

NEW DATA ON GEVORK TIRATSY'AN'S ACTIVITY BEFORE HIS REPATRIATION TO ARMENIA FROM ROMANIA IN JUNE 1948¹

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Introduction

The development of classical archaeology in Armenia in the second half of the 20th century is intimately connected with the career of Gevork A. Tiratsy'an, who "developed the principal trends of study of ancient Armenian culture, substantiating them by concrete investigations in the field of history and archaeology"². After graduating the Yerevan State University in 1952, he started his impressive series of publications in 1956 as a researcher and postgraduate student at the Institute of History of the Armenian Academy of Sciences. Nonetheless, his active preoccupation in the field of the ancient history of Armenia preceded by far his early years as a junior researcher in Armenia.

This short note is devoted to bringing into focus the less known period of Gevork Tiratsy'an's youth spent in Romania, where he was born on 18 September 1926. Two pieces of information discovered in the Romanian Armenian newspaper Հայաստանեան ճախար / *Hayastanyan Chakat* are presented here with a twofold objective. Firstly, to underscore for the Armenian public the fact that Tiratsy'an's preoccupation with the ancient history and archaeology of Armenia had already been strongly developed during the period when he had been a student of the Department of History at the University of Bucharest (1945-1948). Secondly, to raise the awareness of the Romanian public on the undeservedly neglected fact that one of the most celebrated Armenian archaeologists of all times was born and started his academic career in Bucharest.

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² Vardanyan 2003, ix-x.

Some pieces of historical and biographical background

Gevork Tirats'yan was the son of Artashes Tirats'yan (1889-1974), an acclaimed economic historian and lexicographer. Born in Shumen, Bulgaria, in the family of a craftsman, Artashes Tirats'yan studied between 1901 and 1910 in the Cernăvea of Etchmiadzin and then in the universities of Berlin, Lausanne and Zürich, where he obtained the Ph.D. degree in economics in 1920³. He worked as a history and geography teacher at the Misakian-Kesimian School of Bucharest since 1922 and acted as Head of the Armenian School of Bucharest, at least from the end of the Second World War to his repatriation in 1948⁴. He developed leftist political views which opposed him to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun)⁵, although his wife was a relative of the Dashnak leader, General Drastamat "Dro" Kanayan⁶, who also lived for almost two decades in Romania after World War I. Given that he contributed articles to *Նոր արշալույս* (*New Dawns*) and *Պահակ* (*The Guard*), the newspapers of the Romanian branch of the pro-Soviet Armenian Aid Committee (H.O.G.), it is possible that he also became a member of the organization. Soon after Romania had entered the Soviet sphere of influence on 23 August 1944, he participated in the foundation of the pro-communist organisation The Front of Armenia, being vice-chairman of its Central Committee, at its formal establishment in April 1946⁷. He was also actively involved in editing its homonymous newspaper *Հայաստանեան ճալատ* (transliterated as *Haiasdanian Geagad* on its fourth page, which contained abridged Romanian versions of the original Armenian articles)⁸. He was one of the leading figures in charge of the second wave of repatriation

³ Tavitian 2008, 350.

⁴ Tavitian 2008, 350 mentions that Artashes Tirats'yan worked as Head of the Misakian-Kesimian School since 1922, but the information presented in the autobiographical article Arakelian 2014, 21 shows that he was only history and geography teacher in the 1930s. On the other hand, Artashes Tirats'yan was Head of the Armenian school of Bucharest in 1947, one year before his repatriation, as shown by the article "Serbarea..." 1947, which mentions that at the graduation festivity held on 30 June 1947, "Dr. Ard. Tiračian, the Head of the Armenian School, presented the educational situation on the current year in his report." The article is the Romanian abridged version of the larger piece «Պոփրտչի...» 1947, published in the Armenian section of the same issue of the newspaper, *Հայաստանեան ճալատ*.

⁵ Artashes Tirats'yan even came into violent conflict with the supporters of the Dashnaktsutyun, as he later confessed in the article *Տիրացյան 1947b*, published on 1 June in *Հայաստանեան ճալատ*:

⁶ Toumanyán, Vardanyán 2012, 269, Tirats'yan 2021.

