fortress is not identified. Transliterated only.

[39] Translator's note. Jafar agha of Avdo — the Avdoi were a leading house of the Shikak Kurds. The book styles him 'the father of Simko' (printed «Սըմկօ» — the Ismail Agha Simko of later fame), though histories of the Shikak record Jafar Agha as Simko's elder brother. Rendered as the book has it, with the discrepancy noted.

[40] Translator's note. Boghazkeasan — the village of Nikol's fight, told at p.415; cf. the song-title *Boghaz Keasan* ('throat-cutter') of Ch. VII. Baghu is not identified; both names as printed.

[41] Translator's note. The page prints «լիւ», evidently for «լաւ» ('better'); rendered by that sense, with the misprint recorded, per the transcription's reconciliation.

[42] Translator's note. Atrpatakan — the Armenian name (ancient Atropatene) of the northwestern province of Persia, of which Tabriz is the capital.

[43] Translator's note. «Ֆաթանեան» — reading flagged in transcription; the man is not further identified. Transliterated as printed.

[44] Translator's note. Ishkhan Arghutian — Hovsep Arghutian (1863–1925), the A.R.F. commander styled 'Ishkhan' ('prince'), a veteran of these Persian border years and later of the Persian revolution.

[45] Translator's note. The parenthesis is the book's own. Chs. VII and XI know a Galust Aloyan ('Torosents'; 'Darvish'), an Erevan notable with a wine-works at Tabriz; the book nowhere says whether the gunsmith Toros is the same man, and the two are not unified here.

[46] Translator's note. The Turkish Constitution — the restoration of the Ottoman constitution in July 1908.

[47] Translator's note. «Ագրիպասեան եւ Գոլոշեան» — spellings unverified; the first propagandists of the movement in these provinces, killed before reaching Van. Transliterated as printed.

[48] Translator's note. «Զուխի գեադուկը» — reading flagged. *Gedük* is apparently the Kurdish-Turkish word for a mountain pass (gedik); 'Zukhi' is unidentified. Transliterated.

[49] Translator's note. The page prints «Դերեկի» here, against «Դերիկ» everywhere else in the chapter; the variance is the book's and is carried (Derek/Derik), not harmonized.

[50] Translator's note. «Հախվերան» — unattested village name, flagged; Parik and Aslanik as printed. Transliterated only.

[51] Translator's note. «չունգուրը» — flagged form of the instrument printed «չոնգուռ/չօնգուռ» at pp.403 and 406 (see the note there); carried as this page prints it.

[52] Translator's note. «Ուղունը» — reading flagged; the man is not identified. Transliterated.

[53] Translator's note. «Զարվադարը» — reading flagged; not identified, and not assimilated to the common noun *charvadar* (muleteer). Transliterated.

[54] Translator's note. «Շա եւ Ջնդի» — readings unverified; the two chiefs are not identified. Transliterated as printed.

[55] Translator's note. «դալեր» — flagged; evidently something burnable, filled into the monastery beside the hay. «դալար» ('green growth') is named as a possibility only; nothing is asserted.

[56] Translator's note. «Քեօհնա-Շահար» — the old market town of the Salmast plain (Pers.-Turk. *köhne şahar*, 'old city'); the book's form is kept in a plain romanization.

[57] Translator's note. «ռեկուիզիցիայի» — the Russian loan реквизиция, carrying the author's own gloss «(բռնագրաման)», requisition; the reading is flagged and the form carried.

[58] Translator's note. The Monastery of the Apostle Bartholomew, in the district of Aghbak, on the Van road.

[59] Translator's note. «Բժ. Օհաննեանը» here and at p.418; p.421 prints «Օհանեանը». One doctor; both printed spellings are carried where each stands (Ohannian/Ohanian). He is distinct from the Sarkis Ohanjanian of the p.413 list.

[60] Translator's note. «Սէմէրճեան» — the vowels are unverified in this typeface; romanized Semerjian throughout.

[61] Translator's note. «Շատխու Բաղիկը» — the page prints Shatkh without the second ա of Shatakh, and the printed form is carried. The Haji of Nor Gegh and Baghik are provincial by-names, as printed.

[62] Translator's note. «Յոխնին» — reading flagged; not identified. Transliterated.

