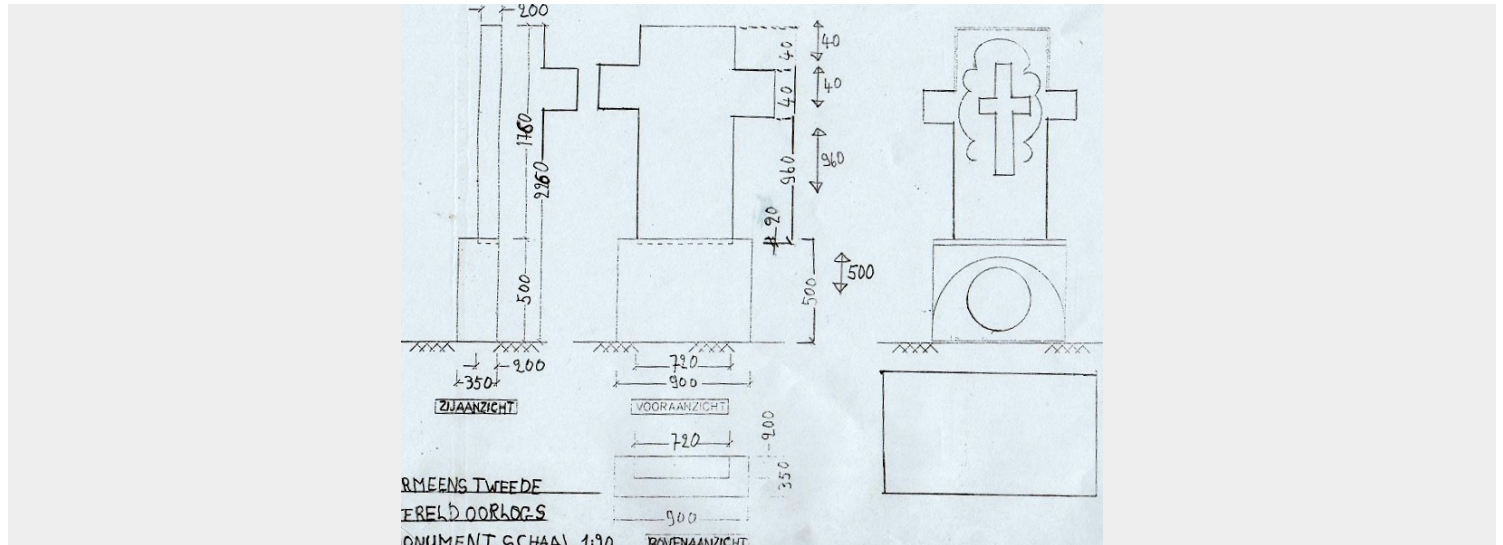


A MAN AND THREE MONUMENTS

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By **Jirair Tutunjian**, Toronto, 3 May 2018

Nicolai Romashuk Hairabedian of Assen, Netherlands is an indomitable patriot. The sixty-five-year-old former Jerusalemite, who has lived in Holland for more than forty years, is a veteran activist par excellence for the Armenian Cause.



After intense lobbying of the Assen municipality, several years ago he received permission to install a Genocide monument in that city. He then successfully lobbied to erect a monument in honor of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink who was assassinated by a Turkish extremist in Istanbul in 2007. Both monuments (khachkars, stone crosses) were made in Armenia. Hairabedian paid for the construction and shipment of the volcanic tufa stone monuments. Several years ago he also found time to persuade the Amsterdam municipality to name a historic bridge after the Armenians. The bridge had been frequently used in the 18th century by Armenian merchants.

The latest Hairabedian project is a monument in honor of the 200,000 Armenian soldiers who were killed in the Second World War. Some died in the Netherlands.

Hairabedian says he came up with the idea to honor the Armenian soldiers four years ago. He then pored over books to learn about the Soviet Armenian soldiers who had sacrificed their lives to liberate Europe. Hairabedian discovered that 5,000 Armenians soldiers had been held in concentration camps and a significant number had died in camps such as Auschwitz and Berkenau. He also learned that some captured Armenian soldiers, who had been forced to join the German army, had fled their captors and helped the Dutch freedom fighters. They had even provided the Dutch underground with weapons and hand grenades they had pilfered from the German army. It's a relatively unknown fact that many other captured Soviet Armenian soldiers similarly fled the German army and fought along resistance forces in France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Belgium, and Greece.



Military Parade in Yerevan

In August 2017 Hairabedian asked the Assen municipality for permission to erect a monument (close to the previous two monuments) in honor of the Armenian soldiers. In March of this year he received the green light from the municipality. By mid-April the monument was already in Assen. It was installed on April 18 which happens to be Hairabedian's birthday.

The monument will have the following inscription in Dutch and in Armenian: "In memory of more than 200,000 Armenian military victims who fought the enemy in the Second World War."

The monument weighing about a ton is made up of two pieces. Together the two stone monuments measure 221 cm. in height, 112 cm. in length while the arms of the khachkar measure 2 by 40 cm. Just

as he had paid for the previous two monuments, Hairabedian paid for the third monument.

Construction and shipment cost \$3,500. Although the three monuments are in three fields, the fields are adjacent. The address is Boskamp 5.

The placement of the monument was covered by journalist Bernd Otter of the "Dagblad van het Noorden" newspaper of Assen.



High Ranking Armenian Commanders in Soviet Army

Marshal Hovhannes Baghramian (L-Top), Admiral Hovhanness Isakov (L-B)

Chief Marshal of the Armoured Troops Hamazasp Babajanyan (R-Top)

Marshal of Aviation Armenak Khamperiants (R-Bottom)

