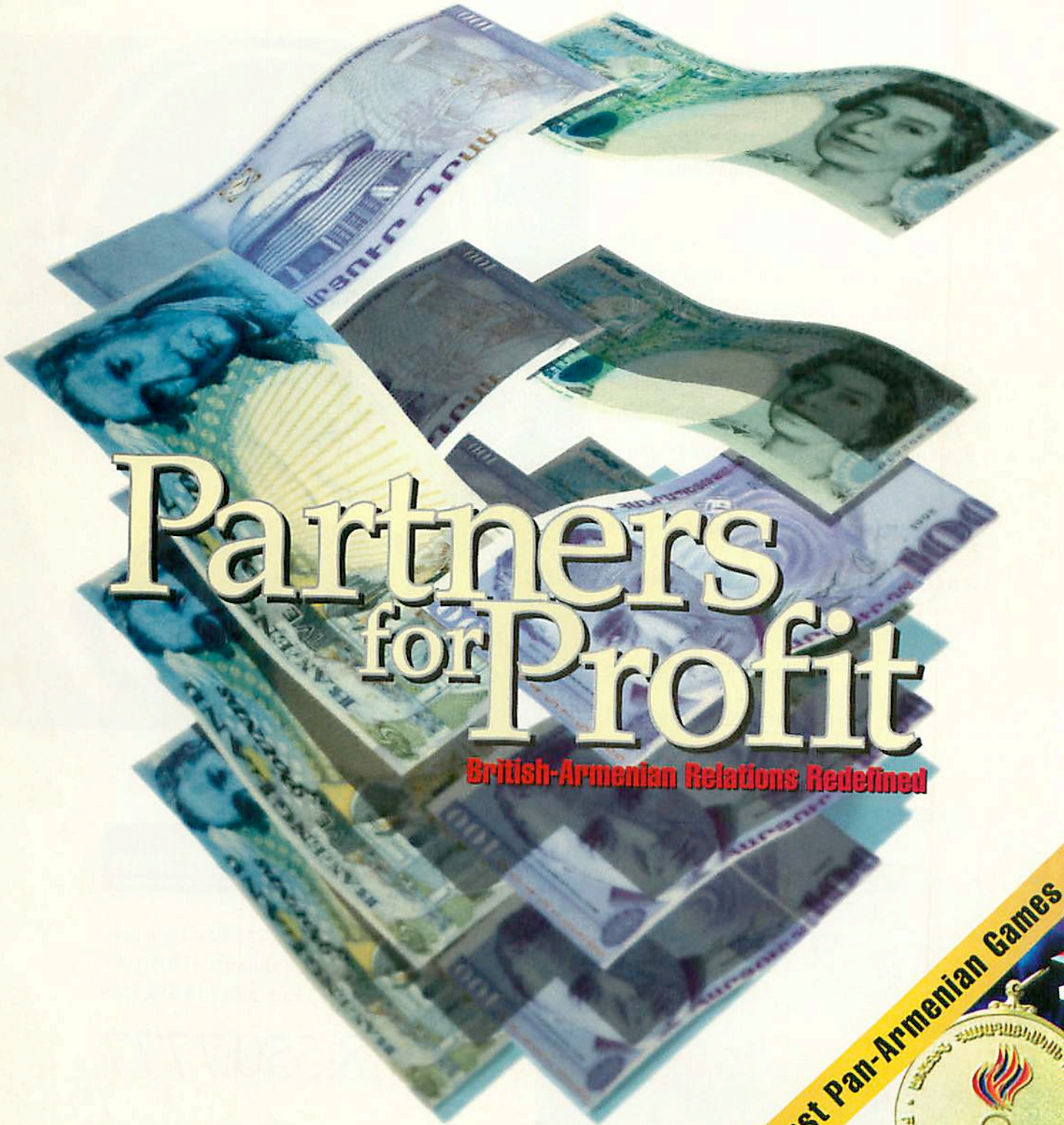


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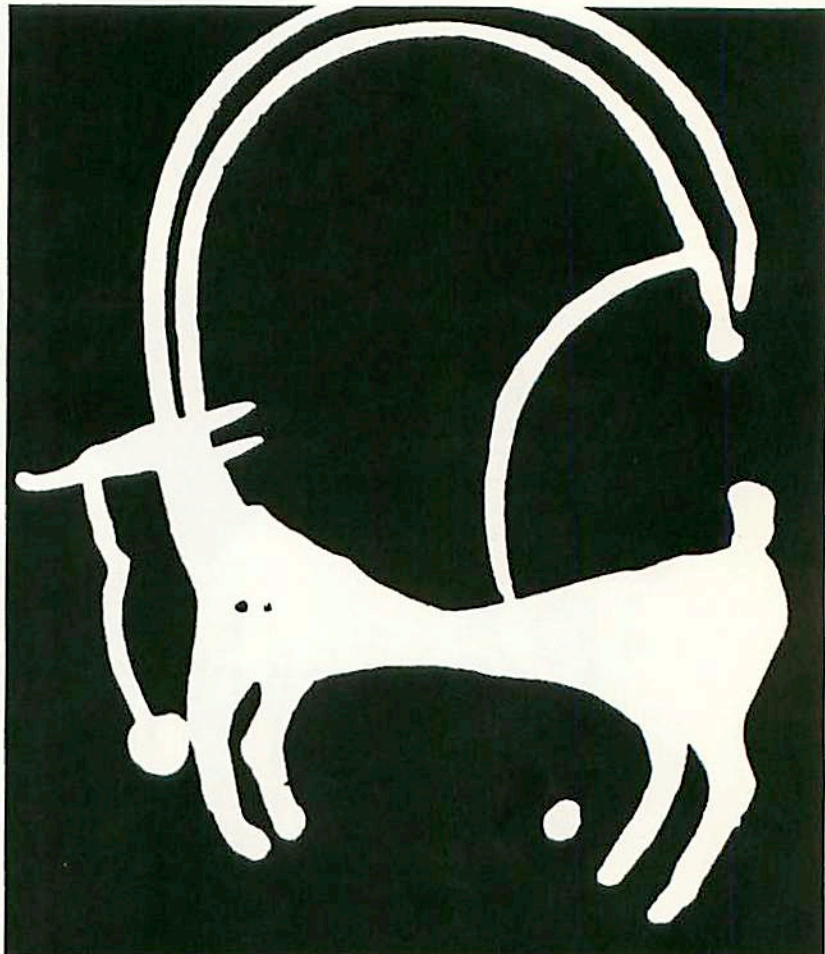
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COVER ART AND DESIGN BY RAFFI TARPINIAN

# Volunteerism Alive and Well

Yes, volunteerism is alive and well—in Armenia. So is philanthropy. AIM and the *A Wall of Silence* are evidence.

Let me start at the beginning.

Last April, after successful showings of *A Wall of Silence* in Beverly Hills, San Francisco and Montreal, we thought about premiering the film in Armenia as well. After all, a film featuring an Armenian historian—Vahakn Dadrian, and a Turkish historian—Taner Akçam, discussing the genocide of the Armenians in the context of Turkish state-building and human rights, should become a focus of conversation in Yerevan as well.

The logistics and the costs could both have become problems, but, as we've learned at AIM, there's always a way to get things done, and there are always people willing to help.

September 28 was chosen as the date of the premiere, in order to coincide with the Armenia-Diaspora Conference, as well as with Armenia's independence anniversary. Lots of Diasporans would be in Yerevan at that time, we thought, and would be equally pleased at the opportunity to participate in the discourse that the film engenders. And, Dorothee Forma, the film's producer was available to travel to Yerevan and present the film, just as she had done in North America.



AIM Managing Editor Hratch Tchilingirian with *A Wall of Silence* producer Dorothee Forma, center, at the film's premiere in Yerevan.

Anahit Martirosian, Coordinator of AIM's Yerevan Bureau and the staff got the ball rolling. The Paradise Advertising Agency (whose Vahan Stepanian also does

production work for this magazine) undertook the translation of the dialogue, as well as subtitling of the film. I worked with them in the last days of the process and was very impressed by their careful, thoughtful treatment of the material and its nuances.

The film was shown in the beautiful Moskva Theater on Abovian Street, just a block away from Republic Square. The director of the theater, Norair Azatian, graciously offered the use of the hall for free. "If AIM can get involved in this cause, so can we," he said and generously agreed to every request.

There were still costs involved: Travel, lodging, a simple reception following the film in order to encourage the airing of ideas and thoughts that the film naturally generates, technical costs, etc. It didn't take more than a five-minute explanation to Khachatour Soukiasian, Chairman of the SIL Group, a member of parliament, and an AIM patron, to agree to underwrite these expenses. Sukiasian, sitting in his beautifully renovated National Assembly office, simply said, "This is important, I'm happy to help."

It's true a cause like this one doesn't come around every day, but there's no doubt that there's a great deal of willingness and goodwill to be mined in Armenia. The premiere, it goes without saying, was a rousing success. And a television showing is in the works.

*Saygi Harout Ghazarian*



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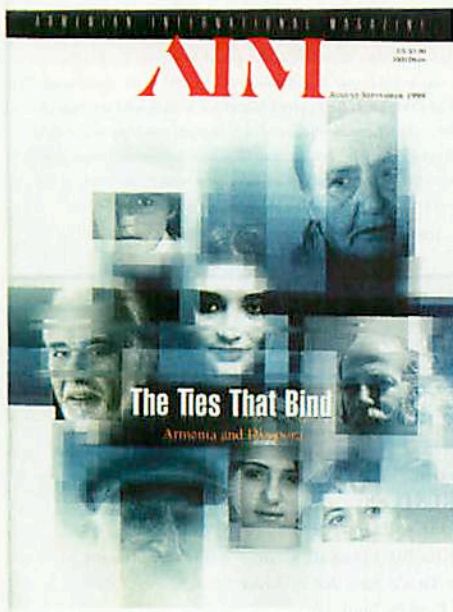
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**WRITE TO AIM!**  
 We welcome all communication. Although we read all letters and submissions, we are unable to acknowledge everything we receive due to limited staffing and resources. Letters to the Editor may be edited for publication.



## Internet or Not?

I have always enjoyed Tony Halpin's writings, but his essay, "Generation Internet" (July 1999) in my opinion, is not thought through. Yes, computers are vital for Armenia; but the Internet? I'm not as certain as Tony. We all know how easy it is to alter the balance of nature; is this no less with the human mind and ultimately, society? The Internet is full of wonderful sites for kids to view, learn, interact, but it is also filled with easily downloadable corruption: videos of rape, hard core sex. There are hate sites, anarchist sites, drugs, virus mailings, cyber vandals, cyber rapists—you name it. All as easy to contact or download as a fried chicken recipe. And safety filters don't work; not completely.

So really, how is the Internet going to effect the ecology of the human mind and the balance of nature in our society? If student shootings at Columbine High School in the US are any indication, then should Armenian children really need to succumb to the Internet? Doesn't our desolate little country have a plate full of problems already?

*John Vosbikian  
Medford, New Jersey*

## Letter to PM

John Hughes's letter to the Prime Minister (Focus, July 1999) sure hit home. As an Armenian-American living in Armenia and Karabakh I can only say that during John's stay in Armenia he sure saw everything. He didn't hold back any punch-

es and really told it like it is (as sad as that may be). Unfortunately, such letters in the past from those that don't provide material support have seemed to have little effect (who remembers the Human Rights Watch letter to Kocharian in January? Has anything really changed?). With the Armenian government still desperately looking to the Diaspora for its blind support of our struggling nation, let John's letter be an indication of what blind support has caused. World Bank stipulates that certain conditions be met in order to receive loans, which up until now amount to \$500 million—with an additional \$240 million in the next three years. Future generations must one day try to repay these loans.

Prime Minister Sargsian indicated in a speech to the National Assembly that all Armenians with resources around the world will be "called to Armenia, just as the army recruited its commanding officers with such a call back in 1990." Sargsian referred to the Armenia-Diaspora Conference in September as the opportunity to make such a call for participation. I would hope that those bold enough to answer this call will stand as one and seize the opportunity to stipulate their conditions, asking for a certain amount of equality and fairness to be created for the people.

*Ara Manoogian  
Marduni, Artsakh*

## No Smoking

In economic news from Armenia (July 1999) the statistics of the rapidly expanding tobacco industry seems to be presented with a sense of ill-deserved pride. In a country in which self-sufficiency in food production should be a primary goal, it is incredible that precious agricultural land is diverted to tobacco production.

If increased employment is the target, by all means continue expanding tobacco production to get the additional spinoff of increased employment in the healthcare industry as greater numbers of middle-aged people go on dying of cancer and heart disease.

*Pierre V. Haig  
Dana Point, California*

## Church and Nation

I commend your courage in publishing the "Quiz" on the Armenian Apostolic Church in your June 1999 issue.

It reminded me of a fanatical young Armenian I met in Beirut in 1956. Aware of

my connections with the Evangelical community, he arrogantly declared that when "we achieve independence," no religious denominations would be allowed in the Homeland other than the National Church and no political party other than the one he belonged to.

It is a disturbing thought that the dagger responsible for the present-day "decimation" of our people hides in the hands of our most ardent "defenders."

*Jirair Shekerdeman  
Vancouver, Canada*

## Tourism

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate receiving AIM.

I am planning to visit Armenia this fall for the first time. Your May issue (Discover Armenia) will simplify this task greatly. Keep up the good work.

*Hovik Abramian  
Snowmass Village, Colorado*

## EXCHANGE

### Infrastructural Focus

I am not a regular, nor a fond reader of AIM. Your magazine caught my attention at Borders Bookstore and I read, as you put it, an "insightful essay on the challenges facing Armenia and Armenians in the next millennium" (Cover Story, June 1999). The essay by Jivan Tabibian on political institutions was not only "a textbook look at the situation in Armenia" but a typical reflection on Weberian concepts of state-building and bureaucratic institutionalization. It utilizes basic and generalized ingredients, such as autonomy, legitimacy, constitutionalism, etc., of a western-style working state but does not provide any apropos prescription or an endemic analysis for Armenia. I think, knowledge of state-building and institutionalization is useful when applied to a specific case.

The article by Jivan Tabibian and AIM's views show that a faction of Armenian political mind seeks solutions in institutions and structures and seems to be incarcerated in the western model of state-building and institutionalization. Social struggles and political activities in Armenia, I believe, represent a new dimension of dissent suspicious of all traditional claims for development, on behalf of the people, the state, the common interest and skeptical of all singular, homogenized theories and

# LETTERS

images of authority, legitimacy, bureaucracy, management, legality, and liberty. I think, the people in Armenia, for a change, prefer not the structural but infrastructural focus and approach to state-building and refuse to see development as a process imposed from the top down. And it is irrelevant whether the imposing elites have the skills of coercion or they have developed styles of persuasion in the name of modernization.

*Razmig B. Shirinian  
Glendale, California*

## TABIBIAN REPLIES

It is encouraging to note that a "think piece" in AIM has managed to motivate even an irregular and not-so-fond reader of AIM to share some ideas and express some reservations.

However, although I think I understand what this reader wants to say, I am afraid I must convey some frustration at deciphering certain equivocal, contradictory and ambiguous notions contained in his brief but theoretical-sounding declarations.

First, my answer to his "concluding" observation: May I suggest, that in political life and processes, institutions *are* the infrastructures and it is not fair to think that legitimacy can be "imposed from the top down." To understand legitimacy is to recognize the meaninglessness of such assertions.

As to the reasoning: Thinking of Armenian political institutions as critical for the construction of a modern "working state" cannot be dismissed simply by assuming that characterizing them "western-style" discredits the very idea of state-building. The test is in the effectiveness of modernization, not the "styles of persuasion in the name of modernization" unless one assumes that any desire for or attempt at modernization is inherently either inappropriate for Armenia and Armenians, or alien.

Finally, without too much interpretive analysis of Shirinian's own conceptual or personal ideological inconsistencies, let me suggest that he re-examine his specific uses of the following terms in his text: apropos (prescription), endemic (analysis), incarcerated (in the western model) and "new direction of dissent," etc. It is also hard to think of "homogenized theories" as "singular".

These words, and their awkward usage in his letter, suggest a way of beating around the bush, that I am afraid is not likely to reveal any serious alternative framework or analysis.



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Michael Nahabet, Raffi Zinzalian, Directors.

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## Two Different Islands



**Cooperation among state officials, policy makers and businesses benefits all**

In the last few years, Great Britain, a huge and important island in Europe, has gone through a process of reassessing its foreign policy in the South Caucasus, Central Asia and Armenia in particular.

A few years ago, no one would have believed that Armenia, a regionally isolated "island" would attract the attention of Great Britain, whose sole interests seemed to lie under the Caspian Sea off Azerbaijan. But, as one British diplomat in London put it, bilateral trade volume is one of the most important factors of British foreign policy.

Indeed, in recent years the British Embassy in Yerevan, which has increased its staff, has paid more attention to "the commercial front." Today, Great Britain is the third largest exporter to Armenia (after Russia and the US). In 1998 exports increased by over 500 percent, totaling some \$70 million. (See interview with UK Ambassador on page 31).

Armenia's progressively stabilizing economy (albeit with a long way still to go) and continuing economic reforms are among the factors considered by policy makers. Meanwhile, there is increased political dialogue and cooperation between the two countries and Britain is providing some £500,000 assistance to Armenia this year.

In an ever-expanding global politics, economic position and viability has become the ultimate bottom line of diplomacy and interstate relations. While conflicts, wars and poverty draw attention, and sometimes sympathy, trade and business relations have become the political and diplomatic glues that connect states and sustain long-term, mutually beneficial relations even among far apart "islands."

The current vigor of British-Armenian relations under-

scores another important factor: the role of Diaspora businessmen. Citizens of Armenian origin, in whatever country they may be, can play a significant role in enhancing interstate trade relations and investments, contributing not only to Armenia's economy, but also its diplomacy and international relations.

British-Armenians are heavily involved in more than a dozen British companies set up in Armenia. They are helping Armenia and Armenians, enhancing interstate relations with their country of residence, and at the end of the day, they are making money.

One of the most successful trade and business bridge-builders is Vatche Manoukian, who not only has invested millions of dollars himself, but has helped British and other foreign companies see Armenia as an opportunity instead of a zone of conflict. Indeed, he says that financial returns for the companies he has set up in Armenia are higher than other companies would get in the West for similar projects. In addition to expanding his businesses in Armenia, Manoukian sees his role, as well as that of other businessmen in the Diaspora, as facilitating trade partnerships between Armenia and foreign companies.

The involvement and investments of Diasporans in Armenia's economy has inspired confidence in large foreign firms to take calculated risks in Armenia and succeed. While many in the Diaspora continue to complain about the million and one problems as reasons not to invest in the republic, a number of creative, patient and serious Diaspora and foreign investors have established some of the most successful businesses in Armenia.

The British-Armenian economic "experiment" makes at least one point clear: Those who are able to build trade and economic bridges benefit from the traffic and partnership they provide on both sides of the bridge. ■



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## Electing A Holy Father



**Will the new Catholicos heal, build and lead the Church into the next century?**

**A**t the end of October over 450 delegates from around the world, elected by their respective communities, will convene the National Ecclesiastical Assembly (NEA), the Armenian Church's highest body of authority, to elect a new Catholicos of All Armenians. (See page 18).

The 1995 NEA was filled with great expectations, excitement and vigor: It convened for the first time in 40 years and in an independent Armenia. The old, Soviet era had ended and a new one was about to be shaped.

But this time around, that excitement and enthusiasm is missing. Indeed, preparations for the election of the new Catholicos went almost unnoticed except for the odd press release on procedural matters. Yet, electing a new head of the Armenian Church is among the most pan-Armenian of events, one that involves the "entire" Armenian nation, at least in theory.

With the early death of Catholicos Karekin I, who was expected to lead it into the 21st century, a leadership vacuum has emerged in the Armenian Church. Who will be the next Catholicos?

While there is virtually no public discussion about the elections or, more importantly, about the essential qualities required of candidates, clergymen, patrons and politicians are busy promoting their favorites behind the scenes.

Various circles, based on their different agendas and interests, would present different lists of qualifications for the position of the Catholicos. But, in this highly advanced world, perhaps, going back to the fundamentals of the ages is not a bad idea. The Catholicos "should have a virtuous, holy and spotless life, with a record of good deeds," says the Book ("Ritual of

Consecration of a Catholicos"). And adds: "He should further be learned and full of wisdom, capable of leading the people of God."

One of the "debates" that has emerged since the death of Catholicos Karekin I is whether the next Catholicos should be a native of Armenia (insider) or a Diasporan (outsider). The fact that the Catholicos in Ejmiatsin is the "Catholicos of All Armenians" makes this issue irrelevant.

The NEA is not called to elect a Catholicos of Armenia, but of All Armenians. The new Catholicos will be the head of the Church both in Armenia and the Diaspora, where more Armenians live. The idea that the people of Armenia would "prefer" a native candidate seems to be an idea promoted by those who have a stake in the elections rather than a reflection of the actual feelings of the people. The Church establishment in Armenia, with its own cronyism and clan networks, would prefer the continuation of the "status quo" without major changes.

Rather than focusing on a narrow "insider-outsider" issue, the leadership capabilities, charisma, educational background and intelligence, and most important, the spiritual and moral standing of the candidates should be the central criteria for electing a new Catholicos.

