

HAYTOUG

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ARMENIAN YOUTH FEDERATION WESTERN UNITED STATES
FALL 2008 ISSUE

*** ACHIEVING ECONOMIC
JUSTICE IN ARMENIA:
WHAT IT WILL TAKE...**

**EXAMINING
ARMENIA'S
SOVIET
LEGACY:**

**LOOKING
BACK
TO
MOVE
FOWARD**

**IS
THERE
A
RIGHT
TO
HEALTH?**

**COMMEMORATING
LISBON5**

**EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW**

**w/ SERJ
TANKIAN**

**A HISTORIC
LOOK
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ACTIVITY
IN SOUTH
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**BOOK
REVIEW:
VAHAN
CARDASHIAN**

**THE FATHER OF ARMENIAN
AMERICAN ADVOCACY**



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ENVISIONING AND ENSURING A JUST FUTURE

One of the reasons for our organization's longevity has been our ability to adapt to the changes of our times—both in the US and the Armenian nation. In the era surrounding our creation, we focused on gathering the youth and keeping our sense of identity alive. As time went on, the AYF became much more active in the struggle for Genocide recognition and political activism. Today, with the fall of the Soviet Union and an independent Armenian Republic, one of our leading concerns is finding ways to bolster our homeland's statehood and development.

Paramount in this concern is the need to ensure equality and a decent standard of living for the entire people of Armenia. Defending social justice and seeking ways to support a just economic system—where human values are placed above profit and citizens have a say in the decisions affecting their lives—are critical to any conception of a strong and prosperous Armenia.

The worldwide diaspora can play a significant role in this process not only through material assistance but also through the sharing of knowledge, skills, experiences, and solidarity. In order to do this adequately, however, we must come to a clearer understanding of not only the current

conditions in Armenia but also the historical context in which they were spawned.

Indeed, if anybody should realize the importance of remembering history, it is us, the Armenians. We must learn the lessons of history when it comes to the legacy left on Armenia by the Soviets and the past two administrations; we must learn the lessons of history when it comes to the struggle for Hai Tahd and the sacrifices of those such as Vahan Cardashian and the Lisbon 5; and we must learn the lessons of recent history here in our own backyard, when we see the ravages of a profit-driven health care system taking the lives of our very own.

Only by paying attention to history and drawing the obvious lessons it teaches us can we make certain that the future will be a more just and equitable one.

We agree with the words featured in this issue from musician, activist and AYF alumnus Serj Tankian when he says, "Everything on this planet is connected. And if that's the case, then working towards justice should be one of our primary goals as humans here."

It is in this spirit that we present this current issue. It is also in this spirit that we call on all Armenian youth to join together to create a more righteous future for our people.

PUTTING PEOPLE ABOVE PROFIT

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. ARA KHANJIAN

Ara Khanjian is a Professor of Economics at Ventura College and a Lecturer in Money and Banking at California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks. In 1991, he worked at the Economic Institute of the Economic Ministry of Armenia, developing economic legislation, such as labor laws. He currently serves on the Executive Board of the Armenian International Policy Research Group (AIPRG) and is the former editor of the Armenian Journal of Public Policy.

1 Armenia has been recording steady levels of economic growth and expansion for several years now. How much of this growth has trickled down to the average population and those at the very bottom of the economic totem pole?

During the past ten years, when Armenia was experiencing a double-digit GDP growth rate, the official poverty rates went down significantly. In 1999, 56.1% of the population was officially considered poor. By 2006 that rate had dropped to 26.5%. However we have to make a few observations here.

First, there are regional disparities. A visitor to Armenia would realize that most of the improvement is occurring within the “getron” (center) of the capital, Yerevan. Outside the center of Yerevan, the improvements are less visible and tend to be the poorest areas. In general, rural areas are doing better than the urban areas outside

of Yerevan, because agricultural production is increasing and, during the past few years, agricultural prices were rising faster than non-food prices.

Second, it could be argued that the official poverty line is very low, and it underestimates the true amount of poverty in Armenia. In 2006 the poverty line was 21,555 dram per month, which implies that someone earning 22,000 dram (\$73) per month would not be considered poor. However with 22,000 dram someone would have a very low standard of living and would be living in practical poverty.



2 What specific policies aimed at reducing poverty and increasing economic equality has the ARF advocated or implemented since joining the coalition government?

First we should emphasize a philosophical issue. The ARF being a socialist political party does not believe in the Darwinian concept of the survival of the fittest or the law of the jungle, where the strong survive while the weak—such as the young, elderly and the unfortunate—perish. Therefore, poverty is a major concern of the ARF, while for other political parties poverty is a secondary issue, because they believe that the poor are responsible for their conditions and that they should improve their own economic situation.

The ARF is convinced that the government has an important role to play in generating an environment where the poor would have the opportunity to improve their standard of living. It is safe to claim that economic growth alone is not sufficient to reduce poverty in a country. It is essential for the government to adopt pro-poor economic policies. The ARF promoted the following pro-poor policies:

- Increase government expenditures on education, health care, housing and social programs.
- Increase in the pension payments.
- Increase in the minimum wage.
- Increase government regulations and restricting monopolies.
- Improve public infrastructure, such as rural roads and water resources.
- Provide easy access to credit by the poor.
- Reduce corruption.

This last point is considered an important factor. Corruption deteriorates the businesses environment and it slows down economic growth. Also corruption increases inequality. Armenia should aggressively reduce the level of corruption.

3 The official political coalition agreement of the current Armenian government and much of the statements coming from President Serj Sarkisyan acknowledge the need for the state to fight corruption, combat the shadow economy, promote jobs, reduce inequality, alleviate poverty, and so on. In your view, what are the prospects for the current coalition government to effectively tackle these socio-economic issues in Armenia and what role does the ARF play in these efforts?

With our focus on poverty, we were able to influence the government and make it more aware of the needs of the poor. During the opening ceremony of the ARF's 30th World Congress, one of the first concerns mentioned by Prime Minister Dikran Sarkisyan in his speech was the fight against poverty. This was not a coincidence. Prime Minister Sarkisyan, knew that the ARF cares about the poor; therefore he explained to the ARF World Congress delegates that he also is concerned with the conditions of the poor.

In addition, the government of Armenia, similar to many other developing countries, with the cooperation of the World Bank, has adopted a Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper, PRSP, which is a long-term plan for reduction of poverty in Armenia. www.prsp.am

Under the pressure of the IMF, the government of Armenia was trying to reduce the budget deficit by reducing government expenditures on social programs. The ARF actively advocated increasing government pro-poor expenditures, such as on health care, education, pension etc. In order to finance these pro-poor expenditures, the ARF advocated a reduction in corruption and collection of the correct amount of taxes from rich families and large businesses.

Meanwhile the ARF was and still is arguing that the government could afford to generate a slightly higher level of budget deficit and could allocate the additional borrowed funds on education, health care, pension benefits and other pro-poor government expenditures.

4 How much of the disillusionment and dissatisfaction that exists in Armenia—as witnessed during the post-election turmoil in late February and early March—do you think is attributable to social inequality and real or perceived injustice in the economic sphere?

Social inequality, high rates of poverty and real injustices in the economic sphere are causing significant amount of discontent. The almost annihilation of the middle class during the 1990s and the emergence of the very rich made people feel much poorer.

At the same time it seems to me that in Armenia the very rich are not hiding their substantial amount of wealth. Instead, they are showing it off and making the poor feel even worse. Also the rich and the powerful sometimes are violating the laws blatantly making the ordinary citizen feel even more helpless. For example, sometimes you will notice that a young person driving a luxury car in the streets of Yerevan is violating basic traffic laws arrogantly. In this sense it is essential to apply the law to everyone, including the rich and the powerful.

Recently we should note that, along these lines, there has been some reduction in petty bribery that traffic cops used to collect from ordinary citizens.

5 The Armenian government's budget has reportedly seen a 35% increase in tax revenue in the first half of this year and the government has promised to increase spending on social programs as a result. How best do you think increased tax revenue should be used to alleviate economic hardships in Armenia?

Even with such increases, the level of tax revenue in Armenia is still relatively very low. It is important that in

the near future, the government of Armenia collects the correct amount of taxes from large enterprises.

In order to reduce the economic hardship of the poor in Armenia, government expenditures on education, research and development, health care, and rural infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, running water, schools, health clinics, etc., should increase.

Probably the top social spending priority should be on education, because an adequate type of education improves the potential for individuals to find jobs and be productive members of society. In general, historically speaking, when a socialist government comes to power in a developing country, one of the first major goals becomes improving the level of education, because education is the best way to reduce poverty.

6 Is there anything you would like to add in sum of our discussion on economic issues facing Armenia?

When we discuss economic issues I think it is useful to keep in mind that our concern should be the economic interests of the masses in Armenia and not just the interests of the upper middle class and the rich.

During this summer I had to read “The Jungle” by Upton Sinclair. It is the most famous socialist novel in the U.S. The novel is based on the conditions of the meat production industry in Chicago around 1905. I strongly advise you to read this novel. You will see the extreme poverty that existed in the U.S. at the turn of the century and how the system was so unfair. It took generations of socialists, union members and workers to fight and struggle in order to have the labor rules and regulations—such as coffee break, vacation time, eight hour work-day, safer working conditions, some amount of job security, retirement benefits, etc.— that we take for granted. None of these things existed one hundred years ago. We should appreciate them and be thankful to the past socialists and union members who struggled, and even died, in order for us to enjoy these working conditions today.

