

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARIS-BASED *ZHOGHOVURD* (PEOPLE) DAILY NEWSPAPER IN RESEARCHING THE ARMENIAN DIASPORA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE FRENCH RESISTANCE (1941-1945)

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Abstract

The participation of the Armenian Diaspora in the French Resistance has been the subject of various historical studies. Numerous documentaries and feature films have been made on this topic, generally focusing on the famous Armenian fighter Missak Manouchian and his heroic group. Over recent years, the memoirs of Armenian Resistance heroes such as Meline Manouchian, Mihran Mavian, Arsène Tchakarian, and others have been published.

However, the Armenian Diaspora in France, the majority of whose members were survivors of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, wrote many heroic pages in the history of the Resistance. Unfortunately, many of these events, their participants, and the heroes of those victories remain largely unknown to this day. There are numerous unexplored sources, including Armenian newspapers published in France during the war and the post-war period. One such publication is the *Zhoghovurd* newspaper, which was issued in Paris under the editorship of Shahe Tatourian from 1943 to 1948. The pages of this newspaper contain many materials written by the participants and witnesses of the events, which could be of significant importance for studying the involvement of the Armenian Diaspora in the French Resistance.

The valuable content of this periodical could be divided into several groups. The first group includes the memoirs of the Armenian participants of Resistance about various actions and their friends who lost their lives during different operations. Among this it's important to note the names of notorious Armenian fighters M.Mavian, A.Konstandinian, D. Davitian and others. The second group contains several components, including information about the number of Armenians who participated in various actions and operations, their biographies, and posthumous commemorations. Particularly interesting is the third group of information from the pages of the *Zhoghovurd* newspaper. This group includes data on Armenians returning from Nazi death camps, as well as the efforts of the Armenian community to reintegrate and rehabilitate former prisoners.

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Introduction

The article titled “An Unknown Figure of the Resistance”, from the May 5, 1946, issue of the Paris-based daily newspaper *Zhoghovurd (People)*, begins with the following lines: “When and by whom will the history of Armenian participants in the French Resistance be written?”¹. This question, from as far back as the 1940s, is still relevant today. Despite the various kinds of publications in past decades about Armenians in the French Resistance, there are still many sources that need to be studied. There are many names of Armenian participants that have been forgotten, and the full extent of Armenian Diaspora involvement remains largely understudied. This does not imply that the role of Armenian Participants is deliberately overlooked or undervalued. The French Republic has consistently acknowledged and expressed profound gratitude for the contributions and sacrifices of foreign nationals in the French Resistance. The evidence of this the Pantheonization of Hero of French Resistance Missak Manouchian in February 2024. In the present context, there is an urgent need to complete the research on Armenian participation in French Resistance and to emphasize the substantial contributions made by the Diaspora, not only in combating Nazism on the front lines but also in supporting efforts in the rear. First, it will illustrate the commitment of individuals to opposing nationalism and hatred—ideologies from which they had previously endured suffering under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Survivors of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 never hesitated to join the struggle against the new evil doctrine, which undoubtedly took its roots, including the ideologies of the Young Turks. Secondly, in an era marked by the spread of false narratives—particularly those promoted by certain Turkish and Azerbaijani historians—regarding alleged Armenian collaboration with Nazi individuals, it is essential to highlight the prominent role Armenians played in the French Resistance, as well as in resistance movements across other European states. Doing so directly challenges and refutes these unfounded claims.

Methodology and Sources

Since World War II and continuing to the present day, the theme of Resistance and the narratives of Heroes have been at the forefront of social, political, and scientific discussions in France. Of course, publications dedicated to Armenian Heroes of the French Resistance but mostly of Missak Manouchian have also been published over the years. The works of Didier Daeninckx merit particular attention in this

¹ Hay antsanoth rezisthan my (An Unknown Figure of the Resistance), *Zhoghovurd* oratherth, (*Zhoghovurd daily newspaper* (*Zhoghovurd*), No. 484, 05.05.1946.

context.² Many other authors have dedicated their works to the famous group led by Missak: Robrieux Philippe, Gérard Streiff, Denis Peschanski, Claire Mouradian, Astrig Atamian.³ Manouchian was the iconic and beloved protagonist of the *bande dessinée*. There are numerous *bande dessinées* published in his honor for all ages.⁴

Of particular importance are the memoirs of the Armenian partisans themselves, published in recent years in France. Among them, for example, are the works of Tchakarian Arsène, Manouchian Mélinée and many others.⁵

Over the past few decades, a limited number of publications have been issued in Armenia, most of which focus on Missak Manouchian and Armenian communist participants of the French Resistance. Among the various publications, the works of Tigran Drampian⁶ are particularly noteworthy. A renowned historian Klement Harutyunyan, who has written numerous books dedicated to Armenian participation in WWII and the Great Patriotic War, devoted special chapters in his books to European Resistance, including the role of French-Armenian partisans.⁷ While these works provide a partial examination of the role of French Armenians, numerous narratives remain unexplored.

