

Karabagh Discussed At Knights Of Vartan

BOSTON, MA – On January 13, members and friends of the Knights of Vartan, Ararat Lodge, during their regular monthly meeting were updated on the Nagorno Karabagh situation. The background analysis was given by the former director of the Zoryan Institute, Hratch Tchilingirian, who is completing his doctorate at the London School of Economics. Some of the points discussed were especially timely in view of the recent developments in Armenia.

According to Tchilingirian, the 1996 Lisbon meeting of the 54-member OSCE (Organization



Hratch Tchilingirian, left, with Arto Kurkjian, commander of the Ararat Lodge.

for Security and Cooperation in Europe) took a policy position that was detrimental to the Karabagh situation. As a result, the Foreign Minister's staff in Armenia was completely absorbed in developing a counter-plan up until the OSCE Copenhagen meeting in 1997. In Copenhagen the Armenian representatives withstood Azeri pressure supported by oil interests. No substantive decisions were reached in Copenhagen, which many Armenians held to be a victory compared to the Lisbon conclave.

In 1997 several favorable bilateral and trilateral agreements were signed between Armenia and other nations. Most important among these was the Friendship Agreement with Russia, a security and defense agreement which commits Russia to defend Armenia against any aggressor nation. In addition, the US Congress approved an \$85 million aid package to Armenia.

Two approaches to the solution of the Karabagh situation received much attention in 1997: the Minsk Group/ OSCE approach calling for a phased process and the package solution favored by the Karabagh leadership and several Armenian leaders. The phased process would address the status of Karabagh at the end of negotiations. Detractors of this plan correctly observe that there is no guarantee that the Armenians of Karabagh would attain the status (political and geographic rights) they deserve. Therefore a decision as to status and rights ought to be front-end loaded, they maintain.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have accepted the phased solution established by the OSCE; however Karabagh wants the packaged solution. The negotiation process was complicated by the fact that Azerbaijan has been successfully using oil company money and lobbyists to direct political pressure their way. Also Azerbaijan has refused to recognize Karabagh as a party to the negotiations.

Very Important Historical Factors

When Azerbaijan declared independence from the USSR in August 1991, it promulgated Article II, which provided that the Republic of Azerbaijan is the continuation of the Soviet

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Students and staff of the 1997 St. Thomas

Adult Armenian Convers

TENAFLY, NJ – Continuing the success fall of 1995, St. Thomas will offer its sixth e Classes sponsored by the Vahan Barsamian

Due to the enthusiastic response of stuc Papken Anoushian, pastor of St. Thomas, a March 10 and continuing through April 28

Students will learn to carry on simple co on verbal skills in every-day situations. Par learn vocabulary, phrases and sentences, a refreshments are served, giving the stud Armenian informally.

The program is presented on five level Course of the Diocesan Armenian Language

There is a \$20 registration fee for the ei

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BELMONT, MA – The Armenian Women's series, china and decorative gift pieces, silver

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 Republic of Azerbaijani that existed from 1918 to 1921. Article III relates that the Treaty signed in 1922 annexing Azerbaijan to the USSR was void/illegal; therefore the Republic of Azerbaijan cannot be recognized as the successor to Azerbaijan.

Karabagh became an autonomous region. It was not integrated into Azerbaijan, but it was recognized as an autonomous region of Armenia lying in Azerbaijan. Further, Karabagh was not part of Azerbaijan between 1918 and 1921.

Karabagh conducted and passed a referendum declaring independence on December 10, 1991. Thus, based on the operative laws of the USSR and Supreme Soviet of 1990, all nationalities and autonomous regions had the right to secede from their host. Therefore, based on international law, Soviet law and a peoples' right to self-determination, Karabagh ought to be recognized on its own merits.

Karabagh Armenians will never agree to return the occupied territories to Azeri rule. But Armenia has to come to terms with this situation. And the international community should address this issue framed in the perspective of a people's right to self-determination. In any case, the prospects for settlement are slim in 1998 because Azerbaijan will hold its presidential election in November. The Minsk Group will continue to push to bring the sides to the table.