[63] Translator's note. «Կէմի» — reading flagged; the place of the fight is not identified. Transliterated.

[64] Translator's note. Shahrikian — Harutiun Shahrikian ('Atom', 1873–1915), the A.R.F. leader, killed in the deportations of 1915.

[65] Translator's note. Duran — taken as the district of Taron north-east of Mush already named in Ch. VI; the transcription flags the name for confirmation.

[66] Translator's note. «Առաւուլ» — glyphs confirmed twice on the page image; the mountain above Khanasor on the Ottoman–Persian border, unattested as an oronym. Ch. VIII's author-footnote names a frontier mountain «Առատուլ» (Aratul); the two printed forms are not unified.

[67] Translator's note. *Zozan* — the Kurdish word for the summer pasture; the tribe had moved up to its summer grazing.

[68] Translator's note. The Khanasor Expedition of 24–25 July 1897 — the A.R.F.'s punitive raid on the Mazrik Kurds; Sharaf bek was the Mazrik chief.

[69] Translator's note. The page prints «անցէնները», not an Armenian word; the sense wants 'those crossing' («անցնողները») or 'the passes' («անցքերը»), neither of which fits the

glyphs — likely a 1952 misprint. Rendered by the minimal shared sense, 'the crossing', and not corrected.

[70] Translator's note. «Խանաղեան» — the hyphenated print carries the descender glyph that serves ղ/ղ/գ/զ, so Khanaghian, Khanagian and Khanazian remain equally possible; the name is unattested in the Salmast record. Transliterated as printed.

[71] Translator's note. «Ամրէն» — reading flagged; the name is not identified. Transliterated.

[72] Translator's note. «բռնութիւններ» ('acts of violence') — the reading could equally be «գողութիւններ» ('thefts'); rendered as printed.

[73] Translator's note. «Զարդամ» — the initial capital belongs to the display family in which Զ/Շ/Ջ/Ձ cannot be told apart, so Jardam and Dzardam are equally possible; evidently the local Persian authority of the Salmast country, and not identified. Transliterated; three occurrences, one form.

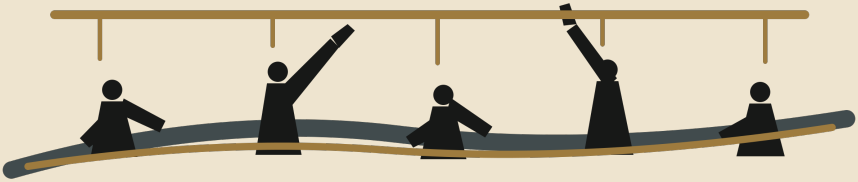
[74] Translator's note. *Mughsi* — a village honorific; apparently the dialect form of *mahdesi*, the title of one who has made the Jerusalem pilgrimage — named as a possibility only. Davit as printed.

[75] Translator's note. «Լեռնապար» — glyphs confirmed on the page image; plausibly 'the mountain range' (պար, as in the 'Armenian Par'), but unattested as a fixed toponym. Carried as a name, untranslated.

[76] Translator's note. «Շէյխ Թահիային» — the printed oblique form is confirmed; almost certainly Sheikh Taha of Shamdinan (Nehri) — the 'sheikh of Shamdinan' of this same page — but the base form (Tahia/Taha) is uncertain, and the printed one is kept.

[77] Translator's note. «Մադրիկցի» — kept as the page prints it; p.421 prints «Մազրիկցի» three times, and the Mazrik chief is plainly the man meant. The p.431 form was read across a line break with the merged descender, and it is carried with that fact recorded.

[78] Translator's note. «Շաւոն» — unattested name; transliterated.



CHAPTER XIV

The Salmast Field-Workers

Սալմաստի գործիչները

Salmast workers / legacy

THE FIELD-WORKERS OF SALMAST. – SAMSON, SARKIS.
I GO TO KHOY. MALKHAS.

THE MONASTERY OF THADDEUS ONCE MORE, WITH DOCTOR ROUBEN.

When I came from the Caucasus to Salmast a second time, I found little changed there. The party's affairs were going on in the old way, and had even taken on a stronger momentum.