Each one of us should feel that it is our duty to take steps in order to generate a fair economic system, where poverty in Armenia is eliminated, where everyone has access to adequate level of education, health care, public transportation, child care, housing, adequate retirement, etc. and where everyone in Armenia has at least an acceptable standard of living.

In order to reduce the economic hardship of the poor in Armenia, government expenditures on education, research and development, health care, and rural infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, running water, schools, health clinics, etc., should increase.

Indeed, in my opinion, nothing has contributed so much to the corruption of the original idea of Socialism as the belief that Russia is a Socialist country. And so for the past ten years I have been convinced that the destruction of the Soviet myth was essential if we wanted a revival of the Socialist movement.

- George Orwell

YOUTH ACTIVISM DOWN SOUTH - WAY SOUTH

By
Razmig Nalpatian
“Arshavir Shiragian” Chapter
Buenos Aires, Argentina

The South American Armenian community emerged as a consequence of the Armenian Genocide. It had been created by the first refugees that arrived to the region between 1918 -1928, escaping from the atrocities that the Ottoman Empire was committing against the Armenians. After establishing and starting a new life far from their ancestral homes and belongings, they founded Armenian community organizations and institutions as a way of sticking together and maintaining their cultural identity.

Throughout years, the Armenian population in the area has increased quite a bit and, currently, a fourth generation of Armenians is taking root. The Armenian community in Argentina is the largest with a population of 120,000. The major concentrations are in the capital Buenos Aires, with 105,000, and in Cordoba, with 15,000, but also

include such smaller cities as Rosario, Mar del Plata, and so on.

Coming in behind Argentina is Uruguay, with somewhere around 15,000 to 20,000 Armenians. Next is Brazil with 3,500 and, finally, Chile with 1,000. However, these numbers do not accurately portray the level of Armenians who are actively involved in the community. Unfortunately for

soon after, many other chapters arose in the region, creating a South American network of UJA's. Today, we have chapters in Buenos Aires, Uruguay, Cordoba and Brazil, and our total number of active members in the region is approximately eighty.

Unfortunately, the task of fending off assimilation has been a difficult one for us outside of the homeland. In the late 1990s, our organization was in a state of flux and struggling to stay active. Also, at the same time, our region was suffering the social and economic consequences of failed neoliberal policy measures applied by the governments in power and this affected

Armenians of the region quite strongly, as well.

By 2002, the tide began to turn and there was a rejuvenation of UJA activism in the region. Many chapters saw an influx of new members and a reinvigorated spirit of commitment to the Armenian community. In my



UJA members demonstrating in front of the front of the Turkish ambassador's residence on October 29, 2004.

us, a low percentage—most guess about 10% to 20%—participate consistently in Armenian community life.

In South America, the Armenian Youth Federation is known as UJA, Unión Juventud Armenia. It was founded in 1941 in Buenos Aires and,

hometown of Buenos Aires, there is even a new chapter, "Sahigian" in Flores, in addition to the already existing "Soghomon Tehlirian" chapter in Valentín Alsina and "Arshavir Shiragian" chapter in Palermo.

The names of all of the chapters in the region are as follows:

Buenos Aires, Argentina:

-*Arshavir Shiragian*.

-*Soghomon Tehlirian*.

-*Sahigian*.

Córdoba, Argentina:

-*Aram Yerganian*

Montevideo, Uruguay:

-*Misak Torlakian*

San Pablo, Brazil:

-*Tro*

These chapters often have meetings once a week, usually at nights in the *agump* or in a local Armenian school. After having had our discussions we like to take time to go out together to either eat pizza or go to an Armenian restaurant or just relax and have fun with friends. In my opinion these types of outings are a great idea because, after a tough and busy week, getting to relax with friends is truly priceless.

In addition, we hold several seminars annually where all the chapters in the region participate. In these regional seminars, we attend lectures about such topics as *Hai Tad*, Armenian history, socialist ideology, how to be better community leaders, world affairs and developments in Armenia.

In order to accommodate everyone and make the organizational and travel issues as fair as possible, we try to have these seminars in a different city each time. Often, when deciding upon the next city and date, there tend to be intense discussions due to every representative wanting to defend their chapter's interest. In each city or country the holidays are different, so it is very difficult to come to an agreement but, somehow, we always do and manage to continue being friends in the process.

We also have our regional summer camp which, if schedules and conditions permit, we try to have consistently every summer. Unfortunately, last summer we could not organize the camp due to the

have the opportunity to see our friends from different cities and, each time, we have a lot of fun renovating our ties as Armenian youth.

Another occasion which we look forward to just as much is the opportunity to meet our fellow *ungers* from other parts of the world. Our region has had the pleasure of attending various international meetings, like the World Social Forum in Brazil in 2005 and Venezuela in 2006, alongside other Armenian youth. We have also sent delegations to the American Social Forum in Ecuador in 2006 and the Pan-Armenian AYF Camp in Armenia in 2007, where we had one member from Buenos Aires and another from Cordoba participate.

For us, being so far from our homeland and having certain difficulties in raising money to travel it is a significant problem. So, when some of us do have the opportunity to travel abroad it is a major event for us and we feel that, in a way, our whole region is accompanying those individuals fortunate enough to make the trek. It is a bit difficult to explain this feeling but I am sure that



UJA members demonstrate against the tortured and disappeared in Buenos Aires on March 24, the day marking the 1976 right-wing military coup which ushered in seven years of dictatorship and state terror in Argentina.

logistical difficulties. However, I am glad to report that the camp will be taking place this year from December 27-29 (our seasons our reversed) in Colonia, Uruguay and we are all anxiously awaiting this gathering. Such occasions are very important for us in our region since we very rarely

our South American *ungers* understand very well what I am talking about.

In the area of communications, our regional media is also growing through the use of new mediums and resources. For example we have a blog,



yeridasartagan.blogspot.com, where we upload documents, speeches and different things that may interest the youth. The same is true of our web page, www.ujafra.org (currently being updated). What's more, we have our magazine *Gamk* which is published twice a year. In it we try to deal with topics related to Armenia, Argentina, human rights and world events. In our blog, we feature various issues of *Gamk* in digital format in order to extend our mission to as many people as possible.

Of course, as the youth of our community, we also lead many Armenian Genocide recognition efforts. Perhaps the largest April 24 commemorative event in all of South America is the march we organize every year in front of the Turkish ambassador's residence in Buenos Aires. During the march, we lead a procession of over 1000 Armenians with torches and candles towards the residence, from where we hold a rally

featuring speeches and demonstrative cultural acts.

Finally, we have two very important other activities on the regional level that are soon to be especially significant for the community. The first one is a campaign called "I WANT TO BE A CITIZIEN" which is related to the Armenian Dual Citizenship Law promoted by the ARF. This consists of making this law a reality for the Armenians living in South America. The main goals are to make Armenians aware of this important issue and encourage them to strive for Armenian citizenship.

The other activity we are working on is collaboration with a major Jewish student organization. The project is a competition in which the participants have to write essays about human rights for the 60th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. We have carried out similar cooperative efforts with non-Armenian organizations in

the past and believe that being aware of other issues not exclusively Armenian is very important. It is also important to build bridges and alliances with other groups sharing similar concerns.

To sum up, our region continues to face the daunting problem of assimilation because, as I explained before, we are a long-standing community and the pressures to stray away from Armenian life and latch on to non-Armenian organizations and institutions are very big in our region.

The Armenian Youth Federation of South America is working to attract those young people that are not participating actively and also to keep the youth as the main character of the community. This is a complicated goal but I think that working together simultaneously and improving our every-day communication to overcome the distance barrier will lead us ultimately to success.

MUSICAL JUSTICE:

THE AYF CHATS WITH MUSICIAN AND ACTIVIST SERJ TANKIAN

Can you tell us a little bit about your background growing up?

I was born in Beirut, Lebanon in 1967. I went to Chatalbashian Varjarian in Beirut, Alex Pilibos in Hollywood, CA, and got my bachelors in Business from California State University of Northridge.

How did System of a Down come to form? Were you guys expecting the super-stardom that System achieved?

We all met through rehearsal situations where one band was sharing rehearsal space with another. Daron [Malakian] and I were in different bands and met first, then met Shavo [Odadjian], and finally John [Dolmayan], when his band was rehearsing with System. We all just wanted to make a living doing what we loved to do. The rest just happened.

Tell us about the inspirations behind your new solo album, *Elect the Dead*.

There are many inspirations from personal, to social, theoretical to political. All open to interpretation, as good art should be. The concept of the ending of civilization is also very apparent throughout the record and my thoughts of last.

Who will you be supporting in the upcoming American presidential election and why?

Obama. He's the only real candidate of choice and honesty. Originally I had supported Dennis Kucinich for his anti-imperialist and pro-working man stance.

Tell us about your work with Axis of Justice.

Check out www.axisofjustice.org and you'll see. We've had this non-profit since 2002 and have done tremendous work in both worlds of philanthropy (feeding the homeless, supporting food shelters, donating to environmental disasters), to our political

work (labor, anti-war, environmental, human rights, genocide recognition, labor rights, etc).