Despite the various kinds of publications in past decades about Armenians in the French Resistance, there are still many sources that need to be studied. There are many articles and various types of publications in Armenian newspapers and journals, most of which have yet to be studied or analyzed. In this context, the newspapers and journals published in France hold significant importance. Such

² Daeninckx Didier, Missak, Paris, Editions Gallimard, 2018, p. 352.

³ Robrieux Philippe, L’Affaire Manouchian. Vie et mort d’un Héros communiste, Fayard, 1986, 434 p., Streiff Gérard, Missak et Mélinée Manouchian. Un couple en Résistance, Paris, Éditions L’Archipel, 2024, 236 p., Peschanski Denis, Mouradian Claire, Atamian Astrig, Manouchian: Missak et Mélinée Manouchian, deux orphelins du génocide des arméniens engagés dans la Résistance française, Paris, Textuel, 2023, 191 p.

⁴ Didier Daeninckx, Laurent Corvaisier, Missak Manouchian, l’enfant de l’Affiche rouge, Rue du monde, 2009, p.60. Didier Daeninckx, Mako, Missak Manouchian: Une vie héroïque, Les Arenes Eds, 2024, 120 p. Jean-Pierre Pécau, Eduardo Ocana, Missak Manouchian mort pour la France, Delcourt, 2024, 72 p.

⁵ Tchakarian A., Les francs-tireurs de l’affiche rouge, [Paris, Messidor/Editions sociales](#), 1986, 250 p., Tchakarian A. avec la collaboration de Hélène Kosséian, Les commandos de l’Affiche rouge la vérité historique sur la première section de l’Armée secrète, Monaco, Rocher, 2013, 272 p., Manouchian Mélinée, Manochian, Paris, 1974, [Les Éditeurs français réunis](#), 204 p.

⁶Drampian T., Manushyan khumby. Patma-vaveragrakan vipak (The Manouchian’s Group. Historical documentary story), Yerevan, Armenia, 1990, 134 p.: Aryan gnov (At the cost of blood), Yerevan, Armenia, [1971](#), 72 p.: Fransahay kumunistnery dimadruthyan tarinerin (1941-1944թթ.), (French- Armenian Communists during the years of Resistance (1941-1944), Yerevan, 1967, 200 p., Драмбян Т., Они сражались за Францию, Ереван, Издательство Ереванского университета, 1981, 196 с.

⁷ Harutyunyan K., Hay zhoghovrdi masnakcuthyun Hayrenakan Mets paterazmin (1941-1945 թթ.), (*Participation of the Armenian People in the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945)*, Yerevan, Zangak-97, 2002, 248 p.: Hay zhoghovrdi masnakcuthyun Erkrord hamashkharayin paterazmin (1939-1945 թթ.) (*Participation of the Armenian People in the World War II*), Yerevan, Hrazdan, 2001, 135 p.:

importance is held by the Armenian national front's official newspaper *Zhoghovurd* which was published in Paris from 1943 to 1948 by Shahe Taturian. The newspaper was published during and after the war, ensuring that the facts and events did not remain in the shadow of time. Most of the articles were written by participants or individuals closely involved with the events.

It is true that newspaper's editor, along with most of the authors, were members of Communist party and apologist of Soviet Union and there were quite a few ideological and propagandist trends in the pages of the newspaper. But despite this, there is plenty of evidence and facts that cannot be ignored or viewed with bias. They can enrich or complement history of Armenian participants of French Resistance with new facts and content after comparison and clarification with other sources.

Guided by these purposes, we have identified the following research objectives.

- Derive and organize information from the pages of the newspaper about Armenian participants in the French Resistance.
- Classify them according to predefined principles.
- After research and analysis, introduce them into scientific circulation, thereby contributing to and fostering the work of future researchers.

In accordance with predefined principles, we have divided the information from the pages of *Zhoghovurd* into the following groups.

- Memories of Armenian Participants of the French Resistance.
- Biographical information about Armenian Participants and Supporters of the French Resistance.
- Facts and evidence regarding the activities, interventions, and contributions of the Armenian Diaspora in the struggle against the Nazi occupation of France.

