

ARCHBISHOP ARSEN BERBERIAN

Archbishop of the Armenian Apostolic Church

THE KGB

in the church

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7. Melchizedek Party

THE KGB
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PREFACE

*“Render To Caesar The Things That Are **Caesar’s***

And To God The Things That Are God’s”

Each epoch, however difficult as it is, bears witness of the seal of divine wisdom. It seems that the 20th century is the culmination of all human tragedy. It witnessed two World Wars, the Genocide of the Armenians by the Turks in western Armenia, the Holocaust of the Jews by the Nazis in Europe, the horrible repression, persecutions, concentration camps of the Socialist-Communist and the Nazi-Fascist regimes. The Bolshevik Empire was founded on the bones of millions and millions of innocent victims of the Soviet totalitarian system. The most frightening ideas were distorted by the Communist ideology and Bolshevism destroyed the material and spiritual values. All spheres of life in the USSR were paralyzed by the Bolshevik terror that battled against the Church of Christ. It demanded great courage not only to survive but also to save spiritual values in the century, which was transformed into a real hell by its rulers. The destruction and rebirth of the Armenian Church during that period of history, as is shown in this book on the basis of the archives, is a remarkable example of the Church of martyrs which has survived in spite of the adversity that fell to the Armenian people. It is especially correct when taking note of the ordeals in the 20th century when the church and Christians in the USSR were on the brink of ruin.

The author traces step by step the anti-religious policy of the Bolsheviks in their fundamental effort to totally destroy the church and other religious institutions.

The first part (**“The Bolshevik Strategy of Destruction of the**

Church”) of the book includes the period from 1917 until 1938 when the theoretical schemes of the classics of Marxism-Leninism about religion were put into practice. The first anti-religious decrees of the Soviet government opened the road for repression, arrests and shootings. The Bolshevik strategy of destruction of the church was realized in three aspects; a) confiscation of church property, b) destruction of the church buildings or turning them into atheist clubs, cinemas, stores of different things, etc. c) extermination of the clergy. Documented correspondence between the Armenian Church office and Soviet authorities revealed that there was opposition to the heavy pressure being imposed by the repressive machine of the Bolsheviks. All spheres of life in the USSR were affected by the atheist propaganda and anti-religious struggle. Even in such horrible situation, the Head of the Armenian Church did her best to prevent the church's complete destruction in the Soviet Union. Until 1938 the Armenian Church's Holy See had its Head, meanwhile the Russian Orthodox Church lost her Patriarch in 1923. It wasn't until 1943 before secession was restored on the throne of the Russian Church. KGB agents strangled the last prewar Head of the Armenian Church. In 1945 a new Catholicos was elected. Many clergymen were persecuted and arrested. Their cases were fabricated and they were accused as “nationalists” involved in the anti-Soviet propaganda.

The second part (**“The Martyrs Witness”**) of the book describes the period of 1939-1942 when the world was engulfed in World War II. One of the main reasons of untidiness to War was the policy of mass repression in the USSR in the 1930's. Moral, military, intellectual and material potent of the country were crushed by the Bolshevik repression during that time. The blood of innocent victims preserved the Church even at a time when the most part of the churches were closed or destroyed in the USSR including Armenia. The GULAG (the State Headquarters of the Camps) was filled to overflowing with the victims of the Stalinist regime. The rendering of this part based on the testi-

monies of witnesses shows that the Church in the Soviet Union lived due to her many innocent and pure sons' and daughters' heroic patience who were tortured in concentration camps behind the barbed wire. They always hoped that Jesus Christ will save them and so they never lost their best human qualities. They were supported by their Christian will, which was the token of the true faith. They took care of each other, shared the last piece of bread and prayed for their souls to be saved. Through their prayers our Church has been saved, their tombs carpeted the path to eternity. They became unknown saints of the Church.

The leaders and other honest clerical Persons of the Church tried to save the Church at all costs. And there came the time of enforced collaboration of some clergymen with KGB for the sake of the interests of the Church. The talk is about those clerical persons who acted in the spirit of the above mentioned words of Christ through all stages of that enforces collaboration within the framework of his duties. And thanks to God his efforts were not in vein. Together with His Holiness they could escape the reefs of KGB and they brought the ship of the Church to the harbor of consolation and peace. But it cost the author dearly. Activities like missions' abroad, coordination of internal affairs of the Church, proper usage of possibilities, opening of closed churches and building new ones took place under scrupulous observation of the KGB. This penetrated everywhere and in everything concerning the Church. The author had for some time to retire from his official obligations as a clergyman.

As follows from the author's account, the enforced collaboration with the KGB was a real martyrdom for him and his honest colleagues, who also contributed to the preservation of the Church from the destruction of the Soviet totalitarian system. These self sacrificing individuals helped the church to enter the path of her rebirth after the fall of the USSR and proclamation of the Independent Republics helped the Church to enter the path of her rebirth after the fall of the USSR and proclamation of the independent Republics. The Church assumed her

Evangelical mission in the Republic of Armenia too.

The third part (**“Tendencies of “softening” of the State Policy towards the Church”**) is devoted to the period of 1943-1945 when the Stalin regime was influenced greatly by transformation of the Soviet international policy on the world arena. World War II brought important changes in relations between the Soviet State and the Church. Documents show that from the first day of Hitler’s aggression against the Soviet Union, the Russian Church, despite all humiliations and harms she had endured, was blessed with believers who defended the sacred frontiers of the Motherland. In September 1943, a meeting took place between Stalin and the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church. Two years later, the Archbishop of the Armenian Church was called to the Kremlin, where he had a meeting with Stalin. Two political issues the Armenian question and the repatriation of the Armenians to the Motherland was discussed before the Postdam Conference. At the same time Stalin gave a horrible hint about the Armenian’s exile to Kazakhstan. But, yet Stalin was tolerant of Church affairs. The author came to the conclusion that these meetings and the Communist party’s hard line softening were due to the participation of the USSR in the anti-Hitler coalition with the USA, Great Britain and France. This new international situation obligated Stalin and his accomplices to pretend support for religion and culture. Regardless, the GULAG was in action and total shadowing and repression continued.

The fourth part (**“The clergy’s enforced collaboration with the KGB and the Church in the Soviet Policy”**) maintains that the existence of the church in the USSR was a real challenge to the Bolshevik policy. The Bolsheviks anti-religious policy was brutal and inhuman. They were compelled to acknowledge that the church was an important factor in international relations. The existence of the church in the USSR was a real challenge to Bolshevik policy, which in spite of its continuing brutalities, had to acknowledge that the Church was an important factor to Soviet policy. This also brought with it a transfor-

mation of Bolshevik religious ideology. Subsequent to Stalin’s meeting with the Head of the Armenian Church in 1945, some non-functioning churches were reopened. Other obstacles however, continued unchanged because authorities used various pretexts to impose prohibitions. With great effort, His Holiness overcame the prohibitions and tried to reestablish the Church’s hierarchy. As soon as he saw some tolerance in Stalin’s attitude toward the Church, His Holiness supported the repatriation of Armenians from Diaspora to the Motherland. Two problems would be settled by this act national and ecclesiastical. This problem was eventually settled at the Soviet’s governmental level. In return, Moscow accepted repatriation in order to propagate “high mode” of life in the USSR.

Despite all “transformations” that were undergone by Soviet policy, the Soviet authorities considered the Church as a bearer of hostile ideas to the Soviet ideology. That’s why the officials tried to limit even these trifling rights that had His Holiness. They undertook measures to change the structure of the Church. The council of the Armenian Church affairs, which was a governmental body, did everything to prevent activities of the Church in internal and international affairs. Moreover, in 1948-1949 the authorities continued to destroy churches. Many of the repatriated Armenians who were ardent believers and strengthened our Church, were arrested and sent to exile. His Holiness was very afraid that Stalin would realize his base program of sending all Armenians to Kazakhstan. Among the repatriated Armenians was the family of the authors that came from Egypt. Just from this period the author is a witness of the contemporary history of our Church.

The fifth part (**“The clergy’s enforced collaboration with the KGB for the sake of the Church’s preservation”**) is based on the memoirs of the author who was the witness and participant of many events described in this book. This period of the history of the Armenian Church is a vivid example of Jesus Christ’s words. “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that

are God's" (Luke XX.25). The documents of the Communist party and other archive materials prove that even after Stalin's death the Soviet State based its ideology on the anti-religious propaganda. It means that censorship and repression continued. Despite the fact that personality cult of Stalin was condemned by the Communist party itself, persecutions soon after the "Thaw's" crashed and assumed a new form. In this period many churches remained closed and the clergy were under strict observation of KGB which was recruiting clerical persons as its informers.

The leaders and other honest clerical persons of the Church tried to save the Church at all costs. And there came the time of enforced collaboration of some clergymen with KGB for the sake of the interests of the Church. Of course the talk is about those clerical Persons' who acted in the spirit of the above mentioned words of Christ and not as Judas who betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver. The author passed through different stages of collaboration within the framework of his duties. And thanks to God his efforts were not in vein. Together with His Holiness they escaped the reefs of the KGB and they brought the ship of the Church to the harbor of consolation and peace. But it cost the author dearly. After some time, missions abroad, coordination of internal offers of the Church, proper usage of possibilities, opening of closed churches and building new ones underwent scrupulous observation of KGB. This penetrated everywhere and in everything concerning the Church, the author had for some time to retire from his official obligations as an official clergyman. The author's enforced collaboration with the KGB was a real martyrdom for him and his honest colleagues who also contributed to the preservation of the Church from the destruction of the Soviet totalitarian system. They also helped the Church to enter the path of her rebirth after the fall of the USSR and proclamation of the Independent Republics. The Church assumed her Evangelical mission in the Republic of Armenia, too.

INTRODUCTION

The Church of Christ gave birth to the Christian civilization in due course accumulated the best spiritual values of all humanity. The Church became the custodian of the treasury of civilized values. From the beginning of its foundation, the Armenian Apostolic Church also made a valuable contribution to it. Christians from all over the world are on the threshold of the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Christ. Despite the fact that the Churches of the East and the West constitute a single whole, the Church of Christ, is approaching this remarkable date having passed different ways of existence due to historical circumstances. Among the Eastern Churches, in particular, the Armenian Church suffered beyond measure under the attack of conquerors and proved the truth of the saying: "The martyrs' blood is the rock of the Church" The Armenians under the spiritual protection of the Church, unity, culture, language and faith have succeeded in keeping themselves in existence over many centuries of oppression and persecution. The Armenian Church is remarkable example of a Church of martyrs that has survived in spite of adversity that befell to the Armenian people especially during the period of the 20th century when the Church was on the brink of ruin in the USSR. Armenia's spiritual life is rooted in biblical times. Armenia, is a cradle of civilization and known to the Christian world from the Bible as a land where Noah's Ark came to rest upon the mountains of Ararat? Through Noah's household and generations took place the revival of life on Earth. This proved to be the cradle of one of the oldest churches and an exponent of the Christian traditions. In order to comprehend the sufferings of the Armenians and their clergy our western Christian brothers have to

know that for a long time they were removed from problems that Armenians had to solve. Among the losses of the Armenian people was part of the Motherland because of the Genocide, in 1915 as well as the starvation, anti-religious and political persecutions from 1918 - 1990. The author of this book himself, a clergyman and a witness of some events described in it. We hope that our western Christian brothers will derive information about the state of the clergy during the Bolshevik regime and after the collapse of the USSR.

The 2000th anniversary of the birth of Christ coincides with the celebration of the 1700th anniversary of the declaration of Christianity as the state religion in Armenia. It will be a significant event in the Armenian people's life and the Christian world as a whole. The Armenian Apostolic Church was founded through the preaching (33-60 AD) of Jesus Christ's disciples St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew. They accomplished the vision and spiritual activities of St. Gregory Lusavorich (Gregory the Illuminator) (239- 325 AD) to sustain the Armenian people through the long and hard history of the centuries to come. At the beginning of the 4th century AD St. Gregory converted all Armenians to Christians (301 AD) through his preaching and built the first Christian Armenian Church at Etchmiadzin which has become the See of the Head of the Armenian Apostolic church. After the fall of the Armenian Arshacids kingdom (428 AD) the nation preserving character of the Armenian Church had been revealed. The Bible's translation into Armenian had been the most important reason to invent the Armenian alphabet and consequently the Bible was translated into Armenian in the first place. The perfection of this "Queen of Translations" opened the way to the Golden Age of Armenian literature of the 5th century. In time those original works were lost, apart from Gospels, the Bible, and other Ecclesiastical books, the

Armenian translators turned to books on a variety of subjects. It is symbolic that some masterpieces of ancient world literature have been preserved owing to their Armenian translations. Armenian schools and other educational centers were opened. At that time national historiography was founded based on historic sources and the traditions of the Armenian people. This movement of Armenian Enlightenment was the spiritual reflection of the national liberating struggle and raised national and religious consciousness to an unprecedented level.

The first repression against the Armenian Apostolic Church began in 440's; when the Sassanid court sent a decree demanding that the Armenians should give up the Christian faith and accept Zoroastrianism; which was established as the state creed of the Sassanid "New Iran" (the Sassanid Persia). A demonstration of the courageous spirit containing all the characteristics of an heroic act, was given by the Armenians in the middle of the 5th century when their commander Vartan Mamikonian led them in the struggle against Persian political and religious oppression. After the heroic battle of Avarayr (451 AD) the Sassanids understood that it was impossible to eradicate the Christian faith from the Armenian people, who were bound to it profoundly. St. Vartan's nephew, Vahan Mamikonian, headed another uprising of the Armenian people that ended in victory. The Persian court had to conclude the Treaty of Nvarsak (484 AD) which granted the Armenians basic human rights guaranteeing freedom of the Christian faith and self-government. Thus the Armenians survived as a Christian nation and Christianity became an integral part of their national identity.

Since the Arab caliphate's growth, Armenia had become an isle of Christianity in the Muslemean tempest. The Caliphate and latter on the Seljuk Turks, the Mongols and the Tartars devastated the country; by endangering Armenia's demography with horrible consequences. Because of unceasing Muslim pressure the Church

found herself in danger but due to her divine mission she became a sanctuary for the destitute and suffering people. The Armenian Church gave a shelter to science, education and arts. The most significant feature of the Armenian Church was her tolerance towards the Armenian scientists' views based on ancient progressive ideas concerning cosmography, astronomy, philosophy, geography. David the Invincible, from the 5th century who holds a prominent place among Armenian philosophers, his contemporary, the Head of the Armenian Church Gyut, the great Armenian scientist Anania Shirakatsi interpreted cosmographies principles on the basis of the conception of the spherical structure of the Universe and the Earth. This is the principle in which Aristotle had fully embodied in his works. Early medieval scientific ideas were comprehended on the basis of theology opening the way to the cognition of God through His creation. It was no mere chance that the first words translated into Armenian by St. Mesrob Mashtots were from the Bible. "To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding (Proverbs X12). The first Armenian universities, Gladzor and Tatev, flourished within monasteries. The Gladzor University was called "the second Athens and the capital of all wisdom." Through many centuries the Church cared for the Armenian people and was justly called the Mother Church by the Armenians.

Modern history did not relieve the Armenian people's sufferings. On the contrary, Turkish domination was added to that of Persia in the eastern part of Armenia. Since the 16th century the Turkish-Persian wars devastated the country. The leaders of the Armenian national-liberation movement adopted another strategy in order to regain Armenia's independence. During the 17th century they tried to regain our Motherlands independence through diplomatic channels, relying upon the Christian states of Europe, in particular, Czarist Russia. Czarist Russia undertook wars with the help of the

Armenian people, against Persia and Turkey and Eastern Armenia was liberated from Moslem dominion and became a part of the Czarist State (1828). The Armenian people hoped that a new period of rebirth awaited the country in the system of Czarist Russia. Soon this hope was replaced by the bitter truth of real life. Eastern Armenia was a remote part of the Russian Empire whose policy of colonialism, toward national minorities closed the Armenian schools, libraries and Cultural centers at the end of the 19th century. Moreover, at the beginning of the 20th century the Czar ordered the confiscation of the Church property.

