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ardziv

արժիվ

**ՀԱՍՏԱՏ ՔԱՅԼԵՐՈՎ՝
ԴԵՊԻ ԱՊԱԳԱՅ**





Ardziv is published by the Armenian Youth Federation of Canada and distributed free of charge within the community for those who strive for the national, social and economic liberation of the Armenian people.

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EDITORIAL

WE OFTEN FIND OURSELVES MOVING OUR FEET, BUT GETTING NOWHERE.

It's almost like no matter how hard we try, there is just no way to reach our goal. Perhaps it is because we are no longer moving in the right direction. Sometimes it's not so much that we aren't moving fast enough, or trying hard enough, but that the path we are following is no longer leading us to where we want to go.

Throughout history, the Armenian people have always found a way to survive. Even after centuries of foreign oppressive rule, and several failed attempts at annihilation, our people have been able to continue their fight for survival.

Today, there are new challenges we must overcome as a people. We must evolve in order to keep up with a changing environment. Change is necessary...With change comes new beginnings. The Armenian youth must take responsibility to bring about change that will lead our people to a brighter future. Ardziv will once again become the forum in which these ideas of change will be discussed without restraint. This issue is only the beginning...

ՀԱՍՏԱՏ ՔԱՅԼԵՐՈՎ ԴԵՊԻ ԱՊԱԳԱՅ

Ահաւասիկ «Արծիւ» պաշտօնաթերթի վերածնունդը:

«Արծիւ»՝ Հայ Յեղափոխական Դաշնակցութեան Գանատայի երիտասարդական Միութեան (ՀՅԴ ԳԵՄ) եւ Գանատահայ երիտասարդին ձայնը արձագանգող պաշտօնաթերթը, իր այժմեականացած էջերով ու նոր կայքէջով կրկին անգամ կը հրամցուի հայ երիտասարդին, առիթ ստեղծելով որ ան կարենայ արձակել իր երեւակայութիւնը, արտայայտել իր մտազբաղութիւնները եւ պոռթկալ անարդարութեան դիմաց:

«Արծիւ»-ի 2012-ի առաջին հատորը նուիրուած է վերածնունդի ոչ միայն պաշտօնաթերթին, այլ նաեւ ընդհանուր մեր երիտասարդութեան: Մեր ժողովուրդի պատմութեան մէջ վերածնունդի վերագրութիւնները բազմաթիւ են Աւարայրէն մինչեւ Մեծ Եղեռն: Այսօր սակայն, Յեղասպանութեան 100 ամեակի սեմին, հերմակ ջարդի սպառնալիքը մեր դիմաց՝ կրկին անգամ հայ ազգի եւ մանաւանդ հայ երիտասարդութեան վերածնունդն է պէտք: Արթննալով անտարբերութեան երազներէն, հայ երիտասարդին պարտականութիւնը պիտի ըլլայ՝ պայքարիլ ձուլումի դէմ, խօսիլ հայերէն, կառչած մնալ մեր ազգի ու կրօնքի սկզբունքներուն, սիրել ու քաջալերել հայ մշակոյթը, քաջատեղեակ ըլլալ մեր ազգն ու հայրենիքը մտահոգող հարցերուն եւ դառնալ Հայ Դատի պաշպան զինուորները:

Կարդալով «Արծիւ»-ը, մեր կարծիքները յայտնելով անոր էջերուն մէջ եւ ըմբռնելով մեր պարտականութիւնները իբրեւ 21րդ դարու Հայ երիտասարդներ, անկասկած իրերայաջորդ հայ սերունդները պիտի կարենան յաղթահարել Հայ ժողովուրդի առջեւ ցցուած բոլոր մարտահրաւերները:

Ներկայ Հայրենիք

Նայիրի Թիլիմեան, «Ս. Զաւարեան» Մասնահիւղ

1920 թուականին Հայաստանը խորհրդայնացաւ: Խորհրդային Միութեան փլուզումէն ետք, 21 Սեպտեմբեր 1991-ին, հանրաքուէի մեծամասնութեամբ Հայաստանը վերանկայացաւ:

Այսօր, 20 տարի յետոյ, Հայաստանը տակաւին կը գտնուի զարգացման փուլին մէջ:

Ընդհանուր առմամբ, վերջին 20 տարիներու ընթացքին որոշ փոփոխութիւններ կրած են երկրի եւ ժողովուրդի իրավիճակները: Օրինակ՝ Երեւանի մէջ զգալի շինարարական աշխատանք տարուած է եւ մեծ թիւով վաճառատուներ բացուած են: Սակայն Երեւանի սահմաններէն անդին, ալ մարզերու բազմաթիւ գիւղերու մէջ, շինարարական աշխատանքի կարիքը էական է: Այս անհամասարտութիւնը պատճառներէն մէկն է ժողովուրդի դժգոհութեան:

