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Armenian Diasporas In Cyprus and London

By Alin K. Gregorian

BELMONT, MA – The worldwide Armenian diasporas are changing, but most are still vital and will not disappear. This was the hopeful message of Dr. Susan P. Pattie, a cultural anthropologist who has extensively studied the Armenian communities in Cyprus and London. Dr. Pattie's book, *Faith in History: Armenians Rebuilding Community*, recently published by Smithsonian Institution Press, is a detailed study of the two diasporan communities.

In a program held on December 4 at the NAASR Center for Armenian Studies and Research and co-sponsored by the Zoryan Institute for Contemporary Armenian Research and Documentation, Dr. Pattie focused on the various ways worldwide diasporas define themselves and how they survive. A similar program had been held earlier in the week at the Armenian Church Diocese in New York.

The program was opened by NAASR Board Chairman Manoog S. Young, and the speaker was introduced by Hratch Tchilingirian, Director of the Zoryan Institute.

The relationship between the Armenian diasporas of England and Cyprus is interesting, particularly because for decades Cyprus had been a British colony and since 1974 has been partitioned, with the larger part ruled by a Greek-Cypriot government, and a smaller portion under a Turkish-Cypriot government installed by the invading Turkish army. As a result, a great number of the Cypriot-Armenian population has moved to England.

An Armenian By Definition

"There is a triangular relationship between the diaspora, the host culture and the homeland," Pattie told the audience.



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian presents benefactor with an encyclical of His Holiness Karekin I, Catholicos of the Holy See, during a reception at the Diocesan Complex in New York City. Gulamerians established an endowment at Holy Etchmiadzin, which will be used to educate and otherwise benefit the community.

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By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK
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While there, Mr. and Mrs. Gulamerian established Holy Etchmiadzin with a heartfelt and generous

"Our visit to Etchmiadzin made an indelible impression on Mrs. Gulamerian. "Those children there didn't say anything to help us. You have so much. We have nothing.""

With tears welling in her eyes, Mrs. Gulamerian said...



Community News

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DIASPORAS, from page 4

Armenians in Cyprus.

Armenians have had a presence in Cyprus since the sixth century. "It's been more or less a constant presence," Pattie said. By the 13th century an Armenian monastery had been founded.

The present Cypriot-Armenians date their community back to the 19th century when about 300 Armenians remained there. By the end of the century, that figure increased to 500. In 1922, an influx of 5,000 Armenians from cities such as Adana, Marash, Caesaria and Kharpert, seeking a haven from the Genocide, came there for safety under British rule.

Various elements have been at odds in the Cyprus Armenian community. At one point the conflict was between the natives versus those who emigrated to Cyprus in the 1920s. The pre-1922 Armenians called themselves "deghatsis," or natives, to distinguish themselves from the newcomers. Then the issue shifted to allegiance between the Armenian Revolutionary Federation versus the Armenian Democratic League. After that came the class differences between the shop owners and the intellectuals.

Pattie explained that by the 1950s what had begun as pleas for independence from the

British by the local Greek majority in Cyprus turned into a violent uprising. A conference in Zurich in 1959 on the status of Cyprus ended with a constitution, a proclamation of independence, and a treaty of guarantee signed by Britain, Greece and Turkey. A coup in July 1974, however, resulted in the election of a more hardline Greek president. The Turkish government, fearing Cypriot-Turks were going to be harmed, launched an invasion, which led to the division of the island by a Green Line.

"The Armenians were caught in between," Pattie said. "They preferred the British rule. There was a lot of killing between the Greeks and the Turks, and the British and the Greeks."

Many Armenians lived in what became the Turkish part of Cyprus. Now, because of the Turkish occupation, the Armenians had to move to the Greek side.

"The Armenians left their churches, homes and businesses to move to the Greek side," Pattie said. "It had an effect particularly on the younger generation." She recited the story of a young Armenian couple just married in a church in the Turkish quarter. They heard an explosion during the ceremony. From the church they went to the Melkonian Institute for their wedding reception. By the time they were able to come back to their new home several days later,



Dr. Susan Pattie, center, with Zoryan Institute Director Hrach Tchilingirian, left, and NAASR member John Vigen Der Manueelian.

it had virtually been destroyed by soldiers.

"Before, old people's refugee stories were like a fairy tale. Now I understand," Pattie quoted the then new bride recalling.

London Community Grows.

In the 1960s the Armenian community in England was relatively small. After 1974, however, the Armenian exodus from Cyprus was steady. Overall, she said, the new emigrants loved the new country, except for the food. She recalled being told a humorous tale of a young man who had been a student in England in the 1950s. One day, with great difficulty and at great expense, he found and purchased a watermelon and brought it back to his rooming house. He asked his landlady to serve it to him and his

Will the Diaspora Survive?

One of the most complex issues facing the diaspora, Pattie said, is assimilation. "It's a real fear in Cyprus. There are now under 1,500 Armenians there." Still, she said, because of the relative prominence of the Armenians there, including the many businesses that they own, the community appears larger than it is.

She suggested that, in the early part of the century, the focus was on rebuilding and the needs of the community. "The only way to continue is if there is a need for each other."

Pattie noted that the need for Armenians to work for the betterment of the community is often countered by the Western emphasis on individualism, which demands focus on one's own needs, as opposed to those of the com-

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