The atrocities that befell the Armenians in Western Armenia during 1915-1918, when the Turkish government used the pretext of protecting its eastern regions' as a camouflage carried out a policy of the Genocide against the peaceful Armenian population. In the course of World War I, was where the Turks went outside the bounds of the human imagination about ordeals. The massacres, devastation, tortures, deportation were the means by which the Turkish government exterminated the Armenian population during those years in Turkey and especially in Western Armenia. The Turks killed more than 1.5 million Armenians during this period. Together with the Armenian population, the Greeks and other Christian national minorities fell prey to the Turkish beasts. It was an act of terrorism against its forced subjects only because of their belonging to other nationalities and religions. The Minister of the Interior of Turkey, in the document dated September 13, 1915, sent to the prefecture of Aleppo, Syria, wrote: "It was announced earlier that the government has decided to exterminate completely Armenian residents in Turkey. Whoever opposes this order will be dismissed from the service. Without regard to women, children or the infirm; however tragic the methods of extermination, and without paying any attention to the dictates of conscience, an end must be put to their existence." Those who escaped the massacres either came to

Eastern Armenia or went abroad and gave birth to the Diaspora. A few of them found refuge in Eastern Armenia and the

Church rendered mercy and hospitality to them.

After the Czarist state's collision and the Bolshevik coup d'état, the Lenin government ordered the Russian soldiers to return home from the region. The Armenians were left alone and they had to resist the advancing Turkish army with their scattered and meager forces. After the heroic battle at Sardarabat, Armenia's independence was declared on May 28, 1918. During two and a half years of its short existence, the First Republic of Armenia created conditions for revival of education, cultural and spiritual life in which the Armenian Church had an important share. But it was an alarming time. Even in a very extraordinary situation the Bolshevik government had time to elaborate an anti-religious policy at the end of the second year of its existence. The Bolshevik party, adopting the hard line of educating the youth in the spirit of Communism, followed the policy of the atheist education this was an integral part of the Soviet ideology.

It is well known that one of the first acts of the Soviet government was the decree about freedom of conscience, ecclesiastical, and religious societies. Thus the Soviets were going to abolish all confessional privileges and rights. All these perils had been in the air when the ghost of a new catastrophe loomed on the horizon of the Republic of Armenia. Following the attack of the Turks from the west (September 23, they received financial and army supply from Lenin) and the Bolshevik XI Red Army from the east Soviet rule was established in Eastern Armenia (November 29-December 2, 1920). From the very beginning Armenia's Soviet government had become a humble executor of the general Bolshevik government's will. Obeying the anti-religious policy of the latter, the former passed a decree about nationalization of cultural institutions belonging to the Ecclesiastical organizations and then ordered to prohibit

any kind of religious education. Step by step repression against religion mustered their strength in the USSR and in Soviet Armenia as an integral part of it. An anti-religious virus affected all spheres of life.

This campaign acquired an organized form and a society of atheists was established in the USSR, which numbered more than five million members. Moreover, the so-called "Free ecclesiastical fraternities" were organized all over the USSR including Soviet Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora in other regions of the Soviet country. They united cowed and dishonored clergymen who served the Soviet ideological repressive machine without any murmur of discontent. "The Cultural Revolution" of the 1920s and the repression of the 1930s were "the offspring" of the Bolshevik monster. With Stalin's instructions and approval, CHEKA (KGB) carried out bloody purges which ended in liquidation and exile of millions of people, in particular, intellectuals and clergymen, all over the USSR. Many of them were brutally tortured and killed. Their cases were fabricated and they were accused as "nationalists," involved in anti-Soviet propaganda and activities.

World War II brought important changes in relations between the Soviet State and the Church. On June 22, 1941 the Moscow and Kolomin Metropolitan, the Head of the Orthodox Church in Russia Sergius blessed all believers to defend sacred frontiers of Motherland. On September 4, 1943 a meeting took place between Stalin and hierarchies of the Russian Orthodox Church. Two years later, the Archbishop of the Armenian Church was called to the Kremlin where he had a meeting with Stalin. All these meetings show that participation in the anti-Hitler coalition obliged Stalin and his accomplices to put on a mask of well wishes of religion and culture. Prohibited books of national-patriotic character were published, historical films were shot, and bonds of the Church were loosened.

The Archbishop Gevorg VI Tchorektchian, who later was elected as the Head of the Armenian Church discussed with Stalin the problem of the Armenian Question in the context of the forthcoming Postdam Conference. They arranged the question of repatriation of 100,000 Armenians from abroad. Despite some changes that took place in the Soviet ideology's hard attitude, its essence had not undergone any real positive development. After the war repression continued and GULAG (the State Headquarters of concentration camps) continued to devour new victims of the Stalin regime. With the death of Stalin the totalitarian system was

cracked. In the course of time many victims were rehabilitated, amongst were clergymen. But devastation of bygone years had been too horrible; the illness of the Soviet society demanded much time to recover. The tentacles of atheism pierced all spheres of the Soviet life and anti-religious propaganda were still encouraged by the state. But little by little the repressive policy had to be given up. From the second half of 1950s had begun the process of partial revival of ecclesiastical institutions. Some churches were restored as historical monuments, as well for the Church services. Anyhow the Church continued to be under the state strict control realized through its repressive organ - KGB.

The periods of "the cold war," "the thaw," "the dissidents movement," "events in Chekoslovakia," "detante," "the Helsinki Final Act," "the Afghan intervention" were marked by strengthening and weakening of political pressure of the Soviet repressive system. But it was swan sang of the Bolshevik ideology. In the first half of 1980s fighters for democracy were still persecuted and jailed. The final step of the repressive regime fell on the period of so-called "perestroyka." The blood of the innocent victims in Sumgait, Kirovabad, Baku, Tbilisi and Vilnius marked it. The echo and agony of the totalitarianism heavily influenced ethnic processes, which were under the yoke of proceeding seventy years

of the Bolshevik rule. Their normalization might be achieved through breaking barriers "created" by founding fathers of the Bolshevik society. After the Soviet Unions collapse, breaking off chains was very painful. With the establishment of independent Republics the peoples of the former USSR found their way to national revival. Nowadays, one of the basic principles of human rights- the worship of God is completely restored. In this context, the speech of the President of the Republic of Armenia L.Ter-Petrosian delivered during the last offices of the late Head of the Armenian Church Vazgen I was symbolic one, being an expression of the spirit of time. In particular, he said: "His Holiness enthronement coincided with the suffering years of throwing off the Stalin despotism, liberation of thought, and restoration of human dignity, a well as with the period of improvement of ecclesiastical life and national rebirth... His Holiness by his personal example came to prove the absolute truth of the unity of the fates of the State and the Church as two important institutions of the nation's natural existence." Two years later (1996) the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Alexy I and the Head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Garegin I preached together in the Church of St. Etchmiadzin and in the Russian Church in Yerevan. All these are symbols of revival of spiritual life, which will be very fruitful for peaceful and prosperous coexistence-existence of nations.

Materials included in this book for a long time have not been accessible neither for researchers nor the relatives of the victims of GULAG. Nowadays it is possible to trace many aspects of criminal policy of Stalin and his adherents. The book contains a rendering about anti religious repression in the USSR from the earliest days of its existence. The repression of the Bolshevik party reflected also in Soviet Armenia as in a mirror glass. Thus fates of the USSR's people were tied in a mortal knot by the Stalin butchers of the 20th cen-

ture. The book is intended to help open the veil of horrible crimes committed in the USSR against humanity.

The book is written on the basis of archives, contemporary eye-witnesses and the authors own memoirs. Through the lines of the Bolshevik documents' bureaucratic style is outlined the phantom of death. Contrary to it, the martyrs' relics bear the seal of life. During the first period of anti religious struggle of the Bolsheviks, as follows from the documents of pre-war time, when the Church was brought into peril, all its dioceses were paralyzed and many of the clergy were arrested, exiled or shot. The second period of the Bolshevik policy towards the religious affairs is described in the book as a time of softening of repression due to international situation during World War II when the ideological and political confrontation between East and West gave up its place to allied relations. There appeared hope that confronting ideology should yield to human thinking and tolerance of spiritual life. But sprouting of new approaches were too weak and "the cold war" brought new repression in the USSR which proved that even "the thaw" of 1950/60s could not disguise anti religious and antihuman essence of the Bolshevik ideology, which came to an end only after collapse of the USSR. Our aim is to show that the anti religious struggle is not a limited episode in the life of one nation or even of one totalitarian country. It is a continuous confrontation and struggle between the GOOD and evil. It is an irreconcilable struggle between the Light and the darkness.

DESTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH; THE BOLSHEVIK STRATEGY

The 20th century has entered the final stage of the second millennium heavily loaded with problems common to mankind. Historical processes, unlike proceeding centuries, had polarized due to the epoch's politicized strain. It witnessed two World Wars, which took away millions of lives, the Genocide of the Armenians by the Turks, and the Holocaust of the Jews by the Nazis in Europe, the Bolshevik and the Nazi horrible repression's and concentration camps with gas-cells and crematoriums, explosions of A-bombs. It is an incomplete list of calamities suffered by mankind during the 20th century. The Turkish atrocities marked the beginning of disasters that awaited the conscience of humanity. Europe contributed by refusing to recognize the Armenian cause and condemning the Turks. For that, they should have received Hitlerism and Stalinism. Progressive figures of that time like the Rt. Hon. Viscount Gladstone, warned that the Turks were a real and dangerous menace for the civilized world. Viscount, at a meeting being held at the Central Hall, Westminster, on Thursday, June 19, 1919, stated, "Up to now, the Turk has snapped this blood-stained fingers in the face of Europe. He has been cunning; He has not acted secretly, but has massacred openly. But, he has always chosen a time convenient to himself. One thing is certain, that whether it was in 1896 or 1090, the Turk operated at a time when he knew that he Could count on the indifference, if not the sympathy of Germany and Austria. The great bulwarks of European civilization! When the Turk acted, he

did not act as the nations and tribes of old sometimes did- using a rough and brutal war to exterminate the population. No, he deliberately settled, even in times of peace on a policy of extermination by degrees. He accompanied these butcheries with

every feature and circumstance of horror. Women and children were treated like men. Well, ladies and gentlemen, we come to the climax in 1915. I am not going to speak to you about that, because what happened is too well known. The world has never seen slaughter on such a scale, in such a manner. The Military powers of Europe have suffered heavily in open fighting, however the Armenians were slain and tortured when they could not defend themselves. That Great War is now over. Germany and Austria are in dust. The Turkish dominions are in the hands of the great powers, and the clouds, we trust are clearing. But do not let us forget at this meeting that the present condition of the Armenian territories is appalling. But, unfortunately, Europe had forgotten the Armenians and consequently all anti-human actions of the Nazis Hitler cynically "justified" with his notorious phrase: "Who now remembers but the massacres of the Armenians?" But before Hitler, the crimes of the Turks were "Forgotten" by the Bolsheviks, but they applied willingly their methods of butchery.

After the October coup d'état (1917) in Russia the Bolsheviks set their course for final abolition of the pillars of the Russian national spirit, the Czar and the Russian Orthodox Church. As a result, the next year the Czar and his family were severely executed and the Russian Church was persecuted. In the first place the Bolsheviks began to educate the working people in the spirit of Communism based on the atheist training. They used every means to achieve their goal. Each insidious action the Bolshevik party concealed under the mask of ostentatious liberties and false brotherhood of "the Soviet peoples." The first anti religious decree ("About Freedom of Conscience, Ecclesiastical and Religious

Societies") dated January 20, 1918 promoted abolition of all legal privileges and restrictions connected with faith. It specifically declared: "The freedom of the religious worship and of the anti religious propaganda is recognized for all citizens." These so-called "liberties" had been "planned" for restriction of the activities of the Church and believers, and unbridling of the atheist campaign. "Theoretical" grounds of such a monstrous policy were worked out by the founders of the Bolshevik Party." The leader of "proletariat" wrote: "the religion for the party of the socialist proletariat, is not a special case: Our party is a union of conscious, progressive fighters for the working class liberation. That sort of union cannot and ought not be indifferent to illiteracy, ignorance or obscurantism, as well to religious beliefs."

The Bolsheviks realized their leaders plans in life through repressive machine of the new established Soviet State. They "perfected" all methods of known and unknown systems of brutality and torture. The following description of the first years of repressive measures undertaken by the Bolsheviks illustrates how the CHEKA tortured its victims without any consideration of their nationality, religion or sex. "All clergymen were put on picket in Poltava and Kremenchug... Officers were tortured in Odessa. They were tied with chains to boards and slowly inserted into furnace, others were torn in two by the winches wheels... sometimes the tortured person was tied to a wall or a pole, then some inches wide iron pipe was fastened to him with one end. A rat was put in it from the other opening. Then and there a wired net closed it and fire was lifted to it. Owing to heat, being in desperation the rat drove its teeth into the body of the wretch, trying to find way out. Such a horrible torture lasted for hours, sometimes up to the next day till the victim died. They made incisions with knife in her bare body, then trod

on extremities of her fingers with pincers and tongs". All these

horrible visions were the prelude of nightmare, which awaited peoples who soon came under the Soviet power. Only great tragedians of humanity can describe all sufferings that had befall to the lot of the peoples of the former Russian Empire under the Bolshevik rule. "It will have blood, they say; blood will have blood" (Macbeth, III, 4).

The principles of equality and brotherhood had nothing to do with the real state of affairs in the Soviet country during its seventy years of existence. It was not equality and "brotherhood" from the viewpoint of the Human rights. It was obedient obligation before the state with all negative consequences of immoral character. That's why the main accusation of the victims of the Stalinist regime was "the enemy of people."

While the Bolsheviks of Soviet Russia had been destroying the basis of the Russian Church, the Armenian Church did all its best to save the native independent state of the Republic of Armenia during the May (1920) uprising of the Armenian Bolsheviks against the interests of the state. The Head of the Armenian Church Gevorg V defending the constitutional Republic appealed to the Armenian people for faithfulness to the legal government. He declared: "We, who have lived and live in the hope of the union and freedom of the Motherland, see how we have forgotten our common language and aim. We see that people with obscure and uncertain ideas dig pits for the united and independent Motherland whose independence is threatened. Instead of uniting around one common cause these people do personal and group exhausting actions... We believe in the Armenian people's wisdom and sound instinct. We believe that obstacles and difficulties, which have appeared on the road of freedom and building on of the Motherland's union, will disappear, excited minds will appease and each word and everyone will meet on the road of the common cause. A very grave danger is at thy door the Armenian people, be cautious and do not fall under the heavy load of responsibility

before history. Amen." With his support and blessing the Head of the Armenian Church took the Republic defenders' side and contributed to the Bolshevik mutiny's suppression. His Holiness acted on principle of the union of the State and the Church who was sanctified by St. Gregory the Illuminator at the beginning of the 4th century, AD. The Republic's life was resuming its natural course in spite of strained international situation. But the ghost of communism loomed on the horizon of the Republic of Armenia.

