

Hayagerdum yev Mangavarjutun

By Hratch Tchilingirian

Hayagerdum yev Mangavarjutun [*Armenian-formation and Pedagogy*]. By Bebo Simonian. Beirut: Shirak Press. 1996. 360 p.

Preservation of the Armenian identity (hayabahbanum) is one of the most talked-about subjects in the Armenian Diaspora. One could even say that "hayabahbanum" has been the raison d'être of the Diaspora, at least until the independence of Armenia.

Bebo Simonian, a Lebanese-Armenian educator, essayist and poet, in his recently published **Hayagerdum yev Mangavarjutun**, adds a new conceptual perspective to the discussion of Armenian identity in the Diaspora: the "formation of the Armenian identity" (hayagerdum). As experience in the last decades shows, perpetuation without formation is a futile endeavor.

Armenian-formation and Pedagogy is a collection of essays dealing with pedagogical issues in the context of Armenian

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education in the Diaspora, particularly as it relates to the Armenian community in the Middle East. They are based on Simonian's decades of experience as an Armenian teacher and school principal. Simonian lays out the general pedagogical issues in the formation of students — starting from kindergarten to high school students — and underlines the importance of well-developed, relevant and modern educational curricula in the process of the formation of the youth.

"New educational values should advance the educational level of students; contribute to their moral and national character, and enhance success in their future."

The author pays particular attention to the decline of interest in Armenian studies in Lebanon. In the past, large numbers of youth chose Armenian studies as an area of specialization and were sent to institutions of higher education to deepen their "intellectual and cultural forma-

tion." However, today, due to the lack of "enthusiastic educators" in Armenian secondary schools, the numbers have declined to an alarming level.

For Bebo Simonian, the future of Western Armenian (language and literature) depends, primarily, on the Armenian schools in the Middle East. Ironically, the problem stems from there also. As Simonian writes, "Our society no longer expects intellectuals, journalists, writers, or teachers to come from Armenian schools." Even more, "Our society does not expect the next generation of Armenians to be fluent in Western Armenian." Without a drastic shake-up and improvement in the approach toward Armenian education, "the threats that emanate from our schools in the Middle East will continue to cause their damage. We have to accept that today we are not producing a generation of Armenians who are proficient in Western Armenian."

In the last section of the book, "The Armenians of Tomorrow,"

a selection of addresses given over the years to the graduating classes of Armenian schools, Simonian captures the true spirit of the Armenian educator: "Whatever we've given you from our soul, time, mind, breath and knowledge, as dedication and sacrifice, have returned to us sweeter and more meaningful, because we believe, and I hope you also believe, that a man is happier and wealthier when he gives than when he receives."

Armenian-formation and Pedagogy, with its engaging discussions of timely issues, is a welcome contribution to an area of study and concern in the Armenian Diaspora — namely education and Armenian identity — about which so little has been written. **Armenian-formation and Pedagogy** can serve as a useful and thought-provoking resource for Armenian teachers, educators, school boards and those interested in Armenian education in the Diaspora.

Bebo Simonian's literary career spans over three decades. As a prolific writer and intellectual of the Lebanese-Armenian community, he has authored over a dozen books and numerous articles on Armenian literature, culture, history and political life. He is regularly featured in **Eritassard Hayastan**, the official monthly publication of the **Social Democrat Hunchakian Party**, published in Paramus, NJ. From 1975-1995, he was the dean of Sahagian L. Megerdichian College in Beirut. He is also the author of **Martgayin Irvantz Hartzter** [Human Rights Issues] published in Beirut in 1995.

London, England

Review of Self-I in I

tria and New York is extensive and appears to have been drawn from French, Russian (Reuters) sources and overwhelming deposits toward Hovannisian's 1918 Republic.

[Haig E. Aslanian on his memoir former A. Tjelnov and is the nephew of Loris Tjeknav of Armenian Panchestra.]

He presents a convincing case in his main thesis, and the book's title is based on legal opinions of Mesrop Aslanian in his Preface makes his point both in his introduction through the end of the book.

Many readers by an inability to understand European language may encounter some difficulties, but this is not a book but rather a collection of facts and scholarly analysis. Nonetheless, despite the text, the reader will find much and it will be a same reader to the sensiveness of the argumentation.

Any book with notes, sometimes ten to the page, with an easy flow and consequently, the reader who is interested in the author's source rapidly fatigues up and down nevertheless, this is the most authentic and reliable compensation on the conflicts and status of the present.

Detroit Armenian Community Honors Historian and Author, Dr. Antranig Chalabian - Cont. from p. 15

torate degree in history. I told him that I'd think about it.

Sometime later, Aharonian called me again and said: "Did you write the letter?" I said, "No. I forgot about it."

The man got upset, angry. "Baron Chalabian, yes kezi esi, ... and so you must write the letter. " I finally gave up and wrote the letter, but reluctantly.

HONORARY OR REAL DEGREE?

After some months, Academician Hrant Avedisian came to California to attend a symposium at UCLA. He wrote to me, saying, "We discussed your letter at the Academy and we give you two options: 1. An honorary doctorate degree for which you don't have to come to Armenia. We'll mail it to you. 2. A real doctorate degree for

there were no Armenian schools in this country then.

In addition to writing history, I have been contributing articles to the **American Military History** magazine, about highlights in Armenian history. My third article about Shah Abbas the Great and the Story of New Julfa is accepted for publication and I am commissioned to write two more articles, this time about events in world history.

Spokane, WA Armenian Says: "We Must Remember"

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American presidents have acknowledged the genocide — but little else.