Memories of Armenian participants of the French Resistance

During its publication, *Zhoghovurd* daily newspaper published many memories of Armenian participants and supporters of the French Resistance such as Mihran Mavian, Davit Davitian, Alexander Kostandinian and many others. It was in *Zhoghovurd* that first time Mihran Mavian shared his memories entitled "Underworld of Crime".⁸ In 1946, *Zhoghovurd* began publishing the memories of another participant of the French Resistance, Davit Davitian. This memoires with impressive title "Mephistopheles in Buchenwald" tell us about the life and struggle of prisoners in one of the infernal Nazi camps.⁹

⁸ Later Mihran Mavian's memories were published as an independent book with the title "Underworld of Crime". See Mavian M., Votchri andrashkharen (Underworld of Crime), Yerevan, 1976, 213 p.: It was subsequently translated into French and published under the title «Par-delà les ténèbres» (Compiègne, Mémorial de l'internement et de la déportation, 2010):

⁹ Davitian D., Mefistofiles Pukhnvalti mej (Mephistopheles in Buchenwald), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 224, 01.07.1946 - No. 278, 04.09.1946.

Among the memories, special importance is given to those written by the participants of Resistance about their friends and comrades of arms. One of the authors who periodically wrote about his comrades was Alexandre Kostandinian. There are many articles written by him, dedicated to Missak Manouchian, Arpen Davitian, Haik Dpirian and many others. Much is known about these famous heroes of the French Resistance, however, there are still some details we can learn from these valuable memories. First and foremost, their humanism, moral qualities, and values. This is clearly shown in Hayk's response to Kostandinian's request, asking him not to join the Resistance because of his family and two children: "Thinking of oneself is considered treachery for a revolutionary".¹⁰

In 1944, an announcement in the pages of the *Zhoghovurd* invited people to take part in a remembrance ceremony at Ivry Cemetery. Here, among the fallen heroes from the Paris region, Missak Manouchian and Arpen Manoukian, we see the name of Vahridj Vadjaraganian. Tiran Voskerichian also mentions in his book Vahridj Vadjaraganian's name among the Armenian martyrs¹¹. A few fragments of his biography can be found in the biographical dictionary of individuals executed during the French Occupation (*Les fusillés, 1940-1944. Dictionnaire biographique des fusillés et exécutés par condamnation et comme otages ou guillotinés en France pendant l'Occupation*).¹²

Thanks to memories of Shahe Taturian the editor of *Zhoghovurd* we find a little information about Vahridj. He was born in Partizak in 1908. He survived the 1915 Armenian Genocide, lived in Constantinople and later in the Corfu orphanage. From there, he moved to France. In 1939, he was drafted into the French army. After the Battle of Dunkirk he moved to England. Upon returning to France, he joined the Resistance movement. In several issues of *Zhoghovurd* Taturian shares his memories about meeting him and the time spent with him in the camp Tourelles.¹³ In May 1944 Vadjarakanian was transported to Rouillé (Vienne). In 1944, 52 prisoners, 38 of whom were political prisoners, managed to escape from the camp. However, 10 km away from Rouillé, in the Saint-Sauvant (Vienne) forest, they were surrounded by German forces. Vahridj was among the 31 massacred Maquis.¹⁴

Even without extensive detail, this brief overview is sufficient to demonstrate the *Zhoghovurd* daily newspaper's significance and relevance. Personal narratives and eyewitness accounts published in the pages of the newspaper serve as valuable

¹⁰ Kostandinian A., Haik Dpirian, (Haik Dpirian), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 77, 06.01.1945). For more details about this famous combatant see *Zhoghovurd*, No. 191, 24.05.1945 p., No. 267, 22.08.1945.

¹¹ Voskeritchian T., *Hay ardzakazeni my yushery* (The memoirs of the Armenian fighter of the Resistance), Beirut, 1974.

¹² Grason Daniel, Vadjaraganian Vahridj <https://fusilles-40-44.maitron.fr/vadjaraganian-vahridj/> (24.04.25)

¹³ Taturian Sh., Vahritchi masin (About Vahridj), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 37, 19.11.1944, No. 38, 21.11.1945, No. 39, 22.11.1945.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

primary sources, offering direct insight into historical events and individual experiences.