The Bolsheviks' anti religious policy coincided with their pro-Turkish course in foreign policy. The Bolsheviks in the hope of exportation of the revolution to the East, established friendly relations with Kemalist Turkey, which became an ally of the Soviet Russia against the Allied powers. On the other hand the Kemalist movement's blow was directed at Turkey's national minorities, particularly, at the Armenians. Moreover, the Kemalists looked to the Republic of Armenia and decided to use the Soviet Bolshevik's aid for invasion into the territory of the Republic of Armenia. Thus, under the leadership of Kemal Ataturk, Turkey experienced extremely active nationalist movement, which advanced to finally waging war against Armenia. Under the pretext of the struggle against imperialistic states, whose agents was considered to be the Republic of Armenia and in consequence, its leadership represented by the members of the leading Dashnak party, Kemal Ataturk asked Lenin for help. The Soviet government sent turkey two hundred kilograms of gold (ingot), arms and ammunition. All this was used by the Turks to wage war against the Greek troops in the west and the Republic of Armenia in the east (1920). Armenia battered by the Turkish beasts and abandoned by so called "allies" had to give up and was devoured by the Bolshevik State. So, from 1920 (November 29 - December 2) Armenia became a Soviet Socialist Republic and lost its independence, together with some territories (Nakhidjevan, Karabagh).

As a humble executor of the central Bolshevik government's will the Soviet government of Armenia passed "The Decree about nationalization of cultural organizations belonging to ecclesiastical institutions," dated 17th of December, 1920. Two days later, the Bolsheviks confiscated the buildings and a part of the Etchmiadzin monastery's property and etc. The executors of the Bolshevik regime acted according to the notorious decree which stated: "Cultural-educational institutions belonging to the confessional organizations of all nationalities, together with their all movable and immovable, are considered to be the state property and are passed at the disposal of the Peoples Commissariat of Education."

From the first day of coming to the power and up to their defeat in 1991 the Bolsheviks carried out policy of encouragement the Moslems. They declared the struggle against religion in general, but in reality they fought against the Christians and those peoples who believe in Christ. The Bolsheviks special attitude to the Moslems was reflected in early structures of the Communist party and their names. On June 10, 1918 was set up the Moslem Communist party of Russia at a meeting of Communist-Moslems. The meeting resolved to set up the Moslem Communist Committees. On November 4-12 was elected The Central Bureau of the Moslem organizations of RCP/B/ at the first congress of the Communists-Moslems. For comparison, it is worth to notice that nothing was organized concerning the Christians, or others. Counting on the Moslem card, Lenin and his adherents made advances to the Islam peoples to the detriment of the Christian peoples. "The Bolsheviks, indeed, spared no pains to spread their influence in the Moslem countries, arousing hostility of these countries towards the European states and for their own political interests the Bolsheviks sacrificed the Christian peoples." The loss of political independence and the fall of the Republic of Armenia were mainly due to external and not internal circumstances. "If not

the support of Soviet Russia, Kemalist Turkey would not have dared to attack Armenia. After the Mudres truce (October 30, 1918) the Young Turks leaders Enver, Talaat, Jemal, Nazim, Bekhaetdin Shakin and others ran away from Turkey to Germany but very soon many of them moved to Moscow. Thus, the capital of the Bolshevik regime became a center of the butchers of the Armenian people. On September 1-7, 1920 took place the first congress of the peoples of East in Baku. There were the Russian, Azerbaijanis and Armenian communists. Besides, the butchers of the Armenian people, Enver, Bakhedtin and Khalil, who had been condemned to death for crimes in Turkey, took part at the congress too.

The anti religious, i.e. anti-Christian, course of the Bolsheviks of Soviet Russia reflected in Soviet Armenia as in a mirror glass. The decrees mentioned above had been followed by active actions. There were organized some special structures in the Soviet state system to control the Church affairs and carry out anti religious repressive measures. Emergency commissions were formed to confiscate the Church property. It is evident that the Bolsheviks elaborated this action with great scrupulousness. They used War, drought and famine.

During World War I, coup d'état ("revolution") and the Civil War in Russia, insurance stocks were exhausted, number of cattle reduced to a minimum. The drought spread over 35 provinces of south-west in Russia Black Sea, Middle and Lower Volga, 'Northern Kazakhstan, Western Siberia and etc., i.e. the main grain regions of the Soviet Russia. The number of starving people reached 15 million towards the end of 1921. One million peasants died of starvation. The authorities used the struggle against famine for just another attack against the Church. The acts of separation of the Church from the state and from the school, the confiscation of monasteries, lands, repression against clergymen during the Civil War, desecration of saint relics in the course of starting "cul-

tural revolution"). In spite of all that, the Church yet had great spiritual and moral authority among the Russian and other Christian peoples of the Soviet State. It is no mere chance that the population of starving regions appealed to the Church for aid. There followed an immediate answer from the Patriarch Tikhon who appealed to the Russian people and said: "We are taking hardship of each Christian family into consideration, allow the clergy and parish councils by consent of the believers' communities, in whose charge is the Church property, make use of precious things which are kept in many temples (and not used for divine service), for starving peoples aid." This act of mercy had not been considered enough by the central and local authorities and the actions of violence and repression followed. The same situation was in Armenia. The confiscation of the Church property, dated January 15, 1921, the Armenian Revolutionary Committee (the Soviet government of Armenia) charged one of its representatives, with the aid of "the Etchmiadzin" district Revolutionary committee, to make an inventory of those precious things (jewelry, handicraft and artistic values and etc.), which are in charge of the Etchmiadzin monastery and monks and are not used for divine service, and all this to pass to the Etchmiadzin State Museum." At the beginning of February the decree was put into effect but it was not easy to break the freedom-loving spirit of the Armenian people whose faithful sons were the Armenian clergymen. The Head of the Armenian Church did not wish to hand the Church precious things to the Bolsheviks who would use them for their sinister designs. His Holiness presented the counter-proposals; the authorities nationalized and confiscated valuable things for the Holy See, he allowed the authorities' representative to see the Church articles, and the inventory list. His Holiness, There were Church articles brought from the towns of Western Armenia and they were sealed separately and ought to remain inaccessible. In his turn, His

Grace Archbishop Khoren Muradbekian, the future martyred Head of the Armenian Church, wrote a letter to the head of the Armenian Rev. Com. S. Kasian about illegal actions of the Bolsheviks. "On February 3, the head of the civil acts department was ordered to seal all the rooms and two days later he opened a cashier's office. Two days later the Internal Affairs confiscated about 1,442,000 rubles which were assigned to pay salary to office workers and for other expenditures of the ecclesiastical organization." His Grace insistently asked S. Kasian to return the confiscated money. Together with the acts of violence, some clergymen were arrested. His Holiness took them under his protection and demanded from the district committee to release them, taking into consideration the age and sickly state of the arrested clergymen. Their life was endangered. At that time many of the officers and statesmen of the First Republic of Armenia were shot. Common dissatisfaction with the Bolshevik rule led the Armenian people to a rebellion headed by the leaders of the First Republic of Armenia. On February 18 insurgent people entered Yerevan. The doors of the prison were opened and prisoners were released. Amongst were many clergymen. There was set up the Mountainous Republic of Sunik in the South of Armenia headed by Garegin Njdeh. The Head of the Aterpatekan eparchy of the Armenian Church in Iran Archbishop N. Melik-Tangian supplied the Mountainous Republic with arms and provisions. His Holiness blessed the insurgent people and congratulated them with the driving out of the Bolsheviks.

The class enemy strengthens its work against us. Comsonel must cause counter-strike... This directive was reflected in other parts of the USSR including Soviet Armenia. The authorities declared that any parent who allows a priest visit his child at home would deprive his son of studying in school.

Closing of the churches continued in Armenia, as in the other

regions of the USSR. And while the churches were closed in Soviet Armenia, and in neighboring Soviet Azerbaijan the Bolsheviks congress (1929) declared "Those mosques which were closed unwillingly should be returned at once". It may be interpreted in different way but the fact is that the Bolsheviks of Azerbaijan know moods of the Soviet leaders quite well. The Bolsheviks considered Christianity as "European" religion more dangerous than "Asian" Muslimism.

In 1929 the persecution of the clergy intensified. They were condemned of spying against the USSR, ideological diversion and propaganda. To struggle the Church, the Soviet authorities increased the taxes of the clergy. For example, a priest's salary was 400r his family consisted of 9 persons, the local authorities demanded him to pay 350 rubles. How could he and his family live getting such a miserable salary? Many churches were turned into clubs and other centers of meetings of people.

In 1930, His Holiness Gevorg V died. The Armenian Church remained without a Catholicos. That role undertook the Archbishop Khoren Muradbekian, an "unfavorable" figure for the Soviet Authorities. On the same day he became the Chairman of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council. The Bolsheviks considered the death of the Catholicos as a political event. On the second day after his death a meeting of the Central Committee of CPA took place. This meant that "to charge the State Political Board to undertake some measures in Etchmiadzin to prevent enormous gatherings and brutal measures. At the end of the statement is written: "To charge all organization, and in particular their actions, connected with the funeral of the Catholicos, with the State Political Board (STB) and the CC of CPA. Thus at he Bolsheviks being afraid of the Armenian people's wrath did everything to protest themselves from any unpredictable action. At the same time they increased the salary of the STB's employee. The same was done in the sphere of

CHEKA. The totalitarian system was tightening its tentacles, which would strangle nations living in the USSR.

It is quite interesting to follow the ways of election of the succeeding Catholicos for many centuries such an election was the privilege and prerogative of the Armenian Church. At first, during the 4th century, succession of the throne of the Catholicos was mainly the hereditary right of the family descending from St. Grigor Lousavoritch. Later it became an elective system. Only in the beginning of 19th century when Armenia was under domination of foreign powers, the election of the Catholicos was subjected to decisions and coordination according to wishes of the foreign heads of states. But this question had never been politicized as it happened at the time of the Stalinist despotic regime.

After the Catholicos funeral the Archbishop Khoren asked the Central Executive Committee of Armenia to give permission to call the National Ecclesiastical Council in October. The official answer was the following: "The government finds it possible to call the Council for the election of the Catholicos... We find it possible that the Armenian clergymen from abroad can take part in this Council. " On the 30th of May the CC of CPA also allowed holding the Catholicos' election. On August 8th the government of Soviet Armenia asked the Commissariat of the Foreign Affairs for the elections' foreign participants. But on August 17th the CC of CPA suddenly changed its attitude and the election of the Catholicos was postponed. It was for the first time in history of the Armenian Apostolic Church when atheists headed the process election of the Catholicos.

On September 7th a document was received by the Central Committee of CPA from Tbilisi which bore a title "The report about the Armenian clergy". Then followed: "A short report about forthcoming election of the new Catholicos of the Armenian Church

and about our tasks concerning this problem". The deputy chairman of the Trans Caucasian State Political Body, L. Beria and the head of the secret department of the same organization, Mughdasi, signed the document. The authors of the document: "We often wrote about the activities of the Armenian Gregorian Church and especially concerning the Holy See of St. Etchmiadzin, about the role and political position of the latter, in our reports. Due to the death of the Head of the Church Gevorg V the question of the Armenian clergy required taking into consideration the political importance of call of the a new congress of the Armenian Church. This question, is also very serious for us, because up to now our policy, aimed at taking Etchmiadzin completely under our control and pursuing our line as in the USSR, as well as, in particular, in foreign countries, had not given positive results. That's why we must consider the forthcoming congress as means that must be used with knowledge of the problem... In order to conquer at last the elite (The Supreme Ecclesiastical Control, the Catholicos) of the Armenian Church". After some excursus the author of the document brought a list of possible candidates. Among 5 candidates they considered the most favorable one the candidature of the Archbishop Gevorg Tcherakchian. They wrote that he was in contact with them and did coordinated work. L. Beria and Mughdasi proposed: "It is very important to use the forthcoming congress and get our candidature accepted as the Catholicos and through him to realize our secret domination over the Armenian Church in order to lead it in the it in the appropriate way. For the realization of the problem we find it necessary: to call the world congress only in Etchmiadzin with the participation of the foreign deputies to postpone the time of the congress as much as we had not yet secured the election of "our" candidate. It is necessary to speed up inclusion of spies as in the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council as well as in dioceses, to get to work on the Archbishop Gevorg

Tcherekchian deciding to look him as our candidate of the Catholicos. The State of Political Body of Armenia must make more accurate the date concerning the Archbishop Khoren Muradbekian with the aim of establishing our influence over him".

The pressure of the Communist party strengthened. The 16th Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR stated in its resolution: "The party must strengthen and develop essential achievements in the filed of the liberation of the masses from the regressive influence of religion". The Bolshevik leadership continued to give orders for the suppression of the Church. In the USSR, including Soviet Armenia, the Bolshevik fanatics used to say "Down with Easter, long live five year plan in four years". There began a new period of the destruction of churches in the country. In 1930 exploded the church of Simon in Nork (Yerevan). The temple of Kasan was exploded in Moscow. The authorities began to speak about the destruction of the Church of Paul-Peter, in Yerevan. The chairman of the protection of historic monuments, the architect Alexander Tamanian (the general architect of Yerevan plan) and the secretary of the same organization took under their protection the church. They tried to convince the authorities to give up the idea of destruction of the Church. But all efforts to protect the Church from destruction turned out to be vain. In 1931, the Paul-Peter Church was destroyed. Once the architects assumed that it was the church of the 17th century, but after destruction, in its interior part was discovered peculiar construction of the 3rd century Basilica.

Strengthening the anti-religious movement the Bolsheviks, were disillusioned with the work of "The Union of Fighting Atheists" and "The Free Churchmen". The Bolsheviks' hopes, that in due course they would substitute St. Etchmiadzin, had not been realized. Anyhow, the Bolsheviks succeeded in closing many churches in Armenia by the end of 1931. There were regions where not a sin-

gle church acted. The number of the arrested clergymen increased. The rest of them lived in poverty and terror to be arrested or persecuted. The Holy See was obliged to direct its activities to release the churchmen. In 1931, the Armenian churches and the priesthood appeared to be in a very sad state, as follows from this document: "Due to zealous activities of the Soviet Authorities all churches are closed in such remote regions as Lori-Pambak, Ghazakh, Shamshadin, Daralagiaz, Meghri, Zangezur, Kapan, Sisian and Mountainous Karabagh. All priests stopped their services because of the imprisonment's threat and terror. Another part of priests were arrested... The Vagharshapat region had 28 priests. Three of them died, seven are imprisoned, four continue to serve, the rest left their services... The region of Sardarapat had 22 priests. Four of them are exiled to Russia's far-away regions, four are arrested, only four continue their services, the rest left it. The Ghamarlu region had 27 priests. Two priests were arrested and sent into exile, five were dismissed from their service and arrested, the rest of them left their service, because of the pressure and persecution. The same situation was everywhere. Thirty priests were arrested from Nor Bayazet. Many priests were arrested also in Leninakan. All arrested priests do compulsory work. The Tcakhkadsor region is in the same state. We had 18 priests in the Kotayk region. Now only one serves, three priests were arrested and sent into exile, five - arrested, the rest left services. All priests who kept their priesthood were deprived of everything - property, cattle, land, but anyhow they were taxed by the state..."

At the end of September of 1931, the Archbishop Khoren sent a letter to the Presidium of the People's Commissars Central with the two essential for the Church problem. The Bolsheviks obliged the priests instead of their main service to do compulsory work in the field. The Archbishop stated that it was done on purpose, so those priests would leave their duties and service in the Church. The sec-

ond question dealt with the compulsory taxation of the priesthood. It was also done on purpose, as stated the Archbishop. Because, priests were unable to pay taxes and so many of them were obliged to leave the service in the Church. The Authority concluded his letter with the following statement: "As a result of such an administrative line of the local authorities the 80 percent of the believers communities did not have a single priest and is deprived of spiritual - religious consolation". Archbishop Khoren demanded the following: 1. To release priests from compulsory works. 2. To free them from buying bonds, 3. To demand from the local authorities to tax priests according to their possibilities. 4. To liberate all the arrested and exiled priests who had been arrested on the pretext of mention reasons. 5. To instruct the local authorities to allow priests, without any persecution, to do service in churches: But all demands of the Archbishop Khoren were left without any answer.