⁷ Năstăsă 2008, 17, n. 25. Artashes Tirats'yan was the second founding member mentioned in the Founding Act of 13 March 1946: The Front of Armenia 1946a, roll 1397, frame 52. In February 1947, after the Second Congress of the Front of Armenia, he was elected member of the Bureau of Central Committee: "Biroul..." 1947.

⁸ More information on the newspaper in Năstăsă 2008, 21.

of the Armenians from Romania that took place in the summer of 1948⁹. All the family followed him on his way to Yerevan¹⁰.

The Front of Armenia was a pro-Soviet organisation based on the former Union of the Armenian Patriots, founded just after Romania had abruptly left the alliance with the Axis powers on 23 August 1944. At its informal establishment in January 1945, its nucleus was constituted by former H.O.G. members¹¹. It aimed to strengthen the ties of the Romanian Armenians with Soviet Armenia and the Soviet Union, to organise the repatriation of the Armenians from Romania, to contribute to the establishment of the people's democracy in Romania, to confront fascism and to back the actions which sought the incorporation of the regions historically inhabited by Armenians in Soviet Armenia (the last objective was added in 1948)¹². The organisation changed its name to The Armenian Democratic Committee in May 1950 and was dissolved in March 1953¹³.

The first known public lecture on ancient history held by Gevork Tiratsy'an

The Front of Armenia established a unified Youth Section on 2 March 1947¹⁴ that also had a Study Group whose declared aim was, in typical communist terms, that of "raising the cultural and patriotic level of the youth"¹⁵. The main events organised by the Study Group were lectures held on Friday evenings mostly by the Armenian students from Bucharest. The first public lectures, dealing with price formation and the achievements of Alfred Nobel, were delivered on 7 March 1947¹⁶, whereas the official inauguration of the Study Group, attended by members of the Central Committee and the Local Committee of Bucharest of the Front of Armenia, took place on 14 March 1947¹⁷. The subsequent lectures covered either general scientific and cultural topics, or issues of a more pronounced political nature, which met the commitment of "doing everything to remove the still existing differences between our youth, who have been raised until recently mostly in a manner which is alien to the aspirations of our people,

⁹ The Central Committee of the Front of Armenia, roll 1397, fr. 352. According to Baboian 1948, roll 1397, fr. 410 (published in Năstasă 2008, 38-39), 1022 Armenians from Romania were repatriated in June 1948 on the ship *Pobeda*. Laycock 2017, 512, n. 5 mentions the slightly different number of 1046 repatriated Romanian Armenians, based on data from the Armenian National Archive, *The Committee for the Reception and Settlement of Armenians from Abroad* fonds.

¹⁰ Tiratsy'an 2021.

¹¹ Năstasă 2008, 19.

¹² The Front of Armenia 1946b, roll 1397, fr. 55; The Front of Armenia 1948, roll 1397, fr. 423 (published in Năstasă 2008, 40). Cf. also Baboian 1948, roll 1397, fr. 410-411 (published in Năstasă 2008, 38-39).

¹³ Năstasă 2008, 21-22.

¹⁴ H. 1947.

¹⁵ Der Kricorian 1947.

¹⁶ "Cercul de Studii..." 1947. The lectures were given by the students Hrant Demirian and Agop Andonian.

¹⁷ "Inaugurarea..." 1947.

and the youth from the Motherland, who are on the right direction of the social and national evolution of the Armenian people"¹⁸.

It was in this context that Gevork Tirats'yan, a second year undergraduate student at the Department of History of the University of Bucharest, delivered his first known public lecture titled "The Origin of the Armenian People" on Friday, 9 May 1947. The event hosted in the customary meeting of the Study Group of the Youth Section started as usual at 18.30 and took place in the "Şahumian" Hall (nowadays Hovsep and Victoria Dudian House, hosting the library and the museum of the Armenian Eparchy of Romania). Although a second talk on the anniversary of the Soviet newspaper "Pravda" should have been given by another student, a certain Hatanasian, apparently it did not take place. Unfortunately, this is the only information about how the event happened¹⁹.

