



ANDRANIK MARGARYAN

Prime Minister of Armenia

Andranik Margaryan was appointed Prime Minister of Armenia in May 2000, only a few months after major political turmoil. In October 1999 the Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan, the President of the National Assembly Karen Demirchian and five MPs were assassinated in the parliament by gunmen. In the power struggle that followed between the supporters of the slain prime minister and the ruling regime, Margaryan allied himself with the two most influential figures in the country – the President, Robert Kocharian, and the controversial Defence Minister Serge Sargsyan. Indeed, Margaryan's longevity as Prime Minister was attributed largely to the fact that he rarely disagreed with the President and the Defence Minister on major policy issues and assured them the full support of his Republican Party, the ruling party with the largest number of seats in parliament.

While unemployment and large disparities between the rich and the poor remain, under Margaryan's leadership Armenia posted healthy, double-digit economic growth. The average annual GDP growth was 12.1 per cent between 2001 and 2005, compared to 5.1 per cent during the previous five years. Armenia joined the World Trade Organisation in 2003, stabilised its currency and privatised most state-owned small- and medium-sized enterprises. Kocharian described Margaryan's seven-year tenure as "the best years of our statehood".

Born in 1951, Margaryan studied at the Yerevan Polytechnic Institute and graduated as a computer engineer in 1972.

He worked in a number of Soviet state institutions before getting involved in dissident politics in Soviet Armenia. He was arrested in 1974 for "nationalist activities" in a clandestine group campaigning for Armenia's secession from the Soviet Union and served a two-year prison term in a labour camp.

During Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika, Margaryan and his dissident colleagues founded the Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) in 1989, which later became the first registered political party after Armenia's independence in 1991. He was elected chairman of its Central Board in 1997. Elected a member of the National Assembly in 1995, he was re-elected in 1999, becoming the head of the largest "Unity" bloc in the parliament and, after the 2003 elections, headed the coalition government.

Unlike most politicians in Armenia, Andranik Margaryan was well liked. Politicians and citizens alike described him as humble, tolerant and honest. Even opposition leaders praised him. "Unfortunately, there are very few political figures in our government with the ability to listen and to forgive," lamented Aram Sargsyan, a harsh critic of the ruling regime.

Margaryan had been planning to resign as Prime Minister after the parliamentary elections on 12 May, but said he wanted to remain active in politics.

Hrach Tchilingirian

Andranik Margaryan, politician: born Yerevan, Soviet Union 12 June 1951; Prime Minister of Armenia 2000-07; married (one son, two daughters); died Yerevan, Armenia 25 March 2007.