Հայաստանի մէջ, ներկայիս, չկան միջին դասակարգի ընտանիքներ: Ժողովուրդը բաժնուած է կամ մաղքատ եւ կամ շատ հարուստ խումբերու, որը պատճառ կը դառնայ նախանձութեան, գողութեան, եւ խաբէբայութեան: Անգործութիւնը եւ սուղ գինները ժողովուրդին մեծ մասը ձգած է շատ ծանր վիճակի մէջ, եւ պատճառ դարձած է արտագաղթի: Ժողովուրդին աշխատավարձը դրամը շատ անգամ ուշ կը վճարուի ու ընտանիքներ անօթի կը մնան: Երիտասարդ տղամարդիկ յաճախ կը ձգեն իրենց ընտանիքները եւ կը մեկնին հեռու երկիրներ աշխատանք գտնելու համար: Նաեւ շատ մը պզտիկներ դպրոցը կը ցքեն որպէսզի աշխատանքի անցնին: Այս շատ մտահոգիչ երեւոյթ է: Կառավարութիւնը մեծ դեր ունի իր ժողովուրդին վիճակը եւ այս դրութիւնը բարելաւելու մէջ, սակայն այս ուղղութեամբ շատ քայլեր չ'առնէր: Հայաստանաբնակ մեր հայրենակիցները մինչեւ օրս կ'ըսեն թէ կը նախընտրեն սովետական ժամանակները, երբ կառավարութիւնը իրենց աշխատանք եւ ապրելու յարմարութիւն կը տրամադրէր: Այս իրականութիւնը նաեւ շատ ցաւալի է: Այնքան ատեն որ ժողովուրդը հանգիստ կեանք չի կրնար ապրիլ, այս մտածելակերպը պիտի չընշուի:

Ի՞նչ կրնանք ընել մենք, բարելաւելու համար մեր հայրենիքը: Ծի՞շդ է որ մենք սփիւռքահայերս, հայրենիքէն դուրս ապրելով եւ տեսնելով բոլոր թերութիւնները, քննադատենք կառավարութիւնն ու ժողովուրդը: Իւրաքաչիւրս, որպէս հայ, պարտականութիւն ունինք մեր կարողութեան սահմաններու մէջ օգտակար դառնալու մեր հայրենիքին: Առաջին քայլը պիտի ըլլայ ճամբորդել հայրենիք

եւ մօտէն ծանօթանալ մեր ժողովուրդին ու անոր կարիքներուն, իսկ յետոյ տեսնել մեր մասնագիտութեամբ ինչպէս կրնանք օգտակար ըլլալ: Օրինակի համար, եթէ բժիշկ մը սփիւրքէն կրնայ քանի մը շաբաթ հայաստանի գիւղերը այցելել եւ հոգալ ժողովուրդին կարիքներուն, բազմաթիւ ընտանիքներու օգնած կ'ըլլայ: Իր աշխատանքը նաեւ օրինակ կը դառնայ ուրիշ սփիւրքահայերուն:

Հայաստանի կառավարութիւնը պէտք է երկրի զարգացման աշխատանքներուն աւելի կարեւորութիւն տայ: Հայաստանի տնտեսական վիճակը պէտք է բարելաւի: Ներկայիս՝ համալսարաններ կան ուր անպատճառ դասարանները կ'արձակուին ու աշակերտները իրենց այդ օրուայ դասը չէն սորվիր: Յատկապէս պէտք է ժողովուրդին ուսումը բարձր մակարդակի վրայ ըլլայ եւ երիտասարդութեան համար պէտք է աշխատանքի առիթներ ստեղծուին, որպէսզի արտագաղթը վերանայ:

Հայաստանը մեր հայրենիքն է:

Ինչքան ալ պայմանները դժուար ըլլան, Հայաստանը մեր տո՛ւնն է:

Մենք ենք որ պիտի բարելաւենք զայն:

Վերջապէս, ամէն մէկս ի մօտի ունենանք որ պիտի վերադառնա՞նք եւ հայրենիք հաստատուինք: □



UNITING A NATION:

The Case for Armenian Diaspora Representation



By: Shant Karayan - "Levon Shant" Chapter Alumnus

There are many tragic consequences to the Armenian Genocide. The millions of people brutally murdered, deported or forcefully assimilated is the most direct and obvious consequence of the Ottoman government's heinous campaign of destruction. Of course, this loss of life is the most disastrous of consequences but infrastructure for one is the consequence we can most easily put a price tag on. Several specialists say that there was over 180 billion dollars (in today's USD) worth of public infrastructure destroyed or confiscated by the Ottoman and later Republican authorities that once belonged to Armenian interests. That's about 20 times the worth of the economy of today's Republic of Armenia.

This essay does not deal with any of that however. This essay will treat what has been one of the seldom uttered realities of the post-genocide Armenian nation; the complete and utter lack of representative politics. It is true that most of the Armenian intelligentsia perished during the Medz Yeghern, and the timing could not have been worse. In a period of great political, intellectual and cultural evolution, most of the greatest leaders of this small but determined nation suddenly vanished and left a void hardly filled by the handful that remained. The Levon Shant's, the Vratsyan's, the Aghpalyan's of this world were handed the sorry task of caring for refugees, fighting epidemics and making sure inflation does not destroy this hardworking people's future prospects. Alas, none of them had the gift of foresight to be able to see the glooming threats of both Republican Turkey and Soviet

Russia. They had no time for nation building, or the transmission of political values as the need for self preservation handed the burgeoning Republic to the hands of the Soviet Union. As a result, the Armenians dispersed in the Diaspora waited 50 years before being able to create strong networks of political leadership. But is it enough? The structure of Diasporan leadership today could be considered outdated and ill prepared for the globalized world we live in. It is time for a Nation, politically divided by the sword of the Turk to reunite and usher a new era of strength and cooperation. It is time for an Armenian Diasporan Parliament.

Creating a new Armenian Parliament, able to accommodate the voice of the Diaspora, seems like a logistical nightmare at best, and ludicrous at worst, but I ask the reader to keep an open mind. Armenia and the greater Diaspora exist in an increasingly globalized world and post modern thought or "thinking outside the box" as it is most commonly referred to, is necessary to accomplish the exemplary. The idea is not all that farfetched. Kenya recently developed a similar process, as have Macedonia and Italy in the past. What is important to note is that these nations understood the vital asset that their Diaspora can constitute and have taken steps to leverage it accordingly. What we must do, as one of very few nations to have a Diaspora larger than the Nationals is first, accept the fact that the Spyurk has equal right and responsibility in determining the course of the Nation's future and as such, should have equal representation. The first problem immediately strikes the reader here. How can (in most cases)



non-nationals – as most Diaspora Armenians are - be made to determine legislation and politics of a sovereign state?