Sasun having fallen, Andranik had come out with his soldiers toward Salmast by the road of the monastery; and behind him Koms too had come out of Van. In their place new comrades had crossed into the Land – Aram,[1] Harutiun, Shahbaz and the others.

Andranik and Koms had gone on abroad, but their soldiers had stayed in Salmast and had made a new atmosphere there.

As I said above, the Kurds and the Persians no longer used acts of violence[2] against the Armenian villages of Salmast, from the day the "Jan Fedayis"[3] had made their nest among the Armenians. The Armenian villages were, on the whole, free from plunder and destruction. The Kurds now did their looting and pillaging only out of the Tatar villages. In this way the Tatars' villages had been brought to a more wretched state than the Armenians'. The soldiers of Sasun and Mush, filling that

small district, had become the protectors not only of the Armenians but of the local Tatars as well. The Tatars of Salmast kept a few *fedayis* in their villages, because the presence of these men was enough to make the Kurds count that village a *fedayi* village and stop plundering its people, or even give back what they had already taken from them.

Many small incidents and skirmishes had taken place between the robbers and these newcomer soldiers, thanks to which, by all accounts, a friendship and a mutual sympathy had grown up between the local Tatars and the Armenians. For the same reason the fear of the *fedayis* had grown among the Kurds. This new state of things had one further use as well: it lifted from the party, and from the small Armenian population of Salmast, a part of the burden of keeping soldiers.

A few words, too, about the field-workers of Salmast – the men with whom, after staying only a month or two, I said goodbye and parted, thinking I would not see them again.

The party's representative at Salmast was Samson, "Samson Khan," as the Persians called him. The Armenians called him "Baron Samson."[4] As I said above, from the year 1898 that comrade single-handed took the place of all the field-workers of Salmast who, after the Khanasor Expedition, were forced to leave Persia. By the time he came to Salmast, the thorny road leading toward the Land had been cleared a good deal. In 7-8 years of its work the party had gained no little experience in binding the local people to itself, in being useful to the Land, in transporting arms, in keeping up communication, in sending bands, in cultivating relations with the government, and in work of other kinds. Samson made use of what had been gained, and was able to set the work carried on in Salmast and its neighborhood on firm foundations. He was able, with little

sacrifice and few casualties, to reach great results.

Samson had no great schooling, but by diligence and by teaching himself he had acquired a certain competence, so that he could give direction even to educated men and lead the work of the revolution. He was a craftsman, a gunsmith, who had worked earlier with Toros and Karo at Tabriz; but having a gift for observation, he had been able to acquire experience, and it was thanks to that that he had become an authority for the men around him.

Perhaps because his trade had shaped him so, he had tenacity and a strong will, and he could restrain and bring to heel armed forces that it was no light matter to govern or to hold under one's own authority. And in order to forestall disorders and to make the party's rules and traditions respected, he did not shrink from severe measures – from a beating all the way to shooting a man. In this way that short man had created around himself sympathy toward him, awe and fear. What helped in this too was the man's plain nature, his warmth and his tact, into which cunning was sometimes mixed.

He took no advantage of the position that the party, the men around him, or the government had given him. In his private life he had remained the same common workman, in his character and in his bearing toward others. He let his standing as a leader, as a khan, be felt only in the hours of work, and then very harshly; in his personal life he was a simple, gentle-tempered man, and it was by that that he bound every class of people to himself.

Salmast has given local forces as well, on whom our field-workers leaned. Among them were Martiros and Zakare,[5] who were a support to the Armenakan party, and who worked and were martyred for it. These men were not only local field-workers of Salmast but *fedayis* too, and they had played a large part in the "Joj Fight"[6] of Van.

Those men, who were Avetisian's own making, died at his side as well, near the Monastery of the Apostle Bartholomew.