Gevork Tirats'yan as an organiser of the Armenian repatriation from Romania in 1948

The talk given on 9 May 1947 at the Study Group of the Youth Section was not the only activity conducted by Gevorg Tirats'yan under the auspices of the Front of Armenia. One month before, in April 1947, the newly elected Central Committee of the Front appointed a new Repatriation Committee, whose task was "to prepare and direct the works for the repatriation of the Armenians from Romania during this year [1947]"²⁰. An informative note published on the first page of Հայաստանեւան ճակատ immediately after the brief enthusiastic column signed by Artashes Tirats'yan²¹ shows that the Repatriation Committee had three branches: the branch for registrations (5 members), the financial branch (16 members) and the administrative branch (9 members). Whereas each was headed by people elected in the central decisional bodies of the Front of Armenia, some of the common members were notable young Armenians, such as Ga-

¹⁸ Der Kricorian 1947. Examples of such lectures are that on the Soviet art during the war, held by Nubar Terzian, and that regarding social ideas seen from the economic perspective, held by Hagop Andonian, on 2 May 1947, see "Colţul..." 1947a.

¹⁹ The event was briefly announced in the short note "Colţul..." 1947a: "The next meeting of the study group will take place Friday, 9 May, 18.30, in "Şahumian" Hall, when the student Kevork Diratjan will give a talk on: *The Origin of the Armenian People*, and the student Hatanasian will hold a presentation related to the anniversary of the newspaper "Pravda". An even shorter account of the event was published afterward, in "Colţul..." 1947b: "Friday, 9 May, during the usual meeting of the F.A. Study Group, the student Diratjan Kevork gave a talk on: *The Origin of the Armenian People*."

²⁰ "Lista Comitetului de Repatriere..." 1947.

²¹ Տիրացյան 1947a.

rabet Garabedian, the second-best table tennis player of Romania at that time²². Thus, among the administrative branch is also mentioned Gevorg Tirats'yan²³.

Unfortunately, the specific tasks entrusted to the young history student remain unknown. Nonetheless, his membership in the administrative branch of the Repatriation Committee since April 1947 might be a hint that the Tirats'yans' had already decided to immigrate to Soviet Armenia at the time. Moreover, the administrative work that Gevorg Tirats'yan carried out as a member of the Repatriation Committee of the Front of Armenia when he was only 19 might have been a helpful experience for the latter administrative tasks that he fulfilled as head of archaeological excavations on several sites in Armenia.

Perspectives for further research

It is possible that more thorough research of the collection of the newspaper Հայաստանեան Ծակատ / *Haiasdanian Geagad* and of the Front of Armenia archival fonds preserved at the Central Historical National Archives of Bucharest, Romania, conducted by scholars with a much better understanding of the Armenian language, will bring to light more data on the years when Gevorg Tirats'yan was an undergraduate student in the Department of History at the University of Bucharest. Moreover, such an investigation, eventually extended to the Armenian Aid Committee (H.O.G.) archival fonds preserved as well in Bucharest, would certainly reveal a large amount of documentary material for a biography of Artashes Tirats'yan, an equally brilliant Armenian intellectual and one of the leading figures of the Armenian community in Romania in the second quarter of the 20th century.

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²² "Știri Sportive" 1947, "Campionatele de ping pong..." 1947.

²³ «Ներգաղթի ...» 1947. Cf. "Lista Comitetului de Repatriere..." 1947.

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Abbreviations

ANIC - Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale [The Central Historical National Archives], Bucharest, Romania.