Philosophically, all that needs to be done is to question the definition of "National". Must one be a citizen to be deeply involved and affected by the fate of the country he calls Fatherland? Does the foreign policy or economic reform of Armenia affect me, even though I am a Canadian citizen? It seems evident to anyone who would identify themselves as Armenian or armenophile, that they hold these issues as dear to them as the infrastructure in Montreal and the state of the Canadian health-care system. What will really be the challenge is aligning this within the technical framework of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia. Although the constitution allows for the possibility of dual citizenship, you must still be a resident of the Republic in order to be elected to office, and in some cases, you must be a resident for over 10 years to do so. Changing the constitution in this manner would be difficult and quite possibly seen as counterproductive. How can one who in essence has not lived the reality of the country be elected to lead it? This is not what I am proposing. What needs to be implemented in the constitution is a second level of citizenry, one that would allow for certain rights and liberties while encompassing the geographical limitations of the new citizens. Citizen of the Diaspora of Armenia. This status, if encompassed correctly within the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia could solve the issues

of the "takeover" of Diaspora Armenians in the internal dynamic of the republic. As such, the status of Citizen of the Diaspora of Armenia would extend some rights to the Armenians around the world, such as a right to vote, but limit it to a framework based on relevance. For instance, a Diasporan Armenian should not have a say in what colour the public bus network of Yerevan should use in their logo, but should be able to participate in any referendum pertaining to how the constitution is modified as this has implications on the Armenian race as a whole.

Another challenge is to determine how this new status of citizen would be incorporated as a part of the structure of the Armenian state. Several different options have been seen in the past and have more or less proved useful to different countries around the world. Some promote a committee of counsellors, volunteers appointed to give their ideas about how Diaspora should be handled. Although comprised entirely of members of the Diaspora, this council would hold little sway on the overall governance of the country. Others have suggested including several seats in their national Parliament dedicated to representatives of their Diaspora. More official than the council mentioned earlier, 5-6 seats in parliament hardly constitute any type of effective representation. I would propose a solution as unique as the Armenian race itself. I propose the establishment of a second chamber of Parliament, entirely composed of delegates from the Diaspora and located in the Diaspora itself. The advantages of such a system are vast. As delegates gather from all across the world for plenary sessions, this house of the Diaspora could potentially be very efficient in first, resolving issues directly involving Diaspora communities, but also, assisting the Republic of Armenia address certain issues with global Armenian implications. As a function house of Parliament, this congress would have the legitimacy needed to include all factions of Armenians in the democratic process and also the power to make a difference in the Armenian Nation. Certain limitations should be decreed in the constitution as to what matters this congress can and can't discuss, but the idea is sound. One thing that the Parliament of Diaspora Armenians should be solely responsible for is to determine the person delegated to the post of Minister of Diaspora Relations, who should also be presiding over the plenary sessions of Parliament. Just as a Diaspora Armenian cannot determine the location of street lamps in Gyumri, a non-Diaspora Armenian cannot understand the reality of the Diaspora. It goes without saying that such a Parliament would have huge implications not only for the Armenian nation, but also for

the country hosting the Parliament, which I will discuss further below. The Minister should have a guiding role and a unifying force for the Diasporan Armenians, for the betterment of these communities and the advancement of Armenian interests abroad.

Questions should naturally arise as to where such a parliament should be located. Keeping in mind the purpose of this legislative assembly, and the spirit of its conception, it is important that should be located in the Diaspora itself. The implications of such a determination are vast and complex. Due to its geographical location, could this Parliament possibly become subject to influence from the hosting nation? It is definitely a possibility, however the risks are offset by the fact that its powers and responsibilities are limited to the Diaspora, which in turn works under the frame of local government. Moreover, how would such a body be legally able to operate in a foreign land? It is not uncommon for countries to grant parcels of territory to other nations as either favours or as part of a larger diplomatic framework. For instance, a parcel of land in Ottawa was by quick legislative action proclaimed as part of the Kingdom of Netherlands in order to secure the birth of the heir of the Dutch throne during the Second World War as Dutch law disavows royal lineage if the heir is born outside Dutch soil. Embassies are also considered legally part of foreign countries. It would not be unusual for the Parliament of Diaspora Armenians to be granted such a licence. The question remains however, where would be the ideal location of said Parliament. Many factors should be considered, such as a strong and vibrant Armenian community, central geographical location, stable geopolitical environment, friendly host nation, etc. Several cities could vie to become hosts. Los Angeles is an obvious contender as its sizable and rich Armenian minority has strong influence. However it is located at the western end of the world and could be too remote to serve as an effective rallying point for Diaspora Armenians. Beirut had for a long time been the centre of the Diaspora for the Armenian minority, but unfortunately, it is not what it once was and unpredictable political turmoil in the region does not lend to the effective practice of legislative assembly. Both Russia and Australia could possibly be considered hosts, as well as some of the South American locations such as Sao Paulo or Buenos Aires; however it is difficult to gauge the host countries sensibilities towards the Armenian Cause and are also geographically distant locations. Two areas of the world that could possibly fit all criteria are the European Union, France in particular, and Canada. France has historical ties to Armenia, a sizeable and

deeply integrated Armenian community and a vested interest in the advancement of the Armenian cause. After all, the last kings of Armenia were French in origin. Canada could be a viable option as well. Canada has had an Armenian Diaspora since the late 19th century and historically has treated minority communities with respect and understanding. Montreal, Toronto, Marseille and Paris could all be viable locations, with Toronto and Marseille being frontrunners due to their more vibrant communities. The Canadian advantage is the proximity to both Europe Middle-East and the States, while the French would have the advantage of being located in a country which has historically been a defender of the Armenian Cause.