There are many field-workers who win fame,[7] whose names are always remembered, but who in reality would have come to nothing if they had not had beside them men of the kind who are the true marrow and pith of the work. In the district of Salmast, if the leadership of the work belonged to Nikol, to Samson and to the others (and it was they who were seen and who gave the orders), still, beside them, there was in the village of Ghalasar a modest peasant, Sarkis by name, of whom one may say that he was the soul of the whole work of Salmast. If that original and self-sacrificing man had not been there, it would perhaps have been impossible, among the selfish and small-town people of Salmast, to create the unity and the spirit of sacrifice pointed to above, or to secure the safe and honest keeping of the arms and the party's goods. He was a man born a dervish, whose motto was to guard the party's property at any price, forgetting even his own person. This man

was the keeper and the carrier of goods worth millions, and yet he himself was always hungry and always poor. That plain peasant gathered up in himself the self-sacrifice and the idealism of the people, and lived only in brooding on the liberation and the independence of Armenia. He had seen many of his dearest comrades off on the road to the Land, where few arrived alive and from which fewer still came back. In him self-sacrifice had reached the point of self-forgetting and had become a kind of second nature. He was a noted marksman with the rifle, and he always wanted to go into a fight. He had taken part in the Khanasor Expedition. It is hard to describe these public workers of ours, who are the men really running the work, but who are ashamed to show it, and who count it a sin even to be conscious of it.

It was with such men that I was a guest for some 10 days. There they told me, among other things, of Sergei's (Aram's) crossing into the Land.

Our greatest amusement in that house was playing

with Kasar,[8] who was as faithful to that house as Sarkis was to the Party.

From there they called me to Tabriz (I do not remember on what business or why), where I stayed about a month, as secretary of the Central Committee. That office work, however, did not satisfy me; I wanted to cross into the Land as soon as I possibly could.

From Tabriz I went to Khoy. Kosti was no longer there; he had gone across to the Caucasus. There was a strange man of some kind there, in a broad hat, with a European's face and a European's clothes. He talked very fast, as though he had something in his mouth, and he spoke with the kind of sounds European pastors make. This man was one of our comrades from America, who had come to replace Kosti. He was called Malkhas, his real name Artashes Hovsepian, and he was the exact opposite of Kosti. Kosti was short and thick, Malkhas thin and long. The first went about in slovenly, torn clothes, while the gentleman who had come from America wore a European traveling outfit. Kosti was gentle-tempered and always smiling and thoughtful; the newcomer was always in a rage, as though he were about to fly at you, and he swore, calling you "dog, son of a dog." Kosti was patient, but he nursed grudges too; Malkhas was like gunpowder – *pchtatsogh*,[9] and then full of regret. Kosti led by his services, this one by his orders.

At Khoy Malkhas had made himself a standing that put one in mind of a khan's.[10] It could not be said, though, that in that country of khans he was doing wrong. That bearing of his was perhaps the right one, and may have been more useful than the bearing of the placid and meek Kosti, who used to clean the dung out of the stable.

– *Dzo*,[11] *brother*, well… I, the representative of the Dashnaktsutiun, am to go and put on a *hamshari*'s[12] clothes, take up the basket and carry out the dung, and after that go and negotiate with the Sheikh of Shamdinan and *federate*[13] with him. No – I do not understand that sort of thing.

Dzo, brother, dog, son of a dog, work does not get done that way…

Malkhas had just come from Shamdinan. He had gone, so he told me, to negotiate both with the Assyrians and with the Sheikh of Shamdinan (the son of Ibadulah).[14] I think I have already said that as far back as '96 there was a thought of establishing ties with the Kurds and the Assyrians, but those attempts had remained no more than attempts. Malkhas manages to meet with those sheikhs and begs, but the result is not great. Why should they strike their own full jug against our empty one? Sheikh Sadiq was all but a sovereign in Shamdinan, and had no need to rebel in company with the Armenians. Even so, he was well disposed toward the Armenians and in sympathy with the idea of independence. In 1895–96 he had not allowed his Kurds to take part in the massacres, saying that "after the Armenians they will massacre us." Even that much friendship was a great thing for the Armenians. This was the line Malkhas was working along, and he did not forget to tell me about his negotiations and about the reception fit for a king that had been given him.

– Dog, son of a dog, every one of you comes and goes straight into the Land, and we are to rot here among these *hamsharis* like donkeys, he would say to me.

With "Doctor" Rouben[15] I take the road again toward the Monastery of Thaddeus. The road is already familiar to me; I have been over it once before with this same Rouben.