ՆՈՐ ՏՎՅԱԼՆԵՐ ԳԵՎՈՐԳ ՏԻՐԱՏՅԱՆԻ ԳՈՐԾՈՒՆԵՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄԱՍԻՆ ՄԻՆՉԵՎ 1948 ԹՎԱԿԱՆԻ ՀՈՒՆԻՍԻՆ ՌՈՒՄԻՆԻԱՅԻՑ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆ ՀԱՅՐԵՆԱԴԱՐԹՎԵԼԸ

Լիվյու Միխայիլ Յանկու

Ամփոփում

Հայ անվանի հնագետ Գևորգ Տիրացյանի վաղ շրջանի գործունեության վերաբերյալ ի հայտ են եկել նոր տվյալներ, որոնք տեղ են գտել Ռումինիայում տպագրվող «Հայաստանեան ճակատ» թերթում:

Գևորգ Տիրացյանն իր հանրային առաջին դասախոսությունը կարդաց 1947 թ. մայիսի 9-ին, երբ Բուխարեստում ուսանող էր. զեկուցման թեման վերաբերում էր հայ ժողովրդի ծագման խնդրին: Նա դասախոսությունը կարդաց ռումինահայերի հետպատերազմյան, խորհրդամետ «Հայաստանեան ճակատ» կազմակերպության երիտասարդական բաժնի նորաստեղծ ուսումնական խմբում: Նրա հայրը՝ Բուխարեստի հայկական դպրոցի տնօրեն Արտաշես Տիրացյանը, այդ կազմակերպությունում ղեկավար պաշտոն էր զբաղեցնում:

Դրանից մեկ ամիս առաջ Գևորգ Տիրացյանն ընտրվել էր ռումինահայերի հայրենադարձության երկրորդ մեծ փուլը նախապատրաստող կոմիտեի վարչական կազմի անդամ: Հայրենադարձությունն ի վերջո իրականացվեց 1948 թ. հունիսին՝ նրա հոր ղեկավարությամբ:

Բանալի բառեր՝ հնագիտություն, Արտաշես Տիրացյան, Բուխարեստ, «Հայաստանեան ճակատ», Գևորգ Տիրացյան, դասախոսություն, հայրենադարձություն:

НОВЫЕ ДАННЫЕ О ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ ГЕВОРКА ТИРАЦЯНА ДО ЕГО РЕПАТРИАЦИИ В АРМЕНИЮ ИЗ РУМЫНИИ В ИЮНЕ 1948 ГОДА

Ливью Михаил Янку

Резюме

В издававшейся в Румынии газете «Армянский фронт» были опубликованы новые сведения о раннем периоде деятельности видного ученого Геворка Тирацяна.

Известный ученый первую свою публичную лекцию прочел в Бухаресте 9 мая 1947 г. еще будучи студентом. Лекция, посвященная вопросу происхождения армянского народа, была прочитана им в молодежном отделе новосозданной просоветской студенческой организации румынских армян «Армянский фронт». Его отец – директор бухарестской армянской школы Арташес Тирацян – занимал руководящую должность в этой организации. За месяц до этого Г. Тирацян был избран в состав администрации комитета, подготавливавшего второй этап репатриации румынских армян, которая была осуществлена им в июне 1948 г.

Ключевые слова – археология, Арташес Тирацян, Бухарест, «Армянский фронт», Геворг Тирацян, лекция, репатриация.

NEW DATA ON GEVORK TIRATSY'AN'S ACTIVITY BEFORE HIS REPATRIATION TO ARMENIA FROM ROMANIA IN JUNE 1948

Liviu Mihail iancu

Abstract

New evidence on the early career of the reputed Armenian archaeologist Gevork Tiratsy'an, identified in the Romanian Armenian newspaper «Հայաստանեան ճալատ»/*Hayastanyan Chakat*, is presented in this paper.

Gevork Tiratsy'an gave his first known public lecture on May 9, 1947, while an undergraduate student at Bucharest. The topic of his talk was the origin of the Armenian people. He delivered the lecture at the newly established Study Group of the Youth Section of the Front of Armenia, a post-war, pro-Soviet organisation of the Romanian Armenians, where his father, Artashes Tiratsy'an, Head of the Armenian School of Bucharest, held a leading position.

One month before, Gevork Tiratsy'an had been elected as a member of the administrative branch of the committee that prepared the second big stage of repatriation of the Armenians from Romania, finally carried out in June 1948 under the leadership of his father.

Key words – archaeology, Artashes Tiratsy'an, Bucharest, "Front of Armenia", Gevork Tiratsy'an, lecture, repatriation.