First and foremost, the Catholicos of All Armenians should represent the spiritual, moral and ethical consciousness of the nation, and then everything else. It is only through a strong spiritual and moral stand (and symbol) that the new Catholicos can become the father of All Armenians.

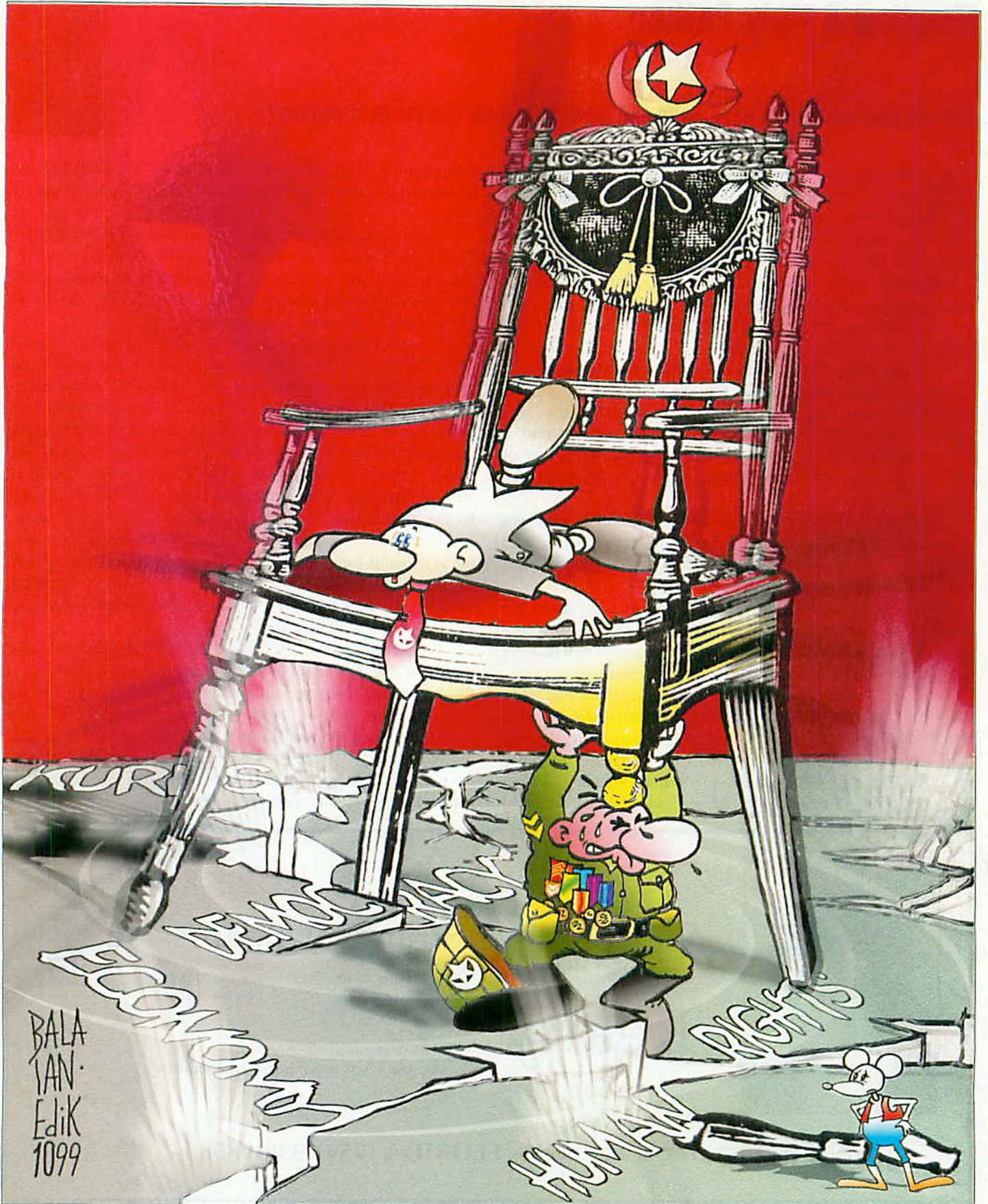
Will the new Catholicos become truly the Holy Father of the nation? Soon we shall see if those who are entrusted to elect him will make a conscientious choice. ■



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Exposing the Cracks

**“Who cares, it's all the same.”**

—Father Zacheos Ohanian

*a young priest of the Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey, serving in a volunteer earthquake rescue team of 15 young Istanbul Armenians, when asked whether the deformed remains of a two-month-old baby he found under the debris of a building was Armenian.*

.....

**“The faces in Macau speak of centuries of mixing among Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, Brazilians, Malays and Armenians.”**

—The Economist

*The tiny Portuguese colony of Macau will fully revert to China in December of this year*

**“Protestantism is strengthening in Azerbaijan because of the activity of international Armenian Organizations.”**

—An employee of Azerbaijan's National Security Ministry

*Turan News Agency, Baku*

**“Armenia is situated in a difficult region where the interests of various nations meet. This is a region where one can easily acquire enemies and where it is very difficult to normalize relations.”**

—Robert Kocharian

*President of Armenia*

**“I don't think that the use of force by the international community against any of the sides to the Karabakh conflict would promote stability in the region.”**

—Wolfgang Schuessel

*Foreign Minister of Austria*

**“At present we do not see any role for NATO in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict.”**

—Roger Thomas

*British Ambassador to Azerbaijan*

**“The Karabakhs have steadily developed the apparatus of statehood.... It seems the only thing the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh does not have is a national airline.”**

—Paul Harris

*Jane's Intelligence Review*

**“There is nothing, absolutely nothing in the... disagreements [among Armenian organizations and institutions] that would withstand five minutes' worth of serious analysis and would not become reduced to ridiculous arguments, which a handful of clever and ambitious persons are using to perpetuate their authority and the glory of occupying their first-row seats.”**

—Vahe Oshagan

*Author and literary critic*

Is the Church relevant in my life as a young Armenian-American? Once the new Catholicos is elected to preside in Holy Ejmiatsin, how will he affect the way any Armenian goes to work, goes to school, or goes to bed at night?....

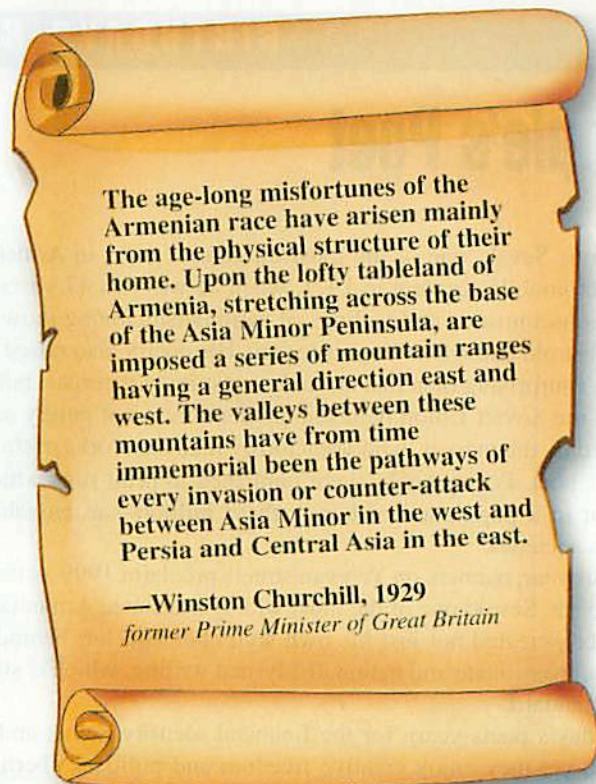
Most Armenians know little about the politics of electing a Catholicos. What they know is that he is a leader of whom they will hear much, but with whom they will have little contact. A tangible reality to them is that in modern society, where technology and hedonism rule, the demand for spiritual direction far outweighs the supply.”

—Lara Setrakian, *Englewood, New Jersey*

The [Dashnaksutiun] party is now facing a task to promote the unification of the two Catholicosates of the Armenian Apostolic Church, proceeding from the principle that both Catholicosates have identical foundations. Disconnecting them cannot help consolidate the nation and resolve the national problems. ...Of course we will not flagrantly intervene in the election of the Catholicos, but this is an important issue for the ARFD and naturally we will voice our opinion and will use all our influence to see that the new Catholicos is indeed Spiritual Father of All Armenians.”

—Armen Rustamian, *deputy political representative of the supreme body of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaksutiun in Armenia*

FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY



—Winston Churchill, 1929  
*former Prime Minister of Great Britain*

Churchill, Winston, *The World Crisis: The Aftermath*. London 1929.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

## Her Majesty's Ambassador

While retired from diplomatic service, David Miller, former British Ambassador to Armenia, is currently a consultant at the British Foreign Office and reviews official documents for release under the Public Records Act.

Miller served in Armenia from 1995 to 1997. Under his leadership the British Embassy in Yerevan was established with full commercial, consular and visa services. Prior to Miller's appointment, Armenia affairs were handled by the British Embassy in Moscow.

Miller's previous and long diplomatic experience includes service at the British embassies in Moscow, Berlin, Geneva, Belgrade and at NATO headquarters in Brussels. But, he says, "Yerevan was the highlight" of his career.

In reflecting on his tenure in Yerevan, Ambassador Miller says: "I received willing assistance from all quarters in Armenia in accomplishing my mission and the enthusiasm of Armenians for the development of relations with Britain, especially the cultural and commercial ties."

In May, the former ambassador was a member of the international team of foreign observers during the parliamentary elections in Armenia.



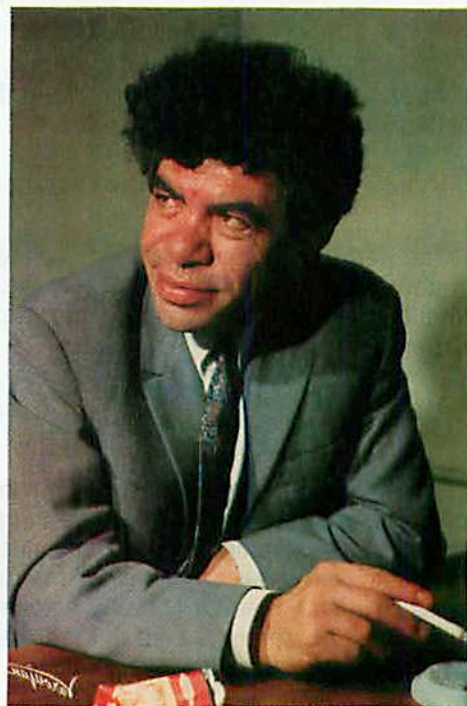
BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

## People's Poet

Paruir Sevak, one of the most influential poets in Armenian literature, died in a freak automobile accident in 1971, when he was just 47 years old. Sevak's poetry had raised consciousness and feelings of nationalism among those too young to remember Stalin, but old enough to fear his legacy. His poetry also raised many official eyebrows. It wasn't surprising then that not only conspiracy theorists, but many others within and outside the Soviet Union believed his death was not purely accidental. His death was mourned by the masses, who voraciously read the works of this prolific writer. And not just this poet. Poetry books were published in print runs which exceeded 50,000 and sold out in a population of barely three million—an enviable number for populous western societies.

This year, banners on Yerevan streets proclaim 1999 as the 75th anniversary of the poet's birth. Sevak, one of the most widely translated Armenian poets (Gevork Emin is the other), created not just his own style, but also left behind a tradition of intensely personal, passionate and nationalist lyrical writing, which is still alluded to and held up as the standard.

Today's poets yearn for the financial security Sevak and his generation took for granted, yet they enjoy creative freedom and political liberties the Sevak generation could not imagine. Still, no one has come close to his mastery and popularity.



## POSTSCRIPT



## Explorer and Humanitarian

In October 1996, Karekin I, Catholicos of All Armenians visited Oslo's People's Museum Nansen Exhibit and blessed Fridjof Nansen's memory, on the occasion of the 135th anniversary of the great humanitarian's birth (see AIM November-December, 1996.)

This year, Norwegian Foreign Minister (and OSCE chairman) Knut Volloebeck was present at the opening of a Nansen Exhibition at the Tekeyan Cultural Center in Yerevan.

Nansen crossed Greenland on skis, and for that he was considered a national hero. He went on to attempt a trip to the north pole, but was forced back after his ship drifted.

Nevertheless, his explorations, studies, discoveries and inventions make him a still-recognized name in oceanography and meteorology. But it was not for this alone that Nansen is blessed and remembered by Armenians. His public involvement included being named a High Commissioner for Refugees for the League of Nations, in which capacity he organized the repatriation of prisoners of war and assisted refugees. He was honored by the Soviet Union even before he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1922.

Nansen once said he had dreamed of visiting Armenia, even as a school boy. He condemned the Abdul Hamid massacres of Armenians in Turkey in the 1890s. Later, after World War I, he tried to help displaced and refugee Armenians find a new home, often in Soviet Armenia. The "Nansen Passport" gave nationality and a sense of belonging to tens of thousands who were left homeless.

After he visited Armenia in 1925, and after the League of Nations backtracked on its intention to help Soviet Armenia and its population of refugees, Nansen wrote *Armenia and the Near East*.

The Norwegian Refugee Council, an international charity, has a branch in Armenia. The Council works with hospitals and other agencies who work with the disabled and the poor.

## BYTES ON FILE

5

Number of former Soviet republics, including Armenia, but not Russia, likely to become World Trade Organization members

9.3

Amount of trade, in billions of dollars, between the US and Russia

624

Amount of trade in millions of dollars between the US and Armenia, Estonia, Georgia, Moldova and Lithuania

486

Age of earliest published anthology of Armenian poetry (in 1513)

38

Age of Siamanto, the activist and poet, when he was killed at the beginning of the 1915 Genocide

247

Number of businesses in Armenia, receiving Iranian investment

37

Number of businesses in Armenia, receiving Lebanese investment

45

Number of Canadian-Armenian joint ventures

18,000

Tons of paint needed to paint Armenia's Republican Stadium

20,000

Area, in square meters, of the stadium

45

Number of countries, including Azerbaijan, which deny or restrict Internet access "to defend their population from dangerous thoughts"

## CHINA

Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian paid an official visit to Beijing where he met with Chinese officials, including **Prime Minister Zhu Rongji** and **Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan**. A wide range of issues related to bilateral relations and several international problems were discussed. Tang stated that since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the countries seven years ago, bilateral relations have developed steadily, mutual understanding has increased, and there has been mutually-beneficial cooperation.

The two states have consulted and cooperated with each other on international issues. He particularly emphasized that there are no obstacles to increased bilateral trade relations as well.

Chinese officials showed interest in investing in Armenia's power engineering and mining industries, as well as extracting copper, molybdenum and possibly gold in Armenia.

During his meeting with the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Chinese Parliament, Dzung Jianui, Oskanian stated that Armenia supports the "one China" policy in reference to the politically sensitive issue of Taiwan and Tibet and that Armenia will not have any official relations with Taiwan.

Oskanian affirmed that "Armenia and China share common interests in world and regional affairs and Armenia is a trusted partner of China." He also said that Yerevan was open to military cooperation with China.

The Armenian delegation also visited Shanghai where they met with the city's mayor and a host of businessmen.

## JAPAN

Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian paid a three-day official visit to Japan, where he signed a joint agreement with his counterpart **Masahiko Komura** to beef up bilateral relations. The two ministers recognized that "the existing friendly relationship" between Armenia and Japan "has entered a new stage with further possibilities for both countries to enhance their relations and to cooperate in various fields." They agreed to enhance political dialogue through regular consultations at appropriate levels on issues of bilateral and international relations. Meanwhile, a Japanese spokesperson stated at a press conference in Tokyo that Japan attaches importance to strengthening ties with Armenia and the region in general. Minister Komura expressed Japan's commitment to provide economic assistance while promising to "positively" consider extending grants-in-aid to Armenia for improving its national medical center.

Oskanian and his delegation also met with Japanese government and banking officials and the heads of major corporations to discuss the possible establishment of a Japanese-Armenian economic committee and improving trade relations.

## GREECE & IRAN

- Armenian, Greek and Iranian foreign ministers met in Yerevan as part of their regular encounters for the development of trilateral economic cooperation. Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi stated the **trilateral relations** are "not directed against any other country." But rather cooperation in economic, energy, transport and trade spheres would contribute to the development of the entire region.

Greece has expressed interest in the projected construction of an Iran-Armenia gas pipeline and is considering attracting some \$120 million in financial support from the European Union. Greek firms are also involved with a European-sponsored fiber-optic transnational network which will run through Armenia and Georgia. "As members of the Council of Europe and the European Union we are in close cooperation with Armenia in the context of its pro-European orientation, and we will make every effort to deepen these relations," said Greek Foreign Minister Georgios Papandreu.

- Greek Ambassador to Armenia, **Panayotis Zagrafos**, met with National Assembly Chairman Karen Demirchian. Zagrafos expressed the Greek government's readiness to render a range of assistance to Armenia and discussed possibilities of creating Greek-Armenian parliamentary friendship groups. In turn, Demirchian expressed satisfaction with bilateral political cooperation, both on the regional and international levels, and called for further cooperation in the economic sphere, especially involving small and medium-sized businesses.

## RUSSIA

Russian Foreign Minister, **Igor Ivanov** (below right, with his counterpart Vartan Oskanian at the airport in Yerevan), paid a one-day visit to Armenia, after a stop in Baku, as part of his tour of the region to discuss Russia's political, trade, economic, military, technical, humanitarian and cultural relations in the Transcaucasus.



Referring to the Karabakh conflict negotiations, Ivanov refuted reports that Russia had abandoned the "common state" formula. He reiterated that Russia is a co-chairman of OSCE's Minsk Group, which "will render assistance as far as the sides find it expedient." He stated that Russia attaches great importance to direct talks between the conflicting parties and that it will expand its efforts further toward solving the decade-long conflict. Russia defends the rights of the Karabakh Armenians, but it does not wish to infringe on Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

Ivanov expressed satisfaction with the development of Russian-Armenian bilateral relations in all fields. "We have achieved the level of strategic partnership. We have preserved the rich legacy of the past," he said. Referring to military agreements and cooperation Ivanov indicated that these do not threaten any third country and are in accordance with the security interests of both Russia and Armenia, as well as states participating in the CIS Collective Security Treaty.

- In Moscow, Armenia's Ambassador to Russia, **Suren Sahakian**, presented his credentials to **President Boris Yeltsin** at a ceremony in the Kremlin. Yeltsin stated that Russia's relations with Armenia are a priority in his country's foreign policy, and that the strategic partnership with Armenia should develop further in the coming years.



## KAZAKHSTAN

President Robert Kocharian paid an **official visit** to Astana, Kazakhstan's new capital, where 10 major bilateral agreements were signed, including expansion of cooperation within the framework of the CIS. A joint commission was set up to explore the potential for economic cooperation. Currently, Armenian-Kazakh trade volume is less than \$1.5 million dollars. President Nursultan Nazarbayev (right, with President Kocharian), referring to the Karabakh conflict, stated that "The negotiations proceeded in a warm and friendly atmosphere and in conditions of full understanding. We settled all issues in the state and legal aspects." He called for a political settlement that would respect the principles of territorial integrity and the rights of nations to self-determination. While praising recent high-level contacts between Armenian and Azerbaijani officials, Nazarbayev said: "The Karabakh problem is a splinter both in relations between the neighboring countries and the entire region, it is an impediment to the deepening of CIS relations."



## UNITED STATES

- **Ambassador Carey Cavanaugh**, the newly appointed US co-chairman of the OSCE Minsk Group for the Karabakh conflict negotiations (replacing former negotiator Donald Keyser), met with President Robert Kocharian and Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian in Yerevan during an official tour to the region. In Baku Cavanaugh got an earful from President Heidar Aliyev. "We place great hopes in the US," Aliyev told Cavanaugh. "But two years have passed and we have not seen any action from the US."

- **Thirty-six US Peace Corps volunteers** (above)—ages 22 to 69—took their oath of service in Yeghegnadsor, southern Armenia, in the presence of US Ambassador Michael Lemmon. The ceremony marks the start of the sixth two-year mission in Armenia, where 19 volunteers will teach English at high schools and 12 will teach public health in addition to English and 17 will serve as consultants for developing small enterprises.

- The **US Geological Survey (USGS)**, under USAID's Coal Exploration and Resource Assessment Program, and in cooperation with Armenia's Ministry of Nature Protection, provided some 1,400 high quality maps to the Ministry of Science and Education of Armenia, intended to be used at schools around the country. The maps, worth \$100,000, will be used for geology, geography, environmental protection, and other specialized needs of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences, the National Seismic Protection Service and the American University of Armenia.

## GERMANY

- The German government signed an agreement with three Armenian banks—Anelik, Agrobank and Agricultural Cooperative—which will provide **low-interest loans to Armenian businesses**. The first installment of six-million-DM (\$3.2 million) was provided by the German-Armenian Fund, established last year for this purpose by the German government and the Central Bank of Armenia. The program total is DM 16 million. Meanwhile, since 1993 the German Ministry of Economic Development has granted DM 100 million to Armenia for other projects as well. The loans will be provided in the local currency, Dram, with a 24-36 percent interest rate. The current annual re-financing rate of the Central Bank is 42 percent. Despite the availability of other low-interest loans for small businesses, in the past banks in Armenia have complained that there are not enough well-devised business plans from prospective borrowers. However, this new German program is seen as having better chances for success according to the three bank officials. Borrowers still need to offer collateral to the banks, but they are not obliged to submit business plans.