Rouben has made me put on good clothes. He had set a European hat on my head and spectacles on my nose, which made my eyes ache. As we are entering the village of Korel,[16] at once, calling out "*hakəm-hati*,"[17] they all come up and tell the doctor their ailments. Many of them are shamming, and it is simply to get medicine that they pretend to be ill. The "*hakəm*" gives them powders of some sort that he has made up himself (in general he handed out a great deal of quinine to the genuinely sick, saying that "it is a harmless medicine").

They bring us a woman whose belly is swollen and who is half dead. Rouben had presented me as a great physician, a "*hakim-bashi*," and as a European. He has told me not to utter one word of Armenian, or Kurdish, or Turkish either, and to put on a very grave manner when serious cases are brought to us. I mumble words in German or in other languages. They bring the sick woman to us and lay her down in front of me. From my schoolbook I recite a line I had learned by heart – «Այն լամ քոմ ցու այնէմ բախսէ» (A lamb draws near to a brook).[18] Rouben translates my words, saying that the doctor orders the swollen place on the patient to be opened. I go on with my German words in the same way, and Rouben goes on with his "translation," saying that "the *hakim-bashi* orders you to take the patient away and lay her down in comfort, that he has prescribed medicine for her, but that he cannot operate, because he has no instruments with him…" Out of that village we take guards along with us, by way of payment for the doctoring done, so as to bring safely to their destination the goods and the arms we were carrying to the monastery.

We reach the monastery. It is the same monastery and the same men. Nothing has changed. The villagers stand about idly in the shade of the *atar*[19] stacks. The same tedious[20] solitude, the same bleary-eyed old woman of a housekeeper with her *tanabur*.

I am to wait there until the snow draws back a little toward the mountains and the couriers can get through. To kill the days we want to put up a building. We repair the walls of the mill, and then we set about finishing the school building, whose construction had been begun. A new wall had to be raised to complete the second room. And the somewhat crooked and lopsided wall built there is the work of my hands and Rouben's.(*)

(*) Doctor Rouben's dream was the question of when "this dog-and-son-of-a-dog nation was to be set free, so that we too might go and

So as to be able to cross into the Land as a peasant in disguise, I began going about bare again, so that my chest should darken in the sun. I began again to walk barefoot, so that my feet should harden for the *charukhs*, and so that I too, like a poor man, might be able to walk unshod over the mountains and the ravines.

In those days Artashes Melkonian came to the Monastery from the Caucasus. I was to cross into Vaspurakan together with him.

live like a dog"… When the Constitution[21] is proclaimed, he crosses into Vaspurakan and settles at Akants,[22] meaning to live a life of his own. But at the beginning of the war he is arrested among the first, as a dangerous man, together with Ter-Zarvadar[23] (Ter-Mkrtich, and formerly Zarvadar Hagop); and those two, who had worked together at Khoy and Maku and had dreamed together of living a quiet life, are killed together as well.

END OF VOLUME ONE

Notes

[1] Translator's note. «Ա՛րամը[?]» — the page prints Ա, then a solid, shapeless blob in the next letter position, then ր-ա-մ-ը̲. The most likely explanation is a broken sort or an ink blot inside «Արամը» (cf. the Ch. VIII «Մբատոն»); «Աբրամը» and «Սլամը» were considered and rejected as unattested and as poor fits to the capital. THE LETTERFORM REMAINS UNRESOLVED. In corroboration of the person — not of the p.432 glyphs — p.435 of this same chapter speaks of «Սերգէյի (Արամի) Երկիր անցնիլը», Sergei's (Aram's) crossing into the Land, which is exactly the event this list refers to. Rendered Aram.

[2] Translator's note. «Բռնութիւններ[?]» — the page prints the second glyph as ռ where the only real word wants ռ, and ռ and ռ merge in this fount at every magnification. «Բռնութիւններ», 'acts of violence', is the only word the letters allow, and the sentence is rendered by that sense; the glyph itself remains unresolved. The identical query stands at Ch. XIII, p.426.

