



**Andrey Maksimchik, Oksana Solopova, Ekaterina Roeva-Mkrtchyan, A Study Worthy of a Hero Admiral, Moscow, 2024, 384 p.
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The world changes and renews every day. However, there are values that remain enduring and irreplaceable in this constantly changing and renewing world. In these difficult days for us, national consolidation and unity are extremely important. To be able to face the challenges presented to us, the proper and Armenian upbringing of the younger generation becomes absolutely necessary. For this

nation-benefiting work, a renewed and thorough appreciation of national values and our prominent figures is crucial. One such figure was Admiral Hovhannes Isakov of the USSR, whose life and glorious path offer many valuable lessons.

Recently, we gratefully received the magnificent volume, “Admiral Isakov”, from Armen Khechoyan, a dedicated advocate for the preservation and dissemination of national values and the head of the “Aniv” Armenian Studies Research Assistance and Development Fund¹. The authors of this high-quality printed book are A. N. Maksimchik, O. V. Solopova, and E. B. Raeva-Mkrtchyan. It was edited by A. V. Khechoyan, O. V. Solopova, and I. A. Permyakov. The volume is truly a worthy addition to the “Menk” (We) series dedicated to the Admiral, printed in Italy by “Artigrafiche and Diaries” publishing house.

Throughout centuries, due to historical fate, Armenians have found themselves in various countries around the world, making their undeniable contributions and leaving a deep mark in the art, culture, science, political life, and other spheres of those countries. Unfortunately, people know very little about them. It is precisely to fill this gap that the “Menk” series publishes research albums dedicated to prominent Armenians. These come to supplement the well-known fact that Armenians were fourth among the peoples of the USSR in the composition of generals and admirals of the army and navy, officers of the air force and artillery, and sixth in the list of Heroes of the USSR. And when comparing the number of Armenian victims and heroes with the population of the Armenian SSR during those years, it becomes clear that Armenians were leaders in the USSR². The total number of marshals, admirals, and generals of Armenian origin is 162 people³, of whom 68 received the highest military ranks between 1940 and 1945, and

¹ Maksimchik A. N., Solopova O. V., Raeva-Mkrtchyan E. B., Admiral Isakov, M. 2024, 383 pages.

² Malkhasyan A., Armenian Figures of the Soviet Army, Yerevan, 1965, 114 pages, 656 pages.

³ Harutyunyan K.A., Poghosyan G.R., The Contribution of the Armenian People to the Victory in the Great Patriotic War, M., 2010, p. 78, 874 pages.

94 between 1946 and 1997⁴. Among Armenian high-ranking naval officers, 4 held the rank of Vice-Admiral, and 6 held the rank of Counter-Admiral. Hovhannes Isakov was an Admiral of the USSR Navy, a rank equivalent to that of a Marshal of the USSR.

Isakov belongs to those whose lives are incomparably richer than the legends woven around them. This work, written based on verified and completely reliable factual sources, is complemented by photographs reflecting various episodes of Isakov's life and other useful materials. Incidentally, the authors of the project not only carry out patriotic work but also published this exquisitely and tastefully designed volume through their own financial sacrifices.

Composed of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, notes, an appendix, and an Armenian summary, this volume dedicated to Admiral Isakov, "The Brain of the Soviet Fleet," uses materials from archives in Russia, Armenia, the USA, Finland, Belarus, Georgia, Estonia, and other countries. There are also a large number of photographs that make the narrative more objective, visible, and convincing.

It is known that in the USSR, the rank of Fleet Admiral was conferred on only three individuals: N. M. Kuznetsov, S. G. Gorshkov, and the Armenian I. S. Isakov. This excellent work dedicated to the latter presents the pages of his life and his glorious path in considerable detail and at an appropriate scientific level. The study is a unique heroic narrative to the immortal memory of Admiral I. Isakov.