- **Christ Lercher**, German MP and Chairman of the German-Caucasian Friendship Group, met with Armen Khachatrian, the Chairman of the Armenian Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee, in Yerevan. Strengthening of Armenian-German parliamentary relations and Armenia's integration into European structures were the focus of the discussions.

## KOREA

While on an official visit to southeast Asia, Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian met with **South Korean President Kim Dae Jung** and with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Hon Sun-Yung in Seoul and discussed international and regional affairs and the prospects for bilateral political and economic cooperation.

## OECF

The Armenian government, the World Bank and the **Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund of Japan (OECF)** signed a \$45 million credit agreement on the implementation of the Electricity Transmitting and Distributing Networks Rehabilitation Program. The joint agreement will provide loans to a number of Armenian enterprises.

## ELECTION OF NEW CATHOLICOS

In preparations for the upcoming Catholicos election, the Armenian Church's Supreme Spiritual Council met in Ejmiatsin to finalize the list of delegates for the National Ecclesiastical Assembly (NEA), the highest governing body of the Church, which will convene between October 26 and 29 to elect the 132nd Catholicos of All Armenians. The Council examined various reports submitted by dioceses and churches around the world and ruled that the NEA will consist of over 450 delegates:

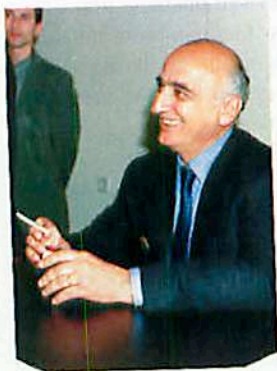
Heads of Hierarchical Sees <i>(Ejmiatsin, Cilicia, Jerusalem and Istanbul)</i>	4
Archbishops and Bishops	47
Hierarchical brotherhoods & jurisdictions	16
Armenia	161
Russia	98
USA	48
Europe	28
Georgia	16
Karabakh	9
South America	7
Ukraine	6
Middle East & Africa	4
Canada	4
Australia & New Zealand	3

This would be the largest Church assembly ever. In 1995, the NEA, which elected the late Catholicos Karekin I of All Armenians, consisted of 400 delegates from 32 countries (74 percent lay people and 26 percent clergy).

## SIRADEGHIAN SAGA

Vano Siradeghian, the newly-elected opposition parliament member and Armenian National Movement leader, declared that he will certainly participate in parliament this autumn and that he is a member of its Judicial and State Affairs Committee. Through the press, Siradeghian thanked the voters in his native Noyemberian region and announced plans to open an office there to facilitate contact with the region and the local population. The ANM leader

also expressed confidence that the criminal charges pressed against him will come to nothing. Siradeghian's trial is scheduled for September. Early this year, after two attempts, Armenia's Prosecutor-General managed to strip Siradeghian's parliamentary immunity, but the latter was re-elected in May 1999, regaining his lost immunity. Siradeghian is accused of ordering, during his years as Interior Minister (1992-1996), two criminal bands to be set up with the task of carrying out several murders against public figures who opposed the regime. Some of the most prominent assassinations in Armenian political life are believed to have been carried out by Siradeghian's bands. A linked trial involving Armen Ter Sahakian is being held. Others are expected to start soon.



## REFUGEES

During a press conference with several organizations dealing with refugee affairs, Vladimir Aghayan, president of the Refugee Fund, announced that 14,000 refugee families are homeless in Armenia. 6,500 families (about 20,000 people) live in provisional dwellings in public buildings. He presented the social, housing and employment problems encountered by the refugees and said that to date out of the planned 9,200 houses, which were approved back in 1994, the government was able to deliver only 2,332. At such a rate, it would take 15-20 years to resolve the housing problem. Aghayan and his group have prepared a social project which will be presented to the government. Larissa Alaverdian, president of Against Legal Authoritarianism, a similar organization, presented the legal problems encountered by refugees and asserted that the main problem is that existing refugee laws have not worked in Armenia because of their inadequacies and shortcomings. She stated that the government must adopt a state project for Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan, as they are not covered in the current law. Hranush Kharadian, a well-known Yerevan State University ethnologist who conducted research among the refugees in the Gegharkunik region, reported about her encounters with a few refugees in the village of Medz Masrik who were starving. A family with five children from Chardakhlu, Azerbaijan, had not seen bread for two months when she met them. In Pokr Masrik village a refugee had already died from starvation. Three others starved to death last year in the village of Tortavan.



Meanwhile, Sadako Ogata (above right, with Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsian), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees paid an official three-day visit to Armenia, where she held discussions with government officials on ways to alleviate the plight of refugees. She reiterated the High Commission's policy which calls for the naturalization and integration of refugees into main stream society. She also visited areas where refugees are currently living and witnessed a ceremony where 300 former residents of Azerbaijan accepted Armenian citizenship. While the government of Armenia is going to present a detailed program to UNHCR, Ogata warned that the UNHCR is short of resources and will have difficulty in raising millions of dollars to house the refugees.

## FROM INDIA TO KARABAKH

Two Indian diplomats, India's Ambassador to Armenia Vidya Bhushan Soni and Charge d'Affaires Rajendu Prakshi, together with Armenia's provisional Charge d'Affaires in India Armand Israelian visited Karabakh, where they were received by Prime Minister Anushavan Danielian and Foreign Minister Naira Melkumian. Discussions focused on Armenian-Indian economic ties. Karabakh government sources stated that a pharmaceutical firm, ArmTechnomashExport, which is due to start operations in Shushi soon, is planning to import parts of its raw materials from India.

Foreign Minister Melkumian pointed out that despite the geographic distance between Karabakh and India, the two countries have common interests. She presented the current state of the peace negotiations with Azerbaijan to the Indian diplomats, pointing out that direct negotiations with Baku were necessary to see progress in the settlement of the conflict.

Ambassador Soni stated that his visit to Karabakh gave him an opportunity to have a wider perspective on the conflict. He said that Indian authorities closely follow the regional developments and the OSCE Minsk Group's efforts toward resolution of the Karabakh conflict. India is interested in the establishment of peace and stability in the South Caucasus, the Ambassador said.

In the wider regional political landscape, Azerbaijan used to recruit mercenaries from Afghanistan, especially at the height of the war over Karabakh, and has close ties with Pakistan, which is in conflict with India over Kashmir. Still, *The Sunday London Times* reported that Saudi billionaire Osama Bin Laden, who has taken refuge in Afghanistan and is being pursued by the US government for terrorism, had tried to buy chemical and biological weapons from Azerbaijan.



## NEW RESIDENTS

Following French football team's 3-2 win over Armenia in a European World Championship qualifying match, at a special reception President Robert Kocharian handed French-Armenian football players Yuri Djorkaeff (above left) and Alan Boghosian (right) "special status" Armenian residency passports. "Armenia is your country," said Kocharian to the players who were in the French team in the historic final match of the World Cup 1998 beating previous champion Brazil.



## DEATH OF A REFORMER

Edward Yegorian, the outspoken leader of the Democratic Homeland Party, died unexpectedly of a heart attack at the age of 45. President Robert Kocharian, Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsian and other civic, academic and cultural figures attended the funeral service.

Edward Yegorian's biography includes all the crucial landmarks of Armenia's recent history of independence, as he had been actively involved since 1988 in all political developments shaping the country. He was an active member of the Armenian National Movement for a long time. While a controversial public figure, Yegorian, a member of the parliament from 1990 to 1995 and president of its permanent committee for Judicial and State Affairs, is credited for contributing to the formation of the modern Armenian state after the collapse of the Soviet Union, especially in articulating a new and necessary legislative process for administering the affairs of the newly independent state.

His real achievement was to secure Armenia's ideological, legal and theoretical transition in a difficult period at the beginning of the decade, where an ideological vacuum had emerged. He was an advocate of flexible legislative mechanisms.

Yegorian, who had worked at Yerevan's Physics Institute as a mathematician from 1979 to 1990, is considered one of the godfathers of liberal political ideology in post-independent Armenia. He was one of the main participants in the development of the 1995 Constitution.

While still a member of ANM, in 1996 Yegorian was the first to discuss necessary reform in the movement, which was the ruling party at the time. He readily expressed willingness to fight against what he characterized as a "nomenclatura capitalism," which had been formed in the country. Eventually, convinced that ANM is not reformable, he left with a number of followers and founded his own party.

Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsian said to the press: "Yegorian was an established political figure, an activist with principles who was endowed with a seriously creative mind. His death was a heavy loss for the Armenian nation."

## FOREIGN INVESTMENTS DOWN

In the first half of 1999 direct foreign investment in Armenia represented only one-tenth of 1998's figures, causing concern in both business and government circles. But surprisingly, foreign investors continue to express more optimism about Armenia's investment environment. Direct foreign investments was only \$8.65 million in the first six months of 1999, against \$84.5 million in the corresponding period of the previous year, \$61 million of which was invested in state-owned enterprises.

Between 1988 and 1998, a total of \$376 million direct foreign investment were made in Armenia, \$240 million in 1998 alone.

Armen Darbinian, former Prime Minister and currently Minister of Economy characterized the current situation as "very tragic." President Robert Kocharian attributed the fall in the level of investments to the pre-electoral campaign platforms of different parties and alliances prior to the May 30 parliamentary elections. "The contents [of the platforms] were alarming and bound to provoke the concern of businessmen," said Kocharian.

Indeed, numerous political figures, including Karen Demirchian, now Parliament Chairman and co-chairman of the Unity Block, had harshly criticized privatizations of the last two years—most notably ArmenTel and the Yerevan Brandy Factory. Also, various campaign platforms had advocated an increase in the regulatory role of the state in the country's economy. "If we wish to attract investments we have to work consistently, because there are many places for investments in the world," said Kocharian. "We have to show that we are ready to have those investments and that our legislation, people and business community are ready to acknowledge the country's development needs."

Meanwhile, US Ambassador to Armenia, Michael Lemmon stated in an interview that "the investment atmosphere in Armenia is improving, albeit slowly." He said that foreign investors actually feel more comfortable than it was the case a few years ago. Lemmon praised the Armenian government's efforts to implement serious economic reforms and affirmed that economic growth would not only bring economic prosperity, but might prompt regional cooperation—and even constitute a means to facilitate the resolution of regional conflicts.

The ambassador listed a number of sectors for possible US investments in Armenia. The energy sector is one of the spheres where Armenia has a big comparative advantage. Information technology is another field where know-how and cheap labor could attract investment. But Lemmon warned that knowledge in this field is rapidly outdated and, therefore, most Armenian computer programmers would have to refresh their knowledge in order not to lag behind. He said that they should be provided access to the Internet, which constitutes an easy and relatively cheap way to get access to knowledge. The production of high quality processed food has great potential, too. But Lemmon warned that Armenia should avoid competing with those who produce big quantities of low quality food. Tourism is another potential sector for development.

Ambassador Lemmon named a number of factors which inhibit American, and in general, western investment in Armenia. The first factor is Armenia's small market. "We are doing everything possible to encourage regional cooperation and integration, as well as to find a common ground of interests," said Lemmon. "Investors

prefer not to limit themselves to a market of three million population, but to have Armenia as a platform from where they can export their products and services to other countries of the Caucasus, Turkey, Europe, the Caspian region and Middle Eastern countries." The other factors are the fear of corruption, the lack of competitiveness in the field of telecommunications, the problem of confusion, particularly with respect to tax legislation, and the rule of law.

He stated that recently the US government had established a Caspian Financial Center at the US embassy in Ankara. The Center is to help potential American investors in the region by providing them with all kinds of help, including financial assistance. The Center covers the whole of the Caucasus and the Caspian region.

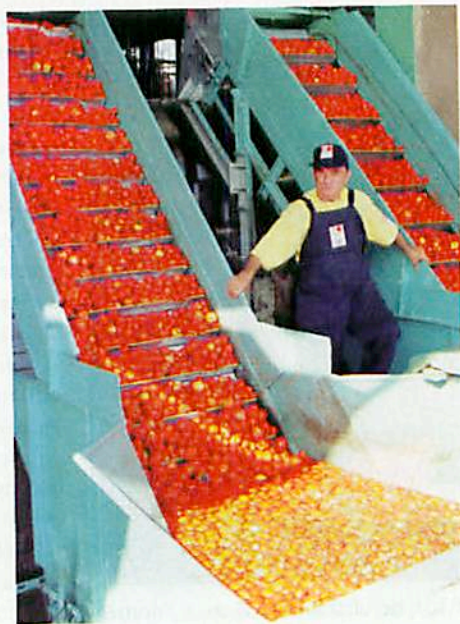
## INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT UP

After three consecutive quarterly drops, Armenia's industrial output registered a growth in the second quarter of 1999. The growth rate was 2.8 percent for the January-June period. In June alone, the growth rate was 31.3 percent on a month-on-month, and 18.4 percent on a year-on-year basis, according to the Ministry of Statistics. Meanwhile, in the first half of 1999, industrial output increased by 2.0 percent in Azerbaijan and 0.6 percent in Georgia. Tajikistan, with 7.9 percent growth, was the highest among the CIS countries. The lowest was Ukraine with 0.2 percent. Armenia is preceded by Russia, which registered 3.1 percent growth.

In 1998 GDP per capita was \$502 in Armenia. This is almost half the level of the per capita GDP in Georgia, and a little higher than that of Azerbaijan. In the South Caucasus, GDP growth rate has been highest in Azerbaijan with 10 percent, 7.2 percent in Armenia and the lowest in Georgia, with 2.9 percent.

## Swiss Andre Group Invests in Food Processing

"Armenia is one of the best countries of the former Soviet Union to do business," said Raymond Critini, Director of the Swiss Andre & CIF group, in Yerevan. He was invited to Armenia by President Robert Kocharian and participated in the inauguration of the MAP food processing plant in Armavir, one of the four plants and canneries of Armenia's most fertile Ararat valley re-equipped



with new technologies, based on an agreement between the Armenian government and the Swiss company. The \$6.2 million "Armenia's Canners' Restructuring Project," in which Andre and CIF have a 25

percent stake, was signed in July 1998. The four plants and canneries are provided with Italian made tomato paste producing equipment. Andre & CIF, one of the world's five biggest producers of agricultural produce, is going to provide technical assistance and consulting and is ready, after laboratory tests, to purchase the products of the canneries for three years, at an average world price. The producers are free, however, to sell their products to other potential buyers. The four plants together are expected to produce some 6,000 tons of tomato paste this year. The volume may rise to 10,000 next year. The project is designed to provide employment to around 1,000 workers at the plants and would absorb the products of 15,000 farmers at 3,000 farms. Tomato crop is purchased from farmers at 22 Drams (4 US cents) a kilo. The Armenian government has enlisted the participation of the World Bank, the Lincy Foundation and the US Agriculture Department for the success of the project. The next phase of the joint project concerns the production of fruit concentrates, particularly, peach, apricot and apple.

In addition to food processing projects, a century-old Swiss company has expressed interest in other sectors of Armenia's economy, including transportation and energy.

### Armenian Brandy in the US

An agreement was signed between Pierre Larretch, Yerevan Brandy Factory (YBF) and Minas Markarian, president of the California-based Saharex Company, to export 100,000 bottles of Armenian brandy to the US. Saharex, which distributes other Armenian alcoholic drinks in 22 US states, will become YBF (right) products exclusive dealer in this market. The agreement will enhance distribution in other states as well. This new joint venture will open new western markets for Armenian brandy and expand distribution of its products beyond the conventional Russian and CIS markets. The agreement comes after a particularly bad year for Armenian cognac, as sales on its main Russian market shrank dramatically because of that country's economic crisis. Consequently, YBF bought only 18,000 tons of grapes this year from local cultivators, against more than 25,000 tons last year. The company has stated that it will continue to invest five million dollars annually in the factory and business in the next few years.

## COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

January to July 1999

### INDUSTRIAL GROWTH

(compared with the same period in 1998)

Armenia	+5.7%
Azerbaijan	+2.7%
Belarus	+6.5%
Georgia	+0.4%
Russia	+4.5%
Tajikistan	+6.6%
Ukraine	+0.3%
Uzbekistan	+5.6%

### GDP

(compared with the same period last year)

Armenia	+5.4%
Azerbaijan	+6.0%
Belarus	+1.0%
Kazakhstan	-3.3%
Kyrgyzstan	+3.7%
Russia	-1.0%
Tajikistan	+2.1%
Ukraine	-2.9%

### RATE OF INFLATION

Armenia	0.9%
Azerbaijan	-2.4%
Belarus	97.2%
Kazakhstan	12.9%
Kyrgyzstan	32.5%
Moldova	25.6%
Russia	28.0%
Tajikistan	23.2%
Ukraine	7.5%

Source: Russian Statistics Agency; CIS Statistics.

## ARMENIA

January-June 1999

(change over corresponding period of 1998)

Gross Domestic Product	+4.9%
Industrial output	+2.8%
Agriculture	-2.0%
Construction	+42%
Electric power production	-1.4%
Consumer price index	+4.3%
of which	
consumer goods	+2.6%
services	+14.8%
non-consumer goods	-0.2%
Nominal money income	+11%
(including transfers from abroad)	
Monetary expenditures	+11.7%
(84.4% of expenditures on goods and services)	
Rate of exchange (USS/Dram)	-7.6%
Volume of foreign trade	-7.3%
Imports	-8.0%
Exports	-3.7%

Ratio of the trade deficit to the GDP 42%

Unemployment (officially registered) 11.1%  
(9.9% in Yerevan, 23% in Shirak, 19.3% in Sumik, 17% in Lori)

Source: Ministry of Statistics of Armenia; AIM Research.



### FIRST SEMINARY IN EUROPE

The Diocese of the Armenian Church in Germany announced the establishment of the **Armash Seminary**, the first Armenian Apostolic theological studies program in Europe to prepare future priests and lay church workers. The students will follow a five-year theological studies program at a Catholic university, which will be supplemented with special courses on the Armenian Church. The students will stay at a special dormitory for Eastern Orthodox students under the supervision of the Armenian Diocese and the seminary staff. Armenian students from any country are invited to apply to the program. After an initial screening and recommendations from local Armenian churches, the Diocese will provide all necessary arrangements and full scholarships. While studying, opportunities will be created for the students to visit various Armenian parishes and churches in Europe during their holidays and in the summer to gain practical experience in the field.

### ADVENTISTS

Levon Maksoudian, secretary of the **East Mediterranean Field (EMF)** of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, along with a delegation headed by Bertil Wiklander, president of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church's Trans-European Division, visited the Maronite Patriarch of Lebanon, Cardinal Nasrallah Pierre Sfeir. "The purpose of this visit was to introduce the Seventh-Day Adventist Church to the Patriarch and to establish a friendly rapport with the Roman Catholic Church of the Maronite Rite," said Raffy Manassian, Communication director of the EMF.

### CHURCH IN IRAN

A delegation of Iranian-Armenians, including Armenian members of the Iranian Parliament Vartan Vartanian and Ardavazt Baghounian, met with Iran's **Interior Minister Mousavi Lari** and discussed the delays in convening the Armenian Prelacy's National Representative Assembly. The delegation informed the minister that the postponement caused by the government has left a negative impression in the Iranian-Armenian community. After being

informed about the technicalities involved in the process of convening the Assembly—where a new church constitution will be adopted—Minister Lari assured the delegation that he will personally look into the issue and provide a response to the Executive Council of the Armenian Church.

### KALNOBO

A **reunion** of more than 1,400 graduates of Armenian schools in Egypt took place the weekend of July 29 to August 1 in Montreal, which is home to a large group of Egyptian emigres. Graduates of Cairo's Kaloustian, Noubarian, Boghosian schools convened in this ninth biannual meeting, which had begun as a Kaloustian reunion alone in 1983. The Mayor of Montreal, as well as other local dignitaries, visited the graduates who live all over the world and had gathered together to renew old friendships.

### CYBER PLAYGROUND

The Cafesjian Family Foundation donated \$100,000 to the Narod Institute for an innovative web-based educational project connecting Armenian students around the world, the **Narod Network Project 2000**. The Narod Institute, established in 1994 in memory of Ani and Narod Ardhaldjian, has been at the forefront of internet-based educational programs. The Cafesjian donation will help the Institute's new project to reach more than 60 Armenian elementary and high schools worldwide by the year 2000. (see AIM January 1999).

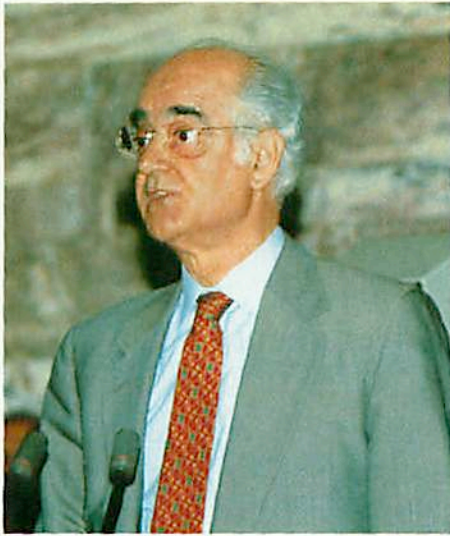
### NAVASARTIAN GAMES

Organized and sponsored by Homenetmen, Armenian General Athletic Union, the annual Navasartian games were held in **Los Angeles** 40 days later than scheduled due to the death of Catholicos Karekin I of All Armenians. Nevertheless, as in previous years, the huge organizational challenge of scheduling hundreds of matches in half a dozen sports, beyond providing an arena for athletic competition, resulted in a successful fundraiser for Homenetmen's dozen-plus California chapters.

