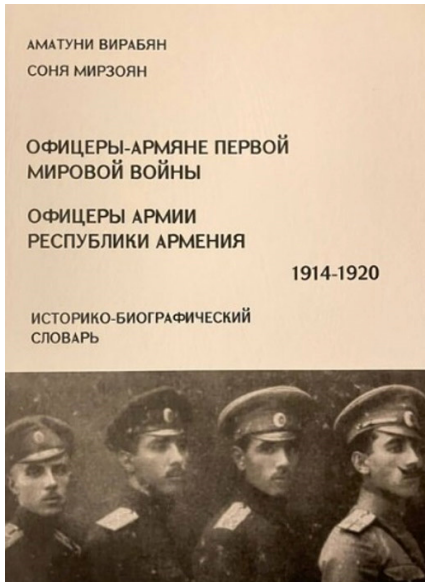


ARMENIAN OFFICERS IN THE WORLD WAR I. OFFICERS OF THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA. 1914-1920: HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY (DOCTOR IN HISTORY A. S. VIRABYAN, CANDIDATE OF HISTORICAL SCIENCES S. S. MIRZOYAN). YEREVAN, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF ARMENIA, 2022, 1392 P., 40 P. OF ILLUSTRATIONS



*"Death, unanticipated, is death;
death, anticipated, is immortality"*

After many years of the intensive scientific research, the National Archives of Armenia has published the historical-biographical dictionary of the officers who have participated in the First World War and served in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia, where their combat path, positions held, awards, etc., were presented. Many previously unreleased documents have been put into circulation, with the help of which the biographical data of different officers has been clarified or supplemented. We should say that a large-scale research work has been carried out, which has been supported by archive specialists Gohar Avagyan, Candidate of Historical Sciences, Hayk Virabyan, Candidate of Historical Sciences, in addition to the compilers, Amatuni Virabyan, Doctor of History, and Sonya Mirzoyan, Candidate of Historical Sciences. Nune Balbabyan and Svetlana Sargsyan have participated in the preparation of the work, too. The publication of the biographical dictionary has been supported by the Doctor of History Sergey V. Volkov and Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences Rafael M. Abrahamyan. The study has been published under the sponsorship of Vardges Artsruni (1941-2019), an honored builder and philanthropist of the Russian Federation. The biographies of more than 7,000 Armenian officers are presented in the compilation.¹

The compilers have used the 17 funds stored in the National Academy of Sciences, as well as some Russian archives and the Internet,² when compiling the historical-biographical dictionary.

A significant number of Armenian officers have participated in combat operations on various battlefields of the First World War. Armenian has officers fought in various military units of the Caucasian Front (Russian-Turkish) in the Armenian volunteer militia groups or druzhinas (retinue) formed by the Russian government, where foreign Armenians were also included. The groups were led by famous Hayduks (type of irregular infantry) and figures Andranik Ozanyan, Drastamat Kanayan (Dro), Hamazasp

¹ Armenian Officers in the First World War. Officers of the Army of the Republic of Armenia. 1914-1920: Historical and biographical dictionary /Doctor of History A. S. Virabyan, Candidate of Historical Sciences S. S. Mirzoyan. Yerevan, National Archives of Armenia, 2022, p. 30.

² Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 31.

Srvandztyants (Hamazasp), Arshak Gavafyan (Keri), Sargis Mehrabyan (Vardan of Khanasor), Hayk Bzhishkyants (Gai), Hovsep Arghutyan and others. According to the description of General Tovmas Nazarbekyan, the commanders of the volunteer groups were “beloved leaders of the people”,³ and according to the assessment of General Evgeny Maslovsky, they devoted themselves completely to the liberation of the motherland.⁴ At the same time, he notes that the druzhinas were organized for political purposes,⁵ because the battles would take place in Western Armenia and the Russian army needed the support of the local Armenian population.

Armenian groups, or druzhinas have actively participated in combat operations and especially invaluable in conducting reconnaissance operations. In 1914-1916, they gained experience in conducting wars in the conditions, required by that time, which was later used in the fight against the Turkish-Kurdish forces in 1917-1920.