Your music has brought an incredible amount of attention to the Armenian Cause; what is the best way young people today can raise consciousness of the importance of Genocide awareness?

By being aware and contributing to the halting of genocide around the world now and in the future anywhere on the planet.

What message would you impart to those Armenian youth that feel powerless or are uninterested in issues pertaining to Genocide recognition or US policies in general?

Everyone has a vision on this planet and not all of us are destined to deal with any specific issues or causes. I would advise people to find their own vision and pursue it with a hunger unseen to achieve their own state of transcendence. Everything on this planet is connected. And if that's the case, then working towards justice should be one of our primary goals as humans here.

What are your plans for the future?

More music, more politics, and much more love... Musically, I'm working on composing for a play, films, video games, and another solo record of jazz/orchestral elements.



Ստորագնահատուած Հերոսներ

«Իսկական հերոսները անոնք են, որ ոչ անուն ունին, ոչ ձայն եւ ոչ փայլ: Անոնք աշխարհին կը նային վերէն եւ չունին համարեայ ե՛լ ոչ մի անհատական, սեփական կիրք: Հարստութիւն, հանգստութիւն, աղքատութիւն, աղէտը՝ ամէնքը համազօր երեւոյթներ են...»

–Ռուբէն «ՀՅ–ի Մը Յիշատականը»
Հատոր առաջին, էջ 119–120

Հերոսութիւնը անձնական մղումներէ բխած վճռական արարք մըն է որը կամատրաբար կ'իրագործուի: Այն հերոսը որ հերոսութիւն կը գործէ իր ազգին ու ժողովուրդին օգտակար դառնալու համար, վեհ գաղափարի մը զօրատր ցանկութեան ու ազատութեան վճռականութեան կամքովն է: Այդ հերոսը, բնական մարդկային անհատական սահմաններէն դուրս կ'անցնի գիտակցաբար եւ բոլոր կամքով ու ուժով կը հասնի մէկ նպատակի կեանքի նուիրումով, անարժէք տեսնելով կեանքը, կ'լանուած այդ գաղափարներով, իրականացումը տեսնել գերագոյն իտեալին ժողովուրդին եւ համայն մարդկութեան լաւութիւնը: Այս բացատրութիւնը կ'ընդգրկէ մեր Հայ կնոջ դերը Հայ յեղափոխական շարժման մէջ:

Ինչպէս «Դէպի Երկիր» գաղափարը, Հայ կնոջ դերը նոյնպէս անմնացորդ մէկ բաժնիկն է Հայ յեղափոխական կեանքին պատմութեան: Բազմաթիւ կիներ, համրելը օգուտ չունի, կեանքերնին զօհաբերեցին իտեալական գաղափարներու համար: Անարատ հայու արիւնով սնած եւ յաղորթուած իրենց վրէժարու կամքովը ի գործ դնել իրենց սուրբ նպատակը, անհրաժեշտ է իմանալ թէ անանունին եւ անուն ունեցողին համ ճանչցողին եւ չճանչցողին տարբերութիւնը ոչինչ է. գոհութիւնը առանց փառաբանելու ի սէր ազգութեան: Երկուքն ալ գուգահեռ օժանդակութեամբ, հաւասար հանգրուաններու տակ, փայլ տուին մեր յեղափոխական կեանքին որուն համայն հայութեան ականատես ընդունումը փաստ կը կայանայ այդ իրականութեան: Բոլորս ալ փառք կու տանք եւ կը խոնարհինք մեր իգական սեռի հերոսներուն, որոնք մէկ վայրկեան իսկ չի խնայեցին ժողովուրդին եւ հայրենիքին բարելաւումը յառաջացնելու ողջագործելով իրենց ճակատագիրը: Մղձաւանգ դառնան թշնամիին մտքերէն ներս ու փակեցին առքերնին յափտեան քնով: Սօսէ Մայրիկի շարքերուն կը մասնակցին, թէպէտ երկար է շարքը, հանրածանօթ է հետեւեալները որուն յիշելը հարկաւոր է. Մարիամ Մակարեան եւ Եղիսաբէթ Նաճարեան–Եօթնեղբայրեան:

Մարիամ Մակարեան

Մարիամ Մակարեան, յեղափոխական ծածկանունով Մարօ, ծնած էր Դեբեքնոս 1872–ին: Որք մնաց մանչ տարիքէն: Եղբայրներուն գուրգուրանքով մեծցաւ եւ ուսում ստացաւ Գիմնազիայի մէջ: Հակառակ զուարթութեան, նորք



կազմուածքին եւ անձնական յիշատակարանին մէջ նշուած «աղջկայ կոչումն է համեստութիւն, խաղաղութիւն եւ պարզութիւն», խստապահանջ եւ առնական կորովի տէր անձ մըն էր: Երազն էր Երկիր անցնիլ եւ նուիրուիլ յեղափոխական կեանքին: Մարօն կեանքի ընթացքին կը մասնակցի Երկիր անցնող խումբերու պատրաստութեան մէջ

զէնք փոխադրելու գործով, Հայուհեաց Բարեգործական Ընկերութեան կարի արհեստանոցին մէջ աշխատելով եւ «Դրօշակ»–ի խմբագրութեամբ: Զէնքերու փոխադրութեան գործով զբաղած առէն, զէնքի արհեստանոցի հիմնադիրին հմուտ զինագործին՝ Արիստակէս Զօրեանի, յեղափոխական ծածկանունով Կարոյի (Ռոստոմի եղբայրը) կը ծանօթանայ: Երկուքը խոր սէրով կը կապուին:

1896–ին, Խանասորի Արշաւանքը կը որոշուի: Կարօ ու մի քանի ընկերներ դէմ էին: Մարօ կը կարծէր թէ իրենց սէրն է որ Կարոյի դժկամութիւն կը պատճառէ արշաւանքի նկատմամբ: Սակայն, իրականութիւնը չէր: Մարօն հոգեպէս կը տատապէր ու յայտնի չէր Կարոյի ու Մարոյի զգացումներու հաղորդակցութեան: Մարօն անդադար կը մտածէր ու կը զգար Կարոյի ներքին պայքարը հայրենիքի ծառայութեան եւ սիրոյ անձնատուր ըլլալուն միջեւ: Համոզուած էր որ ինքն էր ուղղակի խոչընդոտը Կարոյի յեղափոխական ասպարէզին: Այսպիսով, Մարօն կեանքին վերջ կու տայ: Երկու մտերիմ ընկերները

զինքը կը գտնէն անձնասպաս սենեակի մը մէջ, նամակով առանց հասցէի.

«Դ՛ռ՛ւ, որ Հայաստանի ազատութեան գործը գերադասեցիր, քան իմ եւ քո անձնական երջանկութիւնը, դ՛ռ՛ւ, որ սերդ գոհեցիր անելի բարձր գաղափարական սէրի, կատարիր խօսքդ անձդ զոհ դիր հայրենեաց սուրբ սեղանին վրայ: Լեցուիր թունաւոր վրէժխորութեամբ Բաբկէն Սիւնիի նման: Կատարիր վերջին կտակս, դրանով միայն կը հանգստանան ոսկորներս գերեզմանիս մէջ: Ես այսքան քաջութիւն ունեցայ, որ կարողացայ կրակի տալ քո ետեից բոլոր նաւերը, այսուհետեւ դու բոլորովին ազատ ես. գործի՛ր, ների՛ր ինձ: Բիւր համբոյրներ: Վերջին բարեկերս բոլոր ընկերներին»:

Կարօ լուր ստանալով Մարոյի մահէն, խոր յուսահատութեան եւ հոգեկան անլուր տատապանքի կը մատնուի: Կեանքը անիմաստ եւ անարժէք կը դառնայ: Խանասորի արշաւանքի ժամանակ, նահանջի պահուն, երբ միւս բոլոր ընկերները ետ քաշուեցան եւ հակառակ քաշուելու բազմաթիւ հրահանգ ստացաւ Կարոն, շարունակեց կռուիլ եւ պատերազմի դաշտին վրայ զօհուեցաւ: Ընկերները կը պատմէին թէ կարծես Կարոն մահը կը փնտռէր. պարտականութիւնը կատարած, կ'ուզէր միանալ այդ աղջկան որ գաղափարներուն հաւատարիմ մնալու համար, կեանքը զօհաբերեց:

Եղիսաբէթ Նաճարեան-Եօթնեղբայրեան

Ուրֆայի Բողոքական Աղջկանց վարժարանը ասարտելէ ետք, Այնթապի Աղջկանց վարժարանը կը սկսի յաճախելու: Փայլուն արդիւնքներով կ'աւարտէ եւ ուսուցչութեան պաշտօն կը ստանձնէ Ուրֆայի մօտակայ գիւղին Կարմունջի Բողոքական դպրոցը: Նոյն գիւղին մէջ նաեւ կ'աշխատէր մտերիմ ընկերուհիների Եւա Ալադոյեանը որ Ուրֆայի հերոսամարտի ապագայ ղեկաւարի Մկրտիչ Եօթնեղբայրեանի մօրաքրոջ աղջիկն էր:

Մկրտիչ ու իր լաւ ընկերը ֆի Յարութիւն Ռասթայեւի Եւան, տղոց Կարմունջի մէջ զինավարժութեան կը տանէին: Օր մը կ'որոշէն Եայի ու Եղիսաբէթի տանիլ: Երբ վայրը կը հասնին, Մկրտիչ ատրճանակը Եղիսաբէթին կը յանձնէ ու Եղիսաբէթ առանց շփոթելու զէնքը կը կրակէ եւ փամփուռներուն մեծ-



ամասնութիւնը թիրախը կը զարնէն: Յայտնի էր որ Եղիսաբէթ տաղանդը ուներ լաւ ճշան առնելու եւ կրակելու: Այդպիսով, Մկրտիչ կը մղուի ձիավարութիւն սորվեցնել զայն: Ժամանակի ընթացքին, Մկրտիչ որոշում կ'առնէ որ այդ քաջ աղջիկը իր կիներ ըլլայ: 1913-ին, Մկրտիչ Թրքական հետապնդման տակ կ'իյնայ: Երկուքը, Եղիսաբէթի եղբայրներէն մէկուն ընկերակցութեամբ, Տիգրանակերտ կ'երթան ու կ'ամուսնանան:

Մկրտիչ միշտ կը զգար որ մեծ վտանք մը կար ժողովուրդին հանդէպ: Կնոջը կը թելաթրէ Ուրֆայի կիները կազմակերպել որովհետեւ համոզուած էր թէ ոչ մէկ գոյամարտ յաղթահարութեամբ կարելի է պակտիլ տէ կիները մարդոց կողքին չկենան եւ մասնակցութիւն չերէն:

Ժողովուրդին մէջ երկու տարբեր տեսակէտ կար. մէկը կողմնակից ինքնապաշտպանութեան, իսկ միւսը թշնամիին ենթարկուիլ: Սակայն, կիներու ազատութեան ցանկութեան կամքը ստրկութեան դէմ համակերպութեան կողմնակիցներուն կարծիքը փոխել տուաւ ու բոլորը համապատասխան կայնեցան մէկ սրտով ու հոգով, ինքնապաշտպանութեան հետ: Երբ բաւարար զէնք հաւաքուեցաւ, կիները տղոց կողքին զինուա, պայքարեցան ազատութեան գաղափարին սիրոյն:

Կիներու ու աղջիկներու առաջնահերթութիւնը եղաւ հիւանդանոց պատել: Երբ կոիւները սկսան, կիները թաղէ-թաղ մարտիկներուն կ'այցելէին լեղափոխական երգեր գելով քաջալերելու գանոնք: Եղիսաբէթ փամփուռակալները մէջքին ու կուրծքին կապած, հրացանը ձեռքին, դէմքը վճռական, հերոս ամուսինին կեանքի ընկերը եղաւ: Միւս բոլոր կռուողներուն կը խրախուսէր ոչ միայն խօսքով, այլեւ իր անձնական օրինակով: Ամուսինին վիրաւորուելէն եւ Ռասթայեւի Եւանի մահէն ետք, ինքը եղաւ ղեկաւար ու դիրք պահողը կռուելով կատաղութեամբ:

Հերոսամարտէն ետք, ապրողները թաքստոցներու քաշուեցան, իսկ բոլոր վիրաւորուածները անելի ապահով թաքստոցներու մէջ պահուեցան: Տասը օր ետք, Մկրտիչ եւ իր վիրաւոր եղբայրը Սազոն, գիշերով դուրս կ'ելլեն անելի ապահով թաքստոց գտնելու համար: Հայ մատնիչ մը իրենց կը նկատէ ու Թուրքերուն կը փոխանձէ բոլոր տեղեկութիւնները: Տղաքը յաջորդ առտուն Թուրքերով կը պաշարուին ու գանի մը Թուրք սպաննելէ ետք, վերջին փամփուռները կուրծքերնուն կը ստանան ու կը նահատակուին: Մի գանի օր ետք, Եղիսաբէթ կը բռնուի եւ հարիւրմէկ տարուայ բանտարկութեան կը դատապարտուի: Բարեբախտաբար, 1918-ին կ'ազատի եւ եղբօր մօտ Ամերիկա կը բախի:

Մնացած էր բոլիս ճակատագիր մը ողբալու: Միակ զասկը կը մեռնի եւ տարիներուն կրած տառապանքն ու վիշտը պատճառ կը դառնան որ Եղիսաբէթ մտային հաւասարակշռութիւնը կ'որսնցնէ: Ազգականները զինք Նիւ Եորք հոգեբուժարան մը կը փոխադրեն: Տխուր երեւոյթով, մեր ժողովուրդի ազատագրական հայրնին կը մահանայ:

-Սարօ Հարուն

MOMENTS



For five weeks this summer, nine youths left the Diaspora to experience the beauty of Armenia and its people. As part of the Armenian Youth Federation's 14th annual Youth Corps project, they were to serve their homeland by running a day camp in Gyumri; what they got in return was so much more.

Nina *Karabagh*

I remember dreading the eight-hour car ride to Artsakh. However, the moment we arrived in Shushi, my fears were quickly forgotten. As we pulled up to the Shushi Hotel, about twenty children approached our van, intrigued by these new “outsiders.” We had brought some soccer balls and gave them to the kids; they immediately organized a game and insisted that we play with them. The sheer glee on their faces was unbelievable; for the first time, I was hit with the realization of just how precious life is. These children were the happiest kids on earth just because of a soccer ball and a few new friends to play with. Saying goodbye to the children two days later was very difficult. I remember giving some toys to a little girl named Nora and her two brothers. They had the biggest smiles I have ever seen. They were so excited about these gifts—gifts that many of us would not appreciate because we have always been provided for. Artsakh was such an amazing place to visit. The land is filled with so much history and it is amazing how it has overcome so much pain and loss. It may be a small piece of land and we may not have stayed there for very long, but our time there was unforgettable.



Ani *Yerevan*

AYF Youth Corps 2008. I'll start off by saying that I had the most amazing and unforgettable summer of my life. This program not only gave me the opportunity to visit my homeland, see its history, and be surrounded by its rich culture, but it also allowed me to help my people hands on and to really make a difference. It was amazing to be able to finally experience all the places I had seen pictures of as a child. The first week spent touring Yerevan and its surroundings was surreal; to be witnessing first hand the monuments, churches, sights and sounds of the homeland I had always dreamed of seeing was a very emotional feeling. The most memorable moment was seeing the stairs of Sardarabad. I remember just sitting there, thinking about the battle that had been fought there all those years ago. I absorbed that feeling and never wanted it to go away.



Talar *Life in Gyumri*

Gyumri, being the second largest city in Armenia, offers something very different than the capital city of Yerevan. It's a city rebuilt from the ruins it was reduced to 20 years ago. At the beginning of our three-week stay there, we took an instant liking to the people of Gyumri; friendly and hospitable, they made Gyumri our second home. One day, when we were taking the public *marshroutka* to the city center, a woman sitting in the van with us asked where we were from; upon our response, she dug into her purse to give each one of us some candy and apologized that it was indeed Russian candy and not Armenian. She said she did this so that we would have no reason to not want to return to the wonderful Gyumri. Everyone in town knew who we were and what our purpose was; we built relationships with so many of them. Hasmig, who owned a little store right down the street from the home we lived in, was ready to do whatever it took to accommodate us; she had practically everything we ever needed, and if she didn't she would find it. Being in Gyumri gives you a sense of belonging, which is difficult to acquire here in America. Their calm, healthy lifestyle really made it possible for us to truly enjoy what Armenia has to offer: good people, beautiful scenery and a sense of community that we had never felt before.



Anahid

Working on Knarik's documentary

Our neighbor in Gyumri, Knarik, was working on a documentary about poverty in the Shirak region and was on the hunt for English-speakers to do voiceovers for the international version her NGO was hoping to distribute to foreign broadcasters. When Hilton and I told her we'd be more than happy to help, she was ecstatic; she had begun to lose hope after months of searching to no avail, she said. Over the course of one week, we went into the local recording studio several times to lend our voices. It was nothing to us—we were just reading; but for Knarik and her colleagues, the help was a godsend. She thanked us profusely on an hourly basis, and I recall turning to Hilton as we were in the recording booth to point out that Knarik's eyes were brimming with tears. I told Knarik I'd sit with her editor and clean out any kinks in the video footage once the new sound was added; I ended up spending two afternoons in a 3-by-3 foot room with an editor so talented it was a damn shame I couldn't bring him to Los Angeles. It was really something to have gone halfway across the world, expecting to run a day camp, and to end up working on a film. It goes to show that there is more than one way to make a difference—and anyone can do it.



Vaché

Camp-lessons learned from the kids

Running the day Camp in Gyumri for three weeks gave us real insight into the minds and hearts of those kids. It's easy to sit comfortably in America and abroad, complaining and finding fault with the most insignificant things. Watching these kids get the greatest amount of joy and contentment from the simplest of life's pleasures is a reality check as to what is really important and what really matters. For them, to see that there are young Armenians from across the world that want to spend time with them was eye-opening and once we were able to show how much we cared, we became eternally attached. We didn't just sing and dance and play games, but we explored their thoughts and opinions on the most contemporary of Armenian issues. The thing with kids is that they are a lot smarter than we give them credit for—and they don't lie. Hearing their opinions on topics like the Diaspora, on living in Armenia, on relations with Turkey, on their desire to go to college, on their perceptions of Armenia's future, was inspirational to say the least.