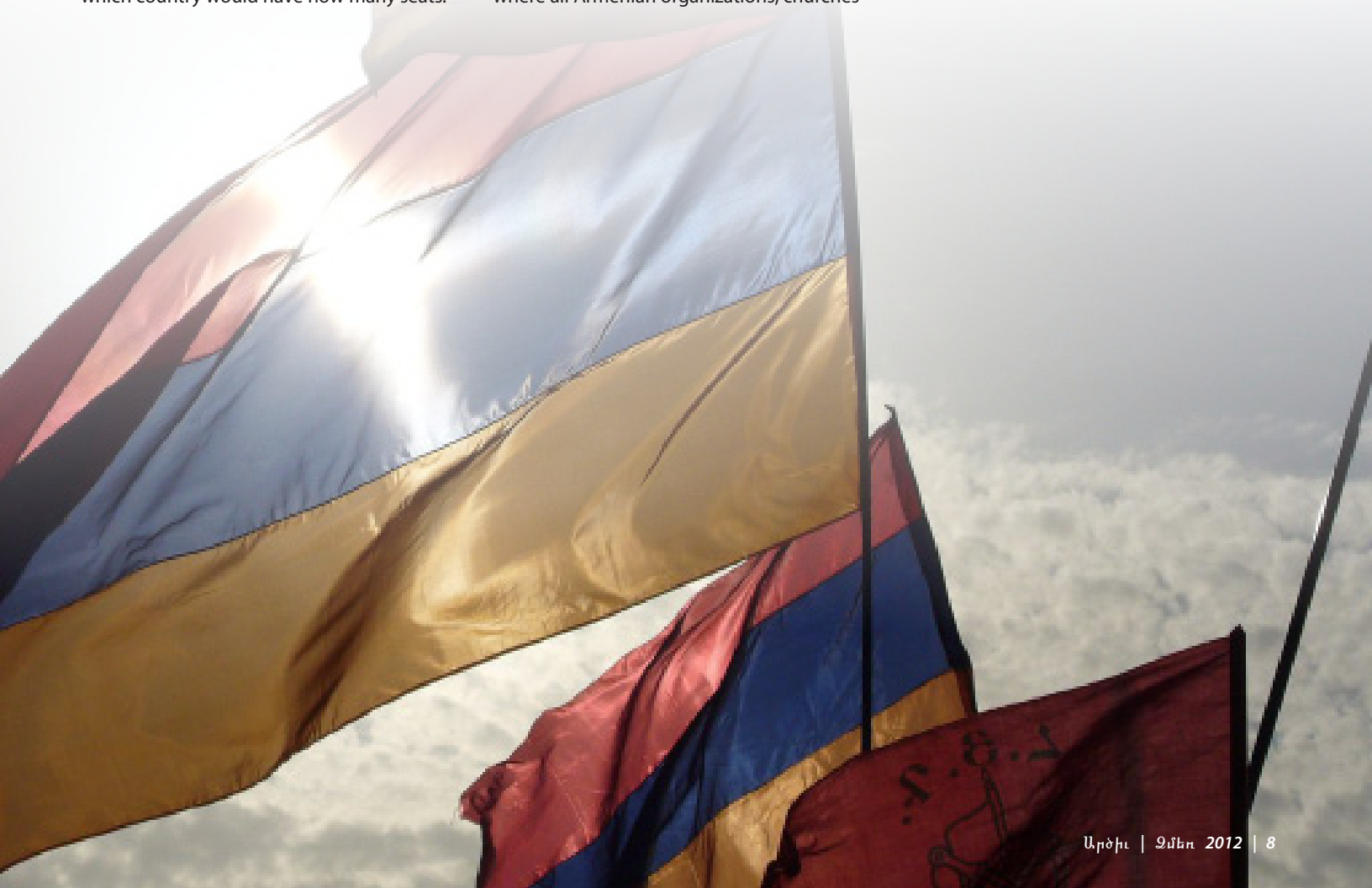
Location however is not nearly as important as the composition of the Parliament itself. How would delegates be elected? Who would vote for them? Who would finance elections and political parties? All of these questions and much more are valid and deserve careful attention and study. There are many different options available to us. In Canada, we have a House of Commons that is divided by geography and guarantees each province a certain amount of seats. Should such a division be incorporated in our Parliament of Diaspora Armenians? It is definitely arguable however difficult it would be to determine which country would have how many seats.

This could create the issue of the United States and Russian factions control most of the seats. And what of small communities such as Egypt or India, would they be allowed representation? Or should there be a minimum population enforced.

In Armenia, the system dictates a mixed representative and proportional system where some of the members of parliament are elected based on districts and others by party lists. This, I believe, could be a viable option for the Parliament of Diaspora Armenians where I see no reason to not have half of the delegates be elected based on geographical representation and the other half based on party vote proportions. The details of how many seats each geographical zone should receive would need to be further discussed but essentially it is important to accept the fact that the geographical dispersal of the Diaspora imposes a similar distinction in its representation. As for the questions of who gets elected and who votes for them, it is important to note that I will not treat logistical details here. It suffices to say that there should be a period where time is given for diasporan Armenians, above the age of 16 or 18, to voluntarily register as voters either via online registration or through community centers and churches. Here is the crucial point in the whole process, the point where all Armenian organizations, churches

and families work together in order to secure the registration of as many voters as possible. If this fails, if all of the Diaspora does not unite to construct this initiative then the process can never be completed. Details such as the length of the mandate or salary of elected officials should be determined in the future, however the principle of a large number of voters should be held. I believe a minimum of 1 million Armenia voters around the world should register in order to make the process respectable and viable.