The Russian government, unlike the military, treated volunteer groups with suspicion and mistrust, so it was waiting for a suitable opportunity to disorganize them. In summer of 1916, the Russian command disbanded the volunteer groups, on the basis of which six rifle battalions were organized, one of which was a reserve unit. The commanders of the battalions were Armenian officers of the Russian army. The battalions take part in the combat operations on the Caucasian front, but, being careful again, the command did not unite them into one tactical unit.

The situation changed after the February Revolution, when by the order of the Supreme Commander of the Russian Army, General Alexei Brusilov, on June 19, 1917, the Armenian rifle battalions were reorganized into rifle regiments consisting of two battalions. According to the order of June 28, the rifle regiments were reorganized into the Armenian Rifle Brigade, whose commander was Colonel and then Major General Pavel Bezhanbek (1869-1956).⁶

On October 23, 1917, the formation of the 2nd Armenian Rifle Brigade began, the commander of which was appointed Lieutenant Colonel Poghos (Pavel) Ter-Sargisov (1871-1920). On November 16, by the order of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, the formation of the Armenian Corps was initiated, the commander of which was appointed General Tovmas Nazarbekyan (Foma Nazarbekov, 1855-1931). The corps consisted of 1687 officers and 10388 soldiers (11675 soldiers in total), and the Armenian collective detachment - 179 officers, 13,679 soldiers and 1,000 horsemen (14,858 in total).⁷

In this period, the continuous formations of the Armenian military units took place, which have been presented in details in this dictionary.⁸

³ R. Sahakyan, *The Unreleased Memoirs of Tovmas Nazarbekyan*, Vem, 2019, N 1, p. 277, NAA, fund 45, inv. 1, file 1, sheets 14-15.

⁴ E. V. Maslovsky. *World War on the Caucasian Front in 1914-1917*, Strategic Essay, Paris, 1933, p. 38.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 40.

⁶ *Armenian Officers in the First World War*, p. 5-6.

⁷ *Armenian Officers in the First World War*, p. 15.

⁸ *Armenian Officers in the First World War*, p. 7-19.

Specialists and readers were somewhat aware of the Armenian officers who fought on the Caucasian (Russian-Turkish) front, but the biography of the Armenian officers who participated in combat operations on the Russian-Austrian front was new. Such an attitude has several reasons: specialists have always been more interested in the Caucasian front, where important events for the Armenian people took place: volunteer movement, self-defense battles of Western Armenians, genocide of Western Armenians, reconstruction of Western Armenia, etc. One of the reasons is that the “former” officers who served in the Soviet Army tried not to “remember” their positions in the tsarist or RA armies and their participation in combat operations. As it is well known, some of them, such as Generals Hovhannes Hakhverdyan, Movses Silikyan, were shot, and others were sentenced to different prison terms.

The compilers of the dictionary note that 7 Armenian Druzhinas were formed in the Viceroyalty of the Caucasus, the number of whose personnel reached up to 10 000.⁹ In total, 250,000 Russian-subject Armenians, 50,000 Armenians from France, Great Britain and Armenia participated in the Great War. 60 thousand out of around 300 thousand Armenian servicemen were killed or wounded (page 4).

We consider it necessary to mention that not all Armenians who came as volunteers from abroad, especially from the USA, took part in combat operations.

From the research done by the compilers of the dictionary, it turns out that 6,440 Armenian officers have participated in the First World War, of whom:

| № | Rank | Number |
|----|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | General | 65 |
| 2 | Colonel | 225 |
| 3 | Lieutenant Colonel | 155 |
| 4 | Captain ¹⁰ | 285 |
| 5 | Rittmeister ¹¹ | 27 |
| 6 | Stabskapitän ¹² | 540 |
| 7 | Stabsrittmeister ¹³ | 46 |
| 8 | Lieutenant ¹⁴ | 1035 |
| 9 | Podporuchik ¹⁵ | 1290 |
| 10 | Cornet ¹⁶ | 85 |
| 11 | Second Lieutenant ¹⁷ | 2450 ¹⁸ |

⁹ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 4.

¹⁰ Chief in the RA army, “Razmik”, Yerevan, 1920, N 1.

¹¹ Senior officer rank in cavalry, corresponding to captain of infantry.