Hilton

Gyumri Yeridasartagan

From the moment we first got to Gyumri, their ARF youth went out of their way to welcome us and make sure we were having a good time. They organized parties at their ARF center, invited us to their homes for dinner, visited and helped us at the day camp and always kept in touch via telephone. They were probably one of the most down to earth groups I have ever met. Two people that come to mind most out of the group of about 15 were Ungers Sako and Levon. Those guys had such good senses of humor—they had me laughing almost every second of my time with them.



Sahag

Camp-interactions with kids

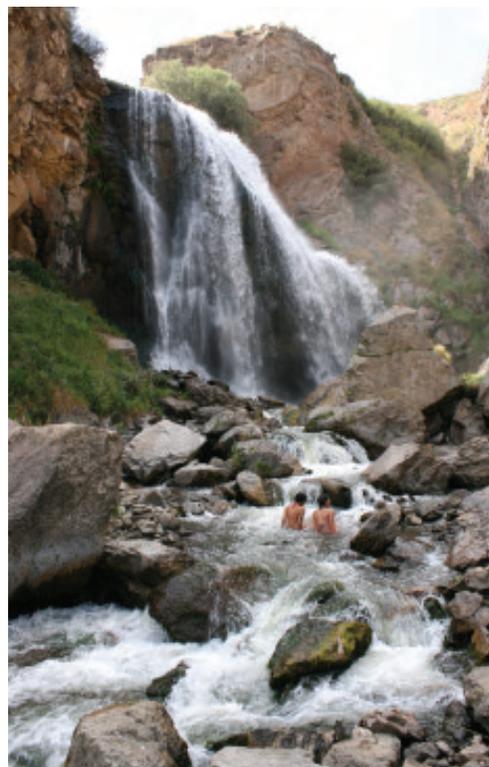
We fell in love with the kids at the day camp from day one. Seeing their smiling faces every morning as they anticipated the day's activities showed just how much of an impact we were making on them. But more than anything, those kids left a huge impression on us—their appreciation and affection was overwhelming. There was one camper who stood out to me: his name was Ardooshig. Looking like the fedayee Ayroodz Mher, he was brave and tough and was never afraid to speak his mind and do as he pleased. At the same time, I felt that he always looked up to me as an older brother; we talked about everything, from girls to cars...true bonding moments. He and the other kids would wrap their arms around us, hugging and kissing us as if we were family. At the end of our three weeks with Gyumri's children, we ended up with 120 brothers and sisters.



Rosie

Waterfall Hunting

One Saturday, we all got ready to go to a waterfall near Gyumri. We had no name for it, nor an idea of where it was—just a description of what it was like. We bought groceries and awaited the *marshroutka* driver we had coerced into joining us on our adventure the night before. After over three hours of dead ends—we had to empty out the van a few times so that it wouldn't be weighed down as it miraculously drove through a shallow river. After enduring nausea, bathroom breaks and even a temporary visit by some hitchhikers, we eventually made it to the waterfall and it was *beautiful*. We ate our usual *varounk*, *lolig*, and *baneer*, then got in the water. It was amazing, to say the least. The rush of thousands of gallons of pure mountain water hit us like rocks, but a momentary look upwards revealed a breathtaking view. Afterwards, we changed into dry clothes and carved "AYF Youth Corps '08" into the watermelon we had managed to lug with us, cut it up and ate it under the sun.



Maro

Going back to Gyumri

Since I live in Yerevan, I got the chance to go back to Gyumri after the Youth Corps group had left for the states; it was strange to return after our three-week stint there as camp counselors. I walked up the street toward the school where we had run the day camp and the kids began trickling out of their homes, running towards me, screaming "Ungerouhi Maro" and asking about the rest of the group—had we all come back to run another session of camp? The children multiplied and followed me to the house where we had lived. I left the kids to play in the streets and surprised Narine, our "mother" for the three weeks we rented the first floor of her home. She invited me in for coffee, asked why I hadn't come sooner, why I couldn't stay longer. It was so amazing to visit them all again and to come to the realization that this year's program left more than an impression on the people we came in contact with—it created an everlasting connection that will survive any distance or amount of time, patiently waiting to welcome the next group of brothers and sisters from the Diaspora.



A GLIMPSE OF ARMENIA'S TOP TYCOONS

Unfortunately, in today's Armenia, there is a wide gap between the living standard of the vast majority of citizens and a small class of very well-connected, super-rich individuals. The latter not only occupy dominant positions in the country's economy and business, but many also tend to have their foot in the door of political decision-making.

With the cooperation of authorities—both government and opposition, current and past presidents—they have sought to entrench their positions, often at the expense of solving pressing domestic socioeconomic needs and problems.

Given the disproportionate affect such figures can have on developments in Armenia, the Haytoug editorial team felt it was important to spotlight some of the most privileged individuals operating in Armenia today. Their inclusion in this issue is not meant to necessarily indict or glorify their stature; rather it is simply meant to familiarize readers with an important phenomena and segment affecting life in Armenia today.

Gagik “Dodi Gago” Tsarukyan



Background

- Born outside of Abovian in 1956
- Former world arm-wrestling champion.

Business

- President of Multi Group, which includes such interests as “Kotayk” beer, the “MEK” network of furniture stores, the largest cement factory in Armenia, “Aviaservice” food factory, the “Multi-Leon” gas station chain, and “Noy” Brandy.
- Considered by many to be Armenia's richest individual.

Politics

- Entered parliament in 2003
- Founder and Chairperson of the Prosperous Armenia Party, a member of the governing coalition.
- Named head of Armenia's National Olympics Committee in 2004
- During the 2008 Presidential election campaign, Levon Ter-Petrossian went out of his way to heap praise on Tsarukyan and urge him to defect to the opposition side. His main message was that Tsarukyan would end up losing his huge fortune if Serzh Sarkisian became president.

Samuel “Lfik Samo” Alexanyan



Background

- Born in Yerevan in 1968

Business

- Owner of Salex Group, Fleetfood Co., Astghatsok, and various other companies which effectively dominate Armenia's sugar, wheat, butter, ethanol, cooking oil and other commodity markets.

Politics

- Elected to Armenian Parliament in 2003 from Yerevan's Malatia-Sebastia district.
- No official party affiliation.
- During the 2008 presidential campaign, candidate Levon Ter-Petrossian tried to persuade Alexanyan to join his side, warning that he and other tycoons would become “homeless” under a Sargisyan administration.

Khachatur “Grzo” Sukiasyan



Background

- Born in Yerevan in 1961

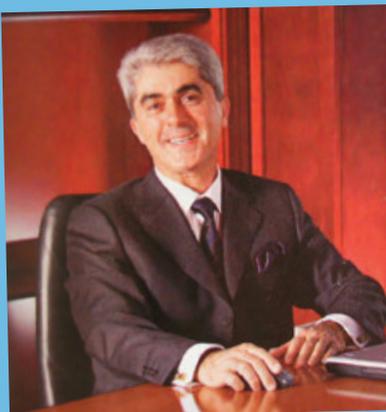
Business

- Head of SIL Group, which controls such companies as Noi, Bjni, Armekonombank, the Pizza di Roma fast food chain, and various construction companies and factories.
- The income of all of his companies combined are reported to make up nearly \$100 million annually.

Politics

- Elected to parliament in 1999
- He served as Levon Ter-Petrossian's Yerevan campaign manager and was one of his main backers for the February 19 presidential election.
- His parliamentary immunity was stripped three days after the March 1 turmoil on charges of instigating a coup attempt. He remains at large.

Valeri Mejlumyan



Background

- Born in Alaverdi in 1951
- Maintains Russian citizenship

Business

- President of “Vallex Group,” which operates copper and metallic mines all over Armenia and around the world.
- His Armenia Copper Program Company owns a copper mine in Alaverdi and was given the government license to process the Teghut mines in Armenia's Lori region.

Politics

- No official party affiliation.
- Both the Teghut and Alaverdi mining projects have become controversial for their harmful environmental affects and degradation of local communities.

Hrant Vardanyan



Background

- Born in Yerevan in 1949

Business

- President of Grand Holdings, which encompasses such companies as Grand Tobacco, Grand Candy, Masis Tabacco, Ai em Ti, Grand Sun, Hairenik TV, and AR TV.

Politics

- No official party affiliation
- In December, Vardanyan reportedly dished out \$150,000 to transport a female elephant named “Candy” from Russia to the Yerevan Zoo. The purpose of the import was to wed the animal with another Grand Holding sponsored elephant appropriately named “Grand.”

Haroutiun Pamboukyan



Background

- Born in Yerevan in 1962

Business

- Founder and former President of Max Group, one of Armenia’s largest multi-profile companies
- He has been involved in poultry production, restaurants, and other businesses
- Major proponent of privatization and was highly influential in the initial 2002 sale of Armenia’s electricity network to the offshore British company Midland Resources.
- President of the Armenian Tennis Federation

Politics

- Member of Parliament since 1999.
- Joined the Republican Party in 2006.
- His affiliate, Max Wood LTD has been implicated in the cutting of pristine walnut trees in the Kashatagh (Lachin) region of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).

