THE LEGACY AND RELEVANCE OF NJTEH

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Category: Opinions

Book Review by **Lusavor Shushi,** USA, 27 March 2024

Njteh
Authored by Avo (Toumoyian)
Published in Armenian by Revolutionary Album
Printed by Hamazkayin, Beirut 1968

This nearly 500-page book is an effort to concisely describe the contributions of a monumental figure in the history of the Armenian people during a critical part of the 20th century.

In the introduction, Avo writes: "Our leaders and fighters who were striving for Armenia's revival have not done enough to introduce Njteh to the new generation. This volume aims to do just that and save factual historic events from loss."

The first part of the book describes Njteh's youth in Gznoot Village in Old Nakhichevan where he was born in 1886. As a student in Tiflis, Karekin Der Haroutunian (Njteh) became enthusiastic about the revolutionary struggles of the Armenian people. He joined the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) and read nationalistic literary works by Raffi. With financial support from the ARF, he later enrolled in and graduated from a Bulgarian military academy.

The descriptions of the historic events to save Syunik in the early 20th century is the heart of the books' first part. Fighting between Armenian volunteer defense forces led by Njteh against the joined forces of mostly Bolshevik/Communist Russians, Kemalist Turks and Tatars-Azeris provide great insight into today's events in Armenia and Artsakh, the ethnic cleansing, genocide and forced exodus of the people of Artsakh in September 2023. From 1918 to 1921 and under the command of Njteh, Armenians liberated villages and towns in Syunik (historic Syunik included Zankezour, Sisian, Ghapan, Kenvaz and Koghtan regions).

In May 1920, the Bolsheviks entered Baku without much local resistance. By the end of the month, the Azeris occupied Armenian Artsakh with the direct involvement of "Red Russians." Gradually, the Soviet plan became clear—to occupy Zankezour, Sisian, Ghapan and Kenvaz. The book narrates the events that forced the government of Armenia to resign and accept Sovietization in December 1920 followed by the indigenous Armenian declaration of Autonomous Syunik that same month. Then came the revolt of the Armenians in Yerevan and regions against Soviet rule in February 1921, and Armenia's second fall to the Soviets in April 1921. By then, an independent administration was elected in Syunik, known as the government of Mountainous Armenia (Lernahayasdan) to defend and protect the citizens of southern Armenia and the Armenian refugees who fled Turko-Bolshevik onslaughts.



The name Njteh is an Armenian word for someone who lives away from his homeland.

Photo. Credit: The Armenian Weekly

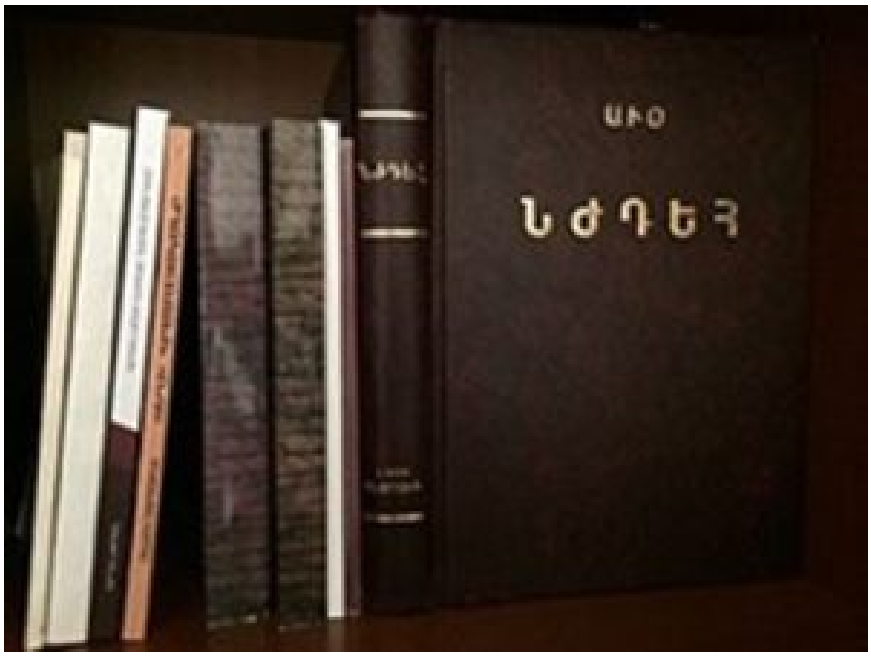
Speeches by and letters to and from Njteh in section one demonstrated his resolve to break the enemy and to instill in his people a fearlessness, patriotism and the importance of military strength to defend Armenian territories subjected to Turkish and Tatar-Azeri invasions for decades and thus depopulated through constant attacks, killings, rape and kidnapping of Armenian women and girls.