¹² Senior officer rank given to company commanders.

¹³ Senior officer rank, assistant cavalry commander rank. Deputy Chief of Staff in the RA Army, “Razmik”, 1920, N 1.

¹⁴ Junior officer rank. Deputy in the RA army, see “Razmik”, 1920, N 1.

¹⁵ Junior officer rank. Deputy officer in the RA army, see “Razmik”, 1920, N 1

¹⁶ Junior officer rank.

About 240 of the mentioned officers were killed, missing or died during the combat operations¹⁹. 720 officers participated in the anti-Bolshevik White movement. 65 of them were killed or shot by the Bolsheviks²⁰.

In 1918-1920, more than 3,400 officers from the First World War served in the Armenian Army, of which 2,785 were Armenians, and 615 were of different nationalities, mostly Russians.²¹

In a separate Armenian army corps served:

| № | Rank | Number |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | General ²² | 49 |
| 2 | Colonel ²³ | 140 |
| 3 | Lieutenant Colonel ²⁴ | 115 ²⁵ |

16 of the generals, 73 of the colonels and 50 of the lieutenant colonels belonged to other nationalities.²⁶ 80 of them served in the White Army in 1918-1919.²⁷ About 160 officers of the Armenian Army died in service or died as a result of various diseases.²⁸

After the establishment of Soviet Rule in Armenia, in January 1921, 850 officers were arrested and sent to Baku under the “disposition” of the 11th Red Army, after which they were deported to the Ryazan concentration camp.²⁹

About 150 officers took part in the anti-Bolshevik uprising in February of 1921. Some of them left for abroad, and then some of them returned to Soviet Armenia in 1921-1922. About 635 officers served in the Red Army, and 330 of them participated in the Great Patriotic War.³⁰

¹⁷ Junior officer rank. In the RA army, Second Lieutenant, “Razmik”, Yerevan, 1920, N 1.

¹⁸ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 31.

¹⁹ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 31.

²⁰ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 31.

²¹ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 31.

²² On May 28, 1920, the government thanked the RA Army Sparapet, Infantry General T. Nazarbekyan for his service. Major Generals Daniel Bek-Pirumyan and Kostandin Gamazyan were awarded the title of Lieutenant General, “Razmik”, 1920, N 4.

²³ Chief in the RA Army.

²⁴ Deputy Chief in the RA Army.

²⁵ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 31.

²⁶ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 31.

²⁷ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 31.

²⁸ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 31.

²⁹ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 31.

³⁰ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 31.

In the 1920s and 1930s, 635 officers were shot and about 200 were imprisoned, 25 were arrested and released after some time.³¹ Among them, Lieutenant Samvel Hambardzumyan (1894-1955) participated in the war and then served in the Armenian 2nd Infantry Regiment. In January 1921, he was deported to the Ryazan concentration camp, but managed to escape, after which he joined the Red Army and was even placed in the field commission for combating desertion. In 1938 he was arrested and sentenced to 10 years in prison, and then he was released and exiled to Kazakhstan.³²

The Armenian servicemen who were awarded with three or four crosses of the George Cross have been presented in the biographical dictionary.³³ This award was given to privates and junior officers who distinguished themselves in battle. It should be added that by the decree of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation in 1992, the status of the “Georgian Cross” was restored.

For the compilation of the work, several Internet websites have been used, which made it possible to fill in the problems related to the biography of some personalities, their combat path, some of which we would like to present.

Second Lieutenant Levon G. Bashinjaghyan (1893-1938) studied at the Faculty of History and Philology of St. Petersburg University and participated in the World War. He graduated from the Pavlov Military Academy (1.12.1916). After the Soviet Rule was established, he was exiled to Persia (1921-1922), then returned to his homeland and continued studying in Petrograd. He worked in various research institutes. He was arrested and shot on October 17, 1938. The officer was the son of the famous painter Gevorg Bashinjaghyan (1857-1925).³⁴

Captain Grigory Bashinjaghyan (1887-1918), the elder brother of famous film director Hamo Beknazaryan, participated in the war and served in the 6th Armenian Rifle Regiment. He died in the hospital from the wounds received in the battle.³⁵

Second Lieutenant Artem Hovhannisyan (Ovanesov Khan-Kotursky, ?-1930), held the position of the head of the counterintelligence department of the headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet on the Romanian front. He held various positions in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia, including the head of the counter-intelligence department of the General Staff (1918), acting head of the intelligence department of the headquarters of the commander of the RA troops.³⁶

The participants of the First World War were brothers Mikhail (Michael, 1892 - 1920) Georgits (1886- ?) Manaseryan (Manaseryants). The eldest of them, Georgy, served in the RA Army. During the Soviet years, he served in the military-engineering department.³⁷

³¹ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 141-142.

³² Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 31.

³³ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 31.

³⁴ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 291.

³⁵ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 305.

³⁶ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 898.

³⁷ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 692-693.

Lieutenant Colonel Khoren Igithkanyan (1887-1938) started his military career in 1907. A graduate of the Tiflis Infantry Academy (1912), he passed an additional exam and received the qualification of an artillery officer. He fought on the Russian-Austrian front. He was the Commander of the 1st battery of the 2nd Armenian rifle-artillery brigade. He participated in the battles of Sardarapat and Bash Aparan (May 1918). He was the participant of the Armenian-Georgian war (1918). After the Soviet regime was established, he was exiled to the Ryazan concentration camp (January 1921), but managed to escape on the way, and then joined the Red Army, where he held various command positions.

Grigory Khakhanyan (Grigor Ter-Khakhanyan, 1895-1939) participated in the World War with the rank of Second Lieutenant. He joined the Red Army and participated in the attack on the Winter Palace in Petrograd. He is the participant of civil war in Russia, as well as Soviet-Polish War (1918-1920). He studied at the military-academic courses of the High Command Staff (1923-1924). He was the head of the military faculty of the Air Fleet Academy named after Professor N. E. Zhukovsky (since June, 1924). He was the head of the Military Academy named after M. V. Frunze (since 06, 1929), Corps commander (15.02.1936). Khakhanyan became a victim of Stalinist era violence (23.02.1939).³⁸

The combat path of Marshal of the Soviet Union, Twice Hero of the Soviet Union Hovhannes Baghramyan (1897-1982), who initially held the rank of cornet and participated in the Battle of Sardarapat (May 1918) has been presented, too. Later, he served in the Soviet Army, distinguished himself by his military talent during the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945), after which he held various positions, among which we should focus on the position of head of the Rear of the USSR Armed Forces,³⁹ alongside with military intelligence work.

Hakob Melkumyan (Yakov Melkumov, 1885 - 1962) was a participant of the First World War. He was awarded the rank of Second Lieutenant (24.02.1916), cornet (31.05.1916), and then staff commander, commander of the 1st Moscow Cavalry Regiment (1918). He participated in the Sovietization of Central Asia and the battles against the forces of Enver Pasha, the former military minister of the Ottoman Empire. He graduated from the Higher Academic Courses of Workers and Peasants (1924), the Worker-Peasant Academy named after M. V. Frunze (1934). He served in various places, mainly in Central Asia. He was awarded the rank of corps commander. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison (1937). He was acquitted (1954) and retained his military rank.⁴⁰

28 representatives of the Korganov (Ghorghanyan) family participated in the First World War, some of them served in the the RA and White armies.⁴¹ The most prominent of them is Major General Gabriel Korganyan (1880-1954).⁴²

³⁸ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 1270-1271.

³⁹ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 268-269.

⁴⁰ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 782.

⁴¹ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 618-625.

Andrey Melik - Shahnazarov (Andranik, 1887 - 1937), lieutenant colonel. Lieutenant colonel of the Red Army, graduated from the Suvorov Cadet Academy in Warsaw (1906), then the Nikolaev Cavalry Academy, where he was awarded the rank of cornet. Participant of the First World War, during which he was awarded various officer titles: second lieutenant, staff officer, quartermaster, lieutenant colonel (29.10.1917). He was the commander of the 1st Armenian Cavalry Regiment (March, 1918). His accompanist was cornet H. Baghramyan (later Soviet Marshal). He participated in the May Bolshevik Riot (1920). During the Soviet years, he was the commander of the Armenian separate cavalry brigade, the commander of the command faculty of the Air Force Academy named after Professor N. E. Zhukovsky (from March 1931). He held various command positions. He is among the victims of Stalinist era violence.⁴³