Mikhail “Mika” Bagdasarov



Background

- Born in Baku in 1959 and maintains Russian citizenship.
- Previously served in the Internal Forces of Armenia’s Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Business

- President of Armavia Airlines, the leading passenger carrier in Armenia, and owner of Mika Cement, one of the country’s most dominant cement importers. He is also the head of the Mika Football Club and operates in the petroleum trade.

Politics

- No official party affiliation
- In 2007, government audits of various companies held by Bagdasarov revealed tax violations totaling up to \$300,000.

Hakob “Lady Hakob” Hakobyan



Background

- Born in Yerevan in 1957
- Former head of the Regional Council of the Yerkrpah Volunteer Union.

Business

- Owns agricultural produce markets in the Malatia-Sebastia district and one of the largest bazaars in the country.

Politics

- Elected to Parliament in 1999
- Went from siding with the Republican Party to openly supporting Levon Ter-Petrossian during the 2008 Presidential campaign.
- In March, he was one of several Members of Parliament to have his immunity stripped and put under arrest on charges of attempting to foment a coup and seize power.

Ruben “Nemets Rubo” Hairapetyan



Background

- Born in Yerevan in 1963
- Head of the Avan District Community from 1996-1999.

Business

- Chairman of Armtobacco Company, owner of “Harsnakar” hotel, and president of the Armenian Football Federation.

Politics

- Elected to Parliament in 2003
- Joined the Republican Party in 2006
- During the May 2007 Parliamentary elections, it was reported that Hairapetyan and his bodyguards were involved in a scuffle with ARF supporters at a Yerevan polling station after the latter accused Hairapetyan and his entourage of trying to hinder the conduct of the local vote.

Manvel Ghazaryan



Background

- Born in Ararat region in 1961

Business

- President of the Vedi Alco Company, producer of such brands as Areni, Vernashen and Getap wines, as well as vodka and brandy. It is consistently listed as one of the top taxpaying companies in the republic.

Politics

- Elected to parliament in 2003
- Went from siding with the Republican Party to supporting Levon Ter-Petrossian.
- After claiming that several other businessmen in parliament had joined him in support of Ter-Petrossian—only to have them publicly refute his statements—Ghazaryan has mostly been absent from the political arena.

UNDERSTANDING HISTORY IN ORDER TO CHANGE IT: THE SOVIET LEGACY IN TODAY'S ARMENIA

By Serouj Aprahamian

Can you imagine trying to understand the depopulation of Nakhichevan or Kharabakh's struggle for self-determination without considering the impact of Stalin's decision to carve up these regions from Armenia in 1921? Better yet, can you imagine trying to understand the present state of Armenian-Turkish relations without looking at the facts of the Armenian Genocide? Although some parties, such as Turkey and Azerbaijan, would prefer that we look at issues through such an ahistorical lens, those concerned with truth would be wise to realize the importance of history.

Simply put, history matters. Those who do not properly understand and acknowledge history are not only doomed to repeat it, they are setting themselves up for even graver outcomes in the future. As historian Howard Zinn has suggested, not being aware of history is like being born yesterday. In his words, "If you forget history, if

you were born yesterday, then you'll believe anything."

In the case of the present day Republic of Armenia, understanding history means taking a critical look at the previous 70 years of Soviet rule over this land. Only then can we properly understand the current fabric of social and political life and contemplate ways of moving forward.

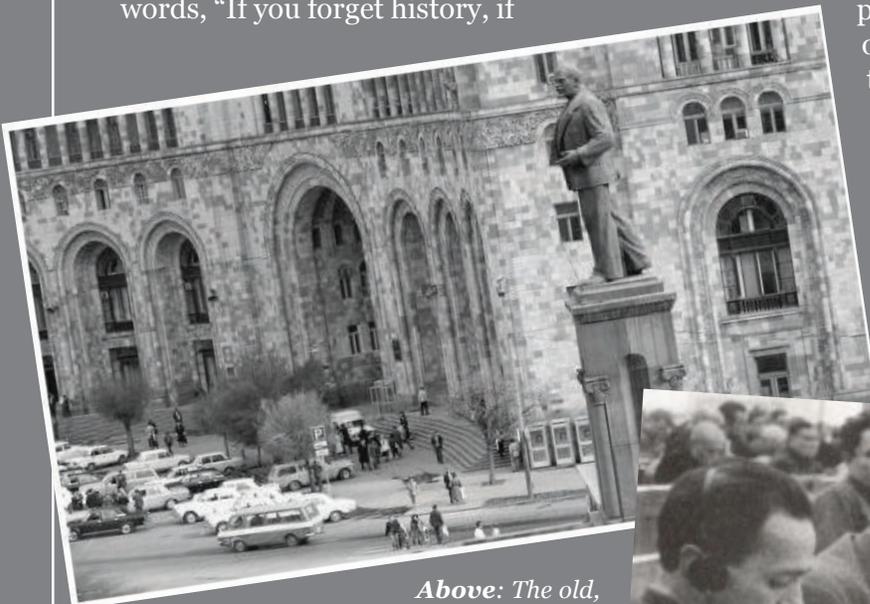
The Working Class

Contrary to the rhetoric and official proclamations of the Soviet Empire, the USSR was about as socialist as it was democratic. Rather than empowering workers and freeing them from conditions of oppression, Armenia under Bolshevik rule witnessed the domination of workers by the state and its appointed overseers.

Under the Bolshevik regime, workers were placed into arbitrary unions used by the government to control industries and ensure the implementation of party policies. Those who did not obey would face the danger of losing their job, income, benefits, or worse. In effect, the Soviet factory managers replaced the previous owners of capital as the new exploiters of the working class.

In this environment, Armenian workers never had the opportunity to organize independently and exercise their class-consciousness. Perhaps even worse, appeals toward class sensibilities and trade unions themselves became largely discredited by the experience of the Soviet era, which carried out its subjugation under the false banner of 'socialism.'

Meanwhile, in the countryside, Stalin's brutal collectivization forced peasants against their will into collective farms controlled by local Communist party officials. Those who resisted were executed



Above: The old, famous statue of Lenin hanging over the center of Yerevan in Republic Square. The statue was removed in 1990.

Right: Stalin's notorious henchman Lavrenti Beria (middle) sits alongside Aghasi Khanjian, head of the Armenian Communist Party, circa 1935.



while many Armenians ended up being forced to leave their homes in the countryside and crowd into urban areas.

The countryside itself was left sacrificed for the sake of heavy industry and military production. Virtually no investment was made in the rural economy or infrastructure, resulting in severe decay still felt to this day. In fact, with over 30% of the current population in Armenia working the land, one of the most pressing needs in the area of poverty reduction is investing in infrastructure, such as rural roads and irrigation systems.

A further problem in today's Armenia is that institutions such as trade unions and worker cooperatives continue to be negatively associated with the repression of the Soviet past. Overcoming this legacy and organizing workers independently to protect their interests will undoubtedly be one of the major tasks for the foreseeable future.

Political Participation & Ideology

In the arena of political participation, the Soviet era has also left an indelible mark on Armenia. Not only were political decisions dictated from above (via Moscow) but even those democratic institutions which did exist served largely as empty, ceremonial devices for validating the Communist regime. For example, there *were* elections in the USSR but they were virtually all uncontested races, where participation was considered part of the ritual of being a Soviet citizen.

In addition, mass organizations such as youth groups, student organizations, political parties and trade unions were seen simply as stepping-stones for career advancement. Participants usually joined these groups to enhance their future and gain the support of party bosses, not to make a difference in politics or join with like-minded individuals to affect change. As a result, for decades, Armenia was almost completely deprived of the valuable practice of voluntary civic association and engagement.

In turn, the heavy political repression of the Soviet period transformed politics into a nuisance that was to be avoided, not embraced. Naturally, people preferred to keep their true political ideals private and relied the

most heavily on close family ties and social networks. The economic hardships and political persecutions of the post-Soviet leadership in Armenia only reinforced this pattern of disillusionment with politics and political participation.

Along these lines, ideology also became a negative connotation for many in post-Soviet Armenia. The USSR's stated mission of building communism and being driven by ideology discredited the promotion of such ideals in general. People came to expect that their leaders would make ideological proclamations in public but practice something completely different in private. Not surprisingly, ideology in general became negatively associated with Bolshevism and its deceit.

We can see the pitfalls of this phenomenon playing out today, with the 'opposition' of Levon Ter-Petrossian having no real platform or ideology to speak of besides calling for a regime change in his favor. Reversing this trend and reinstating an appreciation for political platforms and clear visions of a more decent future will be a key factor in ensuring a more rapid and healthy democratization process in Armenia.

Corruption

Of course, the fundamental problem of corruption in Armenia also has its roots in the Soviet era. Given the fact that the Communist Party relied on its managerial class (the apparatchiki) to govern affairs, distribute appointments, and hand out benefits, many regional and local 'leaders' used

their power to expand their own personal gain. If a citizen had a problem, he or she had to turn to the local or city party committee for a solution. Getting help from such highly concentrated centers of power required some sort of 'connection,' favoritism, or bribe to those in authority.