A Parliament of Diaspora Armenians and the Citizens of the Diaspora of Armenia are both ideas, concepts of what the future for our nation might hold. We saw through the paper a train of thought, an abstract string of concepts and process that could plant the seeds so that future generations may reap the harvest. What is incumbent upon all of us is to think of the future, think how to maximize our gains based on our wide breadth of resources and to strengthen our nation. My suggestion in these pages is only one of many options available to us as a nation; it is up to you to decide which is best. □



VIOLENCE:

Perceptions of Domestic Violence in Armenia

By: Sylva Kakoussian, "Aram Manougian" Chapter

Living in a country where women are considered equal, and where domestic violence is not tolerated, it is difficult to understand how domestic violence is a casual topic in Armenian television shows.

Recently an article was posted on the Armen Karo website entitled "Armenian TV Series Glamourise Domestic Violence" which sheds light on the issue of domestic violence and how it is perceived in Armenia. After reading the article and doing research on the case of Zaruhi Petrosyan it is clear that there is much to be done for women's rights in Armenia. The article discussed how popular television shows depict a woman as being inferior to men, and how men are able to control women with violence. The question remains whether portraying violence against women as an everyday occurrence on popular television shows further enforces the social acceptance of using violence to control a woman.

A related article, written by Nanore Barsoumian ("Domestic Abuse? What Abuse? ... She Fell and Died!"), is an extensive documentation of the murder case of Zaruhi Petrosyan and also touches on the issue of the Armenian government's denial of there being domestic violence, and tolerance of such actions. Over one year has passed since Zaruhi's passing, but her death was not in vain. An initiative by the United Nations Population Fund called "Combating Gender Based Violence in the South Caucasus" project was established to respond to the issue of domestic violence. Their website is a good source to get a better understanding of gender based violence in Armenia and what they have done to campaign against it. It is encouraging to see that impartial, non-Armenian groups, such as the UNPF, are willing to assist Armenia, in order to cultivate a safe environment where men and women can be considered equal.

I remember when I was a high school student and how entire classes would participate in annual walks protesting violence against women. Prior to these demonstrations there would be class discussions and lectures about violence against women. It difficult to believe that in this day and age there are still countries where domestic /gender based violence is considered a social norm. How would a protest similar to one I have participated in be perceived in Armenia? With initiatives such as that by the UNPF, women's rights may no longer be considered a taboo subject in Armenia. □

THE IMPORTANCE OF VISITING ARMENIA

By: Edward. Kabakian, "Simon Zavarian" Chapter

I strongly believe that every Armenian should visit Armenia at least once during their lifetime. By visiting Armenia, not only do we return to our roots and see where our forefathers came from, but we also renew our commitment to the Armenian cause by seeing our motherland with our own eyes.

During the summer of 2010, I had the privilege of visiting Armenia with the ARF JOC. Members from Montreal, Cambridge & Toronto participated in this once in a lifetime trip, which surely was a remarkable excursion for us all. Simply taking my first steps on Armenian soil invoked feelings within me that I cannot explain in words. The best way I can possibly describe it was a sense of pride mixed along with a sense of gratification. I was proud because we have a free and liberated country, and thankful since I was able to see it firsthand, thanks to the ARF JOC.

Since we were younger, we have continuously been taught about Armenian history and Armenia's famous landmarks. From our time in school to our weekly meetings, conversations would always come up about how beautiful or how breathtaking certain areas of Armenia were. However, it was only after visiting the country that those conversations actually meant something more to me. Armenia was not an idea in our minds anymore. It was finally in front of our very eyes. After seeing the historic churches and various landmarks throughout our excursion did we realize how much history our nation holds and how passionate we should be when it comes to our past.

Unfortunately, as the trip progressed and the country moved further away from an idea and became more real to us, we also began seeing the other side of Armenia. It is almost impossible not to realize the amount of poverty that exists in the country. Regardless of having nothing, even most unfortunate children on the streets still managed to greet us with huge smiles on their faces. Not only did this make me realize how lucky we were and how much we have in our daily lives that we take for granted, but also got me thinking about how Armenia and its population are in need of such dire help. It is our duty as Armenians across the world to aid in our country's wellbeing.

One should not think about a visit to Armenia as a holiday. While you are sure to have a great time during your trip, it can also be a life-altering experience. Not only will seeing the country instill within you a sense of pride and appreciation, it will also get you thinking about the country's future and wellbeing. I strongly believe that every Armenian should visit Armenia at least once during their lifetime, because it is only by seeing the country with your own eyes that you can truly understand its problems and help its future.

I hope to someday return and help the nation prosper in any way I can. The country has lasted through much heartache and countless problems and can only flourish from here on. □

LEST THEY PERISH: The Cry From Javakhk

By: Daniel Ohanian, "Simon Zavarian" Chapter
Photos By: Allen Yekikian

The following is an interview recently conducted with a Javakhtsi Armenian. Although the conditions here have been reported in different ways at different times, I found that there is a paucity of firsthand accounts given by those living in the region itself. It is hoped that through this interview, we will be able to amplify the voices of our fellow Armenians in a way not possible for them in their present situation.

Let's begin with a simple but important question. What is Javakhk and where is it located?

The name Javakhk can be understood in two ways. Samtskhe-Javakheti is a province within the Republic of Georgia in the South Caucasus – an administrative division. But Javakhk is also understood as a smaller region in the southeastern corner of the country – an historical entity.