[3] Translator's note. «Ջան Ֆիտայիները» — the *janfedayi* of Ch. VIII (*jan*, 'soul, life', + *fedayi*): the Armenian escorts whom the caravans, the post and even the troops of Persia asked for. The page prints the group's name with «Ֆիտայի» (ի) where the rest of the chapter prints «Ֆէտայի» (է); that vowel variance is the book's own and is not harmonized. THE INITIAL CARRIES NO CASE CONTRAST: this fount sets one and the same Ֆ/ֆ sort — a two-story form with a loop above the x-height and a descender below the baseline — at all four occurrences (pp.432, 433 twice, 434), so the mixed casing in the Armenian text is an editorial normalization and not a distinction the page makes.

[4] Translator's note. *Baron* is the ordinary Armenian courtesy title, the equivalent of 'Mr.' The sentence turns on the contrast: to the Persians he was «Խան», to his own people plain «Պարոն».

[5] Translator's note. «Զաքարէն» — the base form on the page is «Զաքարէ», Zakare. The printed final -ն is the definite article, not part of the name: the coordinate name in the same phrase is «Մարտիրոսն», Մարտիրոս with the same article taken before the vowel of «ու», and «Զաքարէն» stands before the vowel of «որոնք»; if the base had been «Զաքար», the articled form before a vowel would have been «Զաքարն». The ablative reading of -էն is ruled out, since the phrase is the nominative subject of «էին». What remains open is the initial capital, which belongs to the display family in which Զ, Չ, Ջ and Ձ cannot be told apart, so Jakare and Dzakare are equally possible on the glyphs; Zakare is chosen as the attested Armenian name. Martiros and Zakare are not identified and are not equated with any other Martiros or Zakar in the book.

[6] Translator's note. The "Joj Fight" — *joj* is the Van dialect word for 'big, great' (= մեծ; cf. Joj Agha, Ch. XIII). The name is the attested one for the great Van fight of 1896, which is exactly what the sentence describes.

[7] Translator's note. «հոչակ[?]» — as with «բոնութիւններ» above, the page prints n where the word wants ռ. «Հռչակ», 'fame', is the only real word the letters allow, and the sense is settled; the glyph remains unresolved.

[8] Translator's note. «Քասարի» — the letters are secure. The book says nothing further about Kasar than that he was faithful to that house, and nothing is supplied here: no animal, person or thing is named for him. Carried as a name.

[9] Translator's note. «փչտացող[?]» — UNRESOLVED, and left transliterated. The glyphs փ-[չ/շ]-տ-ա-ց-ո-ղ are stable at high magnification, but the form answers to no standard Armenian word; a dialect form or a 1952 typesetting error is named as the possibility only. It is the first half of the author's gunpowder simile, and no verb has been substituted for it and no object named.

[10] Translator's note. The word is «խանութիւն», 'khan-ness' — the manner and standing of a khan — and not «խանութ», 'shop'. The next sentence, 'in that country of khans', settles it.

[11] Translator's note. «Ծո՛» — a rough, familiar vocative of the spoken language, thrown at a man to get his attention; roughly 'hey, you there'. Transliterated, with the printed emphasis mark carried by the italics.

[12] Translator's note. «համշարու», and «համշարիներու» on the next page — the *hamshahir* of Ch. VIII (Pers./Turk. *hemşehri*, 'fellow-townsman'; in these pages used of the Persian

menial laborer), in two more of the book's printed forms. Each is carried where it stands and none is harmonized; cf. the «Համշարի» of Ch. XIII, p.397.

[13] Translator's note. The Armenian is «դաշնակցի՛մ», the verb «դաշնակցիլ», 'to make a pact, to federate' — which is the root of the party's own name, Դաշնակցութիւն, the Federation, and which Malkhas has just used in its party sense two clauses earlier. The printed շեշտ on the final syllable makes the play audible; 'federate' is used so that the pun survives, and the emphasis is carried in italics.

[14] Translator's note. «Իբադուլահի[?]» — the page prints Ի-բ-ա-դ-ո-ւ-լ-ա-հ-ի with a single լ, and the initial capital is in the merged Ի/Ր/Ւ family. Sheikh Ubeydullah of Nehri is evidently the man meant, since the son named lower on the same page, «Շէյխ Սադըղը», is Sheikh Sadiq. That identification is confined to this note: the printed form stands in the text.

