



The Editorial Board of the Caucasian Review wish to convey to Armenian readers, their deep sympathy on the occasion of the death of one of the national heroes of the Armenian people, General D. Dro.

Editorial Board of the
Caucasian Review

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GENERAL D. DRO

General D. Dro (Drastamat Kanayan), well-known politician and leader of the Armenian Dashnaktsutyun party, died on March 8, 1956, in Boston, USA.

Drastamat Kanayan, known in the Armenian liberation movement as Dro, was born at Igdyr, Surmalin district, in 1884. His parents, wishing to give him a good education, sent him to the Erevan classical secondary school. In 1904 he joined the army. Stormy events in Transcaucasia made him join the Dashnaktsutyun party at an early age and he became one of the outstanding fighters of the Armenian revolutionary organization. At the age of 20 he actively campaigned against the anti-Armenian representatives of the government, who had provoked the clashes between the nationalities in Transcaucasia in 1905.

To escape police persecution Dro went to Turkey, where he lived in the town of Beyazit. During World War I he returned to the Caucasus and became Commander of the 2nd Armenian volunteer detachment. In the battles on the Caucasian front at the beginning of the war, Dro was seriously wounded and sent to the Armenian hospital in Tiflis.

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In 1915, after recovering from his wounds, Dro once again assumed command of his detachment. He was the first to occupy Van and liberate the local Armenians. Until the autumn of 1916, Dro took part in numerous battles on the Caucasian front. Everywhere he displayed exceptional bravery and military skill. After the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, disbanded the seven independent Armenian volunteer detachments, Dro left the front.

In 1917, during the Russian revolution, when the army began to disintegrate, Dro was appointed commissar of the Armenian corps, which was organized with the Provisional Government's permission, and was open to all Armenian soldiers and officers on the Western and Caucasian fronts. He rendered invaluable services to General Nazarbekian by energetically restoring order and discipline in the armed forces. Thanks to his labors, the Armenian corps became the main prop for the defence of the Caucasian front after the withdrawal of the Bolshevized Russian Army divisions.

In 1918 the forces of the Ottoman Empire reached Erevan and Echmiadzin. During the critical May battles Dro assumed command of the Bash-Abaran detachment and threw the enemy back. On its flank the Serdarabar detachment succeeded in doing the same.

As a result the Ottoman government recognized Armenia as an independent state and made peace with her on June 4, 1918, in Batum. Dro was thus one of the main founders of renaissance Armenian statehood.

While the Democratic Republic of Armenia existed, General Dro occupied the highest commands and in 1920 conducted successful military operations both on the Turkish and Soviet fronts.

After the sovietization of Armenia, Dro remained in the country as he did not wish to leave his people, who looked on him with trust and hope. The Bolsheviks were afraid to touch him, so popular was he with the people. However, the Soviet authorities soon invited him to "take up his residence" in Moscow. This was camouflaged banishment of a national hero. All the way to Moscow, numerous Armenian colonies solemnly acclaimed him. The authorities were afraid to interfere. In 1924 he insisted that the Soviet government give him permission to go abroad. The Bolsheviks consented and General Dro left.

As an emigré he at first lived in Bucharest. During World War II he rendered incalculable services to Armenians living in territories occupied by the Germans. He devoted much energy to organizing aid for Soviet Armenian prisoners of war. He personally contributed much to the establishment of close and friendly ties between Caucasian emigrants. In their circles he enjoyed great respect and affection.

After the war he dedicated himself entirely to social work. As one of the leaders of the Dashnaktsutyun party, he resolutely opposed the Bolshevik infiltration of Armenian colonies, particularly in the Middle East.

The report which he made to the Commission of the House of Representatives in America is known. In it he gave exhaustive and authoritative data on events in Armenia, beginning with World War I. He described in detail the conditions under which Soviet Armenia arose and the cruel Bolshevik policy which led to a national anti-Soviet revolt in Armenia.

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