The name Javakhk is a phonetic derivative of Zabakha, a name used since the 9th century BC. The region was ruled by Armenians, Iranians, Iberians and others over the centuries, always maintaining its Armenian identity. During the time that the Kingdom of Armenia existed – that is, from 200 BC to 400 AD – Javakhk was part of the province of Gugark.

Moving on to the modern era, we find Javakhk being a battleground between the Persians and Ottomans for several decades until Ottoman hegemony over the area was established in 17th century. From that point onward, the population was subjected to massacre and forced conversion to Islam, but foreign immigration was so low that an Ottoman census shows the majority of the population remaining Armenian.

Soon afterward, it was annexed by Tsarist Russia and the Armenians of not only Javakhk, but Tbilisi as well, flourished economically and culturally.

What is the Armenian population in the region?

90% of the region's inhabitants are ethnically Armenian, a percentage which amounts to roughly 150,000 people. The remaining 10% are largely Georgian, but we have been seeing an influx of Turkish and Azerbaijani migrants in recent years. The primary cities (Akhalkalak and Akhaldzkha) and many villages are almost exclusively Armenian; in Akhalkalak, for example, we make up 95% of the population. Outside of Samtskhe-Javakheti, an additional 200,000 live in the capital, Tbilisi.

How would you summarise the major challenges faced by Armenians in Javakhk?

The biggest problem we have is with our youth, but there are political, social, religious and economic issues, too. The government puts great pressure on us to forget our language, our cultural treasures and to leave our homeland. Using Armenian is illegal here, for example.

We're facing a growing age gap. A large portion of Javakhtsi

youth leave for Yerevan to study and end up staying there after securing their diplomas. Those that don't leave for Armenia pursue postsecondary education in Tbilisi and settle there, or immigrate to Russia to find work.

Here is another facet to the age problem: it's normal for men and women here to get married between the ages of 18 and 21. So by the time they reach a point where they've attained the necessary amount of maturity and experience to be able to have a positive and meaningful impact on the region and its problems, they're already preoccupied with securing a family. So the pool of young, capable Javakhtsis remains meagre. We need to find ways of keeping them here and ameliorating the situation.

You mentioned that the use of Armenian is illegal. So you can't speak your mother tongue when you're out on the street or in public?

No, we can speak it in the street, but legal documents have to be in Georgian – they can't be in Armenian. We can't import Armenian language newspapers into Javakhk; we are made to organise our own press, which requires funding. Because we're an ethnic majority, we're allowed to teach Armenian in our schools, but the number of hours of Armenian-language class has been decreased from 8 hours per week roughly 6 years ago to only 4 hours this coming term, while the length of Georgian classes has increased. There was a law passed recently mandating that all schools be renamed to follow a generic numbering



system; so a school that was called Hayk Nahapet Secondary School may now be known as Georgian Secondary School Number 13. In this way, they lose their connection with their fundamental Armenian identity. The use of imported Armenian-language texts is barred; instead, the government has decided we're to use books translated from Georgian by them. But the translations are so inaccurate that they sometimes don't make sense. So how are our sons and daughters supposed to learn? Those that teach Armenian are underpaid, too, thereby discouraging people from pursuing that career path. They're playing a zero-sum game here; they're not only making it harder for our Armenian teachers to work, they're also making it so that there is increased demand for Georgian teachers to take their place.

What types of religious problems are there here?

What we see in Javakhk is a clear attempt at erasing the Armenian character of our churches, which have been here for centuries. They destroy or remove khachkars and the Armenian writing engraved on church walls, then seek to Georgify them by bringing the building under the ownership of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Clerics will come and announce to the village that this is now a Georgian church, etc.

Our Church currently operates outside the proper legal framework in Georgia. It does not have any de jure legitimacy here because the government does not accredit it the proper legal recognition it deserves. These are our major problems.

Are steps being taken to afford our churches proper de jure standing, or is that something that has already been tried and failed?

That's unfortunately something our religious leaders here would be able to answer in greater detail than I.

If they're able to completely erase the Armenian character of the churches, what would the consequences be for the Armenians living here?

If this were to happen, we would become witness to the same situation we see in Western Armenia, which has been taken from us. Javakhtsis consider themselves a people indigenous to this region. It's well known that there were waves of immigration in the 1830s and 1840s, but there was a large population living here before then.

Today's Georgian historians give us a different official account than their Armenian counterparts and these may be interpreted as two subjective readings of history. But the physical things we see around us have to bear witness to the truth, right? And what we see is that in the 5th century, Armenian churches were built. So there was Armenian life here, an Armenian faith. This is what we see. And we haven't even spoken about our fortresses and walled cities yet, which further solidify our "version" of history as the truth.

And despite the fact that the majority of the population is Armenian, you aren't able to make your way into the political arena to solve these issues?

There are a small number of Armenians in local government, but it appears that that's not sufficient. They only represent 10% of the governing body and aren't able to bring about meaningful change through the positions they occupy. The true power lays higher up, at echelons we don't have access to.

So, at the federal level.

Yes, at the federal level.

Although all these problems exist, it seems that the Georgian government hasn't made a clear effort at keeping Javakhk underdeveloped the way we see in south-eastern Turkey, for example. The roads are well-paved, there is running water and there are new construction projects all around. These are things



that even Armenians living in Armenia don't always have. What explanation is there for this dichotomy?

Look, we are living, after all, in the 21st century. The days of not having running water or electricity are behind us. But there are several important points to make here.