[15] Translator's note. DOCTOR ROUBEN IS NOT THE AUTHOR. Rouben Derdzakian — a 'doctor' with no diploma, one of the two veteran field-workers into whose charge the young Rouben Der Minassian was given at Khoy, and the man who led the earlier ride to the Monastery of the Apostle Thaddeus in Ch. IX — is a different person from the narrating 'I' of these pages. The author's own quotation marks around «Բժիշկ» are kept, and the word 'Doctor' is used throughout this section for the sole purpose of keeping the two men apart.

[16] Translator's note. «Կորել[?]» — the letters Կ-ո-ր-ե-լ are secure, but the village, somewhere on the Khoy–Thaddeus road, is not identified with any known toponym, and none is proposed for it. Transliterated only.

[17] Translator's note. «հաքըմ-հաթի[?]» — carried exactly as printed, and UNIDENTIFIED. The page prints հ-ա-ք-ը-մ – հ-ա-թ-ի: the two letters are distinguished from each other inside this one hyphenated word, and the control stands two lines above on the same page, «եւ քթիս՝ ակնոցներ», where ք and թ are set side by side — ք an x-height bowl with a descender and no ascender, թ a loop with a tall ascender crossing it. The second element is four letters with the closing guillemet immediately after. It is the villagers' cry for the doctor, and the first element is the «Հաքըմ» of the next sentence; whether the second element is a form of *hakim* (Arab./Turk. *hakim*, 'physician'; *hakim-bashi*, 'chief physician', twice on the next page) is possible but not established, and NO NORMALIZATION IS MADE and no meaning is carried over onto «հաթի». The book's own per-page wobble between «հաքըմ» and «հաքիմ» is preserved.

[18] Translator's note. The line is German, set down in Armenian letters as a schoolboy heard it: *Ein Lamm kam zu einem Bache*, 'a lamb came to a brook'. The macaronic form is carried exactly as the page prints it, and the parenthesis after it is the author's own printed gloss, kept as a parenthesis; note that his Armenian renders the verb in the present («կը մօտենայ», 'draws near') where the German has a past tense. No source is proposed for the line beyond the author's own words, that it came from his schoolbook.

[19] Translator's note. «աթարի դէզերու» — the author gives no gloss for *atar*. Heaped in stacks beside the village and standing high enough to throw shade, it is most likely the dried dung-fuel of the treeless plateau (cf. *khushki*, Ch. VIII) — named here as the likely sense only, and not asserted. Transliterated.

[20] Translator's note. «ձանձրանալի[?]» — the page prints ten letters where the standard adjective ձանձրալի has eight; the printed form is built instead on ձանձրանալ ('to be bored'), and ձ is preferred over ճ on the real stem ձանձր-. The sense of the stem, 'tedious', is rendered; the form itself remains unresolved.

[21] Translator's note. Evidently the Ottoman Constitution, restored in July 1908, since it is on its proclamation that Doctor Rouben crosses into Ottoman Vaspurakan; Ch. XIII calls it 'the Turkish Constitution'.

[22] Translator's note. «Ականց» — transliterated as printed and not located; no modern or alternative name is proposed for it.

[23] Translator's note. «Տէր-Զարվադարի» — the printed initial is Զ, and here that is certain rather than presumed. This footnote is set in the upright fount, not the italic of the body, and in the upright fount Զ and Չ do not belong to the merged display-cap family: the two are plainly distinguishable at magnification, and the letter on the page is Զ. THE TWO PRINTED NAMES ARE THEREFORE DEFINITIVELY DISTINCT: Ter-Zarvadar here, Ter-Charvadar («Չարվատար», with Չ) in Ch. VIII. The Ch. VIII man is likewise a priest and a muleteer by by-name who worked at Khoy and Maku and was killed after the outbreak of the war, and the resemblance is recorded here for the reader; but the names differ on the page, THE BOOK MAKES NO EQUATION AND NONE IS ASSERTED. The «Զարվադար» of Ch. XIII, p.414, is itself a flagged reading and is cited only as a cross-reference. The parenthesis giving the man's priestly name and his lay name is the author's own.

THE ROAD OF MEMORY

In 1904, Rouben Der Minassian entered the revolutionary world of Kars and began a road through Gyumri, Erevan, Persia, Saint Thaddeus, Batum, and the frontier.

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Original edition: Horizon Press, Los Angeles, 1952

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