In April of 1932, took place a meeting of the Bureau of the Central Committee of CPA where the question of the Catholicos' election was discussed. It was decided that on August 18, a meeting would be held devoted to the election of the Catholicos. The meeting was allowed, in fact, by the sanction of the Bolsheviks' center. After that invitations were sent to the Armenian dioceses, in the USSR, as well as abroad. It is interesting to mention that invitations that were sent abroad reached addressees. But in the USSR, not all addressees received them. For example the invitation, sent to the Head of the Artchak Diocese, was lost. From that moment the pressure of the Bolsheviks of Azerbaijan on the Armenian clergy of Artchak increased. The horrible consequence of it was the closing of the Armenian churches there.

But the National ecclesiastical congress appointed on August 18, 1932 was again postponed. The authorities continued to oppress the clergymen in order to leave the Church service. The postponement of the Catholicos' election became the theme of dis-

cussion in the newspaper "Fatherland": published in Diaspora. It wrote: "The government ruling nowadays, in Armenia, is the enemy of the Armenian Church, as well as any church. It aims to destroy any church and religion".

As follows from the articles published in the "Atheist", the local authorities were cautious that the Holy See might be removed abroad. Because the Armenians living abroad knew quite well about the situation concerning the Church and unjust actions directed against her. "Atheists" wrote: "The idea of transference of the Holy See abroad proceeds from the desire of the Armenian bourgeois parties. This idea was intensified after the death of the last Catholicos Gevorg V. But the Armenian bourgeois have been unable to realize that desire. Soviet Government... allowed the election of the Catholicos to take place in Etchmiadzin, in November".

At last, on November 10, 1932, the national ecclesiastical meeting took place after long waiting. The solemn opening took place in the Holy See. There were presents the delegates not only from the other Armenian dioceses (which yet had existed) but also from abroad who dared to come to the USSR. That's why the delegates from abroad were mainly secular persons. The result of the election was the following: the Archbishop Khoren received 60, votes of 80. Thus, he became the Catholicos of all Armenians who was considered by the authorities a nationalist, Dashnak, i.e., the anti-Soviet person. Allowing such election CHEKA had to take into consideration the fact of existence of the Armenian Diaspora, which was a rather strong factor. Besides the Soviets desired to change its image in the eyes of the foreign countries.

KGB AND CATHOLICOS KHOREN MURADBEKIAN

The period of the election of the Catholicos was very hard for the Armenian Church. The CC of CPSU and CHEKA kept under strict observation the situation connected with the church. The government of Soviet Armenia received a telegram from the People's Commissars Committee of Foreign Affairs, which informed: "On November 12 took place the Catholicos' election and on November 18, the "Fatherland" newspaper published in Boston appeared an article about it. We politically gained by allowing such election. The deputies, especially Kyumushkertian, after their return from the USSR, displayed pro-Soviet campaign. Before the departure Kyumushkertian told that as an Armenian he set a task to help Soviet Armenia and a citizen of France he will do his best to contribute to the Soviet-French rapprochement". At the same time there was a tendency of coming out from the sphere of St. Etchmiadzin's influence, of some ecclesiastical leaders in Diaspora. But anyhow most of the religious figures of Diaspora saw their future activity under the guidance of St. Etchmiadzin's Catholicos.

In 1933, an exhibition opening in Chicago was devoted to the USSR, Soviet Armenia was also presented there. On the opening day of the exhibition the Archbishop Gevond, the Head of the Armenian diocese in the US gave a speech. But his speech was interrupted by a group of the Armenians the Armenian (Dashnak) who began to sing the hymn of their party. In his turn, the Archbishop interrupted them, and continued his speech. Several days later he was stabbed to death, the church was named St. Cross of New York. This case testifies how dangerous is for the nation when political differences penetrate into the most delicate-sphere.

To describe the false face of the Bolshevik "humanism" it is worthy to mention a visit of "The New-York Times" correspondent to Etchmiadzin where His Holiness Khoren Muradbekian received him. After his return home the correspondent published an article on his mission. One may read between the lines about difficulties standing before the Church in the USSR. The article was written on the bases of an interview with His Holiness.

From 1935, the anti-religious propaganda was sharply strengthened. The Central Committee of CPA adopted a resolution about strengthening the anti-religious measures in educational and cultural establishments. It stated, in particular: "The Central Committee of Comsomol must elaborate special measures for animation of the anti-religious activities in the organizations". Some clergymen could not find enough strength to overcome difficulties and demoralized. They not only left the service but also blasphemed their colleagues, and generally, the Church. The official organ of the Bolsheviks "The Communist" presented in following way the Armenian Church's state: "In 1935, owing to crop-failure clergymen arrayed animated activity among peasants in the Leninakan district. Every year, several hundred people gather near parish churches. There are also young people among them, even comsomols and pupils on religious holidays. Priests try to gather mainly young people in the churches of Parbi and Oshakan. On December 11, the Catholicos Khoren I, ordained the celebrated priests by seniority" just at that time was dismissed from his service the only priest of the Leninakan region. His Holiness' appealed to reinstate the priest in his place but there was no result.

In the constitution of the USSR (1936) was written that for the sake of censuring the freedom of conscience of the citizens the church is separated from the state and the school. The church was under permanent pressures of the state while the clergy were

persecuted. As follows from a letter written by clergymen to His Holiness the authorities arrested some priests and took them to the State Political Board.

Since Middle Ages the Seven Isles had been monastery's territory. One June 10, 1936, the Central Committee of CPA passed a resolution, which stated "To conform the resolution passed by the Commission of the Central Committee about passing holiday house to the People's Committee of Internal Affairs". Thus the Soviet repressive organ banished the monks from the isle which had been their possession sine the Armenian Bagratid Kingdom's time. Simultaneously, a church was destroyed in the center of Yerevan.

The plot around the Church thickened. The Armenian churches continued to be closed in Georgia. The Archbishop Gevorg Tcherekchian wrote a letter to L. Beria: "I have His Holiness' assignment to ordain a priest for the Armenian believers in Batum in peaceful ways... But the head of policy refused to register the priest". And then the Archbishop asked for help. But whom he was asking. L. Berea was responsible for closing churches, imprisonment of clergymen, and their shootings. Thus, the Archbishop was disappointed again.

Leaders of the Communist party and the Soviet State changed quickly like in kaleidoscope. The repressive machine devoured its butchers too. But, strangely enough, every new leader expressed dissatisfaction with the slowness of the anti-religious struggle and adopted new measures to intensify it. The organ of the Armenian Bolsheviks "The Communist" wrote with indignation: "The churches are in action, with "budgetary servicemen", in the Akhta region... The former priest Ter-Simonian has again resumed his religious activity. He is a traveling "instructor" of religious prejudices...Priests, are going to organize a procession in connection with the new Constitution, to the monastery in the

center of the region. A deacon of the same region visited 30 families of Collective farmers (January 6, 1937), Carried out religious work among them, telling, that "the new Constitution allowed to do so". The priests pay special attention to the organizing chorus's in Yerevan. They want, especially, to include young people and women. These anti-revolutionary elements tried to stick slogans calling young people to worship and attend churches. There have been attempts to reopen churches which were closed, or to collect means to repair them". In another article the Armenian clergymen were presented as ignorant, miserable and benighted people.

In 1937, the Congress of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR took place. It condemned the Church in anti-Soviet activities and stated: "One of the difficulties in the Soviets election will be the existence of anti-Soviet element in some places. They are able to stir up provocation's and our task is to curb their anti-Soviet work". It was call for strengthening anti-religious struggle. Without any delay repressive organs began their new attack against the Church. During 1937, among many others, 2.5 million, were arrested, and banished and exiled many clergymen in the USSR. But even such a brutal repression could not stop the activity of the Armenian Church and it worried the Soviet Authorities.

In the autumn of 1937, the Commissars of Kremlin arrived in Yerevan. They brought a top secret letter where, it was written: "The CC of CP of the USSR can not allow the Armenian people's enemies to have a free walk in Armenia and to harm the people's economy and agriculture and the working class". Among the enemies were considered former leaders of the Republic of Soviet Armenia, the dashnak and the clergy. In 1937, they closed St. Sargis and some more churches in Yerevan and Leninakan (Gyumry). During this year, 70 clergymen of 75 personnel of St.

Etchmiadzin were arrested. After fulfilling repressive operations" successfully" some of the State officials were awarded with the orders of Red Star. All of them carried out brutal policy towards the Church. His Holiness was very anxious about the fate of arrested clergymen. Once, by chance he received a letter from one of the exiled priest from Arkhangelsk. He wrote about the Armenian clergymen's sufferings in the Yerevan prison, and about the death of some of them because of tortures that took place. Then he described how they were removed to the Arkhangelsk concentration camp. He wrote that money was needed to cover debts accumulated as a result of funeral expenses of their late friends. The Catholicos ordered at once to send to exile priests 200 rubles.

The symbol of the Stalinist repression against the Armenian Church and, generally, the Christians of the USSR was the tragic murder of the Head of the Armenian Church, Khoren Mouradbekian, almost in the Macbethian style, on April 15, 1937. There were 7 servants in St. Etchmiadzin monastery. At night His Holiness suddenly died. He was a healthy man, without any complaints about his health. The official diagnosis was "heart attack". But a servant of His Holiness told the following story: "In the evening of April 4, when I worked in the garden of the church, two unfamiliar persons approached me accompanied by a woman, the director of Armtrade in Etchmiadzin, who never came there. The older one ordered me to leave the residence of the Catholicos. My answer was that I could not leave His Holiness alone. In the meanwhile, they threatened me and I had to leave the residence without any word. Before my departure I entered His Holiness' room. He was drinking tea. Then I took his cup and went away with foreboding in my heart. But I couldn't think that it was our last meeting. I went to Father Matthew who also told about those two mysterious persons. Next day I was

informed that His Holiness was found dead. I came to his residence, and entered the bedroom. He was in bed. Father Mathew put his head on the Catholicos dead chest and cried as a child. I washed his body and didn't see any badly injuries. His face was only became blue and there were blue strips of 35 blue traces on his neck, and under them were the spots of blood... Suddenly, his doctor entered the room. He investigated injuries on the neck and said in low voice: "Without any doubt, the Catholicos had been strangled". Anyhow, the Soviet government announced that he died of a "heart-attack". His funeral was without any ceremony. The authorities prohibited burying him in the sepulcher of Catholicoses. Six women, who were ardent believers, took the coffin to St. Cay one's monastery and buried him there without any procession. All witnesses of the Catholicos murder were arrested or exiled. Thus the Bolsheviks achieved their goal. The Catholicos was murdered; the Armenian Church was left without her Head. There was coming a period of self-survival through the blood of martyrs.

PART TWO

THE MARTYR'S WITNESS

The Soviet authorities did not take into consideration the loss suffered by the Armenian Church. In spite of the fact that after the death of the Catholicos Khoren Muradbekian, the Church's influence on people weakened the authorities and did not cease anti-religious activities. First of all they confiscated the private property of the late Catholicos. Only after the decision of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council to pay the authorities for confiscated things, the private property of the Catholicos was partly returned to the Church.

With intensification of repression in the USSR, the Church became a target of political persecutions, too. The clergy was considered as an organization serving imperialistic interests of the foreign countries. Thus, the Church was considered supported and used by the parties, which were declared to be hostile by the Communist Party. And therefore churches were closed as centers of ideological diversion and churchmen were arrested. The official atheist propaganda and its institutions prepared the ground for repression.

In July 1938, "The anti-religious" (Anti-religious person) published an article named: "About the work of Union of Fighting Atheists (UFA) in Armenia". This magazine was published in Moscow as the organ of All-Union organization of the UFA. It stated in particular:

"During 1937, the UFA of Armenia was in deep crises. The people's enemies- the dashnaks and the trotskist-bukrinists- tried to shatter the anti-religious work by penetrating into the UFA.

Since 1938, some changes took place in work of the UFA of Armenia. The Communist Central Party Committee carried out a resolution to unfold anti-religious propaganda in the Artik region, where anti-religious work had been forgotten for a long time. In 10 days, they prepared 35 agitators and propagandists of anti-religious propaganda. Such courses were passed in 15 regions of Armenia... Instructive meetings of agitators were carried out in all region of Armenia. During these meetings were delivered reports about "The election of the Supreme Soviet and the problems of the anti-religious propaganda". About 130 lectures were organized in Yerevan... In March the Central Committee of CPA passed a resolution about the work of the organization of the UFA of Armenia and the anti-religious work. New employees strengthen the Central Council of the UFA of Armenia. The city council of UFA is organized in Yerevan. It is planned to have free anti-religious propagandists in 18 organization of UFA. Three-month (long) courses are organized for training the anti-religious propagandists. Soon the UFA conference will be summoned in Armenia. The Central Council of the UFA of Armenia will call the UFA regional conferences. There are many famous monuments of the Armenian peoples culture. A part of them is of anti-religious museum, which is going to be organized in Armenia. The social and party organizations pay special attention to the anti-religious propaganda and activities of the UFA. It is a matter of honor for atheists to use that attention and, in a very short time, to bring out the UFA organization from the crises".

The anti-religious terror of the Bolsheviks accelerated. The CC of CPA announced about the calling of the UFA republican conference on July 25, 1938. The Bolsheviks hurried to "solve" the problem of the Church. On August 4, 1938, this problem was discussed at the meeting of the Bureau of the CC or CPA. It

passed a resolution with the stamp "top secret". It stated: "Since present materials unmask the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate in its active struggle against the Armenian people and the Soviet power. It is necessary to close the Etchmiadzin monastery, turning it into a museum, not to carry out the Catholicos election and to abolish the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate as the center of the Armenian clergy. To ask the Central Committee of CPA to conform".

On the same day, the new leader of the Communist Party of Armenia sent a letter to Stalin. He wrote: "Up to now, there exists the Etchmiadzin monastery in Vagharshpat. In Armenia, 10- 12 Kilometers away from the (state) border. Here is the residence of the Armenian Catholicos. The residence exists due to the donations of the Armenian clergy living abroad. Materials of the former treacherous leadership, which now are at the disposition of the Central Committee of CPA, unmarks the anti-Soviet activities of the Catholicosate and its activities in the sphere of formation of the Dashnak organization in Armenia. The Armenian clergy disguising under the announcements and resolutions concerning the election of the Catholicos, who, as if its loyalty to the Soviet power, but constantly waged demoralizing and espionage activity in Armenia being in contacts with foreign centers of counter-revolutionary parties-Dashnaks, the ramkavars and other "societies". The late Catholicos Khoren Muradbekian was an active member of the Dashnak Party and in his counter-revolutionary activity he was contacting with Khanjian (the former leader of the Communist party of Soviet Armenia). Ter Garabedian is the former head of Soviet Armenia's Government and other members of the right-trotskyist center in Armenia. In 1937, 70-75 clergymen worked at the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate. We arrested the most part due to their contra-revolutionary activity. Now only 7 clergymen work

at the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate. They are dashnaks with contra-revolutionary moods. The CC of CPA discussed the question of the Etchmiadzin monastery, turning it into a museum, not to carry the election of the new Catholicos and to abolish the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate. As the center of the clergy and the materials being at our disposal unmask the active struggle, the participation of the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate against the Soviet power and the Armenian people. We ask the CC of CP of the Soviet Union to conform”.