The primary land routes linking Georgia to Turkey and Armenia run through Javakhk, so keeping the roads in good repair is an important economic asset to Tbilisi. The country also received \$300 million as part of the US' Millennium Challenge programme. A third of this amount was earmarked by the Americans for road repair projects between the capital and the borders with Turkey and Armenia.

So, yes, you're correct in noting that there is a good deal of active construction work in Javakhk, but the companies that are granted these long-term projects are usually either Turkish or Azerbaijani and hire their workforces out of those countries. These labourers then sponsor their families to join them and end up settling here. All this happens while Javakhtsis have to emigrate in order to secure an income, thereby weakening our majority in the region. When you look past the surface, there are strong indications that we are being subject to an organised effort at weakening our presence on our ancestral land.

What has the Diaspora's role been in Javakhk and in what new ways can the Diaspora help?

Unfortunately, we haven't seen the same level of interest in and support for Javakhk that we've been seeing for Artsakh.

Moving forward, the Diaspora can put the Javakhk issue on the agendas of many different organisations and countries around the world. There are always attempts at silencing this issue when it arises on the international stage and the Diaspora can oppose that. You can also help us overcome our national, religious and socio-economic hurdles. And most importantly, our linguistic and cultural issues.

We are trying to claim our rights in Javakhk. According to the Congress of the Council of Europe [in which Georgia holds five seats], as a national minority and as an ethnic majority in Samtskhe-Javakheti, our language must be given official status. Georgian will remain the official language of the Republic, but Armenian must become a recognised second language. Especially seeing as how our schools are losing their Armenian character and it's becoming increasingly difficult to teach Armenian to our children, this is very important.

Considering Javakhk is not part of the Republic of Armenia, do you consider yourself a Diasporan?

No. If you called a Javakhtsi on the street a spyurkahye, they would probably consider it an insult. The word spyurk doesn't even fit in

Javakhkahye... Javakhkaspyurkahye? It's awkward, it doesn't make sense. We don't accept that label. Here is a concrete example I can use to demonstrate. When the Republic of Armenia's Diaspora Ministry wanted to organise an event here, we refused their invitation. Look, let them send their Committee of Physical Education and Sports or something different; we would be more than happy to accept their help. But not the Diaspora Ministry. We're not Diasporans. We're an ancient people living on historically Armenian soil, regardless of what the Georgian government says. This is a part of Armenia and we're Armenians. We're not part of the present Republic, but this is still Armenia. We're not Diasporans.

Thank you for your time so far. Do you have any thoughts you would like to share in lieu of closing remarks?

Simply that our nation must remain united, because if history has taught us anything, it's that when Armenians stand united, we have the power to solve problems in ways that are beneficial to us, not others. □



Արարատը կը խօսի

Տեսէք ինչպէս կը ժպտամ այսօր,
Քեզի կը կանչեմ կարօտով,
Հայուն սարը դար մը անհայ,
Կը դիտէ քեզի հայ երիտասարդ...

Քեզի համար ես ինչպէս հարս՝ քողս հանեցի,
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Քեզի համար այսօր իմ լաւս տուի
Որ տեսնես ու երկար նայիս, չի կշտանաս:

Չի կշտանաս որ կրկին գաս,
Ուխտես ինչպէս պապդ աքսորին,
Վերադառնալ ինծի կրկին
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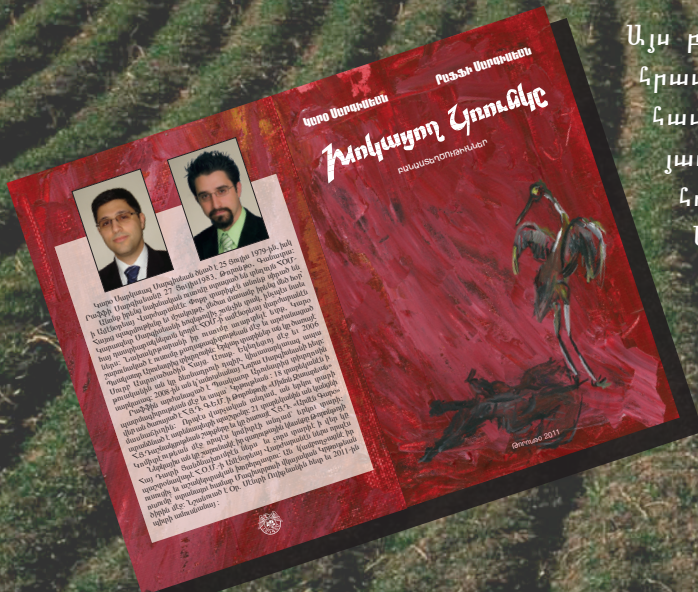
Մի թերանար, մի խրտչիր,
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Մի հեռանար, ինծի մի թողիր
Մի մոռնար, սիրտն եմ հայի...

Ի զո՞ւր հազար երգ ինծի համար գրեցին
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Ի զո՞ւր հազարներն քեզի նման եկան ուխտի,
Պայքար խոստացան, վերջ իմ շղթաներու...

Թէ կ'այ ինձմէ գեղեցիկն ու հարազատը աւելի
Սիրահարուեց'ար ուրիշ գեղունի հետ օտարի,
Առանց սրտի սէրն ի զուր է, կը կորչի
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Րաֆֆի Սարգիսեան

«Ս. Զաւարեան» Մասնաճիւղի Շրջանաւարտ



Այս բանաստեղծութիւնը կը գտնուի ՀՅԴ ԳԵՄ-ի հրատարակած «Խոկացող Կռունկը» բանաստեղծական հատորին մէջ: Գիրքերու հասոյթը ամբողջութեամբ կը յատկացուի ՀՅԴ ԳԵՄ Կեդրոնական Վարչութեան հովանաւորած Վանատորի Ամառնային Ճամբարին: Ապահովելու համար ձեր օրինակը, թիմեցէ՛ք central.executive@ayfcanada.org ե-հասցէին:

This piece is a part of a collection of poems by Raffi and Garo Sarkissians entitled “The Reflecting Crane”, published by AYF Canada in 2011. To purchase a copy, please e-mail us at central.executive@ayfcanada.org. All proceeds will help fund AYF Canada’s Youth Corps - Camp Vanatsor.