### AT THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY

This year the **Armenian Studies Program** at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem celebrated its 30th anniversary. A three-day international conference dedicated to the anniversary was held in Jerusalem with the participation of scholars from Armenia, Canada, Georgia, Holland, Israel and the US. Professor Michael Stone (right, center), head of the Armenian Studies Program, addressed the conference, along with Tsoilag Momjian (second from left), Armenia's honorary consul in Jerusalem, Elyahu Honig, Hebrew University's Associate Vice-President and others. In addition, an exhibit of old Armenian printed books and ancient manuscripts was held at the Jewish National and University Library. The participants also visited the St. James Armenian monastery where Patriarch Archbishop Torkom Manoogian hosted a reception.





### CHURCH IN GREECE

A delegation representing the Armenian Council of Greece, headed by Archbishop Sahag Aivazian, Prelate, met with the President of the Greek Parliament, **Apostolos Kaklamanis** (above) and discussed various issues related to Greek-Armenian relations.



### EXHIBIT IN JORDAN

Three years ago, the book *Stream of Fire* highlighted great works of contemporary art. The book featured the works of artists Ashot Bayandur, Rouben Gregorian, Marcos Grigorian, Sarkis Hamalbashian and many others. These same paintings were featured in the Jordan Exhibition, which **Queen Noor** (left) viewed for over one hour. Headed by Garo Keheyan of Nicosia (second from right), the Pharos Trust presents Armenian and non-Armenian culture in Cyprus and elsewhere.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic information about the **Armenian communities of the Middle East** is very rare, not least because of the lack of population census, for example in Lebanon, and their 'political' implications. But Youssef Courbage, director of research at the Institut d'Études Démographiques in Paris, in an informative article on Christians in Islamic countries (published recently in *ISIM Newsletter* in Holland) provides a comparative demographic table on the various Christian communities in the Middle East.

The Armenian Apostolic and Catholic churches are among the 12 groups presented in a study, conducted by Courbage and Phillippe Fargues and later published as a book called *Christians and Jews in Islam* (London/New York, Tauris, 1997). In providing a historical context to the Christian communities in the Middle East, Courbage writes, "The end of the Ottoman Empire strongly marks the end of Christianity in its Turkish component and its decline or eclipse in its Arab component. In the Ottoman Empire, or more precisely, under the Young Turks and then under the Kemalist Republic, nearly three million Christians were to pay the shock of nationalism and the birth of modern Turkey with their lives or by their exile. There were 1.2 million Armenians in 1914 and only 77,000 left in 1927; 1.5 million Greeks before the 1914-1918 war, of which only 136,000 were to survive in Istanbul and just 10,000 in Anatolia 13 years later. In the Arab world, on the other hand, it was not massacres or exile but rather a different demography that was to mark the receding numbers of Christians."

## ARMENIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST (BY CHURCH AFFILIATION)

(1995 figures, in thousands)

Church	Egypt	Lebanon	Syria	Iraq	Jordan	Israel	Palestine	Turkey	All Countries
Armenian Apostolic	7.6	196.4	111.8	25.0	3.5	1.3	2.9	68.3	416.8
Armenian Catholic	0.6	19.7	24.6	5.5	0.4	0.1	0.3	5.1	56.3
Protestant [incl non-Armenian]	20.9	20.2	20.1	5.8	4.4	4.5	4.8	5.2	85.9
<b>Total Christians</b>	<b>3336.4</b>	<b>132.2</b>	<b>945.7</b>	<b>615.5</b>	<b>150.1</b>	<b>104.3</b>	<b>76.2</b>	<b>146.6</b>	<b>6700.6</b>
<b>% in population</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>43.8</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>4.0</b>

Source: Youssef Courbage and Phillippe Fargues, *Christians and Jews in Islam*, London/New York, Tauris, 1997, p. 209.

# Turkish Tragedy

A Devastating Earthquake Shakes the Land, People and Government of Turkey

By HRATCH TCHILINGIRIAN

**T**he devastating earthquake that hit Turkey's Marmara region in August killed almost 20,000 people, left more than 27,000 people injured and hundreds of thousands homeless. The epicenter of the 7.4 magnitude earthquake was near Izmit, an industrial city about 104 km (60 miles) east of Istanbul.

The enormity of the disaster left Turks and people around the world shocked. While the international community responded quickly to help, the failure of Turkish authorities to respond effectively to the disaster caused anger and disappointment both inside and outside Turkey. Angered earthquake victims criticized the government's failure to prevent contractors from building with cheap materials, in defiance of safety codes designed to make homes earthquake proof and for its delayed response to rescue people trapped under mountains of rubble. As one Turkish minister remarked, the earthquake was "a declaration of bankruptcy for the Turkish political and administrative system."

Turkish Health Minister Osman Durmus' notorious decision to reject rescue teams and aid from Armenia, Greece, and Romania and his statement that US hospital ships sent to Turkey were not necessary, became a prime target of public rage. This compounded the government's troubles and angered many international aid teams.

Durmus, a member of the far-right Nationalist Action Party in the government of Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, was criticized by the Council of Ministers and parliamentary groups. Public reaction to his statements was equally forceful, calling for his resignation. However, in contrast to Durmus, the Turkish people continued to express their gratitude to international and national rescue teams.

European countries sent nearly 2,000 rescue and medical workers and a large contingent of rescue teams and military personnel reached the disaster zone within days from the US and a host of other countries.

Immediately after the earthquake, Armenia offered to fly in 100



Collapsed homes in Bahcecik (Bardizag).

professional rescuers and 10 truckloads of equipment. However, Turkish diplomatic snafus and bureaucracy left a plane-load of supplies waiting at Yerevan's airport.

"The health minister can only be described as a retarded racist," said a Turkish diplomat, who affirmed that the Turkish Foreign Ministry had forwarded Armenia's assistance offer to the government's crisis management center. From Australia to Canada, Turkey's rejection of aid was criticized in newspapers around the world, especially given the enormity of the human tragedy.

Finally, 11 days after the disaster, Armenia's aid reached Istanbul after Ankara gave clearance. Armenia's Department for Emergency Situations sent a cargo plane delivering \$10,000 of medicines, three diesel generators, and other first aid supplies. Five employees of the Department and a team of experts from the





**An Armenian woman in Istanbul during a church service for the Turkish earthquake victims at the Cathedral of the Armenian Patriarchate.**

National Service of Seismic Protection accompanied the airlift.

Within hours after the earthquake, Turkey's Armenian community, under the leadership of Patriarch Mesrob II of Istanbul and all Turkey, organized rescue teams—comprised of priests and youth—and sent them to the damaged areas to help the victims.

The Holy Savior Armenian Hospital's emergency unit was

filled to capacity. Most Armenian medical specialists were asked by the Turkish Health Ministry to serve in state hospitals, while the hospital continued to admit victims for treatment, free of charge. Also, in response to a request from the Istanbul Chamber of Medicine, the hospital dispatched \$6,000 worth of medical equipment and supplies to the earthquake zone.

The Patriarchate's courtyard, and the large front yards of the



PHOTOS BY SEVAN ATAVAN

**Left:** In Adapazari, the homeless queue to register for winterized tents.

**Right:** Patriarch Mesrob speaks with earthquake victims in Adapazari.

Armenian churches in Ferikoy and Samatya were opened to the public to use the water supplies and other facilities available in the complexes. Food and tea was served to hundreds of people who were either homeless or feared returning home amid hundreds of aftershocks.

The earthquake also caused deep cracks on the third floor of the Patriarchal headquarters in the Kumpaki district. The bell tower, built in 1870, was damaged; two of the five stone-crosses decorating the dome of the sanctuary fell down damaging the roof of the ancient church's nave. Nine other Armenian churches in Istanbul and a number of Armenian schools were damaged, in addition to the building complex of the Armenian Hospital in Yedikule. During the aftershocks a large chunk of the upper wall on the facade of the Armenian Church of Saint John the Evangelist fell down. Further cracks developed in the walls and beams of the Armenian Church of the Holy Mother-of-God in Bakirkoy. The Patriarchate reported that numerous houses collapsed in Istanbul's Avcilar district where there is a thriving community of Armenians who had migrated to the city from Kastamonu and Sinop regions in the northern part of the country.

A team of engineers and architects has estimated that the cost of renovation of the Patriarchate and the churches will exceed \$1.2 million. However, the Patriarch has stated that at this stage their priority is providing relief assistance to the victims and securing the welfare of the affected people.

So far, three weeks after the earthquake, over two dozen Armenians have been killed in the earthquake.

"There are still thousands under the rubble in Izmit, Adapazari, Yalova and Cinarcik, where Armenians worked or lived," said a report from the Patriarchate. "How many of them fell victim to the earthquake is still an unanswered question. No information is yet available on the injured, since they could have been taken to any hospital in the Izmit gulf area," stated the report.

Patriarch Mesrob has been a leading force behind the immedi-

ate organization of relief work, despite an uneasy relationship with the government and extremist attitudes toward the Armenians from certain segments of Turkish society.

Indeed, in a touching move, the 43-year-old Patriarch adopted three Armenian orphans whose parents were killed in the earthquake—one of them a 12-year-old girl whose left leg was amputated. He assured them that they will be taken care of until they graduate from university. The Patriarch is also setting up an earthquake trauma clinic where children and young people can be treated for psychological and emotional problems.

Within days of the disaster, the Patriarch issued an encyclical expressing his sympathy to the families of the dead and giving spiritual encouragement to the injured and the homeless. He urged the Armenian communities in Turkey and around the world to contribute to the fundraising efforts and to extend a helping hand to the victims. The Patriarchate has already contributed \$7,000 to the aid campaign, despite its own severe financial crisis.

Weeks after the earthquake, new rescue teams came from abroad to continue searching through mountains of rubble for the missing. Father Zacheos Ohanian, a young priest, headed a volunteer team of 15 youths from the Armenian community of Istanbul to Cinarcik—a resort town not far from the epicenter of the earthquake. In the absence of public officials and relief teams in the town, Fr. Zacheos and his team, together with untrained rescue groups dug through the rubble with their bare hands looking for survivors. The priest said "he cannot forget the angelic face of the 2-month-old baby's deformed remains that he found under the debris. The corpse of the baby's young father was nearby and the mother was yet to be found." When asked whether the baby was Armenian, "Who cares, it's all the same," was Fr. Zacheos' response.

Other young Armenians joined AKUT, a local Turkish NGO specializing in relief work, and various rescue organizations which transported volunteers to the disaster zone. A group of Turkish and



**Left: In Akmeshe (Armash), the mosque built two years ago in the place of the former Holy Cross Armenian Church lost its minaret. The former church used to be the center of worship for the once famous Armash monastery and theological school which has been heavily damaged (right).**

Armenian professionals set up a portable kitchen in Izmit serving three free meals a day to 1,500 people.

Given the large scale of the disaster, Patriarch Mesrob invited and organized an ecumenical relief effort with the participation of all Christian churches in Turkey, including the Greek, Syrian, Roman Catholic, German Evangelical, Anglican, churches and a host of other religious organizations. The short- and long-term assistance is being coordinated by the newly created Churches of Turkey Disaster Relief Steering Committee (CDR), which has already dispatched hygiene kits, baby food and other emergency supplies to the disaster area.

On August 21, the Armenian and Greek Patriarchs of Istanbul paid a pastoral visit to Izmit with members of the ecumenical committee. "During the eight hour trip, the Patriarchs shared the pain of those who had lost their family members," wrote *Radikal* newspaper. The Patriarchs also discussed relief work with local government officials. An initial commitment was made to build 200 prefabricated units in a place to be designated by the local authorities.

During a second trip to the disaster zone, Patriarch Mesrob and members of the Steering Committee delivered 80 of the 200 tents ordered from Norway by the CDR to the earthquake zone. One foreign relief worker accompanying the Patriarch said, "It is impossible not to weep. We were able to share the frustration of government officials unable to shake loose from endless regulation and to celebrate the erection of the first tents.... The task is overwhelming."

The delegation also conducted a survey of the devastated areas to plan relief efforts accordingly. The World Council of Churches, the Middle East Council of Churches, the Vatican and other European churches have expressed readiness to provide financial aid.

Meanwhile, Armenian churches and organizations in the Diaspora have responded positively to Mesrob II's call for help. Church leaders in Ejmiatsin, Yerevan, Beirut, New York, Los

Angeles, Sydney and other cities have called upon their parishioners and benefactors to participate in relief efforts. Among the first to respond were the Armenian Missionary Association of America in New Jersey and the Armenian Relief Society in Boston with an initial contribution of \$5,000 each.

The Istanbul Armenian organizations in North America have mobilized fundraising efforts to help their compatriots in Turkey. Meeting under the auspices of the Diocese of the Armenian Church in New York, \$19,000 was sent to Turkey through the Fund for Armenian Relief, a Diocese-affiliated charity organization which has been helping Armenia since the 1988 earthquake there. In early October a benefit concert was organized by the Diocese at the St. Vartan Cathedral in

New York, where former Istanbul-natives, renown violinists, sisters Ani and Ida Kavafian and pianist Sahan Arzruni performed. Patriarch Mesrob II presided over the concert and a fundraising event in Los Angeles organized by the Western Diocese. Meanwhile, the Lincy Foundation has announced that it will donate up \$600,000 in matching funds.

Currently, the Armenian Patriarchate has concentrated its relief efforts in three areas: General disaster relief to the earthquake zone; aid to children, primarily caring for orphans and providing psychological treatments; repair and renovation of damaged Armenian Church buildings.

As in the case of the earthquake in Armenia and elsewhere around the world, it will take years to restore shattered lives and reconstruct demolished homes. Large-scale human tragedies caused by nature do not know national boundaries. Physical and political structures come and go, but common sense, human care and spirit are the ultimate champions. While government officials will continue to pursue their political and diplomatic contests, the worst tragedy is forgetting the victims who will need assistance for years to come.

# REFOCUSED DIPLOMACY

## Trade and Economic Prospects Redefine British-Armenian Relations

By TONY HALPIN

**G**iven the checkered history of their relations at an earlier stage of this century, it is perhaps surprising to find that ties between Armenia and Britain have quietly been gathering strength in recent years. Indeed, it is already possible to say that Britain is the most important European country for Armenia in terms of trade and investment and may over time come to be of equal political significance.

All of this has occurred without fanfare or even great pressure from the local Armenian community, which at around 20,000 is tiny by comparison with France or the United States. Though small, the community has been active—establishing, for instance, an Armenian-British parliamentary group of MPs and members of the House of Lords. But its activities do not explain the steady growth of interest in Armenia from London.

When the history of the establishment of the modern republic of Armenia is written, the decision to open its first foreign embassy in London will come to be seen among the most far-sighted of its early acts. In 1992 Armen Sarkissian was appointed Armenia's first diplomatic representative anywhere in the world for 70 years when he was named first Charge d'Affaires and then Ambassador to London where he remains eight years on. Sarkissian, who holds a PhD, was already familiar with British political and social culture, having spent time in the mid-1980s as a visiting research fellow at Cambridge University. This was important in a society which operates as much on

nuance and informal relationships—the “old boy” network—as on formal contact. It helped, for example, if only for establishing personal common ground, that the then Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd was, like Sarkissian, a Cambridge man.

The embassy, established with the help of the community in fashionable Kensington, around the corner from the Armenian Church built by the Gulbenkian family, was fortunate in having a succession of talented and energetic young diplomats posted to London. The combination of insight and effort built up over years is now gradually bearing fruit to Armenia's benefit.

### Trade and Investments

British business now plays an important role in key elements of the Armenian economy. British Airways was the first foreign airline to operate flights to the republic, the products of Armenia's mines are traded on the London Metals Exchange, a British company established the first western bank in Armenia, and British accountancy firms are reshaping the financial environment in which local business operates. MacMillans, a British publishing house, is responsible for producing textbooks for Armenia's schools, and British investment is behind Armenia's growing importance as a regional center for pharmaceutical production.

A British retail giant, British Home Stores, is planning to open a department store in Yerevan, bringing expertise gained in the “nation of shopkeepers” to bear on the consumer market in Armenia. The Ani Hotel, one of Yerevan's principal hotels, currently undergoing refurbishment in



MKHITAR KHACHATRIAN

preparation for the expected influx of tourists for the 2001 celebrations, is likely to turn to a British management company to run its affairs. And a British company recently ploughed \$5.5 million into a diamond-processing factory outside Yerevan, taking a stake in one of the country's fastest growing industries.

HSBC opened Midland Armenia Bank off Yerevan's Republic Square in 1996 and has seen business grow fast. A second branch opened in January and a network of automated teller machines has given easy access to the global banking network for tourists and visiting business representatives alike.

Profits are good; the bank has since branched out into the provision of insurance services for corporate and individual customers, and it holds two seats on the Yerevan Stock Exchange. It is ranked among the leading dealers in government securities and in the republic's foreign exchange market. In short, in just a few years, it has become a serious financial player in the economy.

George Cardona, HSBC's general manager in London responsible for overseas locations, said its decision to invest was influenced by the attitude of the Armenian government.

“They were very straightforward with us and really seemed to want to get us to invest. They went out of their way to make it easier for us in the very difficult circumstances of that time,” he said.

“It was clear to us that they understood that the country needed a Western bank and

that it would help to bring in other foreign investors. They were keen to make it happen."

Other companies have sought out HSBC to ask about its experiences in Armenia as a pioneering investor, Cardona added: "They are clearly reassured by seeing a Western bank there. It has a demonstration effect, which is what the Government was aiming for and they are absolutely right."

Another vital sector—telecommunications—might also have attracted involvement from a British giant of similar stature. British Telecom, which has become a global force in the industry since privatization 15 years ago, was among those bidding for the right to buy ArmenTel. The 15-year contract went instead to OTE of Greece, a country not renowned in Europe for cutting-edge telephone services, and is now bogged down in controversy both in Parliament and in government circles. Unusually, the deal specified not only a monopoly in standard



Opposite page: The British Embassy in Yerevan.  
Above: HSBC Bank on Vramshapuh street.  
Below left: GlaxoWellcome/Bristol-Myers plant;  
Below right: Staff at Pharmatech.

ting them to separate Armenia in their minds from the chaos and uncertainty in Russia. After that, questions of corruption and concerns about the unresolved conflict over Karabakh raise their heads. But MacKeown takes all of this in his stride.

"As a salesman you know that these obstacles are put there to distract—they don't really want to say no but neither can

is slowly changing into investment and, with that, other investment will come."

His strategy is to find a few small to medium sized projects and to make them work by finding suitable British partners. Success makes it easier for others to follow, gradually building up a network of Anglo-Armenian contacts across a whole range of industries.

"Gently and quietly getting on with the job is by far the best way to work. If I go there and find three projects that will be viable and realistic for British business to get involved with, then I have something to take home that is real," he said.

MacKeown is planning to lead the first British trade mission to Armenia early next year. He is full of praise for the way Ambassador Sarkissian has facilitated access to top Government officials in Yerevan, opening up a level of contact which he believes "is of very valuable potential to British business."

In Britain, too, relations are being



telephone service but also in the provision of mobile and paging services. The scope for involvement by others seems non-existent for some time to come.

At the British Government's Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), Tom MacKeown is the export promoter working on developing business links with the Caucasus. His brief covers Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. He sees his role as matching interested partners in Britain with investment opportunities in the region. In Armenia, for instance, talks are currently taking place for a dairy plant to be set up, importing knowledge, equipment, and cash into an important agricultural enterprise.

His first task in persuading British business leaders to become involved is get-

they say yes. I have to sell the country by telling them that there is a very good workforce, willing and well educated; they have the opportunity to produce their goods at a price that is going to be significantly lower than UK production, and to enter a market where there is far less competition in an environment that is politically stable.

"If you talk about corruption, that is not unique to Armenia. Yes it exists, but in my experience corruption in Armenia is very much less than in the other two countries."

MacKeown adds: "The other big advantage is the Diaspora. Because Armenians invest in Armenia, it shows a level of respect for their own homeland and others feel they can follow with a little more confidence. The Diaspora sent money and aid for years. That

cemented at the highest levels. The DTI will be hosting a major UK-Armenia trade conference early next year at its London headquarters, attended by top executives from major companies and ministers from both countries. The location—inside the Government offices rather than at a hotel in the capital—underlines the importance attached to the event on the British side.

British diplomacy, as it has done since the days of the East India Company, follows its businessmen.

Britain was long perceived to have only one interest in the region—Azerbaijani oil and the multi-billion dollar contracts struck by British Petroleum. Armenian thinking on relations was for a long time colored by this fact, either ignoring possi-

bilities for closer ties or seeking to counter-balance British involvement with Azerbaijan through association with other major powers.