Thus, getting by in the Soviet system inherently required political influence, social connections, and personal networks. The totalitarian, top-down nature of management also led to the wasteful distribution of supplies and constant shortages. People were conditioned to set aside national concerns and look out, instead, for their own narrow personal and familial interests.



A Soviet era Armenian stamp which features Karl Marx's famous rallying cry, "Workers of the world, unite!"

It was also during the Soviet era that a black market economy developed in Armenia, which then ballooned out of control following independence. This was precisely because the only people who had experience with the market in the Communist period were those who operated illegally. As one can imagine, such individuals were the best skilled at evading laws and taking advantage of circumstances to pull a profit.

Today, people continue to view patronage and family networks as key channels for getting ahead and money, in many ways, has become the new way to get around bureaucratic difficulties and daily obstacles. It is no secret that businessmen who operate in the 'shadows' and evade regulation are also prevalent in the economy.

A serious campaign to combat corruption and bring market activity within legal parameters is one of the most important challenges facing the country. This struggle must be waged if we want to see a more prosperous and equitable Armenia.

Moving Forward

The Soviet State had a severe impact on countless other facets of Armenian life; everything from the education system and media to national identity, culture, and relations with the Diaspora. The list is too long to be covered here.

The main point, however, is that the legacy of the Soviet Union must be well understood when analyzing conditions in today's Armenia. Seventy years of rule behind the 'Iron Curtain' had dramatic effects on the development of the Armenian

Republic, just as the respective host country each community has been forced to develop under has shaped life in the Armenian Diaspora.

So how do we move forward? One simple starting point would be to reverse the negative trends and artificial characteristics imposed on Armenia during the Soviet period. Returning Armenia to its natural course of development without interference from abroad (whether it be from Moscow, Washington, or anywhere else) would seem to be one of the most basic lessons drawn from the Soviet experience.

The recent political turmoil in Yerevan also suggests that political organization in Armenia needs to focus more on the root causes of social injustice and inequality. The discrediting of class-consciousness, political ideology, and civic organization during the Soviet era is very dangerous and must be overcome soon. Otherwise, as we saw with the campaign of Levon Ter-Petrossian, discontent and political anger in the country can be diverted into demagoguery, sensationalism, and attacks against national unity.

Reviving the true values and ideals of socialism becomes even more critical in this light. This revival can best be assured through democratic, bottom-up organizing around principles of economic equality, accountability, social justice, and national (not personal) priorities.

Achieving such progress will require not only a proper understanding of history but, more importantly, the willingness to change it.



May Day parade in Yerevan during Soviet times.

Firmly relying upon the working masses we are fighting against economic inequality – an injustice that forms the basis of all other evils. And I reiterate that only through the determination of working people will it be possible to eradicate flagrant injustice and establish a socialist order.

- Hamo Ohanjanian

As a soldier of liberation, the Tashnagtsagan must fight all manner of exploitation, must be vigilant so that the fruits of one's labor do not end up in somebody else's hands, so that no one is placed in a privileged position at the expense of another.

- Simon Zavarian

Until the spirit of love for our fellow-workers, regardless of race, color, creed or sex, shall fill the world, until the great mass of the people shall be filled with a sense of responsibility for each other's welfare, social justice cannot be attained, and there can never be lasting peace upon earth

- Helen Keller

The economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is, in my opinion, the real source of the evil.

- Albert Einstein

Who are the oppressors? The few: the King, the capitalist, and a handful of other overseers and superintendents. Who are the oppressed? The many: the nations of the earth; the valuable personages; the workers; they that make the bread that the soft-handed and idle eat.

- Mark Twain

THE

RIGHT

TO BE

HEALTHY

THE MISSING LINK IN THE AMERICAN DREAM

By
William
Bairamian

the Armenian-American community when, tragically, AYF member Nataline Sarkisyan lost her life because the deplorable policies of Cigna Health care prevented her from getting a potentially life-saving organ transplant. Cigna's purposeful obstruction of the procedure led to an outpouring of Armenian-American activists, along with health care advocacy groups and individuals, protesting the insurance company's decision to place more importance on their finances than to save an individual's life. The ensuing debacle was nationally televised and the Edwards campaign even flew the Sarkisyan family to New Hampshire to share their harrowing experience with the state's constituents in an effort to show voters the seriousness of America's health care woes.

As the only industrialized Western country to not offer universal health care and as the country with the most expensive health care system in the world, the debate in the United States has intensified. This article will endeavor to explain what is wrong with the health care system in America, what can be done to change it, and how this is all relevant to the Armenian-American community.

What about health care?

In America, health care is the responsibility of each individual or head of household, in the case of families with children. That means that, in most circumstances, a person pays for their own health care and that of their children out of their own pocket. The problem with this system is that since health insurance is provided mostly by private companies, they can charge whatever they like to those

It has been an historical year for the United States: two frontrunners in the race to become the Democratic Party's presidential nominee were a black man and a woman. Without simplifying the accomplishments of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, the impact of their candidacies on the future political environment of America should not be lost on the citizens of this country. Alas, there was something else this year that had never played such an important role in a presidential election cycle: the issue of health care.

Despite the temptation to suggest that it was Michael

Moore's SicKo that provided the impetus for this national discussion, I believe that it was a result of a tacit agreement between Mr. Obama, Mrs. Clinton and the other frontrunner, John Edwards - who exited the race in its early stages - to finally address a frequently ignored problem. Consequently, health care became a central campaign issue for all three Democrats and each candidate had detailed plans on how they would make health care accessible to a greater number - if not all - Americans.

The relevance of this campaign issue became especially poignant to

wanting to buy it and oftentimes, those prices are too expensive for middle-income to low-income workers. First, this can make it difficult even for a person who has a job that pays enough to take care of their family's basic needs (e.g. housing, food, transportation) but who does not have much money to spend on other expenses. So, buying health insurance for oneself or one's children becomes a "luxury" that only some can afford, although a person may be working full-time. Unlike other luxuries, health care is a service necessary for all segments of the population and its availability should not be limited solely to those who have extra money to spend.

Also, just like the weather, the economy is cyclical. Most of you reading this have probably been through a few of these up-down economic cycles and you know about the consequences of each: typically, high employment and market growth during up cycles, low employment and market decline in down cycles. The primary concern here is with those who do not have jobs, not because they do not want to work, but

insurance in order to be able to go to the doctor, if need be.

In the most loathsome scenarios, insurance companies will refuse their health care plans to those with preexisting conditions. This means that if a child has leukemia or if a woman has breast cancer or if a man has a brain tumor before they have insurance, the insurance company can – and most likely will – deny an applicant because of the higher likelihood of death. Because of the exorbitant cost of uninsured health care, this is essentially a death sentence signed by the insurance companies.

What can be done?

There have been numerous proposals of how to solve the problem of uninsured Americans and, fortunately, a few were made on the presidential campaign trail. Because of the varied living situations of the American populace, most of the proposals have been multifaceted. For example, people would have the choice to either keep the insurance plan provided by their employer or buy into a reasonably-priced program offered by the U.S. government.

Included in the health care coverage would be regular and unexpected doctor visits, access to necessary pharmaceutical drugs and insurance for health-oriented (i.e. not plastic) surgeries. Also, it would guarantee that those with pre-existing conditions would still be able to afford health care, giving them a higher chance of surviving their illnesses. Such a system would ensure that everyone would receive, at least, basic medical attention required for a normal, healthy life – or, at least, its pursuit.

Where do we fit in?

Very simply, any of the aforementioned issues can apply to Armenian-Americans; unfortunately, one of them did and we lost Nataline Sarkisyan because of it. As Americans, we need to be concerned that many people who need medical attention do not receive it although they contribute their fair share to the economic well-being of the country and duly pay their taxes.

As Armenians, the tenets of our culture which have given us an admirable reputation as hospitable and respectful people should be parlayed into a sense of social justice that can be partially achieved through the implementation of universal health care.

It is, as I said, an historical time in the United States and if we, as Armenian-Americans, can agree that health care is the right of each individual, we can be a part of that history – a part of potentially the greatest social change this generation of Americans will ever see.

“THE PROBLEM WITH THIS SYSTEM IS THAT SINCE HEALTH INSURANCE IS PROVIDED MOSTLY BY PRIVATE COMPANIES, THEY CAN CHARGE WHATEVER THEY LIKE TO THOSE WANTING TO BUY IT AND OFTENTIMES, THOSE PRICES ARE TOO EXPENSIVE FOR MIDDLE-INCOME TO LOW-INCOME WORKERS.”

because there is no work available to them. A person in this situation is simply negatively affected by circumstance and he or she cannot be expected to buy health

Most universal health care programs would provide coverage regardless of employment status, making sure that unemployment does not result in the loss of health insurance.

COMMUNITY REMEMBERS SACRIFICE OF LISBON 5

By Allen Yekikian

GLENDAL—The Armenian community of Glendale gathered at Saint Mary’s Church in Glendale on Sunday, July 27, for a vigil to commemorate and honor the sacrifice of five young individuals who, on the same day in 1983, occupied the Turkish Embassy in Lisbon to demand the international recognition of the 1915-23 Turkish Genocide against the Armenians. The five individuals, who came to be known as the Lisbon 5, were forced to set off explosives, destroying the embassy and killing themselves.