The closing of churches continued. In June 1938, information came from Moscow that the local Armenian Church was closed according to the decision of the Moscow City Council. The Moscow Armenian ecclesiastical council asked for help, but Etchmiadzin was in a very dangerous state itself. The last priest of the Moscow Armenian Church was arrested. The Archbishop Gevorg tried to help the Moscow Armenian community but in vain. These actions were a part of the anti-religious policy of the Soviet State and all efforts to change anything were doomed. Therefore, nothing could help to restore the Moscow Armenian Church's functioning. It was closed with the sanction of the highest authorities of the Soviet State. The same lot befell the Leningrad (St. Petersburg) Armenian clergy. This is a part and a vivid example of the Church drama in the USSR during the Stalinist repression.

There was no difference between the clergymen and the politicians, for Soviet repressive machine. It didn't differentiate moral, spiritual and political aspects of life. Everything perished in a chaotic life stimulated by the butchers of the Stalinist regime. Long lines of arrested and exiled men and women extended from one end of the USSR to another. Great masses of people were brought into a violent movement. The hell opened its maw and devoured victims. Main directions of forced move-

ment were to Siberia, Kolima, Arkhangelsk, Solovki, Alta, Komi and etc., Thousands of honest and devoted clergymen to the Church were among millions of innocent victims of the Stalin camps. Each of them passed a way of martyrdom. I would like to tell about some of them to show the price that was paid to preserve the Church in the former USSR. My description is based on the content of letters sent by the arrested to Etchmiadzin, as well as the stories of those who survived in that hell.

As usual, the officials came at night. Like ghostly visions the men in uniform knocked at the door. They turned everything upside-down in the house. Then commanded to take necessary things and to follow them. Sometimes the arrested persons were taken away by car which was called among people “the black crow.

Imprisoned clergymen, as many others arrested, were taken to CHEKA prison Number 10, which was in a basement of the inner building. When priests Ghevond Ter-Gazarian and Mambre were pushed in, they could see nothing, because of the darkness. The only bulb working was very weak and, besides, the cell was full of smoke and you could not see anything. Prisoners could not move if their life depended on it. The cell was stuffed with prisoners. It was planned for three or four persons but later it appeared that there were more than a dozen of men. In order to move from side to side they all had to change their position at the same time. It is perhaps difficult for a foreigner to imagine such a horrible inconvenience. Lavatory places were in the same cell but they were not even lavatories but a small barrel serving as a sewage vessel. At night another arrested man was pushed in. It turned out that some of the imprisoned men were former political leaders; others were professors of the Yerevan University. The clergymen were surprised to learn that one of them was the minister of the Internal Affairs

of the former Republic of Armenia. Another famous person was the former commissar of education of Soviet Armenia. Once he was the Soviet Ambassador in Italy and Turkey. It was P. Makintsian who was an intimate friend of S. Esenin. Despite the fact that the clergymen were considered as the dashnaks by the authorities, they were accepted by the "inhabitants" of the cell as true sons of the Armenian Church. The atheist propaganda didn't play any role here. Many of the arrested men used the word God in their expression. The

clergymen blessed them and prayed for their salvation. They were the bearers of hope. But was very difficult for them too. Every day, they were called up for interrogation.

Examining magistrates of the Soviet prison were very hard. The imprisoned persons had no chance to escape severe verdicts. Unceasing interrogations were aimed at getting "confessions" in crimes that had not been committed. Victims had to sign documents denouncing others. Thus the arrests continued constantly. During this time period about four thousand clergymen of the Armenian Church passed through the CHEKAs sieve. Many of them, finding themselves in inhuman conditions died in prisons, or on the road to concentration camps. Others had to pass through all stages of the Soviet repressive system. After the prison, the second state of torture began on the road to the GULAG camps. The railway station was a place where prisoners were handed over to the escort of trains consisting of the "Stolipin" trucks. There were corridors for the guard and special trained dogs. Enormous numbers of prisoners were squeezed into trucks and the train moved. It was a hot summer. There was no water and the escort didn't allow them to take a bottle of water. They were not allowed to come out of trucks for their natural needs.

There were some prisoners from the former cell number 10.

The prisoners from other prisons and even such ones who were brought to the station without any serious verdicts joined them. It seemed that the main thing for the authorities was to push the prisoners into the "Stolipin" trucks. Because they carried out arrests not according to committed crimes, they had to follow the orders of the Bolshevik leaders. Besides, the main lists where the names of repressed persons were mentioned there were also additional lists, which only enumerated the number of persons to be arrested. Thus the very essence of repressive policy was to exterminate great numbers of people in order to keep the rest in obedience to the Bolshevik regime. Of course, the "class struggle" lay in the basis of such an inhuman policy. It cost millions of innocent people their life, because as it was cynically said: "You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs". The Bolshevik nonsensical idea of the "world revolution", turned the Soviet State into the "country of evil" in the world. But the world must know that it was for certain time, a hell for its own people.

The train moved slowly as if the heat strangled it. The clergymen prayed by instinct. It turned out that one of the arrested young men once was a literary man recognized Father Tate among the arrested clergymen. The priest began to sing in very wild voice. The song was like a prayer. Not long ago, the young man with his colleagues lived in one of the monastery cells and worked in the library of manuscripts. Father Tate visited them very often and prayed in their room. But the Etchmiadzin monastery had been already closed and turned into a store of straw. Train after train left the Yerevan station, in the direction of the GULAG concentration camps situated in the northern and eastern regions of the USSR. The same took place in many other cities and towns of the Soviet country. Trains were leaving mainly at night. The officials didn't like witnesses. They didn't like

the truth to spread. They were afraid of it, as the criminal is afraid of justice. Their victims had no right to send letters home to their relatives.

The escort didn't allow having pencil and paper. It was dangerous for life to keep these things. But anyhow the young man could get a stump of pencil and a scarp of paper. He wrote a note about their destination. Once when the train stopped in the open field somewhere in Siberia the young man saw a schoolgirl not far from the train. When the girl noticed the arrested men she approached the truck and the young man threw the letter out. She took it and stood for a moment. She couldn't see how two escort soldiers ran towards her. The prisoners shouted and waved their hands about to warn the girl of approaching danger. But she was motionless and perplexed. She was yet a child and could not understand why those soldiers were running. Everything was a play for her. She even shouted that they would not find the letter. The prisoners cried, "Run away, eat the letter, baby tear it, and throw it away". But everything was in vain. She was standing and smiling. Only when she notices that sheep dogs were running in her direction, suddenly she startled and began to run away. Yet it had been a play for her while running she was waving with her hand as if to tell that pursuers would not be able to catch her. The trained dogs reached and knocked her down. All prisoners that were in the trucks shouted and cried but were helpless. Soon soldiers approached and caught the girl. They brought her closer to the train in order her to show where the letter has been thrown from. She suddenly cried, "They will not find". These were her last words. The poor child's mouth was closed with a huge paw of one these bloodsucker vampires. She fluttered as a fledgling and died. Perhaps it was the most horrible crime of those years of repression. The devil killed and angel. All of the arrested men shouted and cried. The clergymen

prayed and sang spiritual songs. There was no judge, no justice, and no mercy in that horrible field.

The arrested men saw many misfortunes on their way to the GULAG CAMPS. When they reached the places of destination many of them died. They did not have a chance to get buried. The clergymen were taken in different directions. One group appeared in the European North of the Soviet Union, in Arkhangelsk and another group thousands of kilometers away - in the far northeast, in Kolima. The specific feature of these camps was their international character. There were presented all nationalities of the sister republics of the USSR. Besides, there was no division between criminals and others. The camps were far away from populated

areas. They were isolated from the rest of the world by several lines of barbed wire. In some cases these wires were connected up to the high-tension current. There were wooden watchtowers with a machine gun at each corner of the camp. In the daytime German sheep dogs ran between wire-lines, at night they ran freely in the territory of the camp. People lived in wooden barracks where stood two-story bunk beds. When a new group arrived it turned out that there was no free space for its members and so two or three days they had to spend in the open air, while a new barrack was build in a hurry.

It was scrupulously elaborated mechanism of human beings humiliation. The prisoners had to forget their individuality, nationality, faith, honor, dignity, and conscience and only to acquire responsibility of being humbly obedient to the system of the fear and submission. But even if it didn't ensure them against death. Because, first of all they were considered as a cheap even free working power which was used up to the thorough exhaustion. All, so called, "great constructions" of the first five-year eerie are dotted with the prisoners' corpses.

Winter came with horrible frost. It seemed that there was no to polar night. Prisoners were extremely exhausted. The work in open mines stopped because it was quite impossible to dig the frozen earth. But the state officials of the GULAG found for them work in underground mines of coal. Prisoners were toil-worn. They were wondering like ghosts. The death rate increased sharply. Everyday outrage of the camp staff completely demoralized many of the prisoners. Prisoners were depressed and some of them committed suicide. The authorities as a desertion of "Counterrevolutionaries" from the "socialist labor" considered the cases of death.

The Bolshevik ideology didn't lose its cynicism even in the concentration camps. Criminals were in favored position, in comparison with the so-called "Political prisoners". Intellectuals, generals and officers, state and political men, workers and peasants represented "Political" prisoners. All they were called "counter-revolutionaries" and "trotskists" of sending them to the GULAG camps was their "correction" through labor. This cynicism had no limit. Remember that there were red slogans in the Stalinist camps with the following words "Here will be a great city", "You are welcome", Human being is the most valuable capital", (with Stalin's name as a signature), "if enemy does not surrender he has to be annihilated" (with Maxim Gorki's signature).

It is an unwritten objective law, when one has got nothing to lose, in extreme situation; he either becomes a pious person or is completely destroyed. And it is very important to have somebody near to whom one can rely upon. The indispensable person in this case is the priest to whom it is possible to confess. Thus the GULAG camps awakened many former "official" atheists and they converted to Christianity. The priests became real physicians of souls. One of them was Father Tate who found time for everything. When he was on duty, he lighted a stove and

dried wet shoes of prisoners, gave warm water to sick ones, shared his last piece of bread with extremely exhausted prisoners and etc. "The International", "Varshavianka", Marseillaise", pure national and religious songs were prohibited as counter-revolutionary, trotskist songs and their signing was considered as betrayal and ideological sabotage. But the clergymen, anyhow, did their best to be unnoticed while singing spiritual songs. And thus day after day they tried to ease the prisoners' lot.

It was really the Golgotha way for many of the prisoners both spiritual and secular ones. Later the above-mentioned young man described a very tragic case that happened in the GULAG camp in winter. Among the prisoners there were a violinist and an opera-singer, both from the Bolshoi Theatre. The violinist's name was Kogan (perhaps a relative of famous L. Kogan) and the opera-singer's name was Artamonov who was the second great has after F.Shaliapin in Russia. It appeared so that they also were sentenced as "counter-revolutionaries". Conditions were so horrible that one-day the violinist left his hand open and chilled it purposely. Then they cut his hand with an ax. He thought that he could get rid of hard toil but it turned out just in opposite way. The guard of the camp considered it as an act of sabotage and he was shot. Artamonov hardly survived the blow.

It is necessary to note that in winter it was impossible to bury the deceased ones, because the ground was frozen. Only in spring when days became warmer they were buried. Even not buried, but simply their bodies were thrown into a common pit. Their names were registered in the so-called third archive. It is very strange but the most active chiefs received state order and medal. They even were elected as deputies of the Supreme Soviet in order to "defend" the rights of the Soviet people. It is very ridiculous but the fact is that the butchers became people's "defenders".

Unfortunately, some prisoners believed that Stalin knew nothing about their sufferings. They thought that they were simply denounced by somebody and if only Stalin learnt about their cases they would be freed. But such prisoners were mistaken because they didn't even know about special lists without names, simply numbers enumerating those to be arrested. I think that such a blind belief in tyrant Stalin was a kind of fanaticism, which came not from human nature but was based on the education of people in the spirit of Communism. They bore in their hearts not the image of Christ but of the tyrant who was a real embodiment of the devil. Such prisoners even were very dangerous because the course of their reasoning justified all kinds of cruelty and atrocity. They were nourishing soil for despotic regime. They did not only justify imprisonments and shootings but also considered them as necessary measures for the security of the state interests. Nothing could change their position towards the course of events that brought them to the GULAG camps.

Each day is like another but it was only outside impression. The horrible toil and inhuman living conditions took away many lives. But the main problem for the camp authorities was the state plan. They were of an opinion that if the production of gold or coal had been ensured there would be no problem concerning human losses. There were many people in the country and through the policy of repression millions of people might be put at the disposal of the GULAG. Nothing was taken into consideration by the camp authorities. When they entered the barracks and saw somebody lying the first question was about temperature. The normal temperature in medicine is considered to be 36.6C, but the camp authority was of another opinion. It declared that up to 38C was a normal temperature. Only dying persons had "chance" to go to the camp "hospital". Once the

head of the camp entered the ward and demanded to take temperature. As far as all sick prisoners had the temperature less than the "norm" they were pushed out of the "hospital" By the way, all of them were so-called political prisoners. They were considered as more dangerous elements for the Soviet society than criminals were. As a former public prosecutor said, they were socially dangerous elements but politically quite harmless. Because, as he said, the criminals did not express any class interest, they were out of the class struggle. He added that it is possible to change, forgive or help them but political prisoners were trotskists and shifted to the left or the right; they were very dangerous because they were against the party policy and Stalin. That's why they had to be annihilated. He spoke that way in order to be heard by "ears" of the authorities. He hoped that his "loyal speeches would be counted as payment of his "disloyalty" and he will be compensated in some ways. He was one of those who were called "stukach" (i.e., informer by prisoners. Such persons were informing the authorities about things that were taking place among prisoners. They had some privileges: could keep pencils and papers (for reports to the authorities), received extra portion of food, and could walk in the parts of the camp, which were prohibited for other prisoners. But it is worthy to mention that sometimes they were found dead in mysterious circumstances. They were even disliked by criminals.

The most horrible place of the camp was its punishment cell. It was impossible or to lie there. One night stay they're only in bent or squatted state. The cement ground was spotted with the rat holes. In winter not a single punished prisoner would survive in two or three days their corpses were taken out from the punishment cell. A story told about a Russian Father Arseni, because almost a legend and was told from mouth to mouth the GULAG camps.

Many Russian clergymen were arrested during first decades of the Bolshevik repression. It is not exaggeration to say that the flower of the Russian Pravoslave (Orthodox) Church was exiled, tortured and annihilated. Many of them were sent to the Solovki isles where was situated the Solovetski monastery. Its territory was turned into a concentration camp of the Bolshevik regime since the next year of its existence. There were Archbishops, Bishops, priests and deacons from different region of the Soviet Union, as from the center as well as from far way regions. The tormentors cut their beard, shaved heads, put them into icy water, buried alive into ground, crucified and cut up. The Bolsheviks were afraid of the Church because it had great influence on the people. The Bolsheviks had been establishing a "new" world order of "brotherhood" so they began from the destruction of the world order, and as the

Church was the bearer and symbol of its best spiritual values so the heaviest blow fell upon the Church and churchmen.

Father Arseni was the embodiment of Christian piety. No one could tell his real age. He was like an ancient patriarch but it seemed that he had superfluous energy owing to his love towards people. Father Arseni's life principles were based on Christ's words: "He who is not against us is for us. Whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward... Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another" (Mark, IX, 40-41,50). That's why Father Arseni could deal with all layers of suffering people. At the same time he tried not to irritate officials committing brutalities. They told that even criminals respected and love him. He was considerate to everyone in his surrounding. When prisoners returned from hard work they usually were wet, hungry and very tiered. Being on duty Father Arseni took care of everyone who had been in the most desperate situation.