British offers to become involved in the early days of the OSCE's Minsk Group negotiations process, designed to resolve the Karabakh conflict, were turned down by Armenia largely because of perceptions of bias. More recent opinion in Armenian circles has come to believe that this was a mistake. Britain's interests are now viewed as regional and pragmatic, seeking the promotion of a stable environment for business rather than of any particular cause.

Armenian officials who have held talks with the British Foreign Office in recent months all report a considerable degree of understanding of Armenia's position both on Karabakh and other policy issues, and an eagerness to be seen as even-handed.

The siting in London of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the primary international institution for rebuilding the former Soviet and East European economies, underscores the importance of the UK embassy for Armenia. Following criticism that money intended for refurbishment of a hydroelectric plant was actually used to restore Yerevan's nuclear power plant, Armenia has not enjoyed as much financial aid as it could have done. Nevertheless, Armen Sarkissian's standing within the EBRD is high—he was recently appointed a governor of its ruling body—and the damage suffered in that episode has gradually been overcome. It is likely in the future that, after much quiet diplomacy, Armenia will again benefit from support for reconstruction projects.

### Cultural Ties

Cultural relations between Armenia and Britain are blossoming too. The Royal Society, the "club" of the British scientific elite, is backing ten scientific projects in Armenia following the visit in June by Fadey Sarkissian, president of the republic's National Academy of Science, to the Royal Society.

A recent exhibition on the pioneering filmmaker Sergei Parajanov was a critical success and attracted widespread interest.



Fadey Sarkissian, Armenian Academy of Sciences President (left) and Armen Sarkissian, Armenia's Ambassador to Britain, at the Royal Society

An Armenian day at EBRD saw displays by modern Armenian painters and performances before an international audience by talented young musicians.

Musical ties with Britain have been growing over the past seven years.

Several outstanding teenagers have studied in London, including at the well-known Yehudi Menuhin School of Music, largely through the encouragement and determination of violinist Levon Chilingirian, whose own quartet enjoys international fame. Chilingirian and one of his proteges, cellist Alec Chaushian, now hope to establish an annual music prize in Yerevan, offering hope, money, and the possibility of performing in London to new talent at a time when the arts in Armenia are struggling to survive.

### Education and Research

Ties have also been established with British universities. Sarkissian has persuaded Cambridge University's Judge Institute of Management Studies to launch a new research program into transition economies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Its first research projects, involving five academics in Armenia working with the Cambridge team, will concentrate on the Caucasus economies, the TRASECA "silk road" transportation plan, and the energy sector in Armenia.

The program will have a dual impact. First, it establishes long-term partnerships between Armenian universities and academics and their counterparts at one of the world's most famous educational institutions.

Eventually, with sufficient backing, it is hoped to endow a chair, raising the profile of academic study in the area still further. Second, it will create a powerful body of academic research on developments in the economies of Armenia and the Caucasus region, which will attract international interest and investment. Something similar happened with a China Big Business program developed at the same institute, which established a formidable reputation for research that directly benefited companies seeking to understand the opportuni-

ties then opening up in that vast country. Demystifying the Caucasus through reliable information will help to open it up as an area of business interest, from which, the argument goes, Armenia can only benefit.

Armenian graduate students also enjoy sponsored places on research programs into transition economies at the London School of Economics, and there are links too with Leeds University in northern England. Then, of course, there is the long-established Chair of Armenian Studies at Oxford University.

Slowly, then, and over a wide range of fronts Anglo-Armenian relations at all levels are deepening. The notion that Britain was only interested in Azerbaijani oil has given way to a more sophisticated appreciation of the potential for partnership with the world's fifth largest economy and a heavy-weight player in European diplomacy. British business, aided by the activities of Diaspora Armenians, are gradually coming to perceive Armenia as an opportunity instead of a war zone.

But it is the intricate network of personal relations that is gradually emerging between individuals in all walks of life that will create the basis for mutual and long-lasting benefit. One indicator of this quiet revolution can be found in the record of visas issued at the Armenian embassy—applications from Britons with no Armenian background or family connections far outnumber those from the Diaspora. With each one, a new connection is made between the two countries, some profitable, others personal, but all destined to bind them closer together. ■

# An Economic Bridge Builder

**A**ny discussion of British involvement in Armenia sooner or later leads to Vatche Manoukian.

By his own reckoning, the London-based businessman, originally from Lebanon, has invested more than \$100 million in Armenia. He single-handedly accounts for much of the interest now being shown in the republic by British firms.

He was a driving force behind the opening of HSBC's Midland Armenia bank, in which he has a 30 percent stake.

Manoukian also established Yerevan's Coca-Cola factory producing 150 million bottles a year, a separate bottling plant and a plastics production company.

He persuaded Bristol Myers Squibb to set up pharmaceutical production in a state-of-the-art factory he owns in the city and has negotiated a license with Glaxo Wellcome to produce their medicines too.

His investment in pharmaceuticals is part of a strategy aimed at promoting Armenia as a regional center for hi-tech industries. Medicines are sent from Armenia to other countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia, promoting not only trade but the development of a transportation network down which other products will follow. If patriotism fires his decision to get involved in the fledgling republic's economy, Manoukian does not hide the fact that it also makes good business sense.

"There are more opportunities in the region than there are in the West. Armenia has an education equivalent to any western country—why should I set up a factory in the Far East and take a rice factory worker and train him to work in a factory when I can employ a hundred people with a PhD in Armenia who are prepared to work for the same salary?" he said.

"One is helping his country but at the same time I can categorically say that all the enterprises we are running are profitable. The returns we receive are higher than we would be getting in the West," he continued.

Manoukian's wealth puts him in the annual rich list published by the London Sunday Times, but few seem to know exactly how much he is worth. Estimates vary from \$400 million to \$2 billion. What is clear, however, is that he is committing huge sums to Armenia as part of a long-term strategy of involvement in the economy.

He sees the role of influential diasporans like himself as paving the way for major foreign companies to enter the country. This potential for partnership gives the tiny republic a competitive edge, he believes.

His latest project is to provide a 400,000 sq ft business center,



Vatche Manoukian (right) with President Robert Kocharian.

equipped to the highest international standards, to provide Western firms with office facilities.

"Because of the strength of the Diaspora you will always find an investor who will put up the money providing an internationally recognized company is willing to provide the product. All the big companies are looking for opportunities in the region but don't know enough of the people or environment," Manoukian explained.

"There are organizations in Armenia that will provide the money and local know-how and all they want is the expertise."

As well as economic gain, Manoukian's money is also put to philanthropic use. His Manoukian Foundation sponsors the 37-piece Armenian Chamber Orchestra, and also pays for a project to translate every volume of the Dorling Kindersley children's encyclopedia into Armenian, with copies placed in every Armenian school around the world.

It is his money, too, some \$350,000, which is sponsoring a major display of Armenian manuscripts at the British Library in 2001 to mark the 1700th anniversary of Armenian Christianity.

"It upsets me that a lot of people I meet don't even know what an Armenian is. So there is going to be a big drive to show people what Armenia is and to introduce to the world our heritage as an ancient and noble race," Manoukian said.

"Investors are not going to come to Armenia by themselves. Armenia has to go to the investors and convince them by explaining where we are, what we can do, and what the possibilities are," he affirmed. ■

# Trade & Foreign Policy

Ambassador John Mitchiner Explains Bilateral Relations



Great Britain's outgoing Ambassador to Armenia, Dr. John Mitchiner, 48, is currently Head of the Japan Section in the Far Eastern and Pacific Department at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. Since 1980, when he joined the Foreign Office, he has served in Istanbul, New Delhi and Berne and has held various positions at the Foreign Office. He has a PhD in Oriental Studies.

## Q&A

**AIM:** British policy towards the Southern Caucasus has been undergoing changes in recent months and it was reported that Armenia has become a priority interest country for the UK in this region. Is this a correct assessment and what are those changes?

**MITCHINER:** That is a fully accurate statement. Armenia, alongside other countries in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia, is becoming and has become a focus for British foreign policy. The other countries are Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. As a reflection of that we have been increasing our staffing level in our embassies in the region. In Armenia we have already increased our UK staff from two to three, and later this year we should increase that number to four. Along with that, we are seeing an increased emphasis on Armenia in a number of other programs, such as in military cooperation and development assistance through the Know-how Fund. The military cooperation is particularly in the area of English language teaching, where the Armenian military are disadvantaged, especially through their growing involvement in NATO activities and specifically in the Partnership for Peace program. On the aid level, we are expecting a very substantial increase, more than doubling the volume of our development assistance to Armenia over the coming three years. Last year the amount of the aid was £500,000, in the current financial year it is going to be very close to £1 million, and building up after that to £1.5 million and more.

**What about cooperation on the bilateral political level?**

That again has been getting closer over the last year. Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian's visit to London in March was a



good discussions both with the British Defense Secretary George Robertson and with the Foreign Secretary Robin Cook. They had a very interesting discussion on Kosovo for example, and discussed Nagorno Karabakh in that context. That is the sort of contact which is set to continue over the coming months and years. Another change that we have seen, regarding Karabakh, is a greater willingness on the part of the Armenian government to compromise to reach a settlement, which will be to the benefit of Armenia, of Karabakh, and of Azerbaijan, and indeed of the region as a whole. I think regional cooperation is being seen increasingly by the Armenian government as a way forward in order to promote the prosperity both of Armenia and of the region as a whole.

#### What changed eight years after the collapse of the Soviet Union to bring Armenia into focus?

I think a major reason behind that change of emphasis is the changed economic position in Armenia. To give one example, in the bad years of 1995-96 electricity was in such short supply here in Armenia. Now, just three years later we have the position where

Armenia not only has full domestic electricity supply but is now exporting electricity to neighboring Georgia. That is a remarkable achievement. Similarly, the stabilization of the Armenian economy; the inflation rate was lowered to minus 1.2 percent last year, and GDP growth was very satisfactory despite the Russian crisis. Overall, the economic reform program, which successive governments have been pursuing very rigorously, is now showing its fruits. That is making the Armenian market all the more attractive to foreign investors and exporters.

#### How has that increased emphasis on Armenia manifested itself on the economic level?

Over the last year or two years we in the embassy have devoted a lot of attention to the commercial front. I was very pleased to see that last year both Armenian exports to the United Kingdom and British exports to Armenia increased by over 500 percent. British exports to Armenia amounted last year to \$70 million, making the UK the third largest exporter to Armenia after Russia and the US. This is a remarkable turnaround and a reflection of how British businessmen now

see the growing importance of the Armenian market.

Petroleum products constitute a significant portion of British exports to Armenia, followed by sugar and sweets, books and magazines, mechanical equipment, pharmaceuticals, musical instruments, and furniture. Armenia's exports included various precious metals, such as gold produced by the Ararat Gold Recovery Company which is sent to the UK for processing, some alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, chemical products, textiles and carpets, copper and other metallurgical products, as well as a small volume of electronic machinery. Armenian exports to the UK are still at a relatively small level, however, and I'm sure there is a great deal more scope. Equally, I have to add that just as the role of the British embassy in Armenia is to promote British exports to Armenia, it's also the role of the Armenian Embassy in London to promote Armenian exports to the UK.

Alongside exports we are seeing an increasing number of UK investors in Armenia. We had the first western bank here, HSBC, the first western airline, British Airways, and more recently there was the first western pharmaceutical ven-

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*I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, literature is unread, music is unheard, and prayers are no more answered. Go ahead, destroy that race. Destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them into the desert without bread or water. Burn their homes and churches. Then see if they will not laugh, sing and pray again. For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a New Armenia*



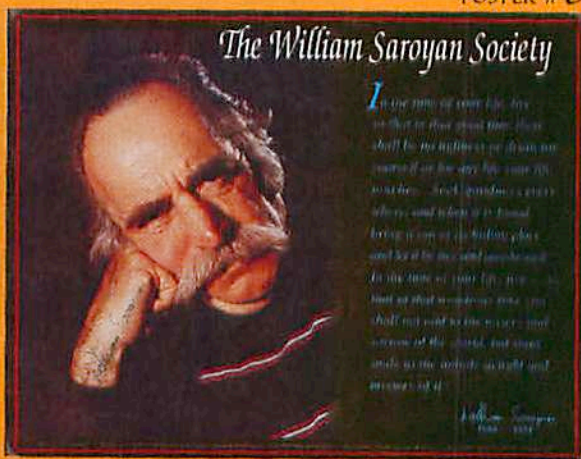
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witness to the way they have  
lived, and perhaps a great  
many, and when it is found  
bring it on to the hidden place  
and let it be the end of the world.  
In the time of your life, they  
shall not see the way they  
lived, and when it is found  
bring it on to the hidden place  
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ture, with Pharmatec and Glaxo-Wellcome Bristol-Myers Squibb. We also have smaller investors; for example a British investor has opened a macaroni plant.

**Are there new investment projects for the future?**

There is great interest and we are constantly having a wide range of new inquiries.

**Are there British citizens of non-Armenian descent among the investors?**

There are very definitely. I have already mentioned British Mediterranean. There is no Armenian investor involved in that.

**What do you think about the possibilities for tourism in Armenia?**

I think they are very great. We already have several British companies here. The full potential of tourism in Armenia is dependent on two things: improving the infrastructure so that a tourist can get around easily, I mean improving basic things like roads; and increasing hotel capacity. Armenia is going to have to do this anyway for 2001 because it is going to have a lot of tourists coming in and around that year.

**“The economic reform program, which successive governments have been pursuing very rigorously, is now showing its fruits. That is making the Armenian market all the more attractive to foreign investors and exporters.”**

**Do you think British tourists would be interested in Armenia?**

Very much so. I think at this stage, the type of market that should be targeted is the more adventurous traveler wanting to explore unknown markets. There are a great many things of interest here, not least, of course, the churches and monasteries. Apart from that, there is really beautiful countryside and many interesting things such as skiing and other resorts which can be developed.

**You mentioned the 1700th anniversary in 2001 of the adoption of Christianity by Armenia. Do you think a visit of the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, might be possible on that occasion?**

I cannot say too much on the subject because we have not discussed it yet with the Armenian government, but we do have very definite ideas for a way to celebrate the year 2001, which would involve a high level visit from the UK.

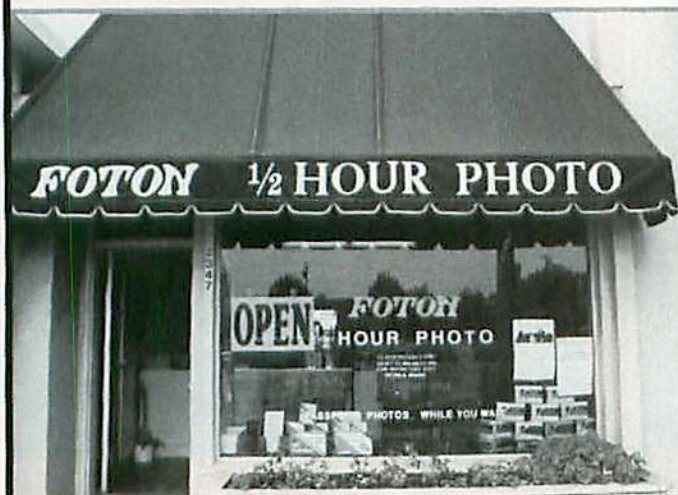
**British oil interests in Azerbaijan are well known. Don't you fear that increasing Armenia's importance in UK's perspective might contradict those interests?**

Not at all. I very much agree with the approach of the Armenian government on that. Armenian foreign policy is based on the premise of non-exclusivity, in so far as relations with Russia are not exclusive of relations with Iran, or with Europe or the West; they are complementary.

A number of British companies have oil interests in the region. Equally, as we are now seeing, a lot of British companies have other commercial interests, including in Armenia. The one does not conflict in any way with the other.

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**How would you summarize your country's position on the Karabakh question?** Britain is not a member of the Minsk Group; despite that, we do maintain a very close interest in the Karabakh issue. We would like to see a settlement there, not least for the benefit of the region as a whole, for regional stability and regional prosperity. At the same time we fully recognize that any settlement has to be agreed by all three parties: by Armenia, by Azerbaijan, and by the people of Karabakh. Unless you have the agreement of all three parties, no settlement is going to be a lasting settlement.

**Can you tell if the "Common State" proposals of the Minsk Group co-presidents are still on the table?**

As I understand it, the basic concept behind the "Common State" approach is still on the table; the actual term "Common State" may change. To my mind, the name that you apply doesn't matter, what matters is the actual content. The essential thing is that the people of Karabakh should have—and I'm going to use a term that has been bandied about—the highest possible degree of autonomy, and that, in reality, not just as a term. They should be self-governing, they

**“Unless you have the agreement of all three parties—Armenia, Azerbaijan and the people of Karabakh—no settlement is going to be a lasting settlement.”**

should have full security guarantees for the future.

**As the representative of the UK in Armenia, do you support Armenia's membership in the Council of Europe?**

Yes. I can say that unreservedly. The British government would very much like to see Armenia as a member of the Council of Europe in the short-term, rather than the medium or the long-term. I certainly hope

that within possibly a matter of months, or at the most within a year, we should see Armenia as a member.

**Are there plans to open a British Council office in Yerevan?**

I have been trying to persuade the British Council to set up an office here ever since I arrived over two years ago. The will is there. The British Council has Armenia virtually at the top of its list of priorities for new countries in which to open. The problem is that the finances of the British Council are such that rather than opening any new offices they are in fact tending to close offices in various parts of the world. Having said that, a representative of the British Council came to Armenia in May to examine the grounds for setting up an office. I know that he went away very encouraged by the opportunities here, convinced that the British Council ought to open a new operation in Armenia. The foreign affairs committee of the House of Parliament, also visited in May and strongly recommended setting up a British Council office here. I hope those two factors together will lead to the opening of the office within the next 12 months. ■

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# AID ARMENIA

## Decade-long Humanitarian Assistance

**S**t Nareg's pediatric hospital is known locally as "the English hospital" and stands as a tangible reminder of the links between Britain and Armenia.

It was built with money raised by London-based Aid Armenia after the 1988 earthquake and continues to benefit from regular support from the charity. Unfortunately, because of financial difficulties both at state and local level, the hospital which serves children's needs in Vanadsor and the surrounding area is currently only 40 percent occupied.

Rouben Galichian, chairman of Aid Armenia, explained: "It is mainly because of the financial situation of the population. They have to feed their patients themselves and some of the medicines have to be purchased

by the patient's family."

"The Government pays the hospital a sum per head during hospitalization but it is not really covering the true costs of the food and medicine."

Annually, the charity supplies \$50-\$70,000 a year in financial assistance to the hospital and other medical projects, raised through donations in Britain.

"The hospital has approximately 70 staff who are paid by the state. We take care of the maintenance of equipment, supplying x-ray film and spare parts for the laboratory machines. Our main expenditure, about \$5,000-a-year, is laboratory reagents," said Galichian.

Cash comes from a variety of sources,

including other charitable foundations and individual fund-raisers. One woman in her eighties, Roza Khederian, raised about \$15,000 by collecting donations after services at the Armenian Church. Another, Dr Kevork Hopayan sends money that he collects each year from a sponsored swim in the freezing North Sea on Christmas Day.

Members of a Hindu temple in Swansea, Wales, who first raised money for victims immediately after the earthquake, still send donations every other year.

Aid Armenia was established by members of the British-Armenian community in response to the December 1988 earthquake and by the end of that month had sent 400 tons of medicines and medical equipment as well as 1,100 tons of food and clothing, totaling two million British pounds in value.

When the immediate crisis passed, it raised another four million pounds (about \$6.5 million) in donations from the British public, charities, and businesses.

After talks with Armenia's Health Ministry, it was decided to use most of the money to build and equip a hospital to replace

Opposite page: St. Nareg hospital staff and Chairman of Aid Armenia, Rouben Galichian, (first from right). Inset: Physiotherapy session. Right: Hospital senior staff and physicians.

the one damaged by the quake.

The 60-bed St Nareg's was completed and officially opened on April 25, 1992 by Catholicos Vazgen I and Lord Runcie, the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is built to withstand future earth tremors up to eight on the Richter scale.

Aid Armenia also donated £300,000 towards the construction of the Lord Byron School in Gumri, another tangible link between the peoples of the two countries. Children at the school are "twinned" with pupils at an elementary school in Nottingham and there are regular contacts between them.

As well as supporting the work of the hospital in Armenia, each year the charity pays for one or two physicians to visit their counterparts in UK hospitals to learn new techniques and update their professional knowledge.

The Children's Clinical Hospital in Yerevan has also benefited from machinery worth around \$60,000 in the past three years, particularly in equipment to test hearing. The



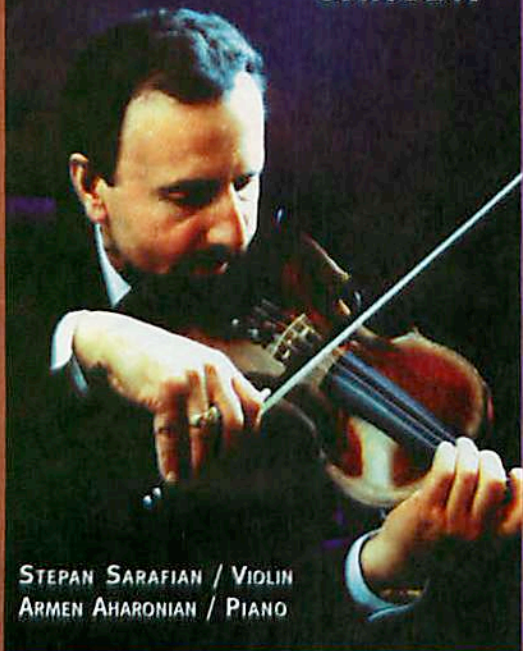
latest piece, which uses Evoked Response Audiometry, can measure the hearing response of children as young as six months and is available in only a few hospitals in the UK.