The requiem service, presided over by Western Prelate Archbishop Moushegh Mardirossian, was followed by a video presentation in the church’s hall dedicated to the memory of Simon Yaheneian, Vatche Daghljian, Sarkis Aprahamian, Setrak Adjemian and Ara Kerjelian—the Lisbon 5.

In attendance were members from the ARF Western USA Central Committee, members of the ARF Aharonian Glendale Chapter, members of the AYP Roupén Chapter, and members of the Glendale Ararat Homenetmen Scouts who carried a wreath in memory of the Lisbon 5 to the Church altar.

Following the vigil, Glendale AYP member Meghnik Babakhanian spoke about the influence the Lisbon 5 has had on today’s young Armenian activists, describing their sacrifice as an inspiration to her generation to learn from the past and work within the political process for the advancement of the Armenian cause.

“Twenty-five years have passed since the sacrifice of the Lisbon 5 and the political atmosphere of the world has changed. It was common for people then to resort to violence in order to be heard,” Babakhanian said, noting, however, that for Armenians—and the Lisbon 5—violence was only used as a last resort. “The times have changed and so have the means with which we struggle for justice.”

“Ara, Sarkis, Setrag, Simon and Vatche, were ardent believers in fairness, justice and human rights. Their sacrifice laid the groundwork for the worldwide political recognition of the Armenian Genocide and their high ideals continue to inspire us today,” she added. “Their memory will live eternally in our hearts and minds as we continue to seek international recognition of the Armenian genocide,” she said.

Following Babakhanian’s speech, 3 AYP badanees, Tony Ghanime, Verginie Touloumian and Nare Terzian recited a poem by famed Armenian poet Hovhannes Shiraz dedicated to the Lisbon 5. Armenian musician Nersik Ispirian also performed “Lisbon 5,” a song dedicated to the five young Armenian activists.

Babakhanian, who served as the event’s Emcee, presented a short video that included short biographies about the five young men, as well as audio reenactments of them as they spoke about themselves and relayed their message to their families and the Armenian community as a whole. The video also featured footage from the Lisbon bombing.

Following the video, Keynote speaker Hovan Tashjian spoke more about the five young men, the circumstances that lead them to Lisbon and how their actions have impacted Armenians today. Their actions were considered a surprise by the world, Tashjian said, adding that “Armenian life was not the same after July 27, 1983.”

In the early 1980s, the entire world seemed apathetic to the Armenian Cause, and the genocide question was consistently brushed aside in diplomatic forums. It was a time of great frustration for the Armenians who faced a vicious campaign to deny the Genocide by a Turkish government unwilling to engage in dialogue concerning the Armenian Genocide.

As the Lisbon 5 characterized it at the time in communiqués to the world, the press and the Portuguese authorities, the

wall of silence surrounding the Armenian Genocide had become so thick, that the only way to penetrate that wall was to make the ultimate sacrifice for one’s country.

Their sacrifice inspired a new generation in the

1990s, as Karabakh freedom fighters sacrificed their lives to liberate the historic Armenian territory and establish a democratic republic, explained Tashjian.

“[The Lisbon 5] were well aware that they were the descendants of the remains of the tragic act of the annihilation of an entire nation at Der Zor. They were the birth of the Armenian Diaspora and had received their national baptism in Armenian schools and youth organizations that marshaled the Armenian Cause, Tashjian said during his remarks. “In our community centers, they had felt the freedom-loving spirit of Nigol Tuman, Dro and the likes.”

Archbishop Mardirossian concluded the event with his own remarks. Echoing Tashjian’s remarks, he added that “25 years ago, on this day, a heroic event was transcribed into our modern history, when 5 young Armenians joined the martyrs of our past, who had died for our homeland and cause.”



ARMENIA AND THE 2008 BEIJING OLYMPICS: A Deeper Meaning & Why We Should Watch

By Arek Santikian

On August 8th, 2008 an estimated 50 million people were glued to their television sets watching the elaborate spectacle of the 2008 Olympics Opening Ceremonies in Beijing, China. Every country cheering for its heroic athletes. Every athlete carrying their country's honor on their shoulders. For most countries, this event passed by like a New York stock market ticker. However, for Armenia, the Olympics hold a deeper meaning.

For Armenians around the world, the Olympics are a time to come together in unification and to celebrate the country's history, struggle, significance, and most of all, its freedom. Olympic representation is a symbol of our country's progress, determination and will. It is a profound moment for Armenians, and it is an event that every Armenian should watch proudly.

For decades up until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenians were forced to participate in the Olympics competing under the flag of the USSR. Every medal won was viewed as a Soviet victory, not an Armenian victory, a fact that undoubtedly bothered Armenians greatly. At home, Armenians were forced to watch sporting events of foreign countries with the hope that they will find at least one Armenian competing.

Yet, it was not until the 1994 Winter Olympics Games in Lillehammer, Norway, and the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia that Armenia was able to represent herself on an international stage. Finally, a chance for Armenians to wave their flags, cheer, and rejoice, as a free and independent nation. Listening to the announcer say "Armenia" into the microphone, listening to the television broadcaster talk about

Armenia's athletes, and listening to the crowd in the arena's cheer, can send chills down any Armenian spine.

This year, newly elected President Serzh Sargsyan, who holds great relations with the Chinese government, personally attended the Opening Ceremonies. More importantly, this year Armenia had 25 athletes participating in 7 sports. Among their staples, which include weightlifting, boxing, shooting, and wrestling, three more sports have been added to their arsenal for 2008: judo, swimming and athletics. With every Olympics, new events are added to the list, which undoubtedly serves as a testament to a dedication towards progress.

The underlying aspect of Olympic participation is not winning gold, or breaking records, rather it is the significance of competing on an international

Yuri Patrikeyev
Wrestling

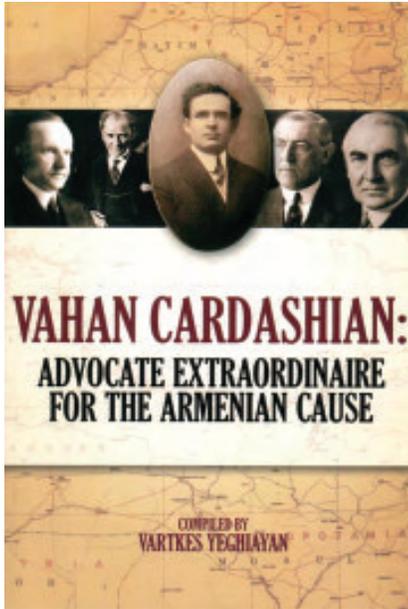


stage, as a free country. It is showing the world that although our numbers are small, our will is endless; and as a nation we have persevered for so many years. Although the Olympics will not get us Genocide recognition, although it will not return to us our lands, it is still a symbol of our country's existence, strength, and independence.

It is for this reason that we must be proud of our Olympic athletes. And it is for this reason we must cheer, shout and rejoice when we see our colors displayed on an international stage.

BOOK REVIEW

UNDERSTANDING CARDASHIAN'S LEGACY



Vahan Cardashian:
Advocate Extraordinaire For The Armenian Cause
Compiled by Vartkes Yeghiayan
CAR Publishing, \$25.00
ISBN: 978-0-9777153-3-6

By Staffwriter

A book on Vahan Cardashian, the man who set the foundation for Armenian political advocacy in the United States, has long been overdue. Finally, earlier this year, the Center for Armenian Remembrance (CAR) released a compilation documenting some of this man's legendary work.

Born in Caesarea around 1880, Cardashian made his way to the United States in 1902. After graduating with a law degree from Yale in 1908 he went on to open a successful legal practice in New York.

Interestingly enough, Cardashian actually later became the representative for the Ottoman Embassy in the US. As he learned of the Turkish government's plans to exterminate his own people—including his mother and sister, who became victims of the Genocide—he resigned his post and transformed himself into a “one-man army” fighting for the Armenian Cause.

Cardashian was most well known as the founder of the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia (ACIA), the precursor to today's Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA). Working alongside the likes of Armen Garo (Armenia's then Ambassador to the US), he succeeded in rallying countless prominent Americans in support of pro-Armenian issues.

The book features both a biography and synopsis of Cardashian's life and work. It also features excerpts of his reports, correspondence and writings during his advocacy with the ACIA. These writings offer direct insight into the issues and arguments being fought over in US policy at the time. They also reveal the nature of the battles an Armenian patriot such as Cardashian had to confront. Ironically, the lessons of these battles are as relevant today as they were back then.

Cardashian eventually passed away in 1934, in pursuit of the Armenian Cause until his very last breath. Although he was not able to shift US policy against collaboration with Kemalist Turkey, his efforts helped lead to such successes as Woodrow Wilson's push for a viable Armenia in the Treaty of Sevres, official White House recognition of the Armenian Republic and the blocking of American ratification of the Treaty of Lausanne.

More importantly, the standard of sacrifice, political influence, and integrity that he established became the blueprint for future generations of Armenian activists in the United States. Understanding his legacy and ideas should be paramount to anyone concerned with the future of Armenian American political action. If you're one of those people, you should definitely consider picking up this book.

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