Once the camp officials saw Father Arseni praying together with a young prisoner. At once they were taken to the punishment cell. It was winter and all of the prisoners were sure that they would not survive in the punishment cell. After three days when the door of the cell was opened Father Arseni and the young man were found alive. It turned out later that they survived due to ardent praying without a minute of rest.

When Stalin and his adherents sent the Soviet citizens to the GULAG camps they didn't take into consideration a very important thing: "All that lives must die passing through nature to eternity" (Shakespeare, Hamlet). And they had not been immortal too. But as far as they were not punished for their crimes. They thought that they were "gods" to be worshiped. The cult of personality grew from the feeling of being unpunished for committed crimes. The same happened to Stalin and his surrounding. History sets everything into its place. Tormentors turned into dust and their names were disgraced. But the names of such pious people as Father Arseni are glorified and their souls are in heaven for "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; blessed is the coming kingdom" (Mark, XI, 9-10).

There were no confessional diversities among the Christians in the GULAG camps. The clergymen of the Russian, the Armenian, the Greek, the Syrian churches bore the same sufferings, consoling each other and were all united in Christ. The Contemporary Ecumenical Movement must take into consideration the fact of uniting clergymen of different nations was under very hard circumstances. They had no chance to discuss theological diversities or rebukes. It was All in God and God in all, truthful Christian brotherhood and divine love. Many died of exhaustion, but with the God's image in their hearts. They confessed to each other.

Once a Russian bishop was near death. He was from Far East.

Father Arseni most of his free time spent with the bishop. He consoled him and prayed for his wound. The bishop confessed to Father Arseni and calmly passed away. It happened so that there was no guard of the camp nearby. Father Arseni sang, spiritual songs set a wooded cross at the head of the bishop's bed. The next day the bishop was taken away from the barrack. A "snitch" informed the camp authorities about Father Arseni "insolence" and he was taken to the punishment cell for three days. Thus the Soviet authorities violated sacred feelings of the clergy. Their vicious mockery of human suffering had no limit. Once the camp head entered the barrack with a loaf. He addressed prisoners: "Do you see this Loaf? This is fresh bread and it may get only one of you, the one who fulfills my will. I do not demand much to do. This bread will get the one who dances for me lezginka. And so begin".

That day the prisoners had not received their miserable portion of bread and they were very hungry. The camp head knew it quite well and continued to play on their nerves. The first was an old man. He spread his hands in air, twice cried "Assa, assa" and fell down. Another old men said "give us bread to eat then all of us will dance". The camp head answered: "no, I'll not be deceived. Who will work, he will it". There was a former soviet general who was arrested as an enemy of people". The camp head addressed him: "Don't you want to try, traitor general". The general, who once commanded divisions, came forward, raised his hands, as an old eagle, but suddenly he knelt and fell down. The camp had turned and went away with the loaf. All prisoners were shocked. A clergyman prayed aloud: "Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven". The clergyman closed his eyes, stretched his hands to heaven and continued in mysterious voice: "Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our tres-

passes, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver as from evil. For Thy kingdom, power, and glory, is yours forever. Amen". There fell deep silence, it seemed that all troubles and clouds of desperate misfortune that lured upon the prisoners' fate "into the deep bosom of the ocean buried" (Shakespeare, Richard III). And miracle happened there: all crossed themselves and kissed each other without any consideration of nationality, religion and life principles. Jesus Christ was among them and they won. Who could think and imagine that in deep province of the North, God would enlighten these exhausted people. But anyhow, it happened disregarding everything, it had to be happening, because Christ said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mat.3.8).

Not only the prisoners of the GUY LAG camps because martyrs, the clergymen continued to be persecuted also at home, filling the sacred list of the martyrs of the Church. After Catholicos Khoren Muraedbekian's death the Soviet authorities feverishly sought the way to get rid of his followers who could became a candidate for the Catholicos election and thus to hinder the election of the authorities' candidate the Archbishop Gevorg Tcherakchian. The authorities considered one of such unfavorable candidates the Archbishop Mess-up Ter-Movsisian. And the Soviet security organs began to act. On June 11, 1938, anti-religious article was published in "The Proletariat" (a newspaper of the Armenian Bolshevik, in Georgia). It bore a title "The Lair of spying. Just from the first line it was obvious that the article had been written by the order of the authorities, and with special intention to discredit, terrorize and slander certain people. The Church was condemned as an establishment where spies had been trained. The ideological background of the article was reflected in the following sentence: "While religion exists in the

church there must be struggle against religion". The end of the article made clear their main reason of its publishing. This time the Bolsheviks as a target of their attack chose the Archbishop Mess-up Ter-Movsisian. "History can not forget the excellent spy of the Caucasus vice-royal Vorontsov-Dashkov, the Armenian Archbishop Mess-up who was presented with valuable presents by the vice-royal's wife. He was also very often invited to dinner and was promised to become the Catholicos". It was clear that the article was against the Archbishop who at that time was 73 years old. He understood that the Bolsheviks soon would try to get physically rid of him. That's why he appealed to the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council with the following request: "When I learnt about the Catholicos Khoren Muradbekian's death I got nervous shock and after some time I told the state officials that didn't interfere with the affairs of that establishment. I don't attend church, I live in the monastery and everyday I work in the state library of manuscripts. I ask you to give me chance to get a room in Yerevan in order to leave the monastery forever. I am going to announce that I am firm in my decision...to leave Etchmiadzin. I renounce my ecclesiastical rank." On September 25, 1938 a meeting took place with the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council. It is necessary to note that the staff of the Council was incomplete because many of its members either died or were arrested. So it consisted only of 3-4 persons. The Archbishop Mesrob was declared as a liar and it was decided to deprive him of his ecclesiastical rank and to consider him as a secular person, with all negative consequences. Thus instead of valuing his almost half a century service for the sake of the Church the Archbishop was dishonored and notwithstanding his own appeal the Council presented the case in such a negative way as if he was to be blamed for his dismissal and banishment from the monastery. This method of discrediting a person

was adopted from the Soviet Authorities; the great regret was when it became an integral part of the Soviet State system. The conclusion of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council's Resolution was just in spirit of the Bolshevik demagoguery "The Armenian paper "The Proletariat" of the Tbilisi Bolshevik party strictly characterized the role of Mesrob as spying. Thus the Council not only knew about "The Proletariat" article in its turn condemned the Archbishop Mesrob as a nationalist and spy. It was a very grave condemnation. Because people condemned in such way were either shot or exiled, according to the Soviet Laws. He was considered as an enemy of the Soviet State, because being the prelate of the Georgian diocese during World War I, he was elected the Armenian Central National Bureau's Honorary Chairman. He was doing everything in order that the Czarist officials would change their attitude to the Armenian people. The Archbishop Mess-up was in friendly terms with the vice royal of the Caucasus Vorontsov-Dashkov and through him he could get the Czar's permission to organize the Armenian volunteer battalions that were part of the Caucasian Russian Army. Thus he became the "Godfather" of the Armenian national units, which later served as basis of the Armenian National Army of the First Republic of Armenia. He could never imagine that after all his colleagues would call him spy or nationalist. But the time was "out of joint, and every devilish action found a way of expression. Thus, according to the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council's resolution the Archbishop Mess-up Ter-Movsisian became the citizen Mess-up Ter-Movsisian. He moved into Yerevan and lived in a one-room flat, continuing his work as a manuscript researcher. Several times the CHEKA officials visited him, but being assured that the old man read only manuscripts they didn't touch him. On June 3, 1939, he died and was buried in the Yerevan cemetery. There was nothing found in his flat, but

many manuscripts. He left more than a hundred of works, which were devoted to the investigation of the Armenian manuscripts. His life and death are vivid example of a true patriot and devoted to his sacred duties as churchman who became a victim of the Bolshevik repressive system.

On May 20, 1939, took place an ordinary meeting of the Central Committee of the CPA. At that meeting was discussed the question of the anti-religious propaganda in the Soviet Armenia and the activity of "The Fighting Atheists Union". The party organizations helped actively all social groups that fought against religion. One of the regional anti-religious organizations wrote in its resolution sent to the Central Committee: "The pilgrimage and rituals are prohibited and keys are in the hands of our controllers". The anti-religious struggle was carried out in organized ways in Yerevan, too. At the beginning of the 40s St. Zoravar was closed. The clergymen, deprived of any right, continued to remain the victims of the Bolsheviks' whim. For example, the priest of Khorvirap monastery had to leave his work and move to his native Haghbat village. The head of the village council later reported to the Soviet Authorities: "On October 19, 1939, the priest Zakhar Lalaian was run over by a train and died on his way from Alahverdy to his native village Haghpat". It was obvious, that the authorities killed him because he was known as an active defender of the Church. Without any doubt he was killed and then his case was presented as an accident. The GULAG was everywhere, repression continued, the numbers of martyrs increased. Even after their release the condemned people were not free from repression. Once in winter a priest was released from the camp after ten years of imprisonment. He was given a paper for registration out of the camp zone. He walked alone through the taiga the frost was severe. He almost fainted and could hardly drag his legs. The priest thought that there was

no chance to survive. Suddenly he saw an old man approaching him. Then he couldn't remember anything. When the priest opened his eyes he found himself lying in bed. It was a very small hut, but it was warm and tidy there. Then he learnt that his hosts were an old man with his wife. They were an exiled family. Their son was a repressed colonel who died in the camp of GULAG. The old man was a hunter who spent several days in the taiga. His wife cried almost all day long remembering their late son. The priest was yet young and accepted him like their son. There was a corner in their room where hung an icon depicting Jesus Christ. It was a true Christian family and the priest found himself in very dear surrounding. The old man told many interesting stories about his past. It turned out that during World War I he served in the Caucasian Russian Army and knew quite well about massacres of the Armenian by the Turks in Western Armenia. The old man knew that the Armenians were devoted Christians and he was very surprised that the Armenian priest had spent several years in the GULAG Camp. The priest told him that there were many clergymen of different nationalities in the camp. It was a pity that the priest had to leave them in the center of northeastern region to be registered otherwise the authorities would punish him for disobedience. After three days he blessed the old man and his wife and left them. When he came to the registration bureau of former prisoners he was ordered to wait. In an hour he was told that he had no right to leave the camp zone. He had either to get married or live there or they were going to send him to the forced labor zone. As far as he had a family in Armenia so he could neither get married again nor could call his family to him. Thus it was decided that he had to go to the forced labor zone. There was a little difference between that zone and the GULAG Camp. Anyhow one couldn't feel freedom of his actions. And it appeared to be in that ill-fated

zone. Again there was no freedom of movement from one place to another, no living conveniences any communication with the outside world. Those three days in the old man's hut were like a dream during the nightmare, which had continued already for several years.

Once working the priest got deeper into the taiga and suddenly discovered an old half-ruined wooden building. It turned out to be an old chapel dated as far as the time of brisance. That's to say the second quarter of the 19th century. It became a harbor of secret consolation for the priest and some of his friends. They went and prayed there. They made small candles of paraffin and lighted in front of the wooden cross, also made by them. They got somewhere an iron pole and hung it near the entrance of the chapel and used it as a bell. Soon they're little secret was discovered. They were declared incorrigible fanatics and sent back to the GULAG Camp. There began the second term of unceasing toil with physical and spiritual torment. There was no escape from hell. The Christian tolerance of sufferings and hardships, praying within barracks and punishment cells of the GULAG Camps, the chapel in the taiga, an icon with the image of Jesus Christ in the taiga hut, unburied corpses of unknown martyrs were real witnesses of the Christian faith. They bore testimony of its eternal nature and became the unknown saints of the Christian Church. "Now to thy eternal King, immortal, invisible, the only God, may honor and glory be forever and ever. Amen". (I Tim. I, 17).

PART THREE

TENDENCIES OF SOFTENING OF THE STATE POLICY TOWARDS THE CHURCH

World War II brought important changes the distribution of political powers in the world. Before it there were two camps: Socialist and Capitalists. Since the beginning of War changed into confronting camps according to fighting against each other alliances and not class division. Thus the Soviet Union appeared to be in one group together with the USA, etc.; it brought some changes in the Soviet Government's attitude towards the Church. This change reflected in different ways and with different intensity.

Since the beginning of 1940, the attitude of the Soviet Authorities the Church began to change, the pressure of the state repressive machine was weakened but ideological confrontations continued. At that time the Archbishop Gevorg Tcheorektchian was the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church de facto, but de jure he had yet to be elected as the Catholicos. As far his candidacy had been acceptable for the Bolsheviks that is why the Soviet Authorities did their best for him to be known to the Armenians of the Diaspora. The only aim was the Archbishop Gevorg to be elected as the Catholicos of All Armenians.

On February 7, 1940, the president of the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR, M. Papian, received him. They spoke about the problem of the Armenian Church and reconstruction of the Etchmiadzin Cathedral. They came to the conclusion that the Archbishop would

present a list with the Armenian clergy's demands. The Archbishop was allowed to call the National ecclesiastical council for the election of all Armenian Catholicos. The Soviet Government of Armenia settled the date of the election {April 10, 1941). To show that changes took place in its attitude to the Church the Government adopted a resolution according to the expropriated the property of St. Hovhannes Church was given that back. Anyhow the results of the National Ecclesiastical Council (April 10-13) were not satisfactory. Despite the fact that the Counsel was attended by several representatives from the Diaspora, as well as from some survived deceased not finally ruined by the Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union, but their number was not enough to elect the Catholicos. The Armenians of the Diaspora had not trusted the Soviet Authorities owing to its policy towards the Church. They understood that the power of savages destroying the Church would never treat religion in proper way. The Armenians of Diaspora had reliable information about the church affairs in the USSR from the Archbishop Garegin Hovsepian who was elected as the prelate of the dioceses in the USA. Beside, World War II embraced countries of Europe, Asia and Africa and made it very difficult for other representatives to attend the Council. The latter decided to keep the president of the Supreme Counsel the Archbishop Gevorg as the head of the Armenian Church. According to the resolution of the National Council the Supreme Council had to "send regularly representatives to dioceses in the USSR and abroad in order to have information about their real state, the activities of the ecclesiastical power control and instructions".

This resolution of the National Council reflected the expectations as of the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate, Holy See, as well as of the believers of the dioceses in the USSR. They waited for reopening of closed monasteries and churches. But first the Soviet local authorities opposed and then their expectations were broken by the aggression of the Fascist Germany against the USSR, the Great Patriotic War

began, (June 22, 1941). The Church always was with the people in all troubles and difficulties. The same took place this time in spite of the fact that the Bolsheviks did everything to separate the Church from the State with all tragic consequences.

On the very first day of War the Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolonna addressed all Christian dioceses with the following words: Fascist bandits invaded our Motherland violating all kinds of treaties and promises. They suddenly attacked us and now the blood of peaceful citizens is shed.... But it is not for the first time that the Russian people have to stand the test of sufferings. It will crush the hostile fascists with the aid of God. The Christian Church blesses all her believers for the sake of the defense of the Motherland's sacred borders. God lead us to victory." Like the Russian Orthodox Church the Armenian Apostolic Church also addressed the Armenians over the world with the following words. "It is already a fortnight (July 5) that the German armies invaded the Soviet Union, devastating and plundering our Motherland, spreading death among our parents, brothers, sisters, children. The Hierarchy of St. Etchmiadzin cannot stay indifferently as a witness. The Armenian Church and the Armenian people complain of the committed injustice. The Holy See is glad and consoled in his heart, in the historic moment its spiritual children fulfill their patriotic, civil and state duties, together with other people, enthusiastically and honestly. St. Etchmiadzin in her great and just cause, contributing to its successful resolution". It is noteworthy to mention the second appeal of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council to the Armenian people (July 30, 1941): "The Armenian, has no other Motherland but Soviet Armenia. The Armenian has no other stand factor outside of Armenia, except the Armenian Church and her Catholicosate with the Holy See in St. Etchmiadzin. The guarantee of the final victory of the Soviet Union is the sacred struggle of the

Soviet Union's 200 million. People united one by one will defend the Motherland for the sake of her defense of political liberty and eco-

conomic and cultural achievements. This struggle is favored by all nations of the world. To help the Soviet Union means to help the Motherland. The victory of the Soviet Union is the victory of the Armenian people too. Every Armenian who is eager to help his Motherland without doubt will help the USSR. Let Vardan struggle's spirit be with us the will defeat the enemy and give life to our people always. Let the Lord preserve he unshakable Soviet country in joy of the peoples of Soviet Union and the whole civilized world."