REFLECTIONS FROM ARMENIA: TWENTY YEARS AFTER RE-INDEPENDENCE

By: Rupen Janbazian, "Simon Zavarian" Chapter

My first trip to Armenia was in the year 2000 with my family. Although I was quite young at the time, the trip would leave a lasting impression on me, which would prompt me to visit several times thereafter, for various different reasons - from attending conferences and meetings, to sightseeing and exploration with friends. Although I had visited Armenia many times and contributed voluntarily within the Armenian community of Toronto for many years, I had never been able to volunteer my time and efforts within the country. As I approached my university graduation, I felt as if it was time to visit Armenia for an extended period of time, to give back to my homeland directly - something that I believe everybody of Armenian descent is obliged to do at least once in their lifetime.

I decided to volunteer at the Hrayr Maroukhian Foundation (HMF). Founded in 2009, the HMF is a non-profit Armenian think-tank, committed to the development and advancement of public policy issues that promote the core values of social democracy through education, training, research, and regional and international cooperation. Although a relatively new initiative, the HMF has already begun laying the foundations for long-term, systematic solutions to Armenia's social, political and economic problems, and has contributed to the development of a

more transparent, accountable, equitable and prosperous society. Through the HMF, I have been able to take part in several exciting and interesting projects and initiatives. From planning conferences and seminars, to aiding with the day-to-day activities of the foundation, in my short time at the HMF, I quickly realized that Armenia is in great need of such programs, which look to find enduring and practical solutions to the various problems our country faces.

* * *

On September 21, 1991, Armenia declared itself independent from Soviet rule, with over ninety-nine percent of eligible voters saying "yes" to statehood. After seventy long years under the USSR, Armenia was once again a free and independent country. While most believed that joy and prosperity would come about, the years immediately following independence would prove to be bleak and disappointing. Ongoing war with neighbouring Azerbaijan, devastation following the major earthquake of 1988, severe economic hardship, unchecked ownership and entrepreneurship and an illegal blockade were just a few of the several problems the newly formed republic faced. The people of Armenia, who had been so optimistic at the ballot boxes, were soon losing faith in the system they had so

courageously fought for and, for the first time, feeling a sense of disenchantment toward the idea of independence.

Twenty years have since passed, and unfortunately not much has changed in Armenia's geo-political and socio-economic situations. No permanent peace has been established with Azerbaijan, hyper-privatization has paved the way for the prosperity of only a few, and Armenia continues to be a blockaded, land-locked country. This visit, however, made me realize one fundamental difference in Armenia - a difference in people's outlook towards independence.

I happened to be in Armenia during the 20th Anniversary celebrations of its re-independence, which was truly a once in a lifetime experience. Seeing tens of thousands of people on the streets of Yerevan with smiles on their faces, stretching ear to ear, made me realize that independence is once again becoming viewed and protected as a privilege in this country. Years ago, many diasporans had been subjected to lectures about how life was so much better under Soviet rule, and how independence has only brought poverty and despair to the country.

to realize that joy and prosperity can come about in a country working towards democracy.

The day-long independence celebrations concluded with a beautiful symphony concert at Yerevan's Republic Square, and a wonderful fireworks display. As the fireworks went off at midnight, we were all caught off guard and quite scared of the blaring blasts. And it got me thinking...The people of Armenia and Artsakh were hearing similar sounds twenty years ago, under very different circumstances. The exploding sounds of war had now become exploding sounds of happiness and joy, and I cannot explain how proud that can make one feel.

In my short time here, I have been certain of one thing. Armenia is our country and it needs us. It is a young country, full of several social, economic and political problems, and we have to feel a sense of belonging to this land and do our best to actively make a difference here. Gone are the days of Armenia being an ideal in our minds and hearts, represented by a picture of Mount Ararat on the walls of our homes. Armenia is a real country with real problems.

I urge you all, in one way or another, to engage with what is happening in this country, and actively try to be a part of its development and progress. The Hrayr Maroukhian Foundation is just one example of how a dedicated group of Armenians can help achieve and implement real and necessary change in our country. There are several other organizations, groups and initiatives within the country, which strive to make a positive difference in Armenia. It is the duty of all Armenians, regardless of where they live, to keep faith in the idea of independence and to actively try to make Armenia a true and rightful democracy. □

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“Social Reforms in A

policy paper presentation

8 Հոկտեմբեր, 2011 Երևան

November 8, 2011-Yerevan



AYF CANADA YOUTH CORPS: CAMP VANATSOR



AYF Canada's Youth Corps Camp Vanatsor took place for the first time in the Summer of 2011 with over one hundred children attending. The camp is a two-week program free of charge for local children aged 8-14 in Armenia's third largest city. The program consists of games and activities, as well as lessons on ARF history, the English language, computers, health, and citizenship. The children are also provided with a daily lunch, snacks and school supplies...

This year, AYF Canada members will be in Armenia between July 14th and August 9th, 2012. While there, they will run Camp Vanatsor as well as tour Armenia and Artsakh.

If you are interested in participating in Youth Corps or would like to contribute to this cause, please e-mail us at central.executive@ayfcanada.org today!