Biographical information about Armenian Participants and Supporters of the French Resistance

There is a lot of biographical information about the Armenian participants of the French Resistance in almost every issue of the newspaper. We all know Manouchian's letter to his wife, Meline. But there was a second one addressed to Meline's sister, Armenuhi. It was here that Manouchian wrote and asked to remember and honor Arpen Davitians memory with him. In the first years after their deaths, they were remembered together, and their portraits were carried side by side at all memorial events. Over time, his name was not entirely forgotten, but it gradually received diminishing recognition. Fortunately, the *Zhoghovurd* daily newspaper preserved much valuable information for us about Manouchian's comrade-in-arms and member of his group, Arpen Davitian.¹⁵

As we have mentioned, there are many articles dedicated to Haik Dpirian's life trajectory and activities. In several issues of *Zhoghovurd* from March 1946, we read about the national funeral of an Armenian hero. In those days, the municipality of Paneo decided to move and rebury Dpirian's remains and those of his three friends. Thanks to this, we get a sense of the atmosphere and the course of the event. Ervand Hovhannesian's article, published in 24 March in *Zhoghovurd* paid tribute to Dpirian's mother. She stayed in Egypt and for her the grave of her son was his library and his unpublished work «I, my life and my pen». In response to her question about whether her son has a grave in France, Hovhannesian writes. «Armenian and French people never forget their heroes. **The proof of this** is the national funeral of Dpirian and his three friends».¹⁶

In several issues of *Zhoghovurd* from February 1946, we get a sense of the atmosphere surrounding the national funeral of another hero, Nshan Ter-Martirosian. The newspaper provided a detailed account of the ceremonies that took place in Nice and Marseille. We should note that not only the farewell of the Armenian hero, but also his life and struggle are chronicled in the pages of the *Zhoghovurd* newspaper.¹⁷

¹⁵ Alexander, Arpen Davitian (Arpen Davitian), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 435, 07.03.1946.

¹⁶ Haik Dpiriani thaghomy (The funeral of Hayk Dpirian), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 448, 22.03.1946), Herosin thaghman arthiv, (In relation to the hero's funeral), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 450, 24.03.1946), Haik Dpiriani ev ir ynkerneru pharahegh thaghumy (Haik Dpirian's and his friends grand funeral), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 452, 27.03.1946:

¹⁷ Hamazgayin mets cuyc ev thaghum Nshan Ter-Martirosian (Nationwide mourning demonstration and funeral of Nshan Ter-Martirosian), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 410, 06.02.1946, Hakahitlerakan payqari heros Nshan Ter-Martirosian thagoumy (The funeral of a hero of the anti-Hitler struggle), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 412, 08.02.1946, Ardzakazn hramanatar Nshan Ter-Martirosian atchyunnery Marseyli mej (The remains of the guerrilla commander Nshan Ter-Martirosian in Marseille), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 416, 13.02.1946:

One of the heroes of the French Resistance in Marseille was Karapet Metsikian. Karapet or Karpis was a soldier in the French Army, and after 1940, he joined the Resistance movement. He was the founder of the Armenian resistance group in Vienne and the Committee of Liberation in *Le Péage-de-Roussillon*. He and his friends liberated 11 Soviet prisoners of war from the camp of *Saint-Rambert-d'Albon*. He also sabotaged railway lines in *Saint-Rambert-d'Albon*, blew up eight steam locomotives, and disrupted German supply movements. He was eventually captured by the Nazi Gestapo and tortured to death in Montluc prison. To this day, no one knows what they did to his body, he still has no grave.¹⁸ Despite everything, his elderly parents never gave up hope that he would return one day. They passed away without ever knowing what happened to their son. Karapet's father passed away a few months ago, shortly after his wife's death. There is an article entitled «Unfortunate Family» in the issue of *Zhoghovurd* from January 22, 1946, which tells how the Armenian community of Vienne held a final farewell in honor of the grieving father.¹⁹

Many issues of *Zhoghovurd* are entirely dedicated to the Armenian participants of the French Resistance. For example, the issue from March 7, 1946, had the following headline: «They fell heroically so that the Motherland might live and liberty might prevail». It provided us with the names and short biographies of Armenian fighters from Marseille and Lyon. Most of them were survivors of the Armenian Genocide, born in various cities and villages of Western Armenia: Levon Antonian (Berdik, Kharberd), Avetis Tulumjian (Kesaria), Nikoghos Avetikian (Havtik, Kesaria), Azat Nikoghosian (Hertif, Qgi), Karapet Terterian (Karin), Karapet Metsikian (Izmir). Among the names of Armenian heroes, there are many young men, 18-19 years old, born in France in 1926-1927: Khachik Marikian, Sargis Miralian, Torgom Ter-Merkerian, Manuk Birian, Vrez Perpatian, Ervand Sar-Keshishian and many others. These young people, sons of Armenian Genocide survivors, never hesitated and undoubtedly joined the fight against the Nazis.²⁰

As we have already noted, there is information about Armenian Resistance in almost every issue of *Zhoghovurd*. There are many articles dedicated to the participation of Armenians in the French Resistance, not only in Paris, Lyon, and Marseille, but also in most of the cities and villages of France. Thanks to the newspaper, we learn the names that, over time, would have been forgotten. Here are some examples: In the issue of September 19, 1945, *Zhoghovurd* presented the translation of the letter from the Mayor of Barjoles regarding the Armenians. Here we read the name of Torgom Mnatsakanian, one of the victims of Barjoles.²¹ From

¹⁸ Karapet Metsikian (Karapet Metsikian), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 775, 20.04.1947.

