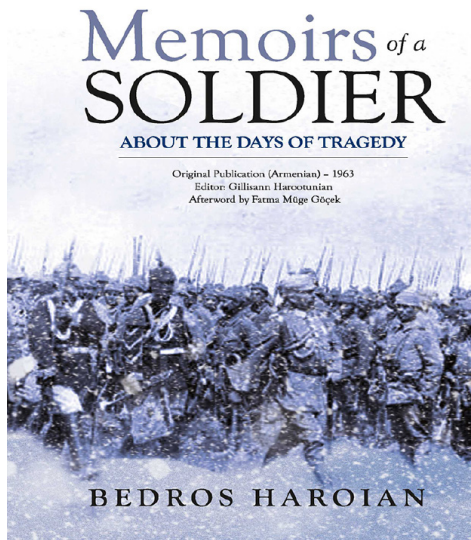


---

# BOOK REVIEWS

---

**MEMOIRS OF A SOLDIER ABOUT THE DAYS OF TRAGEDY,  
Fresno/California, 2021: Tadem press, 544 p., 8 maps, 32 photos**



The newly established "Tadem press" publishing house, USA, took a good and valuable initiative. Under the supervision of Gillisann Harootunian, PhD, Executive Director of University Initiatives, California State University (Fresno) it should try to fill the gap in primary sources published in English regarding the Armenian genocide. The publishing house introduces the English translation of the Memoirs of the military man Bedros Haroian ("Memoirs of a soldier about the Days of Tragedy"), born in the village of Datem, Kharberd (Western Armenia). It is worth to mention that the Armenian variant of the Memoirs has been published in Boston by "Hayreniq" publishing house in 1963.

Bedros Haroian was born in the mid-1890s. His childhood and youth he spent in his village. During World war I he was a soldier in the Turkish army, after he joined the Russian army, in 1919-1921 participated in the defence of Cilicia as Pentecostal. He was a skillful soldier, helpful and honest person.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of the Memoirs B.Haroian speaks about his village Datem with delight, describing in beautiful colors its wonderful countryside. He confesses that for the sake of this paradise it is worth to become a soldier and defend it.<sup>2</sup> The next important episode in the Memoirs of Haroian is the courage of the Armenian priest (Ter Aharon) that he showed against the Turks. Can't stand anymore anti-Armenian riots the Armenian priest began to fight against them.<sup>3</sup> Here it is clearly visible the dedication of the Armenian priest to his people, country and church.

Born and grown up in this environment Bedros could not be indifferent to the riots of the Turks against his people. Still a young man along with some of his friends he joined the Armenian revolutionary party (ARF). The Datem group of ARF, according to him, was the main self defense organization of Datem.<sup>4</sup>

At the beginning of 1900s among the people of Datem was widely practiced emigration to the USA. After saving some money they used to return to their native village in order to supply their families with means of subsistence. Young Bedros also went to the USA. Here, in 1911, learning about the Iranian revolution and the

<sup>1</sup> See «Hayreniq», Boston, July 2, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> Haroian Bedros, Memoirs of a soldier about the Days of Tragedy, Fresno, Tadem Press, 2021, p. 1-10.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 15-16.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 38-51.

participation of Armenians, he decided to return. But due to some circumstances, he was forced to go to Datem.

From here begins the difficult military life of this honest Armenian full of struggle and dedication. After reaching the village he became the target of his Turkish neighbors.<sup>5</sup>

Soon begins World War I. The Ottoman government declared total conscription and in the summer of 1914 he joined the Turkish army.<sup>6</sup> “I am not afraid of going to war,” I said calmly. “I will receive a good military education and gain experience in conducting battles. This will be helpful for me in the future. I will use the knowledge for my nation.”). In this part of the Memoirs Haroian actually proves that the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire were loyal to the military laws of the country, which unfortunately has not been rated by the Turks.

B.Haroian brings interesting information regarding the battle of Sarıkamış (late 1914 - early 1915), the retreat of the Turkish army and how he succeeded not to appear in captivity.<sup>7</sup> Then took place the retreat of the Turkish army. It was here that the Armenian soldier of the Ottoman army became eyewitness to numerous episodes of Turkish ferocities in Western Armenia.

The policy of genocide was already begun. Haroian describes terrible scenes of genocide in Karin (Erzurum). He writes how the Armenian soldiers were withdrawn from the army and sent to Derjan, Erznka to be slaughtered.<sup>8</sup>

The author of the Memoirs appeared in one of such groups. On the way to the destination that group reached Kharberd. Since his native Datem was close to Kharberd, Bedros Haroian had succeeded to escape and by night reached the village where he saw their house destroyed by the Kurdish neighbor.<sup>9</sup>

The Memoirs contains no less interesting and valuable episode which describes the revolt of the Dersim Kurds against the Turks in 1915.<sup>10</sup> Their revolt against the Ottoman government was not of considerable scales, but this very fact is worth to mention.

In the next part of the Memoirs Bedros Haroian speaks about his joining the Russian army in 1917. Here he took important notes in regard to the worrying retreat of the Russian army after Bolsheviks came to power in Russia.<sup>11</sup> It is worth to mention his notes regarding the attempt made by the Dersim Kurds to join general Andranik in the February 1918.<sup>12</sup> The author feels especially hard the retreat of Armenian detachments from Karin (Erzurum) which, as it is well known, was fatal for Armenia.

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 87-95.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 98.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 128-146.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 148-151.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 171-175.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 187-197.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 207.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 214-215.

At the end of the Memoirs Bedros Haroian mentions his participation in the 1919-1921 self defense of Armenians in Cilicia. In autumn 1918 he went to Constantinople and in 1919 to Cilicia.<sup>13</sup> In Cilicia Bedros Haroian came to a conclusion that despite the presence of the French army the security of local Armenian population could be reached only by means of the Armenian military. In Cilicia the French authorities were mostly indifferent toward the Turkish riots, sometimes even atrocities.<sup>14</sup> In this part of the Memoirs we see many episodes of heroic self defense, indifference of the French and betrayal in different places – Incirlik, Sheikh Murad, etc.<sup>15</sup>

The English version of B.Haroian's Memoirs, in contrast to the Armenian edition, is thoroughly worked up; it is divided into chapters and subtitles, were added also notes and maps. The book is supplied with the "Preface" written by Gillisann Harootunian, and "Afterword" by Fatma Müge Göcek, PhD, Professor, Sociology and Women's Studies, University of Michigan.

The English translation of B.Haroian's Memoirs is an extremely valuable book which offers additional information and undeniable facts proving the genocide of Western Armenians.

We wish success to the publishing house Tadem Press and personally to Gillisann Harootunian for this important undertaking.

**Khachatur Stepanyan**  
**Doctor in History, Professor**

***Translated from the Armenian by Aram Kosyan***

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 230.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 231-232.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 233-312.