Galichian himself travels at least twice a year to St Nareg's and remains in close touch with the chief physician. The former head Dr

Felix Khachikian died of cancer last year and his place has been taken by Dr Anahid Darpinian.

Literally tens of thousands of children have received treatment at St Nareg's since it opened and the hospital is regarded as among the best in pediatric care in Armenia. ■

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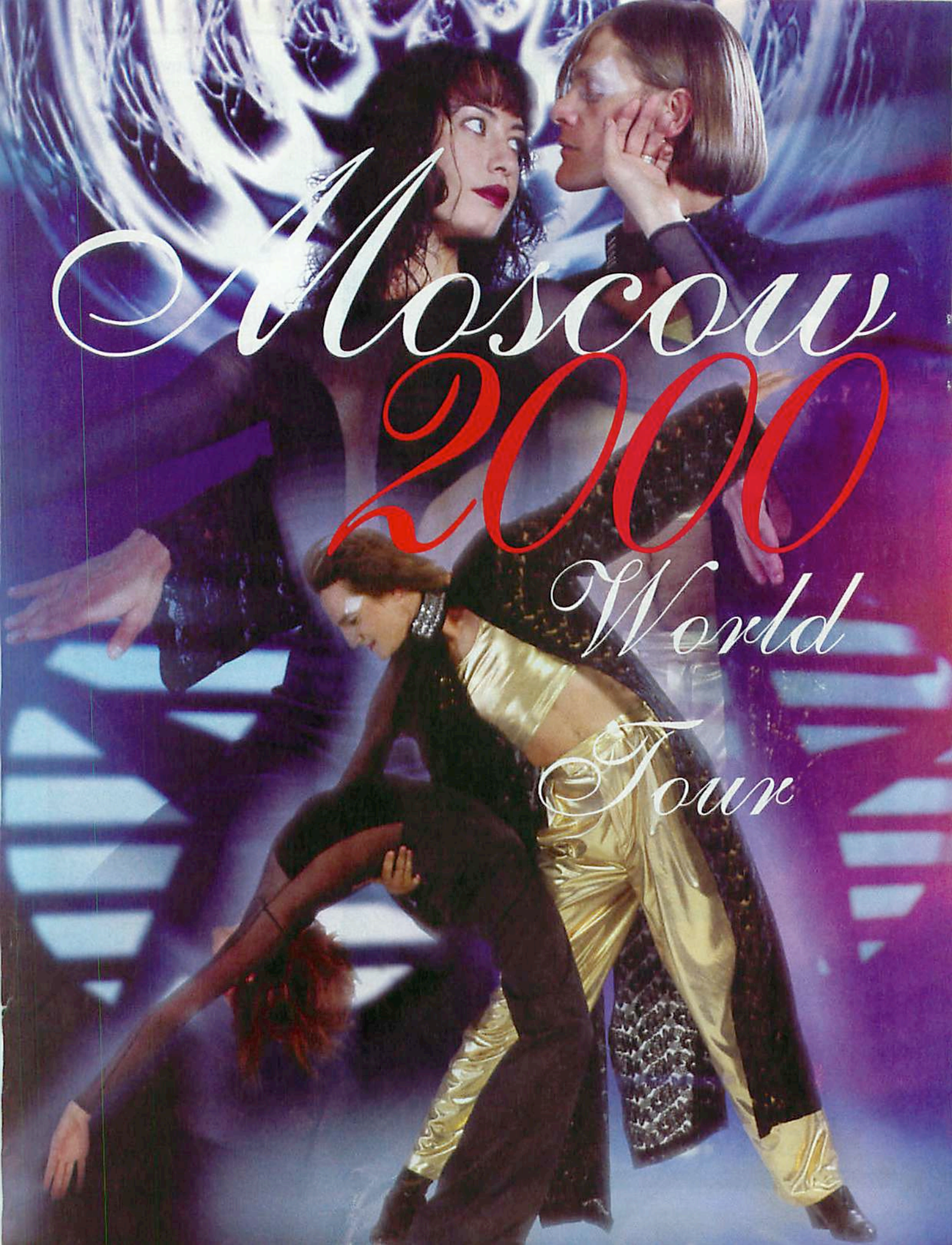
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At a vineyard in the Ararat valley, readying the harvest for the market. Below, Khachik Arakelian, a farmer in Areni, inspects the grapes.

# Bittersweet Taste

Struggling Wine Makers in Armenia Try to Survive and Compete in International Markets

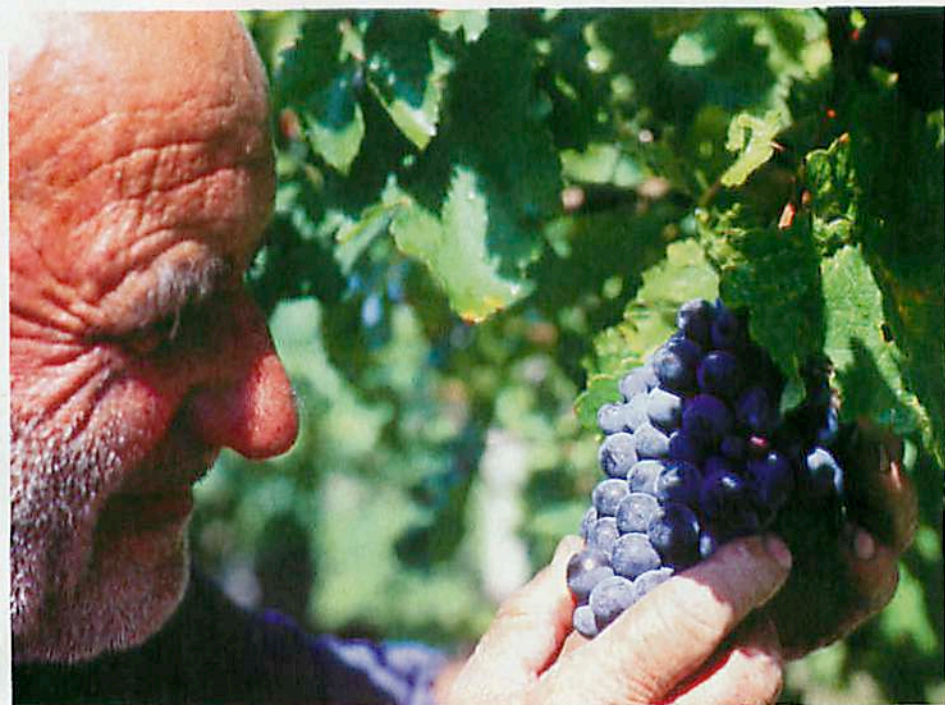
Photos & text by MATTHEW KARANIAN

**T**he ground crunches and shifts beneath Khachik Arakelian's feet. He's walking on a path made of an inorganic mix of gravel and grit—an ideal base for a road, or perhaps for an aggregate for concrete.

But growing in clusters on vines, in neat rows along either side of this path, are the robust grapes of Areni, just two days shy of their harvest. Arakelian has cultivated an unlikely site in the village of Areni, just outside the town of Yeghegnadsor (southern Armenia), and created a productive vineyard.

This vineyard is modest, as are most of the vineyards here.

Arakelian's family sells farm produce along the nearby roadside, but mostly they just sit in the shade, keeping the fruit—and each other—company. They don't do much business. Here they display a couple of pails filled with peaches, one with tomatoes, and a tray piled high with some of the richest



and sweetest of Armenia's purple Areni grapes.

This is the only signpost for the farm. There's no advertising to lure buyers. There isn't even a stand to display the fruit. There is only word of mouth.

"The prettiest garden with the nicest grapes belongs to Khachik Arakelian," says a teenager from the nearby village in response to a request for directions to a vineyard. Just drive down to the open air market and ask anyone where it is, he says. "They can tell you how to get there."

The Arakelian vineyard is just as the teenager had suggested it would be—no weeds. Just healthy plants and succulent grapes, each as perfectly round as a small marble.

Arakelian planted these vines about 20 years ago, with the help of his two sons. He still has a fast step for a man more than 60 years old. His smile is also quick to appear while he talks about the purple fruit that has become his life's passion. "Everywhere we looked, there were only stones," he says, reminiscing about earlier days. "I gathered them and threw them away." From the look of things, he missed a few, but his grapes don't seem to mind.

When last year's harvest was set to begin on September 20, Arakelian said he had expected to bring in about one ton of grapes, all of which he would sell to the wine maker down the road. For the vintner who bought the harvest, this was just one bucket in the vat. The Areni vintner makes Vayots Dsor wine from these grapes, and he said he would need another 99 tons for the season's production.

Making wine from 100 tons of grapes is a risky undertaking.

"Armenians don't like wine very much," he says. "The average person just doesn't drink it, so there is just no wine market." So why make wine?

He doesn't make it for the people who live here. The villagers may like wine, a little, he says. "But everyone makes their own." Tourists, not locals, buy most of the wine, from specialty markets in Yerevan. But even this is not the market that Simonian is targeting.

"Here we sell wine for about \$1.50 a



bottle. Our blush wine is 900 Drams, and our Vayots Dsor is 750 Drams." At one of Yerevan's markets you can even fill your own bottle for 300 Drams (less than one US dollar).

But in the US, wine is no cheaper than five or six dollars a bottle. "We can make more money there," he says. Simonian plans to begin exporting to California. He has already made arrangements with a buyer in Glendale, who is originally from Yerevan. Simonian hopes to some day sell his wine throughout Southern California. He is gambling that Californians will have an interest in Armenian wines that Armenians themselves lack. He doesn't seem concerned about the multitude of competition from California's wine-makers.

The competition just down the road, in the next village, probably captures more of Simonian's thoughts. A competitor, in the village of Getap also sells the wine of Areni grapes, and the labels on its bottles feature the name Areni prominently. They can do this because the name Areni is no more specific to a vintner than is the name Merlot or Zinfandel; it refers to the grape itself.

Because Areni is also the name of the village where Simonian operates his winery, he named his business for it, but not his wine, to keep confusion to a minimum.

Interestingly, Simonian's competitor in

Getap hasn't produced a drop of wine since 1990. Getap still bottles wine from the casks they have in storage and their wine is better known, at least in Yerevan, than is Simonian's. So Simonian, who has been producing fresh wine for each of the past five years, is in competition with a vintner who is still bottling the stuff he made eight years ago.

"It is very unusual" for a winery not to make wine says Simonian about Getap, with great understatement.

The managers at Getap admit their situation is unusual. Armenia's weak wine market is not the cause of their torpor, however. Instead, they say they don't yet have the money to buy grapes.

The Getap winery was founded in 1938, producing new wines until 1990. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, they were unable to get financing to purchase grapes, so each year since then, they have simply bottled and sold whatever is stored in barrels. Getap's most recent vintage is 1990. Neither this winery, nor the one in the village of Areni, grows its own grapes—also a common arrangement in California.

"After the collapse of the Soviet Union, everything was destroyed, ruined," says Emil Manukian, a technologist who has worked at Getap for 32 years. The win-



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The State Unified Cadastral Department of Real Property of the Republic of Armenia has begun a two-year project to streamline the land title registration system and facilitate the development of a real estate market. One of the project's key objectives is to train Armenian professionals in the areas of real estate brokerage, surveying and appraisal.

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ery was privatized in 1997, but the buyer has not made repairs or bought grapes.

Manukian fears he will run out of wine to sell within a year unless he can buy some grapes. The two varieties he sells under the labels "Getap" and "Areni" are red table wines. As for the taste, Manukian is as closed off as a Russian bank. "Getap is Getap, Areni is Areni," he says with a shrug.

Raffik Simonian doesn't squander words discussing the ambience or bouquet of his wines, either. There is no talk of wooden or mellow or fruity tastes. "You want to know what it tastes like? Here, taste it," he says, offering glasses of his recent vintage to guests at the winery. "Decide for yourself."

The blush wine was sweet, with an unpretentious bouquet and a light fruity ambience. The red table wine, Vayots Dsor, was dry, more aggressive, with a strong hint of oak.

At the Areni winery, Vartan Simonian, a cousin of the owners, stands on a concrete ledge above a large vat of crushed grapes. With a stick that look like an eight-foot long wooden spoon, he struggles to mix a thick purple concoction of grape goo that looks solid enough to walk upon.

No visitor dares ask if they crush grapes with their feet. That question at Getap had already brought a surprised rebuke from Manukian. "Do you think we are just wild people?"

Inside the winery, Edward Aftanzilian, the nephew of the owners, prepared the lines that would carry the completed wine while yet another family member, Ashot Simonian, wielded that eight-foot wooden spoon. There's a job for just about every member of the family here. Even 10-year-old Emma Simonian is an apprentice.

The family is busy. The warehouse and the nearby grounds are strewn with the wooden barrels that will hold the wine while it is aged. A new wine cellar is under construction, and Rafik Simonian promises that the entire plant will be entirely new within a couple of years.

After two years in the barrels, the wine will also be ready to be bottled and sold. The wine needs a period of rest he says, but beyond two years is not rest, it's death. While the wine is resting, says Simonian, "I am hoping it will gradually become popular" in Armenia. ■

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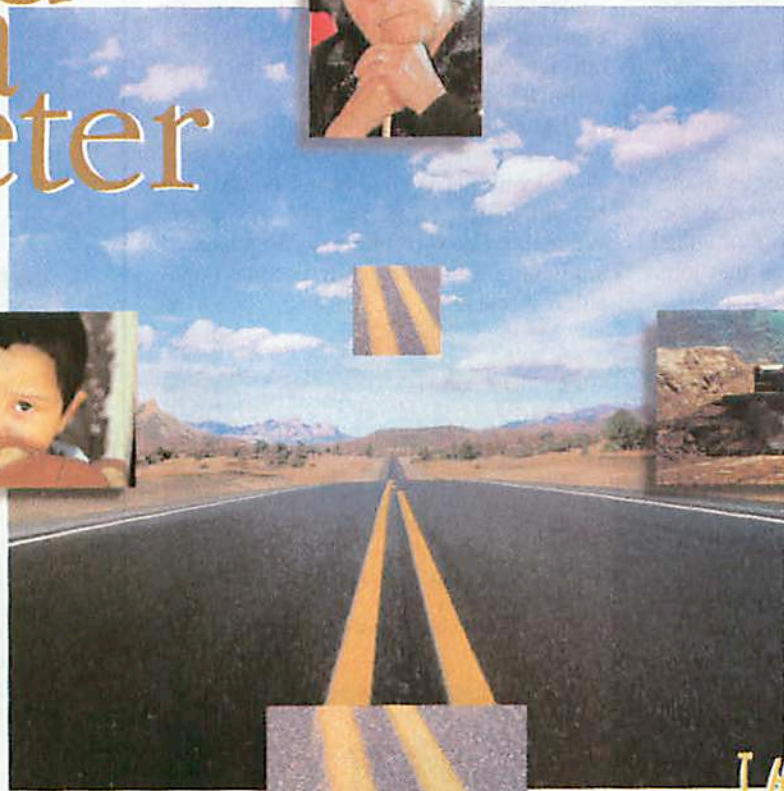
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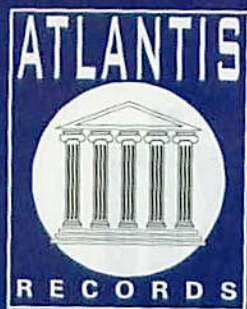


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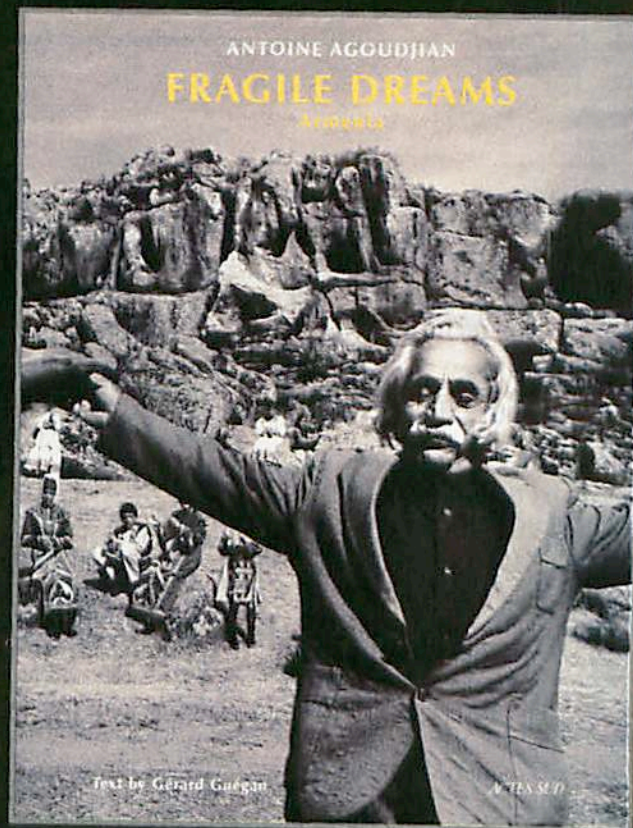
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# Back In Karabakh

## Diocese of Artsakh Celebrates 10th Anniversary of Reestablishment

By HRATCH TCHILINGIRIAN

**T**he Diocese of Artsakh celebrates the 10th anniversary of its re-establishment in Mountainous Karabakh. Under the most trying circumstances, the Diocese was officially reopened in the spring of 1989 with a special encyclical by Catholicos Vazken I of All Armenians, and with the appointment of Bishop Barkev Martirosian as Primate. (He became an Archbishop in June 1999).

From the first days of the self-determination movement in Karabakh over a decade ago, the Diocese has been actively involved in spiritual, moral and charitable ministries. Indeed, before the formal declaration of statehood, the Church was the first national institution that was restored in Karabakh. In the late 1980s it provided much needed moral strength to the struggling population under the spiritual leadership of Archbishop Barkev.

The life of the Diocese of Artsakh in the last 10 years is interwoven with the life of the people of Karabakh.

A native of Karabakh, 44-year-old Archbishop Barkev reflects on the past decade and provides a glimpse of future projects of the Diocese.

### Q&A

**AIM: Could you give us a brief historical background about the Church in Karabakh?**

**ABP. BARKEV:** Artsakh (Armenian name for Karabakh) has been one of the 15 provinces of historical Armenia—it has been mentioned as the 13th province. Starting in the fourth century, a religious center was created in Artsakh, which later became known as the Catholicosate of Aghwank (Caucasian Albania). Even later in history, it became known as the Catholicosate of Gandsasar. The seat of the Church had been in different places in different times, first it was in Bardav, then at the monastery of Amaras, then at the historic monastery of St. Hagop. In the 12th-13th centuries, it was moved to the monastery of Gandsasar.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Catholicosate, which had become a Diocese, was moved to Shushi—which was the administrative center of the region and capital of Karabakh—having the Cathedral of All Holy Savior as its center. In



Archbishop Barkev Martirosian

the archives we have documentation that in the 1770s the administrative boundaries of the Catholicosate of Aghwank became smaller because of political developments and wars. Nevertheless, 1,736 functioning churches and monasteries were still under

the jurisdiction of the Catholicosate. After the treaty of Gulistan in 1815, the Catholicosate's jurisdiction was further reduced and only 1311 functioning churches and monasteries remained under its care.