Karabagh is not eligible to seek assistance through the International Court or the United Nations because it is not recognized as a sovereign state. If Armenia did recognize Karabagh, it may be viewed as the site of the conflict and Armenia would be pulled into the dispute as the proponent of Karabagh. Then the conflict would be viewed as one between Armenia and

Azerbaijan. Armenia has not recognized Karabagh for this reason.

It is noteworthy that, in an official document from 1922, Azeri leadership agreed that Nakhichevan and Karabagh were part of Armenia. Also noteworthy is the fact that \$24 million of the \$30 million budget of Karabagh

comes from Armenia.

To recapitulate events, Karabagh conducted and passed a referendum declaring the independence of the Republic of Karabagh on December 10, 1991. Thus when the USSR collapsed, Karabagh had already established its statehood. However, in 1992 the newly declared 12 independent republics of the former USSR failed to recognize the independence of Karabagh. Second or third tier regions such as Karabagh were not typically recognized at the time. Also, Azerbaijan refused to be the legal successor of the former Soviet state of Azerbaijan and there-

fore, technically, had no legal sovereignty over Karabagh. (Azerbaijan refused to be the successor to the Soviet state which existed from 1921 to 1990.) Azerbaijan should have recognized the December 10, 1991, referendum of Karabagh, declaring its statehood. However, oil interests and geo-political interests have subverted the rights of self-determination of Karabagh. Karabagh had initially sought union with Armenia, but when that failed to materialize, they were compelled to declare independence and follow a road less traveled.

-Robert Avakian

Dolphin Country

By Naomi and Carl Zeytoonian

The building boom in South Florida is still going strong as yet another Armenian church is being built. While St. David in Boca Raton is busy planning its tenth anniversary, St. John the Baptist in Miami is building its new sanctuary in Cooper City and will be renamed St. Mary's.

The new parish priest of St. John's will resume his position after his ordination. Deacon Dikran Joulfayan, with his wife Gayane, will assume his pastorate after his installation on Palm Sunday, April 5. Deacon Dikran will be ordained at St. Vartan Cathedral in New York on February 21 and 22. Meanwhile the dynamic parish council chair-lady, Naomi Davitian, and her parish council and building committee are on site daily to oversee the building activity.

The 45th anniversary of St. John's was celebrated, along with Vartanantz, on Sunday, February 15. At this time the raising of the walls and the roof of the church was also celebrated. Divine Liturgy was conducted by Father Garabed Kochakian, Chancellor of the Diocese in New York, assisted by the church deacons and choir. A light luncheon followed on the church grounds, served by the Women's Guild, followed by a brief program and a cake-lighting ceremony which raised monies and pledges for the new sanctuary.

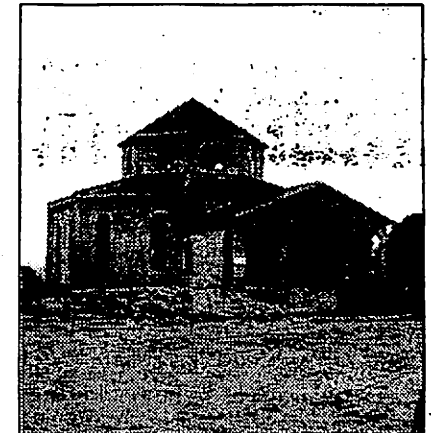
St. John's is built in the round with a raised dome and in the style of typical Armenian churches. Aram Lusarian is the architect/builder, and we are all looking forward to its completion very soon.

Other local news centers around the many festivities abounding in

South Florida this time of the year. St. David Armenian Festival officially opened the season on January 17 with a record turnout for the one-day function. Hundreds of Armenians and odars came to sample the cuisine and enjoy the many booths and dancing to some great music under the huge tent outside. Following this were other events, including the Choir Dance and the Valentine's Day Kef Nite featuring George Mgrditchian. George also presented a concert the following day after church services in Mardigian Hall.

On February 20 and 21 St. David presented their annual follies and supper, which has become so popular that it is now a two-day event, featuring our own members on stage. On February 28, the PTA of the Alex Manoogian School has scheduled its dinner-dance, which helps raise funds for the school. And then of course Lent begins and our most holy season is commemorated.

Hoping to see some of you in our midst as you flee the cold north winds and weather. South Florida is at its best.



The new St. Mary's Church of Miami (formerly St. John the Baptist), now completing construction.