About eight representatives of the noble family of Silikyans served in the military sphere. Among them we should speak about the Lieutenant colonel Movses Silikyan (1862-1937), one of the main figures in the process of shaping the victory in the Battle of Sardarapat.⁴⁴

The first military minister of the RA, Lieutenant-General Hovhannes Hakhverdyan (Ivan Akhverdov, 1873-1931), who joined the Russian army in 1890 and held various command positions, participated in the war initially on the Russian-Austrian front, then - on the Caucasian front. From July 24, 1918 to March 27, 1919, he was the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia. He held other positions, too. After the establishment of Soviet Rule, he was arrested and sent to Moscow, then released. He settled in Petrograd. In 1930 he was arrested and then sentenced to death for joining the “fictional” “Vesna” underground anti-Soviet organization, “established” by the Soviet state security.⁴⁵ It should be noted that about 13 000 former officers⁴⁶ suffered a similar fate, and about a thousand of them were sentenced to death.⁴⁷

The biography of Major General of the RA Army Harutyun Hovsepyants (Artem Osipyants, Oosepyants, 1872-1921) has been also presented in the work. He graduated from Tiflis Artillery Junker School⁴⁸ (1889). He participated in the combat operations of the Russian-Turkish front of the First World War, in the Armenian 1st Volunteer Army.⁴⁹

⁴² Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 620.

⁴³ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 769.

⁴⁴ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 1049-1051.

⁴⁵ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 234–235, for details - A. Ganin. In the Shadow of “Spring”. Former officers under repression in the early 1930s. “Rodina”, 2014, N 6, p. 95-101.

⁴⁶ A. Ganin. In the Shadow of “Spring”. Former officers under repression in the early 1930s., <https://bit.ly/3D7ZzfW> (accessed on 11.04.2023)

⁴⁷ <https://bit.ly/3OjG9ev> (accessed on 11.04.2023)

⁴⁸ Junior officer rank.

⁴⁹ R. Sahakyan, The Unreleased Memoirs of Tovmas Nazarbekyan, Vem, 2019, N 1, p. 281.

In the RA he held various command positions. He has also participated in the Sovietization of Lori (1921).⁵⁰

There are a number of non-essential inaccuracies in the dictionary, on which we would like to draw the attention of the authors.

It is noted that General T. Nazarbekyan was appointed the commander of the 66th Infantry Brigade on November 6, 1914 (page 5). According to the general's memoirs, he was appointed assistant to the head of the aforementioned military unit⁵¹ (deputy), then acting commander of the 2nd Caucasian Rifle Brigade.⁵²

Summarizing the review, we consider it necessary to note that the authors have done quite large-scale research work. If during the Soviet period, more attention was paid to the Armenian servicemen who served in the Soviet Army, then in the current biographical dictionary, not only the biography, but also the combat path of the Armenian officers who served in the Russian Army in the First World War and the officers of Armenian, Russian and other nationalities who served in the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia, are presented to the readers.

The publication once again refutes the misconception that Armenians have never been a military nation and have always been persecuted by various conquerors. Armenian military traditions found their expression in many battles for the Armenian independence in different periods. The presented historical-biographical dictionary proves once again that the combat abilities of the Armenians arise when there is an opportunity to restore the Armenian armed forces. The Armenian gene has preserved the military spirit in itself, which is evidenced by the soldiers who served in the Russian Army. We believe that the biographical dictionary will be the important source that will enable researchers to complete not only the biography of this or that serviceman, but also their combat path.

We are sure that such a study, dedicated to the Artsakh Liberation War, will be also prepared, where the Armenian and foreign servicemen of that period will be impartially presented, those, who contributed to the combat operations dedicated to the liberation and defense of the Artsakh world.

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Translated from Armenian by Gevorg Harutyunyan

⁵⁰ Armenian Officers in the First World War, p. 884–885.

⁵¹ R. Sahakyan, The Unreleased Memoirs of Tovmas Nazarbekyan, Vem, 2019, N 1, p. 273.

⁵² Ibid, p. 274.