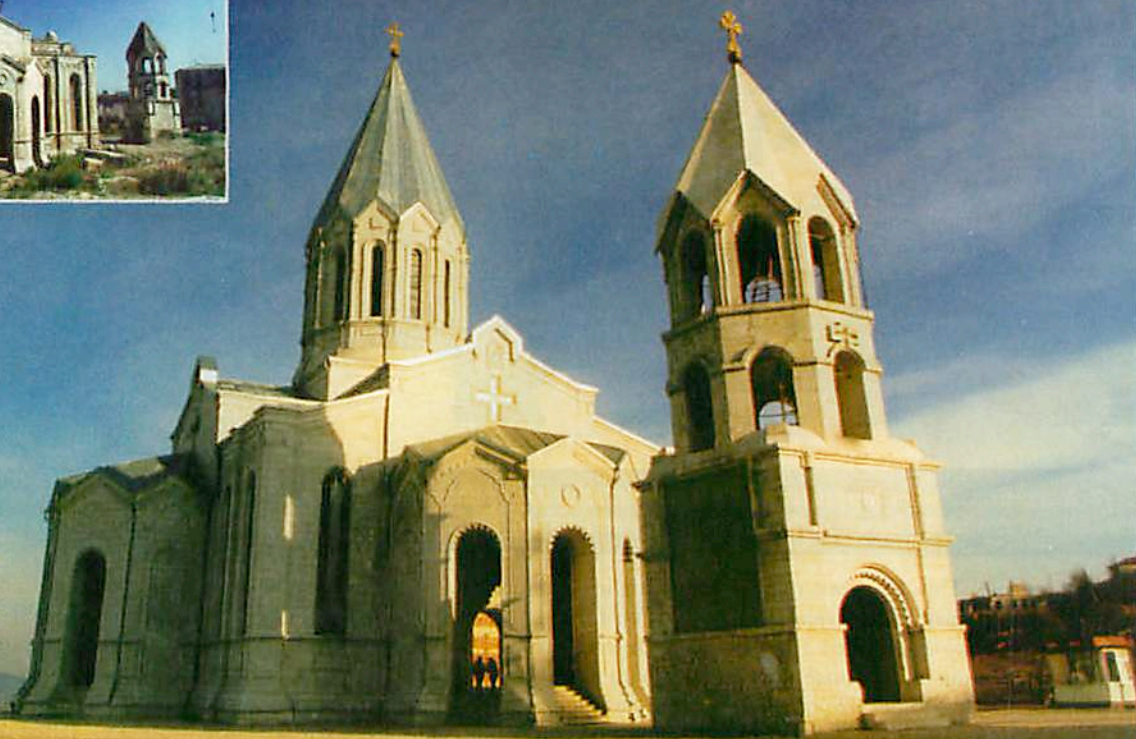
During the Soviet period, Artsakh was turned into the Mountainous Karabakh Autonomous Region and gradually all the churches were closed. Indeed, hundreds of churches were closed very rapidly. The clergy were exiled, persecuted, imprisoned or killed. In fact, the last Primate of the Diocese, Bishop Vertaness, in a 1929 letter to the Catholicos in Ejmiatsin—begging him to do something about the situation—mentions that all together only 112 churches, 18 monasteries and 276 clergy have remained in Karabakh. The following year, in 1930, all of them were completely closed.

In March 1989, the late Catholicos Vazken I appointed me Primate of Artsakh, and together with two Vardapets and two priests, he sent us to Karabakh to reopen the historic Diocese of Artsakh. After conducting renovations, on October 1 of that year, on the Feast of Holy Cross of Vartak, we reopened the monastery of Gandsasar and its St. John the Baptist Church. This was a solemn day for us.

Today, we have eight functioning churches in our Diocese. Currently, we are renovating a number of churches in the regions. In January we reopened St. John Church in the regional center of Martakert. Soon we shall consecrate the Holy Asdvadsadzin Church in Aigestan (Baluja). This year we will open eight new churches. In addition to a large scale renovation of a number of churches in our Diocese, we have plans to build a new church in the Martuni region. If we find donors, we shall also start to build a church in the Askeran region, which does not have a place for worship.

By the end of the year, we expect the total number of functioning churches to reach 16. In the next few years we shall add two or three new churches and renovate oth-





The All Holy Savior Cathedral in Shushi (also known as the Church of Ghazanchetsotz); inset, during renovations.

ers in the villages. By 2001, we hope to have 21-23 churches in our Diocese.

#### **You are also building a cathedral in the capital Stepanakert?**

The state has allocated a piece of land for this purpose and we are planning to build a church, however, so far we do not have the needed funds to start the work. We have pledged for about 10-20 thousand dollars, which shall be transferred to us shortly. His Holiness Catholicos Aram I of Cilicia has promised to donate \$100,000 for this cathedral. Based on the architects' preliminary estimates, the total cost of the building will reach about \$1.7 million. Meanwhile, we have started to rebuild our diocesan headquarters in Stepanakert. We still do not have the funds, but if we have a donor we can quickly complete the work. The skeleton of the building is ready, we have gone up to four stories, but substantially more work is needed.

We have completed the renovation and refurbishment of the diocesan headquarters in Shushi. In Horatagh we built a parsonage but it has not been completed since we don't have a sponsor; in Khnadsakh we have purchased a small land with a small house, but we still need some funds to finish the work. In Martakert, we have asked the workers to build a parsonage next to the church, but we are short of funds. They are building them for us with credit, so to speak, with the hope that we will pay them in due time.

#### **Do you have enough clergymen serving in these churches?**

We do not have enough priests. Today we have 10 priests and, probably, we need 10-15 more.

We have a small Tbranots, a program to train acolytes so that these children would fill the ranks of our clergy in the future. These teenagers attend church services and the Divine Liturgy on a regular

basis. We have a special cycle of lectures prepared for them through which we teach them the history, literature and liturgy and fundamental tenets of our theology, as well as the hymns and rituals of the church. This group, made of 4th-10th grade students, is called Church-loving Children's Association. Eventually, these students will either enter our seminary or we would send them to Ejmiatsin for a few years to complete their studies. Then they'll be ready for ordination and serve in our Diocese.

#### **What are some of the ministries in your Diocese?**

Right now we have a functioning Children's Christian Theater which has already staged the Nativity of Christ and the Resurrection - soon they shall stage the martyrdom of Holy Hripsimyan's Virgins. This Children's Theater tours around Karabakh and stages Christian plays in different towns and villages as a live evangelical program to edu-



Left: Archbishops Barkev Martirosian (left) and Archbishop Vatche Hovsepien, Primate of Wester Diocese, taking donor calls during a Los Angeles Telethon last year for the benefit of the Goris-Stepanakert Highway. Right: Setting a church for worship in Karabakh. Below: Monastery of Amaras.

cate our people. This has been one of the most effective ministries for evangelization.

A year ago we established a center for Christian Education in our Diocese with the cooperation of the Mother See of Ejmiatsin and the blessing of the Catholicos. Through this project, we were able to institute Christian education in all schools as a required subject in the state curriculum. Thus, one-hour weekly Armenian Church

studies are included in the school curriculum for first to 10th grades. Of course, we are training the teachers for these classes, with proper textbooks and series of lectures. The teachers are paid by the state.

In addition to this program, we also have a network of Sunday Schools throughout Karabakh to further deepen the children's Christian faith. Currently, in the town center of Martakert, we are planning to

establish a Center for Religious Culture where children will learn religious music, sculpture, painting and needle work for use in rituals. Our purpose is to provide religious inspiration in the arts. We have already started this program a year ago, and recently the government has provided a new building for this purpose.

Since 1991, our Diocese has its own research center and publishing house. First we started with the *Gandsasar Theological Review* and eventually established the Gandsasar Theological Center (in Yerevan). To date, the Center has published 53 titles dealing with religious, spiritual, theological and patristic themes. This project continues to provide much needed and vital religious literature not only for Artsakh but for Armenia as well.

**There have been a series of articles in the newspapers about "cults" operating in Artsakh. What are your thoughts about this issue?**

There are so many cults in Armenia that from time to time they attempt to establish roots in Artsakh. They came to Artsakh in small numbers, but thank God, we were able to prevent their spread. One of the steps we took in this regard was to make religious education part of the state education curriculum in all schools, including institutions of higher education, so that our children and youth would learn the fundamental tenets of



our faith. We have assigned the clergy to visit each army post to preach so that our soldiers would also learn about their faith. In cooperation with the state, our clergy and intellectuals are visiting Karabakh, village by village. There is live interaction with the people, so that the people will know what the creed of the Armenian Apostolic Church is and what it is that the cults are trying to inject in the hearts and minds of our people.

We also provide religious literature, weekly radio broadcasts and occasionally we have television programs where young people have live discussions on religious themes. On major feast days, we give sermons and issue pastoral letters. On occasion, we broadcast sermons live. Also, articles on religion and faith appear regularly in local newspapers. We are actively trying to educate our people so that they remain loyal to the faith of the Armenian Church.

**Could you tell us about the Stepanakert government's proposal for new laws concerning the activities of the "cults"?**

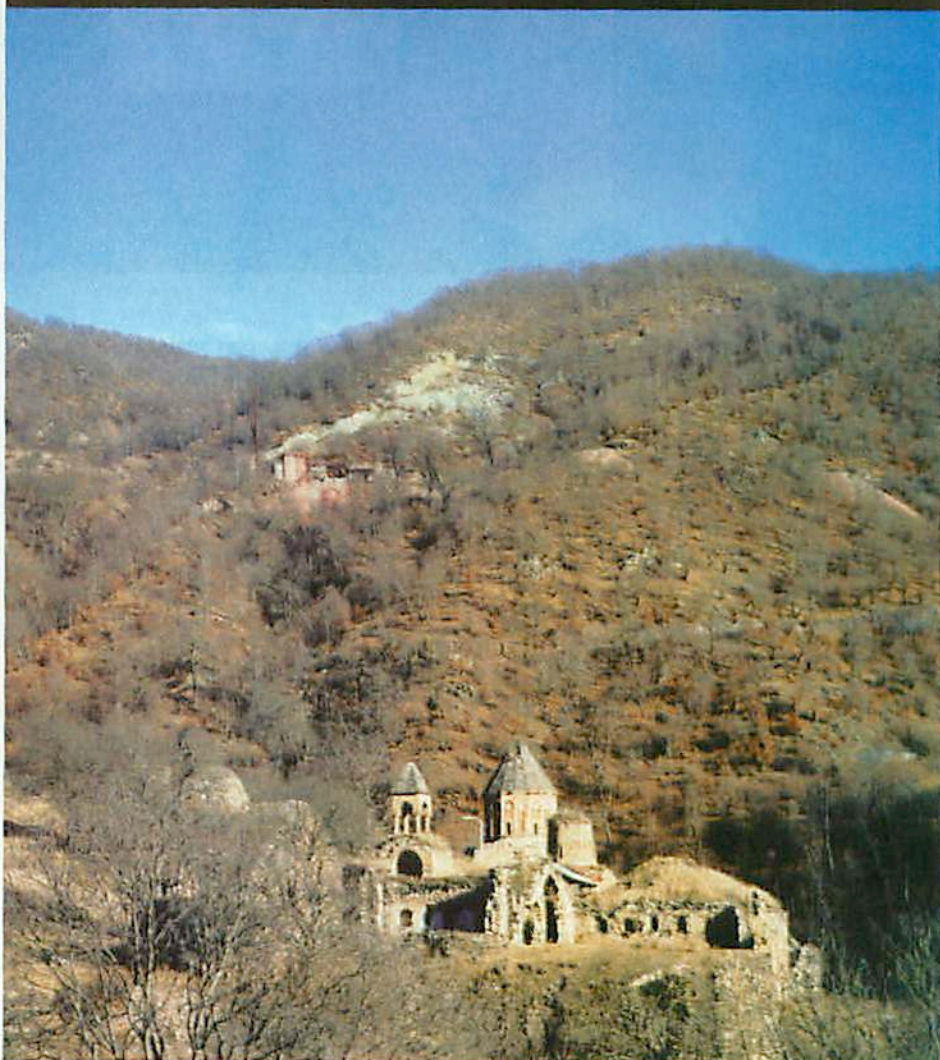
Indeed, the government has decided to tighten our laws so that our people will feel more protected and secure and because this issue also relates to the security of the state itself. If members of the sects refuse to bear arms, they are endangering the security of the state and our peace.

**How do you evaluate the role of the Armenian Church in the national struggle in Karabakh?**

The clergy are the children of the Armenian Nation and we are obliged to be at our people's side, in good times and in bad. When it was necessary to create an army, we all participated in the process so that we may provide security to our people. When it was time to create statehood, we immediately cooperated, by all means possible. When it was necessary to negotiate, we gladly brought our contribution to the negotiations process so that peace would be established as soon as possible. When humanitarian assistance was needed for the wounded, for the orphans and the elderly, the church contributed its efforts. We were actively involved in collecting funds for Artsakh. When our spiritual children were in need, we went from country to country and asked the assistance of our compatriots, as well as non-Armenians, who responded warmly. Most importantly, they provided much needed and decisive assistance to our people during the war. The result of those efforts is obvious today: so many lives were saved. ■



**Above: Karabakh children participating in church services as part of a special training program. Below: The monastery of Tativank.**





# BIG PLAYER

Joe Baroutjian Reaches New Height in Lebanon's Music Industry

By HRATCH TCHILINGIRIAN

**S**tudio Joe" is tucked in the ground floor of an old, war-scarred building in a narrow alleyway of Beirut's Armenian neighborhood of Bourj Hammoud, where at night you can still park your car in the middle of the street and get away with it.

Beirut-born, 41-year-old musician and recording engineer Joe Baroutjian's studio is equipped with the most sophisticated

digital recording tools and computers, hardware, gadgets and a 24-track recording mixer, one of the largest and most advanced in Lebanon.

On any given day, Joe can be seen sitting in front of a computer and the dining-room-table length sound mixer, cueing in the artists singing in a sound proof room. He fine tunes the music and often motions instructions to the singer with broad hand movements. There is a problem with two

bars of the music. Joe backtracks and records again, and again. He goes over the lyrics and the music word by word, bar by bar. After the 12th take, the problem is fixed and Joe is happy. The artist is exhausted and takes a break.

Some of the most famous Lebanese artists—Samira Tufik, Sabah, George Wassuf, who has revived the classic songs of Um Kalthum, and others—count on Joe and his studio to produce their recordings.

Joe has also written music for Lebanese artists. "There's an Armenian element in my music and the artists like that; they want more of it," says Joe, wishing he had more time to write music.

Joe is singled out from other studios in Lebanon because, as he puts it, "Singers want me to do their job, make them sound perfect." Working without assistants, it takes him about eight to 12 hours to record one song. "Sometimes it takes several days," he adds. First he plays and prepares the music, which takes about seven to eight



Left: The set of LBC's new game show entertainment TV program, called *Yalel Yaeyn*. Right: Joe Baroutjian in his studio

hours, and then up to four hours to mix the voice.

Recording studios in Lebanon used to be run by state-owned companies, such as the famous Studio Baalbek. But in 1983, Joe opened his own studio and went on to become one of the best studios in the country.

In 1995 and 1996, Joe received the "Best Studio in Lebanon" award from Mt. Lebanon Radio and TV Broadcasting organization. He has also received an award for a song he dedicated to Hikmet Wahbi, the Radio Monte Carlo presenter who died in 1986. Recently, he was invited by the Culture Minister of Oman to lead the band for a music award ceremony in Muskat.

Since 1975, as a keyboardist, Joe has traveled and played in Europe, Africa, Thailand, Singapore and virtually all Arab countries. In 1983, when he returned to Lebanon from Abu Dhabi, he decided to dedicate his time and efforts to building a recording studio and studied sound engi-

neering through correspondence with a school in Britain.

Within a few years of operation, Studio Joe's clients included artists from Syria and Jordan as well. Famous and lesser-known artists flocked to the studio to record, even during the most difficult times of the Lebanese civil war in the 1980s.

To accommodate his expanding business, Joe is building a new, larger and more advanced studio in the hilly Beirut suburb of Awkar, where in addition to recording music, there will be three studios for translations and dubbing to foreign TV films and programs; a large studio for 35-40 musicians and a smaller studio for individual artists. It will have the most advanced US- and German-made, fully computerized recording equipment.

In addition to his studio, Joe is currently the music director of a new game show entertainment TV program, called "Yalel Yaeyn." Sponsored by and aired on LBC, the most influential broadcast net-

work in Lebanon, the pilot show is a mixture of games, songs and dances with a live audience. Joe leads the show's 14-member band, whose drummer and bass guitarist are also Armenian.

For decades Joe has played in Armenian bands and worked with a number of singers. "The best musicians in Lebanon are Armenians and they play in top bands," says Joe. "I would say about 80 percent of music teachers in Lebanon are Armenians," he adds.

Despite the effects of the civil war on the music industry in Lebanon and the economic difficulties that the country is still going through, Joe is hopeful. "After 2000, we are going to see new heights in Lebanon as new resorts, hotels and entertainment establishments develop in the country."

Among Joe's new projects is the recording of a new collection of his own compositions—a melange of Armenian, Arabic and European music. ■

# Armenian Chamber Music Reaches New Shores

## Gharabekian Leads National Chamber Orchestra on US Tour

**A**fter years of directing the Boston-based Sinfonova Chamber Orchestra, Aram Gharabekian left the US in 1997 to live and work in Armenia. Since April 1997, Gharabekian has been conductor of the newly-created National Chamber Orchestra of

Armenia (NCOA.)

In fact, the Culture Ministry had combined two existing orchestras to form the NCOA, with the hope of saving resources and more efficiently promoting chamber music in the new republic.

Gharabekian's challenges were many. There were all the familiar ones. Without funds to pay

salaries, most musicians could not be counted on to be always present for performances or practice sessions. They were out earning a living, somewhere, somehow.

Then there was the matter of heating the large, beautiful but cold Komitas Chamber Hall. There were other basic problems, too, like securing and photocopying music, facilitating the acquisition of uniforms, music stands, even paper and pencil.

One problem that he did not have was finding talent. From the beginning, Gharabekian would tell everyone within earshot that the pool of committed, open-minded, flexible talent was there. It was simply a matter of creating the open, fair, responsive institution within which they could work. Gharabekian announced he intended to do so.

Gharabekian held auditions—for everyone—from the oldest to the youngest musicians, in order to determine who would remain with the new orchestra. He demanded and got players to commit to practice sessions. He worked hard to secure funding from outside philanthropists and



Gharabekian, center, with composer Edward Mirzoyan, left.



local Armenian and non-Armenian agencies. He succeeded. The Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Benevolent Foundation is the NCOA's General Sponsor. The Armenia Fund and the Armenian Relief Society, too, sponsor the orchestra. And Swissair is the official carrier of the NCOA.

The result is a young orchestra that is at the same time mature and audacious. In 1997, the NCOA performed in Thessaloniki, Greece. In 1998, Gharabekian did what many have only dreamed of—arranged a special performance at the Geghard Monastery.

A US tour, which for long seemed impossible for this 26-person orchestra, will become a reality this October, with debut performances in San Francisco, Fresno and Glendale's Alex Theater. ■



Photo: Nazarian



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# PAN-ARMENIAN GAMES

Over 1,000 athletes Participate in First Ever Armenian Olympics

By A. H. ALEXANDRIAN

The mood was festive and the enthusiasm olympic when 1,200 athletes from 23 countries gathered in Armenia for the first pan-Armenian games.

The opening ceremony reminded all those present that, although these games were new, Armenian athletes had graced the original Olympics in the days when Marathon was a town you ran to in Ancient Greece. At the Temple of Garni, a soldier in pagan costume loudly struck a gong to mark the lighting of the competition flame as maidens lined the entrance holding lit torches.

Through the smoke emerged Kohar Haroutiounian, the current Miss Armenia, bearing the torch of the games. She handed it to three runners who began the relay towards Yerevan's Hrazdan stadium involving in total some 60 athletes from Armenia and the Diaspora.

At the opening of the games, delegations of athletes representing each of the 58 cities taking part paraded round the stadium past the Presidents both of Armenia and Karabakh. Speeches of welcome by Khosrov Haroutiounian, president of the games' committee, Mayor Albert Bazeyan, and Ashot Melik-Shahnazarian, president of the games' international committee, all underlined the symbolic importance of the event as a spectacular celebration of Diaspora-Armenia connections.

Then, the torch brought from Garni was carried into the stadium and handed to Albert Azarian, a double olympic champion in gymnastics who lit the flame of the games placed on top of a structure representing a chess tower. As balloons and doves were released and filled the sky, President Kocharian officially declared the first pan-Armenian games open. It will be held every two years from now on.



PHOTOS BY MELIK BAKDASARIAN/ARMIAPRESS





*Opposite page, top: Opening ceremony festivities. Opposite page, bottom: 100m sprint competition in Artashat. Top: Sochi and Los Angeles basketball teams during match. Below: Opening ceremony at Hrazdan stadium.*

During the festivities that followed, historical pageants reminded spectators that two Armenian kings had been crowned Olympic champions in Ancient Greece. Their modern day successors were greeted in the Hrazdan Stadium by a message of support from Juan Antonio Samaranch, President of the International Olympic Committee.

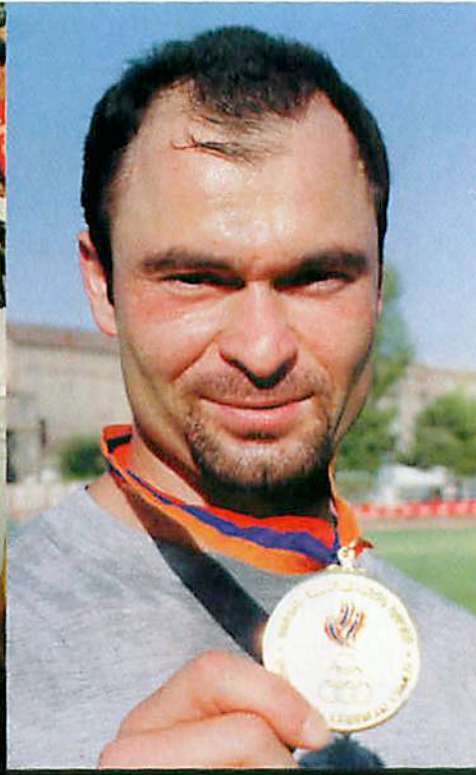
The games themselves comprised seven sports, namely, football, basketball, volleyball, tennis, table tennis, track & field athletics, and chess. To the pleasure of the home crowd, the Yerevan team topped the medals table at the end of the five days of competition, winning 17 golds, 13 silver and 14 bronze. They were followed in the rankings by the teams from Vanadsor, Tbilisi, Tehran, Gumri, Montreal, Los Angeles, Aleppo, Lausanne, the San Fernando Valley (in Southern California), Sisian and Ejmiatsin.