For the first day of War the anti-religious was ceased against the Church. "The atheist and anti-religious" had not been published since June in the USSR. But "The Union of the Atheists" formally continued its existence. The Central Committee of CPA stopped its meetings, which were devoted to anti-religious questions. The Soviet authorities became engaged in the War. Unlike the Russian and the Armenian churches, the Catholic Church of West Ukraine had another position to the question of the War. The leader of the Church in West Ukraine the Metropolitan Andrei Shepetitski, adopted the idea of the head of the Roman Catholic Church Pope Leo XII. He who dreamt about advancement of the Catholicism to the far east and submission of millions of new believers to Vatican, and establishment of the Catholic Patriarchal throne in Kiev and even in Moscow. In the first months of the Nazi invasion the Metropolitan count told his adherents, "The new and resolute leadership of great Germany will, at last, revive the former glory of the German nation and fulfill what is destined by God the task of the Bolshevik annihilation". Before that, he wrote, "Who help the Communists in realization of their projects of general, so-called, people's front with the Socialists and the Radicals, betrays his people". The United church of West Ukraine supported the Organization of Ukrainian nationalists during the War.

The appeal of the Archbishop Gevorg was heard in Armenia, as well as in the Diaspora. There were organized committees to support the Soviet Army materially. It is very strange, but even in such a fatal

situation, when the existence of the state was stake; the Soviet Authorities continued the repression against the clergymen and population of the territories to be occupied by the German troops. It was the beginning of the mass deportation and exile of the peoples considered "unreliable" by the Soviet Authorities. In November of 1941, the only priest of Astrakhan, Sargis Aslanian was exiled to Kazakhstan. For the first time he was repressed in 1939. At that time he was arrested and kept in prison for nine months as an anti-Soviet element but his guilt was not established. Anyhow, after his release, since that time he had been considered as an "unreliable" element and was again arrested and exiled two years later. In 1942, among other people exiled from the Krasnodar region were the Armenians who came here from West Armenia right after the Genocide. In the meanwhile, the situation of the clergy was not easy in Armenia either. They were heavily taxed, as follows from a letter, written by two priests to the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council: "Both of us are taxed by the state - military tax, income tax and cultural service - 2084 rubles 80 kopecks. In the present heavy conditions it is very difficult for us to pay that sum. We appeal to the Supreme Council to take measures to release us from that sum's payment".

The Soviet Government taking into consideration the Armenian Church relations didn't want to cut ties between the Holy See and Cilician Catholicosate, which is part of the Armenian Apostolic Church. In 1940, Catholicos Petros I Saradjian died. The Soviet authorities allowed two representatives of the Holy See to be present and take part in the election of the Catholicos of the Cilician Catholicosate. The Beirut Correspondent of "The New York Times" informed: According to the information, which we have, two deputies are coming arriving in Teheran from Soviet Armenia. They are going to Beirut to take part in the election of the head of the Armenian Church in Near East". At that time the Cilician Catholicos was not elected.

The Archbishop Tcheorakchian was actively involved in the spheres of policy and charity. He understood that saving the Motherland was the sacred duty of the Church and at the same time, through such activities, the Church will be saved from devouring tentacles of the Bolshevik repressive regime. The first step in the realization of such a merciful mission was the collection of financial ones, through donations, to build the tank column named "David of Sasoon". The Central Committee of CPA approved this idea. The first was the Archbishop himself who donated valuable things costing 850 thousand rubles, and 50 thousand rubles in Soviet cash. On January 20, he wired Stalin about the following: "The Etchmiadzin Catholicosate donates to the fund of building the tank column "David of Sasoon" valuable things of diamonds costing 850 thousand rubles, 1000 pounds of sterling and 50 thousand rubles. I ask you to order to open special account in the state bank of the USSR. At the same time I appeal to all Armenians in the world to take part with savings in the building of the tank column "David of Sasoon".

Stalin was one of those Soviet leaders who sanctioned the close of all charitable societies in 1922, in the USSR, indulging the Armenian-Caucasian benevolent society. In the beginning of 40s many things changed. At that time Stalin needed the help of the Church as materially, as well as politically and Stalin understood that he had to do everything to mask the brutal face of his repressive regime. He needed to construct the anti Hitler coalition with the USA and Great Britain. He had to present the Soviet Union as a civilized country and as far as in western countries religion was considered as an important component of the human society. Stalin was obliged to show that there was tolerable attitude towards the Church and other religious institutions in the USSR. That's why on January 26, 1943, Stalin sent a telegram to Etchmiadzin with the following content: To the keeper of the throne of the Catholicos of all Armenians the Archbishop Gevorg Tcheorekchian. I ask to tell the

Armenian believers and the clergy of the Holy See my greeting and the Red Army's gratitude for means donated to build the tank column "David of Sasoon". There is a special order given to open a special account in the state bank of the USSR. J. Stalin". It was a very important document. It meant a lot for the Armenian Church. Indirectly, it meant that the Soviet Government officially recognized the right of existence of the Armenian Church. It could undertake charitable activities and thus to help the struggle against fascism. The letter or telegram or any other document (not of repressive character) signed by Stalin meant much at the time. In the case of the Armenian Church it meant that the Archbishop Gevorg's activities as the head of the Church began to abound. It was his first victory and recognition.

The Russian Orthodox Church and other churches acting in the USSR were also allowed to carry out charitable activities. Means were collected in all parts of the country. Even the Metropolitan of the besieged city of Leningrad (St. Petersburg) donated resources for the defense fund of the country. The Archbishop Gevorg addressed the Armenian people in order to inspire the Armenians of Diaspora. On February 2, 1943, in particular, he declared: "All representative of religious views (the Christians and non-Christians) of the USSR assist the rear's strengthening and the success of the front with their abundant charity. Etchmiadzin, see-

ing the people's inspiration and devoted labor and struggle for the sake of the Motherland's liberty, decided to contribute to the Patriotic War's and success with abundant gifts and to asked to open a special account in the state bank for donations. Moreover, you, the Armenians of foreign lands, especially the Armenians of America that are free of the wars horrors and, due to emotions of your brothers of the Motherland, you suffered. The victory up to now you had not spared neither material nor moral support to the Red Army and orphan families of the Motherland. I am sure that again and again

with your abundant presents you II contribute to the enemy's crush and throwing out from our country".

The representatives of the Armenian community of the USA, inspired by the idea that the Motherland remembers needs and organized a meeting in the USA. Soon the committee wired to the Archbishop Gevorg "We greet your patriotic speech to help the Red Army. We bind ourselves to contribute to that cause, to spread your call and ensure success of collection of donations"; The Committee acted and soon the Armenians of the American Armenian community abundantly passed their savings for construction of the tank column. In a month 115 thousand and 580 dollars were sent to the Motherland. On April 18 the Archbishop Gevorg thanked the American Armenians for help. He informed that the donated sum was given to the government. He thanked also for medicine sent by the Armenian Community. Charitable donations were organized also in the West of the USA. The incumbent of the Armenian Church in California called the Armenian community to answer to the Archbishop Gevorg's appeal. On May 23, 1943, the new organized Committee of the Armenian Community of California, in Fresno, collected 40 thousand dollars, then followed 20 and then 10 thousand. Altogether the Armenian Community donated 70 thousand 600 dollars for the fund "David of Sasoon". The Archbishop Gevorg thanked the Armenians living in the USA not only donated dollars for the patriotic cause but sacrificed their lives for it. There had fought more than 18,5 thousand Armenian youth in the American Army.

The Armenians of Argentina also answered to the Archbishop Gevorg's appeal. In June 1943, the incumbent of the local diocese sent 5580 dollars from Buenos Aires to Etchmiadzin. Donations were sent from the Armenians living in Iran, South America, Cyprus, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Syria, Jordan and other countries. In June 1943, the Archbishop Garegin Hovsepien was unanimously

elected as the Catholicos of the Cilician Holy See. He was a devoted figure of the Armenian Church in the 10th Century.

The change in the attitude of the Soviet Government towards the Church began to give its results in the Armenian left press published in the USA. The Armenian-Azatakan party's newspaper, *The Struggle* (Baykar) published in Boston, wrote: "Some people insist that during the years of the Soviet Power, the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate was deprived of its rights and put under such pressure that was unable to fulfill its national-religious obligations. Rumors were spread that the Etchmiadzin Monastery was closed. The Catholicosate and clergymen were arrested and sent to Sevan. But these rumors were incorrect" The author of this article (Etchmiadzin at the time of the Soviet Power) misled his readers. He either lied or unwillingly used official Soviet information sent by TASS. He had to know that even during the years of World War II many Armenian clergymen suffered in the GULAG Camps far away from Sevan - in Arkhangelsk, Far East, Kolima, and Siberia. The author, as I, to please some customer, ignored the real image of the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate and desired to present it as appendage of the Soviet Government necessary". In order to show how illusory were relations between the state and the Church it's enough to mention that many requests to reopen the closed churches in Armenia were left unanswered requests addressed to him by the believers of Armenia:

On October 27, 1943, the Archbishop Gevorg received a wire from the Defense Ministry, informing "We inform you, that the David of Sasoon" tank column was constructed due to your donations. It is foreseen to give to a military regiment at the end this year". On September 4, 1943, a very important event in the Church's life took place. Stalin received the Metropolitan Sergi and other hierarchy of the Russian Church. During the meeting Stalin allowed to carry out the Russian Church Patriarch's election. On September 8, the election took place and the Russian Patriarch was elected. Sergi was a very

devoted clergyman and he contributed greatly to the perseverance of the Church in the USSR during horrible years of political repression. On October 28, 1943, the Archbishop Gevorg congratulated him for winning the election.

At the end of October, Stalin signed a document according to which was formed the Council of the Armenian Apostolic Church's Affairs under the Soviet Government. The Central Committee of CPA appointed a Soviet official as the head of the Council. That man was a political butcher who condemned many innocent people in the GULAG Camps. In spite of all this, there began a new period in the Church life in the USSR. The Soviet Government, at last, recognized officially the Church. Stalin knew about the influence of the Church in the world. It was very important to have the Russian and Armenian Churches on his side, especially taking into consideration that the Roman Catholic Churches officially recognized the Fascist regime.

Yet, in 1929, the Pope of Rome declared: "Mussolini is sent to us from above, by the Fate. That man is free of the political prejudices of liberalism". Later the Vatican supported Hitler's diplomacy with the treaty signed with Vatican on July 20, 1933". Vatican, in fact, officially recognized the Fascist State". It was the irony of fate that Hitler planned to occupy Vatican in 1943. He desired to remove the Pope of Rome to Germany. Hitler's plan was also to seize the Holy See' reasures old archives. Finally, the Vatican got convinced that there was no difference between Hitlerism and Stalinism.

That's why as soon as the Allied Forces appeared in Europe Vatican went over to them.

The year of 1944 was a turning time in the history of the Armenian Church during the Stalin regime. Since January this prominent magazine was published "The Etchmiadzin " magazine the official organ of the Holy See. Its publication proved once more that the Soviet State was obliged to recognize officially the Armenian Church's existence. A lot of greetings, and telegrams were received from abroad.

On February 29, 1944, the tank column "David of Sasoon" was presented to the acting army. It consisted of 29 tanks there was an Armenian inscription on "David of Sasoon" on the tank towers. The regiment fought heroically liberating Ukraine and Moldova. After the tank column left for the front the Archbishop Gevorg sent a letter to Stalin. He wrote "The first tank column fight successfully at the front. For the construction of the second tank column "David of Sasoon" constantly are received donations. The sum is already 40 thousand American dollars and 10 thousand pounds of sterling. Lately we received a telegram from the Armenians of Teheran where it is said that they gathered a sum of one million 745 thousand rubles for the construction of the tank column". The Armenians of the Diaspora had a hope that after the defeat of the fascist troops at Stalingrad the question of the Western Armenian lands would arise because Turkey was the Germany's ally in spite of the fact that had not actively participated in military actions. That's why there were organized institutions pursuing the Armenian question in the Diaspora. That movement led by the Armenian Party of Ramkavar-Azatacan was done in friendly terms with the USSR. The American Armenian National Councils became the leading center of the whole Diaspora. It was organized on March 19, 1944, in New York. The National Council had its programs" (1) contribute to the American war efforts, (2) To organize activities in the USSR and Soviet Armenia, (3) To defend the rights of the deported Armenians and to repatriate to Armenia. The American Armenian National Council recognizes the government of Soviet Armenia as the head of the Armenian rights". The leading body of the Council included representatives of different Armenian parties (Ramkavars, Hunchakians and etc.). The National Council had its branches in Chicago, Boston and other cities of the USA. The National Councils were organized also in France, Lebanon, Syria, Greece, Palestine, Uruguay and other foreign counties where existed the Armenian communities. The World charitable Union also helped Armenia during

1942-1945 by sending to Armenia 232 thousand 621 dollars. The amount of money was given to the common fund of the Red Army.

It is not difficult to see that the movement of charitable donation, which was set by the Church, found its adherents in the world and contributed greatly to the cause of the victory. The Church in the USSR proved her real destination as the body of Christ founded on the basis human ideals - love, charity, hope, brotherhood. No repression and persecution could destroy the very foundation of the Church because it was based on the rock of true faith. Even the Bolshevik atheists had to yield and recognize the authority of the Church among the people as well as in the world affairs. Despite political persecutions of the previous years and all contradictions between the confessional communities they were unanimous and resolute in their actions intended to support the state at the difficult period of the years of war.

The death of the Patriarch of the Russian Church Sergi shocked all congregations of the Church in the USSR. The hierarchies of all churches waited anxiously for the state decision about the future of the throne of the Holy See of the Russian Church. Luckily, Sergei left a will. According to it, the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, Leningrad and Novgorod Alexi succeeded him and in the winter of 1945 he was elected as the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church. He was a very pious clergyman. During the Leningrad siege he stayed there and with the word of God raised hopes of besieged inhabitants of the city. This situation made me to compare the siege of Leningrad with the siege of the Church by the Bolsheviks in the USSR. The Church had its battles, retreats and victims, but never was defeated.

In May 1944, was finished the work of the second tank column's construction, which consisted of 22 tanks. A month later the Holy See of St. Etchmiadzin received a government telegram with Stalin's signature "I ask you to send to the Armenian believers living abroad, who donated money to construct the second tank column "David of Sasoon", my greeting and the Red Army's gratitude".