The **introduction** describes how a youth in love with the sea left his native home at an early age and dedicated all his subsequent activities to strengthening the USSR Navy. It clarifies that a significant number of works have been written and several films made about Isakov's life and activities. At the same time, the authors express regret that the talented admiral did not write memoirs, and to this day, some pages of his biography need final clarification. This study-album, dedicated to the talented admiral's 130th anniversary, not only fills this gap and answers several unilluminated questions but also draws the attention of future researchers to writing deeper and more comprehensive studies. The authors rightly emphasized an important point: "Isakov's brief biography is presented against the backdrop of the era in which he lived"⁵. It is clarified that Isakov was born not on August 22, 1894, as stated in all records, but on September 3. The authors then expressed their gratitude to the organizations and individuals who willingly provided the archival sources used.

The **first chapter**, titled "Homeland. Family. Education and Combat Baptism," states that Hovhannes (Ivan) Stepani (Stepanovich) Isahakyan (Isakov) was born in 1894 in the village of Ajikend (Northern Artsakh) in the Elisabethpol Governorate, into an Artsakh Armenian family. His father was Stepan, a road engineer, and his mother was Ida. His older brother was Poghos, and his sister was Mariam. After living in Baku for 11 years, their family moved to Tbilisi in 1905. Here, Hovhannes entered the local real school, and after graduating, he moved to St. Petersburg in 1913 and enrolled in

⁴ Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia, Volume 13 (supplement volume "Soviet Armenia"), pages 665, 666.

⁵ Maksimchik A. N., Solopova O. V., Raeva-Mkrtychyan E. B., Admiral Isakov, p. 6.

the local Peter the Great Polytechnic Institute. After several unsuccessful attempts, he was finally admitted to the naval school on September 15, 1914. From June to September 1915, he sailed for the first time in the Pacific Ocean, always guided by the principle: "A sailor without order and discipline is a useless rag"⁶.

After sailing in various waters for a long time and passing a successful exam, Isakov became a junior naval officer on January 15, 1916. By May 27, for excellent performance of duties and successes in science, he was promoted to senior ensign, and on March 25, 1917, to midshipman. Participating in a number of military operations, Isakov met the October Revolution on the ship "Izyaslav," which had joined the Soviet army, and was elected senior assistant to the captain. Subsequently, Isakov was seconded to the Volga-Caspian Flotilla, where, as commander of the ship "Deyatelny," he participated in the liberation of Astrakhan, ensuring the victorious march of the 11th Army, and the battles for the return of ships that had fled to the Iranian port of Anzali. He received commendation from the command and was sent to Moscow.

The **second chapter**, "Promotion in the Navy," presents factual evidence of Isakov's activities in several important positions. For example, in 1920, he was appointed commander of the special purpose ship "Yakor" of the Baltic Fleet, which successfully cleared the Baltic Sea of mines, removing 2527 mines. In 1927, Isakov was appointed senior assistant to the commander of the cruiser "Pobeditel." Subsequently, at the age of 26, he became the youngest commander of the destroyer "Izyaslav" in the USSR Navy.

In 1923, he served in the Black Sea Fleet. He was appointed **Naval Commander of the Batumi port**, then of the Black Sea Fleet's operational division, and in 1924, commander of the ship "Corfu." Subsequently, he became head of coastal service, successfully **restoring all Black Sea ports** between 1926 and 1927. After brilliantly completing advanced training courses in 1927, he was appointed head of the First Department of the Staff in 1928. Notably, during all those years, he regularly published professional articles. In 1929, he was appointed assistant head of the Operational Management Department of the General Staff. In 1931, he was seconded to the Far East. In 1932, he began teaching at the Leningrad Naval Academy and rose to the position of its head. In 1933, he was appointed head of a special purpose expedition, then of the Baltic Fleet, and on December 30, 1937, **Deputy People's Commissar of the USSR Navy**. Having fully earned the trust of the authorities, the figure was sent to France in 1938, then to the USA, with the aim of modernizing and improving the USSR Navy. Isakov, having brilliantly fulfilled his mission, joined the **CPSU in 1939**. During the Finnish War, he was sent to Kronstadt and distinguished himself remarkably, for which he was awarded the rank of **Fleet Admiral on June 4, 1940**. That is, Isakov, who distinguished himself remarkably during the most difficult period for the Soviet naval forces, rose from ensign to the rank of Admiral.

⁶ Maksimchik A. N., Solopova O. V., Raeva-Mkrtchyan E. B., Admiral Isakov, p. 33.