The second part of the book is by Njteh himself. In his own words, Njteh describes the defense of Syunik and later his departure from Armenia in June 1921 when he was declared a wanted man by the Soviet authorities. He wrote: "*For years, the efforts of attaching the Armenian Mountainous regions to Azerbaijan was the reason for us to carry arms and climb our mountains*."

Appraising the second part of the book is critical because it includes excerpts from other works by Njteh, which contain honest observations about why Armenia lost its way: *"I accept that had it not been for our ancestors who became slaves to their selfishness, we would not have become slaves to foreigners for centuries. I accept that the older sins of Armenians have contributed to the destruction of Armenia, more so than our enemy's sword. Until today, Armenians continue to pay for the sins of dissent."* (The Movement of the Race's Soul, Bulgaria 1932)

In the final part of the book, we find testimonials about Njteh from notable Armenian figures of the time, such as Simon Vratsian, Roupen Tarpinian, Hamasdegh, Garo Sasuni and Ashod Ardzruni.

This book must be translated into English. In fact, **all books authored by Njdeh should be translated and made available to Armenian students of all ages and adherents of Hai Tad**. Our schools and youth organizations should devote themselves to teaching our youth Njteh's principles and ideas on the continued and just struggle for Armenia's territorial integrity, including Artsakh. Njteh points out the mistakes that were made, and shows a way forward.



Credit: Վիքիպեդիա

Below are 6 proverbs attributed to Njteh, some not in this book. They should inspire and guide the Armenian people now and always:

- Current Armenia is but 1/12th of historic Armenia. That is not a Homeland, but a corner of the Homeland. This Corner of Armenia and scattered people (the Diaspora) have the same fate and render our people to hesitation and indecisiveness. This means pessimism. Woe to a people who is infected with this sickness. In this condition, Armenia is standing at the edge of its grave.
- We are a sick and unfortunate people that until now have had two virtues: to blame our unlucky condition on external reasons and expect to be saved by foreign powers.
- The victory is won before the battle has started. It is won first morally, first in the soul. People who prepare for struggle must first arm themselves psychologically. Without patriotism, our people form a body without a soul.
- Blind and barbaric partisanship is a hideous disease that must be weakened in order to strengthen the nation. Nations, like their masters, are followed by the fortune they deserve.
- Patriotic education is the anchor of our salvation. The last card of peoples whose future is threatened is re-education.
- Outside of Armenia, in the diaspora, regardless of my condition; rich, well-to-do or daily laborer, I cannot accept emigration without return. Exile? No, there is repatriation.

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Comments

Pat – 2024-04-09 21:29:20
Mr. Bedrossian, it would be wonderful if The Selected Works of Njdeh in English could be made available as an eBook. Is this a possibility?

Boghos – 2024-04-08 22:43:42
Thank you, Mr. Bedrossian, for stepping forward to inform us about this translated initiative from 2011. Congratulations on undertaking that monumental task under the aegis of the Nakhichevan Institute. Would you kindly offer us your email address so that interested parties can order the book from you? It would help to know if your inventory can accommodate requests from numerous schools and Armenian youth organizations in the USA.

Antranig Bedrossian – 2024-04-08 14:21:11
« Selected Works of Garegin Njdeh » was published in English in Montreal in 2011 by Nakhijevan Institute of Canada. The English translation and commentaries by Eduard L. Danielyan, Doctor of History. Introduction by Antranig BEDROSSIAN, president of «Nakhijevan» Institute of Canada. A small number of copies are still available for sale. I am surprised that the author of this article is unaware of this English translation of selected works of Njdeh.