¹⁹ Tarabakht yntaniq (Unfortunate Family), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 397, 22.01.1946:

²⁰ Anonq vor herosabar inkan, vorpeszi hayreniqy apri ev azatutyuny yaghthanake (They fell heroically so that the Motherland might live and liberty might prevail), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 435, 07.03.1946:

²¹ Fransaciq Hayoc masin (French people about Armenians), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 291, 19.09.1945.

the pages of the newspaper, we learn the name of Petros Topuzian a medical student from Vienne. He moved to England and joined Charles de Gaulle's army. He perished in 1944.²² In the issue of March 4, 1946, we read that Vahram's (Valanten Sagiaian) name who was decorated with the Cross for War by the Military Governor of Paris, Koenig.²³ In the article titled "Armenian Members of the Resistance are Honored in Grenoble", from the issue of September 12, 1946, preserved for us the names of 21 names of Armenian participants and contributors of French Resistance.²⁴

This heading represents only a portion of the heroic names from the Armenian Diaspora, the number of which, according to various statistical sources, was 50,000 before World War II. The exact number of participants, or those who lost their lives, is difficult to estimate because it is fair to say that the entire Diaspora took part in the struggle against the Nazi occupation in one way or another. However, when such research is conducted in the near future, the data from *Zhoghovurd* will be essential and should be prioritized.

Facts and evidence regarding the activities, interventions, and contributions of the Armenian Diaspora in the struggle against the Nazi occupation of France

The pages of *Zhoghovurd* contain preserved information about various aspects of the Armenian Diaspora's activities during the Nazi occupation of France. Worthy of mention are the activities of Armenian women. It is no coincidence that many women were among those awarded and honored by the French authorities. We should also mention the Union of Armenian Women, which did great work in the fields of reintegration and rehabilitation for former prisoners returning home. What is interesting is that we always see the surname Aznavourian in the list of generous and compassionate artists who participated in charitable events organized by the Union of Armenian Women or *Zhoghovurd*, whose aim was to help the families of victims or freed prisoners.

Of significant importance is the coverage of efforts for the liberation of Soviet prisoners and, later, their involvement in different military operations. It is known that the first partisan unit was organized from Armenian prisoners of war. Thanks to the newspaper, much information about the unit stationed in Nîmes became known. In the issue of November 4, 1944, we read about the presentation of the flag of the partisan detachment and the celebration held on this occasion. It's interesting to read about the theatrical performance based on the play written by one of the partisans, Gurgen Mukhranian, "In the Ring of Fascism"²⁵.

²² Keanqy Vieni mej (Life in Vienne), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 98, 31.01.1945.

²³ Patvoy takhtak. Hay qaj my ky patui (Armenian hero is honored), *Zhoghovurd*, No. 193, 26.05.1945:

²⁴ Hay Rezistanner ky patuin Krynopli mej (Armenian Participants of Resistance are honoring in Grenoble) *Zhoghovurd*, No. 591, 12.09.1946:

²⁵ Droschaki handznum hay partizanakan gndin (The transfer of the flag to the regiment), *Zhoghovurd*, 04.11.1944:

Conclusion

As presented in the introduction, this article aims to examine the *Zhoghovurd* daily newspaper and its significance in researching the role of the Armenian Diaspora in the struggle against the Nazi occupation of France. In accordance with the defined research objectives, this article, structured under three main headings, highlights key information and evidence derived from this newspaper: Memories of Armenian Participants of the French Resistance, Biographical information about Armenian Participants and Supporters of the French Resistance, Facts and evidence regarding the activities, interventions, and contributions of the Armenian Diaspora in the struggle against the Nazi occupation of France. This is the first time the role and significance of *Zhoghovurd* daily newspapers are becoming subjects of research in the context of the French Resistance. It helps us recover names, recognize heroism, and ultimately restore the complete picture of Armenian participation in the French Resistance. As we stated, this is the first such research, and it will create opportunities for further researchers to continue studying not only *Zhoghovurd*, but also other newspapers and journals published by Armenians, which could help restore the true picture of the Armenian Diaspora's role.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical Standards

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.