The basketball competition proved the most popular with more athletes entered than for any other event - 274 men and women in all. The number of women entered was particularly high, with 75 from teams representing cities as diverse as Los Angeles, Aleppo, Yerevan, Tehran, and Sydney. The team from Gyumri, however, won the contest.

Armenia's native talent also won through in soccer. Although only three teams from Armenian cities were entered, as against 12 from overseas and one from Karabakh, they succeeded in making a clean sweep of the medals.

Gyumri claimed the gold, followed by Ashtarak and Yerevan, with teams representing Tehran, Stepanakert, and Buenos Aires in fourth, fifth, and sixth places respectively. Teams from Nicosia, Toronto, Marseille, Istanbul and Cologne were among the also-rans.

Another Armenian triple triumph came in table tennis, with Yerevan, Vanadsor and Gyumri taking the honors this time in a competition which attracted 111 competitors from 22 cities. ■



TOP PHOTOS BY MELIK BACCALANIAN/ANIMAPRESS

**ABOVE**  
*Left: Fans of Buenos Aires soccer team cheering for their team. Right: Zaven Davtian of Montreal, winner of 100m sprint event. Far right: Chess tournament.*

**BELOW**  
*Left: Tennis player Diego Derenjjan of Argentina. Center left: Tennis player Sona Saringulian of Yerevan. Center: Event poster. Center right: Beirut and Los Angeles basketball teams during tournament. Far right: Vayk and Los Angeles volleyball teams during tournament.*



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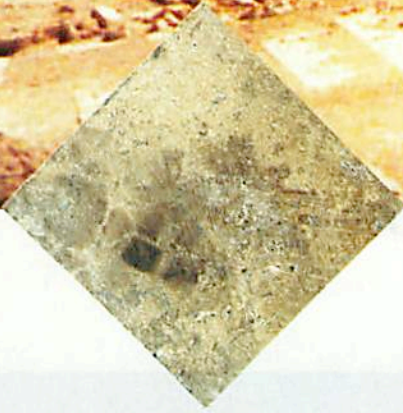
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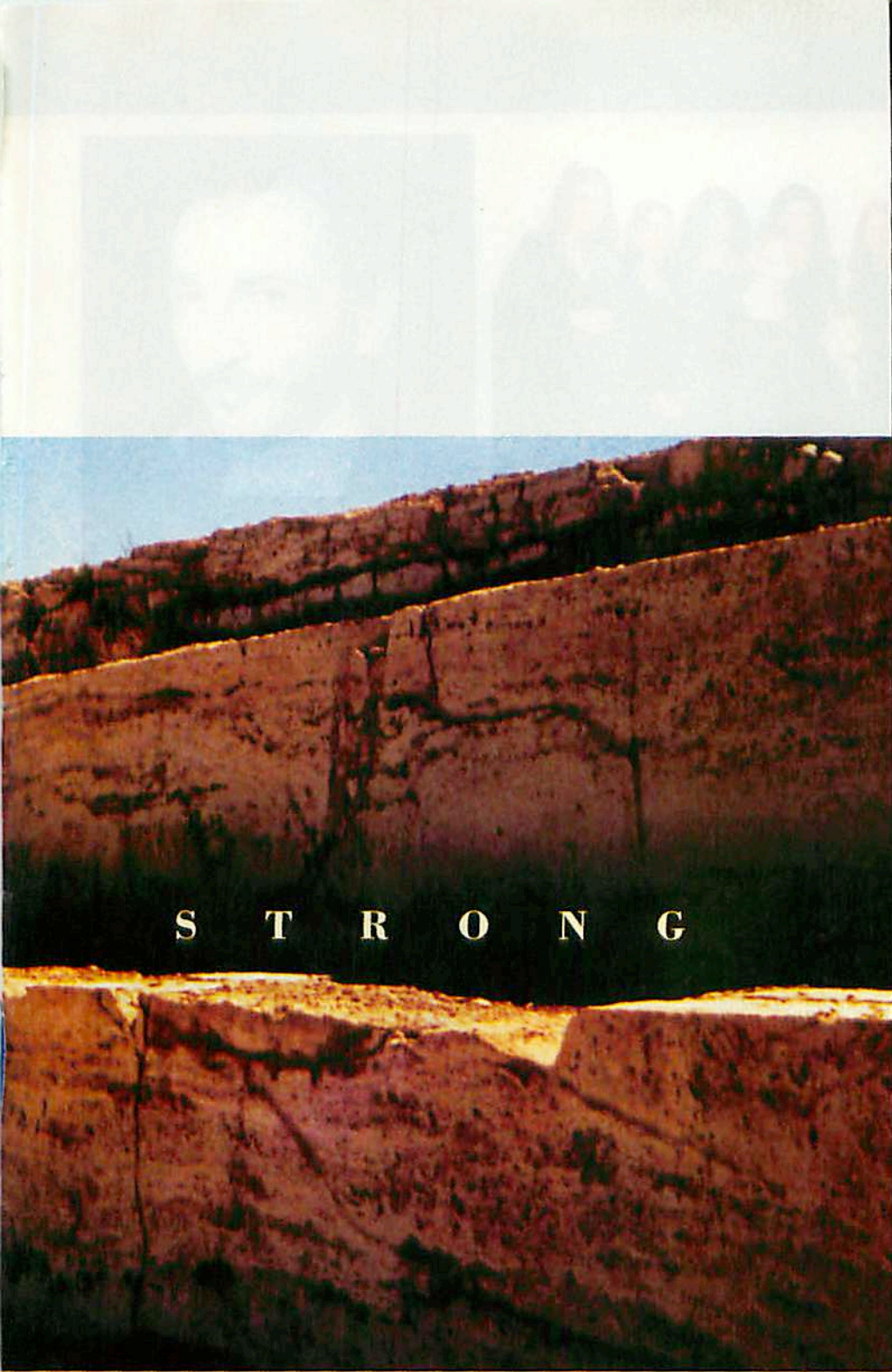
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ZAVEN KHACHIKYAN

## New Models

Tall and short, young and younger the girls of Yerevan stormed the new offices of **Paradise Model Agency** with an assault of wannabe stardom and lust for the glory of the runway.

The slenderly sleek and smoothly toned came with fashion career potential, but no more so than the knock-kneed and acned with their hopes that beauty truly isn't skin deep. Most came with mothers.

They came with an arsenal of hair-brushes and cosmetics. All came with dreams that will mostly go unrealized.

Anna Sogomonian came with curls and dimples and a three-year-old dream that goes all the way back to the time when she was 10. The teenager says she thinks Armenian girls' finest features are their eyes.

Her friend Marine Badalian is 14 and her hopes were born at five, when she was selected by a Moscow agency to be a baby model. But, in the world where retirement comes in the 20s, she is no longer a baby.

The agency opened on March 1 and by March 10, more than 200 girls had applied to become models.

And however much the display might have enforced the belief that the Motherland has beautiful daughters, it also suggests this: They all want to be somebody else—Cindy Crawford, mostly.

Or at least **Nune Harutunian** (above, seated center). For seven years Harutunian has been a professional model, including

four years in Moscow before coming back to Yerevan to open the new agency.

Although there are other modeling agencies in Armenia, Harutunian says hers is the first real modeling school.

And, although she is convinced that Armenia is rich in mostly undiscovered beauty, the pro says modeling is about much more than looks.

"Nobody here thought of teaching the girls, and they don't understand the real meaning of being a model," Harutunian says. "If you look at the girl on the street who is not good looking, but you put makeup on her and teach her how to walk, then she looks beautiful."

Harutunian got her schooling in Moscow and now hopes to duplicate the lessons of style, bodybuilding, acting, choreography and English at her agency. Only the most promising girls are selected for the two-month courses that will cost each girl \$700.

The age of the applicants ranged from 13 to 25 and most were younger than 20. Of the 200-plus hopefuls, only 26 were selected for Paradise's initial class.

"Each girl is nice in her own way," Harutunian says, "and each hopes to become a model. But probably only one or two might become models."

And it isn't likely that even one or two will be that Cindy Crawford of Armenian girl's dreams. Or maybe even that Nune Harutunian.

But young dreams are a beauty on their own. And what true Armenian would question irrational hope? —By **John Hughes**



## Inspiring Hope

The story goes that **David Azarian** came to the US in 1989 with his trio for what was to be a 10-day visit to play "thank you" concerts for the aid that Americans sent to Armenia after the 1988 earthquake. He stayed, settled in the Boston area, and has been playing his beloved jazz ever since.

*Stairway to Seventh Heaven* was his first recording, issued by Mobile Fidelity. His performance on that recording was compared to Keith Jarrett and Chick Corea. The comparisons come from those no less knowledgeable than jazz historian and critic George Avakian, who says he hasn't been so impressed by a new pianist since he discovered Keith Jarrett.

His new recording, *Hope* (Enja Records, 1999) was first called *Living in Jazzland*. That's what Azarian calls the US, although he'd been playing jazz long before he arrived on these shores. In Yerevan, in 1982, he formed his own jazz trio and toured the Soviet Union and Europe.

His classical training at the Tchaikovsky School of Music, at the Yerevan Conservatory, and as a member of the Yerevan Composers Union only helped provide a solid foundation to the pianist who had also become a composer. As Azarian moved into the jazz world, there, too, he went beyond improvising jazz standards, and began to compose his own pieces. *Hope's* eight pieces include four Azarian compositions, as well as pieces by Cole Porter, George Gershwin and Jimmy van Heusen, all, except the last piece, performed live at WGBH-FM, the Boston-based public radio station.



# New King and Knight

**Vladimir Akopian**, 27 (right), put Armenia back on the world chess map at the 1999 World Chess Federation's championship games in the US.

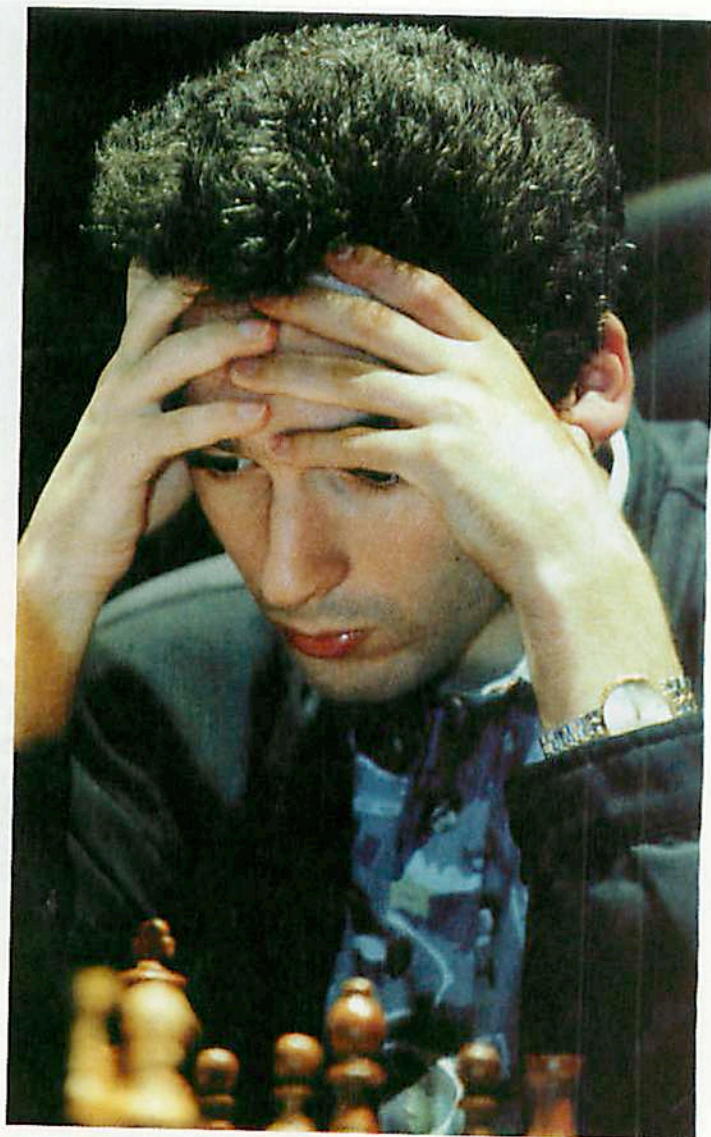
Russian chess player Aleksandr Khalifman, 33 (below, left), after 40 moves, almost four hours of play, and gaining only a half-point over Armenia's Akopian, became the new champion of the 1999 World Chess Federation (FIDE) world championship.

The month-long preliminary matches were held at the Caesars Palace Hotel in Las Vegas, with some 100 contenders. The world championship concluded with weeklong tense finals where three of the six games were drawn, two were won by Khalifman and one by Akopian. Both players were not expected to make it to the finals as Khalifman ranked 36th in the field, and Akopian 31st.

The three million dollar prize fund will be shared by the winners and other players: Khalifman will take \$ 660,000; Akopian \$396,000 and the others will receive prizes ranging from \$4,800 to \$138,240.

Earlier, Akopian—a prodigy winning the under-16, under-18 and under-20 world championships—won his first game against Sergei Movsesian of the Czech Republic and drew the second to secure his place in the semifinals. Displaying cool defensive techniques and instincts, Akopian beat England's Michael Adams in the semifinal.

Meanwhile, previous FIDE champion, Anatoly Karpov, is suing the organization for \$1 million for not seeding him into the finals. Karpov is also demanding a match with Khalifman. As for the top-ranked player in history, Garry Kasparov, who left FIDE and founded the rival Professional Chess Association, announced plans for later this year to stage a rival three million Ultimate World Championship with his designated challenger Viswanathan Anand of India.





Zeynep Yaman

## At Jupiter's Temple

The Armenian Philharmonic, under the baton of conductor Loris Tjeknavorian (right, during rehearsal), presented an unforgettable concert in Lebanon, at the ancient and famous Roman ruins of Baalbek (above). The musical program included pieces by Armenian, European and Middle Eastern composers, among them Walid Gholmieh, Aram Khachaturian, Rachmaninov, and Johann Strauss. Armen Babakhanian, 32, was the featured pianist at the concert. At the conclusion of the program the audience was on its feet with a thundering ovation.

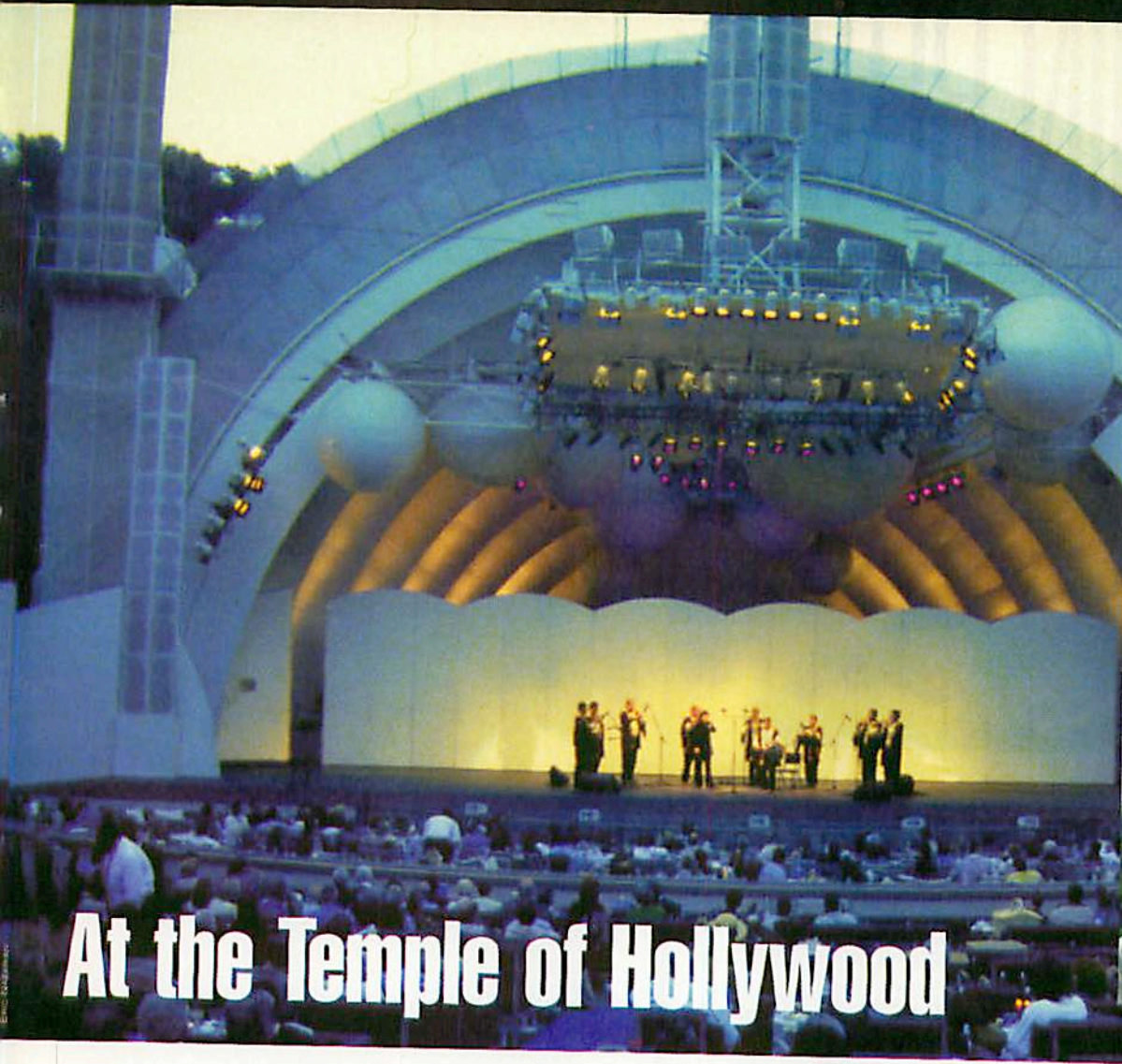


Armenian Journeys

## Temple of the Body

If there can be a Miss Armenia, why not a Mr. Armenia? In June of last year, the Armenian Bodybuilding Federation held a championship competition, and 12 men (11 Armenian, one German) participated. The winner, from Gumri, was loudly cheered by the (largely female) audience at the huge Concert and Sports Complex *Hamalir*.





The Winds of Passion performing at the Hollywood Bowl. **below:** Stepan Partamian and Parik Nazarian **above.**



# At the Temple of Hollywood

Performing at the Hollywood Bowl is the pinnacle of a star's career. The open-air 17,000-seat theater has hosted all the greats of classical music. In August, the new voices of the Armenian Festival Ensemble were heard under the Bowl's warm summer sky.

Thousands of world music aficionados came to hear a night-long multicultural program entitled Hallelujah, which also featured Pakistan's Rahad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and the American Gospel group, Mighty Clouds of Joy. For the Bowl, this series of programs, initiated and produced by World Music expert Tom Schnabel, marked a departure from the standard classical or jazz repertoires. For the audience, it was a welcome gesture of inclusion and appreciation.

The half-hour Armenian segment was produced by Stepan Partamian of Garni, and featured woodwind players Winds of Passion, 18-year-old Gagik Badalian and Parik Nazarian who performed in what the

Hollywood industry's *Daily Variety* called "the evening's most traditional spiritual music."

*Daily Variety* wasn't alone. The *Los Angeles Times* gushed: "utterly gripping, generating a hushed, captivated reaction from the crowd," music critic Don Heckman said.

Partamian ascribes the popularity of the program to the simple, clear, authentic sounds which rang from the stage. No great orchestration, no fancy footwork. The flute, duduk and shevi of Winds of Passion was perfect as the program began at twilight. The deep, robust baritone of a very young Badalian, singing the very old and well-known *Horovel*, accompanied by the spiritual sounds of eight duduks brought the appreciative audience to its feet.

The theme of the entire evening was spiritual music, and nothing evoked the spirits more than the hymn *Surb, Surb*, played by woodwinds alone. At the other end of the musical spectrum, the *Yeghish Dance*—a wedding favorite—was performed on this international stage by its composer and one of the

world's leading dudukists, Yeghishe Manukian.

Unusual even for Armenian audiences was Henrik Avoyan's performance on the dhol, a virtuoso manipulation of traditional rhythms.

And finally, the honest, gentle, yielding, full-hearted medleys of traditional ethnographic songs by Parik Nazarian capped the show. Nazarian, who in her current incarnation is the Photo and Production Manager of AIM, was for years director and lead singer of the Gorani Music Ensemble, based in Southern California. She sings about a people's love of their land, their families and their homes, in a way that inspires and engages the most alienated souls.

So engaged was the audience that after the program, Partamian, Nazarian and others were besieged by programming suggestions. The serious venue caused everyone to take this very familiar music seriously.

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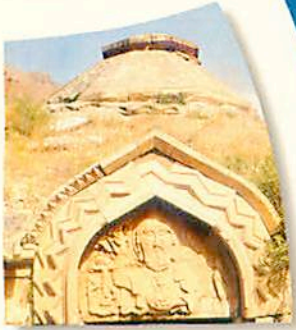
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