The **third chapter**, titled “Ordeal of the Great Patriotic War Years,” states that this was Isakov’s fourth war, and he overcame this ordeal with heroic actions. At the beginning of the war, the USSR had four fleets - the Northern, Baltic, Black Sea, and Pacific. On June 24, 1941, Isakov left for Leningrad to organize the fight against fascist Germany on the spot. Marshal Zhukov wrote about those days: “Isakov was one of the strongest and most talented commanders, who brilliantly fulfilled all his tasks”⁷. In 1941, near Shlisselburg, the indomitable defender of Leningrad lost hearing in his left ear due to an aerial bomb.

In the same year, 1941, by government order, Isakov was seconded to Crimea, then to the Far East to counter the Japanese. Subsequently, we see him in Krasnodar, where he led and successfully carried out operations in the battles for Kerch. As Deputy Commander of the Transcaucasian Front, Isakov sustained a serious injury from aerial bombardment in 1942. When Professor B. Petrov told him that they would have to amputate his right leg, the admiral, suffering in pain, replied: “Save my head so I can fight against the despicable enemy.” Ultimately, with great difficulty, they managed to transport the wounded admiral to Tbilisi, where his leg was amputated. After this, Isakov focused more on scientific and organizational activities: in 1944, he was appointed **chief editor of the monumental work “Essays on the History of the USSR Navy.”** And in 1945, a special commission awarded him the degree of **Doctor of Naval Sciences without defending a dissertation**. On May 31, 1944, he was awarded the rank of **Admiral of the Fleet**.

The **fourth chapter**, titled “Ordered to Live and Work”: Post-War Activities, details Isakov’s patriotic work during the difficult post-war years. Due to his continuously deteriorating health, he was forced to resign from the position of Chief of Staff of the USSR Navy, which he had held since 1940, on April 21, 1945. His tireless talent and energy brilliantly manifested themselves this time in the scientific and organizational field. Since the USSR Navy was heavily damaged during the war, the government undertook the difficult task of restoring and rebuilding it. In these efforts, Admiral Isakov again proved to be intelligent and knowledgeable, contributing optimally to the successful implementation of this task.

On February 28, 1950, a medical commission declared Isakov unfit for military service. However, he did not despair and began to work with great zeal in the scientific and organizational sphere. Under his leadership, the monumental collection of maps, “**Naval Atlas**,” was created, which received the **State Prize in 1951**. It should be noted that he was also elected a **deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR**. In 1958, he was unanimously elected a **corresponding member of the USSR Academy of Sciences**, and in 1967, an **honorary member of the Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences**. In 1965, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of victory, Admiral Isakov

⁷ Maksimchik A. N., Solopova O. V., Raeva-Mkrtchyan E. B., *Admiral Isakov*, p. 204.

was awarded the title of **Hero of the USSR**. He passed away on **October 11, 1967, in Moscow**.

The authors of the work present Isakov's visit to Soviet Armenia with particular enthusiasm, as well as the history of his warm friendly ties with Armenian military, political, and cultural figures, providing several anecdotes about this.

The **conclusion** section rightly notes that the history of the USSR Navy is closely linked with Isakov's name, that they complement each other and directly contributed to mutual development and improvement. At the same time, it clarifies that fate was never kind to him, and he achieved the rank of admiral from an ordinary sailor thanks to his selfless dedication and incredible diligence to his beloved work.

The fact that the work about the Armenian admiral also includes an Armenian summary is entirely understandable and commendable. It states that the study was written based on materials from archives, museums, and private collections in 9 countries, and features over 300 photographs. Structurally, the work consists of chronologically arranged chapters and supplementary sections. These meticulously and consistently present the important phases of I. Isakov's life. Finally, the conclusions drawn from the main content of the book are briefly summarized.

In conclusion, we should note that a colossal amount of work has been done, and all the requirements for a book-album have been met. The sources used are cited with proper scientific rigor. The material is written in literate and accessible Russian and is easy to read. As an Armenian historian, I not only highly appreciate the work done but also express my deep gratitude to the authors, the editorial staff, the printers, and indeed, the entire personnel who contributed to presenting this work to the reader. At the same time, I express hope that in the future, we will continue to see new works of such a high standard.

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Translated from Armenian by Gevorg Harutyunyan