

In 1915, when Baghdik was twelve years old, the horrible massacre and deportation of Western Armenians began. The Armenian population of Van took to the road, fleeing the Turkish murderers in May 1915 and again the following year. The refugees passed through Atrpatakan on their way to Russian Armenia. This cataclysm no doubt impacted the city of Tabriz where Baghdik was living at the time, especially given that Archbishop Nerses Melik-Tangian, Prelate of the Atrpatakan Armenian Apostolic Church, was heavily involved in refugee relief work.

Following the withdrawal of the Russian army in 1917, the Ottoman army took advantage of the power vacuum to advance on Azerbaijan and capture Tabriz. Once again the Atrpatakan Armenians came under fire from the Armenocidists who occupied Tabriz and perpetrated abominable acts until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918.

The Republic of Armenia, confined to a sliver of the eastern portion of historic Armenia, declared its independence on May 28, 1918. Thus, when Baghdik began his formal education the following year, the newborn Republic of Armenia was trying to rise from the ashes of World War I and the Genocide, a situation that was aggravated by the collapsing economy, severe unemployment, and the burden of more than 100,000 refugees, remnants of the Genocide suffering starvation and epidemic diseases, without shelter and with little

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of local youths, outfitted them in Russian army uniforms and sent them to attack the Kurds. They killed Haji Khan and destroyed his gang and the surviving Kurds fled in terror, convinced they were being attacked by the Russian army. That was in 1916.