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Homenetmen Glendale Ararat Chapter
Cultural Division

Get to Know...

Volume 1, Issue 7

November 2008



MIKAEL NALBANDIAN

NOVEMBER 14, 1829 — APRIL 12, 1866

Michael Nalbandian was an Armenian writer who dominated 19th century Armenian literature. Born in New Nakhichevan in a family of a handicraftsman. Largely self-educated, Nalbandian initially pursued priesthood, but left it soon after, studied medicine briefly at Moscow University (1854-58) and finally succeeded in collaborating with Stepanos Nazaryan in founding of an influential periodical, *Aurora Borealis* (*Hyusisapayl*). In the years of revolutionary situation in Russia 1859–1861, Nalbandyan was one of the first of the Armenian writers to take the positions of revolutionary democracy under the influence of propaganda by Kolokol (Bell) and *Sovremennik* (Contemporary)

magazines. He traveled widely throughout Europe: Warsaw, Berlin, Paris, London and Constantinople, as well as to India. In Constantinople, Nalbandyan created a secret revolutionary society named *Party of the Young* around an Armenian magazine *Meghu* (Bee). In London, he became close friends with A.I. Gertsen, N.P. Ogarev, and M.A. Bakunin, as well as with N.A. Serno-Solovyevich and others, participated in discussing the project of an appeal article *What the People Need* (a program of the soon-to-be *Land and Freedom* organization). In a pamphlet *Two Lines* (1861), announced his political credo - to dedicate his life to the idea of people's liberation. In his main journalistic work *Agriculture as the Right Way* (1862), Nalbandyan criticized harshly the peasantry reform of 1861, even though he did it from the positions of community socialism. He saw a peasant revolution as the only solution for post reform Russia. Upon return to Russia, his passionate activities led to his arrest and imprisonment in St. Petersburg by the Tsarist government in July 1862. He was imprisoned in the Alexeyevsky ravelin of Petropa fortress.

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He died of tuberculosis in prison a year later. It was forbidden in Russia to possess a picture of Nalbandian; but portraits of him, with his poem, "Liberty," printed in the margins, were circulated secretly.