THE CLERGY'S ENFORCED COLLABORATION AND THE CHURCH IN THE SOVIET UNION

After Stalin's death the Soviet State methodically continued to persecute Church and religion. On May 30, 1953, the new leadership of the USSR, ignoring the opinion of the Armenian people and the Armenian Church, declared. The following was declared "For the sake of friendly relations' perseverance and strengthening of peace, and security the government of Armenia Georgia considered it possible to renounce their territorial demands as regards Turkey. Thus the Soviet Government declares that the USSR has no territorial claim from Turkey". The puppet governments of the Soviet regime, the Central Government, disregarded national interests of their own peoples. It was in consequence of moral bankruptcy of the Soviet System. At the end of 1953, measures were taken against the religious communities that were evident of it. The Council of the Armenian Church's affairs had to "check up thoroughly all information's about operating underground and non registered communities and to take measures for stopping their activities. To check up the state of religious activities in three districts of the Republic (Kirovakan, Stepanavan, Kalinin) and to take measures for reducing the religious activities in these regions". In 1953, only 18 churches functioned in the Armenian SSR and even this quantity worried the Soviet Authorities. The population of the above mentioned districts demanded to reopen churches but it was in vain. The Soviet

Authorities decided to strengthen the work for spreading cultures among the masses and to tax heavily the parish priest.

Stalin's despotic time was over but not for the Soviet ideology. One of the first decisions made at the beginning of the taking office by N. Khrushchev was the one "About serious shortcomings and measures of improving science-atheistic propaganda" (June 7, 1954). Anyhow, after Stalin's death the Soviet totalitarian system began to show signs of strain, and, particularly, after the 10th Congress of the CPSU. In February of 1956 when Khrushchev due to some objective and subjective reasons officially condemned personality cult of Stalin, it was cracked. Then began a time known "The Thaw" which lasted about eight years. It found its reflection as in foreign, as well as in internal affairs. Many repressed victims of GULAG were rehabilitated. Among were clergymen. But the GULAG continued to function and next in turn had been new victims of the Soviet ideology. In such a political and moral atmosphere I began my studies at the Theological Seminary of St. Etchmiadzin.

Our family repatriated from Egypt, in 1947. I owed it to my parents' and became a seminarist with my parents' consent. In the summer of 1956 I finished the first year of my seminary course and went for a holiday to my parents. On my arrival I received suddenly a notice demanding me to appear in the first department of our town's police for meeting with a major. I went to the police department and was introduced to a dressed up man by an officer. Then we were left alone. The man looked at me and introduced himself as a representative of a KGB commissioned to involve me in a delicate operation. A group of students were coming from abroad to study at the Seminary. The KGB was eager to attain information about them in order to ascertain whether they were students or foreign spies. The man offered me to become one KGB's informer. I had to inform about their everyday life, meetings, contacts, views

and moods concerning the Soviet State and the ruling Communist Party. The unexpected proposal confused and frightened me, because I was inexperienced and very young. Noticing my embarrassment the man politely offered me to think over his proposal and the next day to give him a steady answer. We arranged to meet the next morning at the town hotel room number three, but on the condition that I should do my best to keep out of way of one clergymen. The master was understandable. It was clear.

The whole day my mother was very agitated because of my absence. I came home rather late and went at once to our only neighbor, a former major of the Soviet Army, who questioned me and, looking into my eyes suspiciously, discovered the reason of my absence. He paternally admonished me to be cautious and to display vigilance as regards the man from the KGB. The next morning, first of all I went to my fathers' intimate friend who with other Armenians also repatriated from Egypt, in 1947. Since he was unmarried and knew six European languages, as well as Turkish and Arabic, the KGB suspected him of spying. When my father and his friend met he often complained of being pursued by the KGB's agent who offered him to collaborate with them. Eventually he was obliged to agree to work for them as an interpreter on the Soviet-Turkish frontier. When I told my father's friend what had happened he advised me to decline diplomatically their proposal under a pretext that I was not a useful person for their mission.

Our meeting with the man of the KGB undid with my resolute refusal and he only took my signature not to divulge it. During the following days eight students arrived from abroad and studied at the Theological Seminary for about a year. Being foreigners undoubtedly all of them were under the strict observation of the KGB. Six of them suddenly returned. Only the two from the eight continued their studies.

The second time the KGB attempted to recruit me was in 1962 when I had already become a clergyman. After being appointed as privates secrete of His Holiness, the Catholicos of all Armenians, Vazgen (1955-1994), I was summoned by the military registration and enlistment office. An officer told me that I was a liable person to the military service. He added that there was a chance to avoid it if only I agree to become an agent of the KGB. His proposal shook and plunged me into despair. I asked him to give me time to think about his suggestion. The next day I informed His Holiness about the agent's proposal. He pondered and sadly said that I had to give such a wise answer in order not to give rise to close all doors of my future activities, and in particular, of my mission abroad which were very important for our Church's internal and foreign affairs. I felt that His Holiness was worried about my future fate, which reflected the hard state of the clergy in our country. Suddenly my responsibility raised and I had come to a decision to act according to the words of Jesus Christ: Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesars and to God the things that are Gods' (Luke XX.25).

Two days later, I had been invited again to the military registration and enlistment office to assist them on condition that I should not give information everyday. We arranged that I should

give information about events, which I find important for the "security" of the Church and the state, within the bounds of my official duties. Taking into consideration that my writing-table was placed in the office-room of His Holiness I could present a written report once a week about his meetings, discussions and resolutions. Suppose that KGB set up two a way of checking upon my information credibility and to act according to our common cause, I decided to tell him about all that happened. His Holiness had great confidence in me so I asked to compile together reports concerning delicate questions. He looked at me with a sad

thoughtful air and said: "When I was vicar in Rumania (1944-1945) the country was occupied by the Soviet troops and the KGB agents launched furious activity. They tried to blackmail me. One agent, even threatened me by telling that they knew my anti-Soviet moods, but would not arrest me if I consented to collaborate with them".

A little later, a young man told him he was appointed by the Soviet embassy to keep his activities under observation and report about him periodically. He asked the vicar to help him and roused his disgust but there was no alternative. His activities under the KGB's observation continued for a long time. In 1953 he was ordained as bishop by His Holiness Gevorg XI. Then he was informed about a decision of the Soviet Armenia's government proposing him as a candidate for the Head of the Armenian Church. But on the condition that in one way the KGB would not interfere with the activities of His Holiness in the sphere of relations with the Diaspora Church. And on the other hand he had to be loyal towards the adapted position of Soviet atheist ideology and the KGB control against the Church. And His Holiness added that it was the second case when he learned that he was under permanent observation. Thus, before leaving abroad (October, 1963), when I had to accompany His Holiness as a private secretary, had become a testing term for my "collaboration" with the KGB, which entrapped and paralyzed all secular and religious institutions in the USSR. The period of the Khrushchev "Thaw" came to an end in 1962. Rise in prices of meat, milk and butter was a cause of burst of indignation in the Soviet Union. In the reports of the KGB, which incessantly were received by the CPSU, informed about unrest in Riga, Kiev, and Moscow; calls for strike were heard in Petersburg (at that time "Leningrad", Ivanovo, Magnitogorsk. Rise in prices coincided with reduction in rate in the Novocherkask electric locomotive plant. Workers demanded

to inform the Soviet Government that they were going to cease work as a sign of protest. The local authorities presented it as anti-Soviet rebellion directed against Khrushchev. Troops and tanks were sent to the plant. During their punitive expedition 24 workers were killed. The truth about bloody events in Novochoerkask was learnt by people only in 1990. The KGB kept the truth under lock and key.

Secret files of the KGB were replenished with materials of new persecutions that were fulfilled under the pretext of finding "enemies" among intellectuals. The movement of dissidents became a radical form of the mass social and political protest against the Soviet totalitarian ideology in 1960-70s.

Our ecclesiastical congregation felt sharply the renewal of the ideological pressure. Censorship was hardened and repressive tentacles not only to get a grip of new denunciations but also penetrated all kinds of archives that bore testimony to the Bolshevik's former crimes.

In the course of time the Soviet repressive organs' archives were flooded with fabricated documents ready to explode like delayed-action bombs. The memory of the Bolshevik system's victims appealed for justice. The documents began to pursue the tormentors of the victims. The official criminals tried to obliterate the traces of crimes by removing archive materials from place to place or destroying them. Besides there were documents which being drawn during the years of the Bolshevik repression formed a part of the Church archive. These materials were of the ecclesiastical, official-administrative and personal character reflecting the spirit of these alarming times. In due course the documents acquired historical significance, exposing base essence of the ruling Soviet power. In 1963, I continued my work as a private secretary of the Head of our Church, well known in the Christian world Catholicos Vazgen I. One day he invited me and spoke anx-

iously about a visit of the deputy manager of the Council of the Church affairs of the government. He demanded to turn over the Church archives to the jurisdiction of the Soviet government. His Holiness charged me, in a short time to get into details and get acquainted with the archives, in order to select materials, which could be used to discredit the Church by the Soviet authorities. I was fully busy with that work and, finally, I delivered a sufficient number of necessary documents to His Holiness.

Luckily I wrote down the content of many of them, and even, rewrite some of them. Thus, I can use them in my present rendering. Besides, for the first time I publish my memories, which describe to KGB's efforts to recruit me - a clergyman to be their agent. So I took the extremely dangerous road of the enforced "collaboration" with the KGB for the same of the existence and functioning of our Church.

All corresponding documents, concerning this sphere of our official life, were compiled with the absolute knowledge of His Holiness. Every time I asked his advice about all delicate matters. We found it necessary to give the KGB such reports that would help our mission and justify our existence. Through our actions we also tried to defend our true and honest clergymen from the informers' denunciations. In order to avoid my everyday "duty" of observation, His Holiness decided to remove my table from His office to another room. I was advised to hand over the reports to the Council of the Armenian Apostolic Church affairs, when the personnel had already left the building.

When it had been decided that I had to accompany His Holiness during his mission abroad the officer of the corresponding department of the KGB told me about everybody's contacts with the Catholicos Vazgen I during our mission abroad. It was said to my great surprise, that every person contacting with us had to be considered as an enemy, and agent provocateur acting

against the Soviet State. It was not difficult to guess that every member of our delegation had got almost same instructions in accordance with the principles of the KGB in order to check the reliability of the received information.

In October we left for London. I felt that one of the members of our delegation kept me under observation; thus, the time of our stay in Great Britain was very strenuous for me. Then we went to Egypt, India and Jerusalem and during all that time I compiled "reports" consulting His Holiness. Then I passed them to the Soviet embassies officials who used them on purpose. I think that we were under double shadowing. Most probably, the KGB had its man as a member of delegation and, besides, the KGB's spies kept us under observation. It was a time when a year before the Armenian Church became officially a member of The World Council of Churches (1962) and so our missions abroad intensified. In 1965, during my another mission abroad, when we left for Ethiopia via Istanbul, we discovered a man sitting behind our chair in the plane. I warned His Holiness about it in order us not to speak loudly. During our mission several times I saw that man keeping us under observation. It was obvious (if that man had not been a foreign agent) that the Soviet political secret organs mistrusted us. It was due to the spirit of time. In September of 1966, the USSR's Criminal Code had been adapted to the standards of new forms of persecutions. New clauses (19 and 190) were added to it. These clauses provide up to three years imprisonment "For dissemination of slanderous fabrications discrediting the Soviet State and social system".

My most "ceremonial" meeting with the responsible figures of the KGB took place in 1967, when I was going to leave for Geneva to study at the Ecumenical Institute of BOSS El. The KGB staff organized the farewell reception in one of the luxurious rooms of the main hotel in Yerevan. The high-ranking officers of

the KGB perhaps used richly served table for final "examination" of my personal attitude towards the life, in general. It was a new stage off the KGB' activation in respect of me. It seemed to me that I passed the "examination" and satisfied their curiosity. And as if to prove it one of the KGB's agents accompanied me to Moscow during my flight. After our plane had landed the officer introduced me to a Russian agent of the KGB who had been going to be with me during my stay in the capital of the USSR. The KGB's Central Organ continued to check my loyalty in respect of the Soviet Regime. Then I was summoned by the Russian Church foreign office to be given instructions about our behaviors abroad. I realized that three Russian students were going to come with me for studies in Ecumenical Institute in Switzerland. Undoubtedly they also had passed all stages of above-mentioned "examination" by the KGB' instructors.

During my stay in Switzerland, I was sure that each my step was under their strict observation. I know that I had to be very careful while speaking about the Soviet policy especially concerning the Church affairs and national policy interests, in order not to be condemned as a nationalist. When came back home for summer holiday, suddenly, I was offered to have a summer vacation too, contrary to my earlier agreement with His Holiness Vazgen I about my participation in theological seminars during summer. I was rather surprised that after summer one of them had not been allowed to continue his studies. I suppose that the reason was his close contact with an English girl during his studies, in Switzerland. It was considered suspicious by the Soviet authorities. I realized that the same sequence of events awaited me, but concerning another cause. Later I learned that there was information about my "unloyalty" to the Soviet power in national questions. It is interesting to mention that later on the mentioned Russian students became important figures in the Russian Church.

One was ordained a priest then became a high-ranking person in the Church hierarchy, the other - remained layman but held one of the highest posts in the Church Office. As for me, after graduation from BOSS El I was appointed in the London Armenian Church as an incumbent and simultaneously I continued my high education at the King's College of music and University of London. I studied there by the recommendation of His Holiness. It was in 1968. To my surprise, I had been only a month in London when, suddenly, I was called back on the pretext of getting a new admittance to Great Britain by the Soviet authorities. After my return I was reminded about my stay in Geneva. I was advised not to get involved in national questions. I felt that those two students didn't, spend their time "in vain" during our stay in Switzerland. For getting a new admittance for Great Britain I had to meet with the KGB in Moscow. One officer, who was rather well disposed to me, convinced his bosses to allow me to leave for London, as a necessary step for their work. At the same time, he charged me to appear in the Soviet Consulate on my arrival in London in order to meet one of the vice-consuls.

New restrictions and rigorous measures carried out in the Soviet country were connected with the aggravation of the prestige of the USSR on the international scene connected with the events in Chekoslovakia where the Soviet tanks brutally "set up" on order. The Soviet authorities intensified repression and many dissidents were persecuted. Taking into consideration the fact that Armenia from the middle of 1960s became a center of the rebirth of the national-liberation feelings in memory of 50th years of the Genocide and extermination of the Armenians in West Armenia. A meeting was held in commemoration of the victims of the Genocide in the Opera House, in Yerevan. The High-ranking Armenian clergy headed by his Holiness was present at the meeting. I was among them too. There were demonstrators outside the

Opera House. It was on April 24, 1965. No one directed against the Soviet System.

The only slogan was "Lands, Lands". (They meant the lands of Western Armenia, which are occupied by the Turkish conquerors). But as far as the Soviet government in 1921 "presented" Turkey with the Armenian territories so the KGB acted accordingly keeping to the Soviet-Turkish Treaty. And its agents provoked a clash between the police and demonstrators. Stones were thrown, windows of the Opera House were broken, and some demonstrators were arrested. KGB found a new pretext for intensifying repression in Armenian. National feelings were presented as anti-Soviet actions in the KGB's Documents. That period was marked by the

anti-national hysteria of KGB, which embraced all sphere of intellectual and spiritual life of the so-called Soviet Society. It reached its climax in 1968, and coincided with a terrible shock of the Soviet ideology after punitive expedition of the Soviet troops (which had bloody experience of Hungary's people uprising in (1956) in Chekoslovakia. I must tell that among officials of the Soviet authorities were people who had already understood that the Soviet System was doomed and they served not so much as ideological adherents of it but as professionals of their work. And they liked to have a heart-to heart talk with someone who could console them.

I found such a spiritually bewildered man in the person of the Soviet vice-consul in London who appeared later to be a high-ranking agent of KGB. As an experienced spy he received me very cordially and during our prolonged meeting he turned off the telephone in order, as he explained me, our conversation not to be listened in by the British Intelligence Service.

During my sojourn in London two important events engraved on my memory. The first one was connected with the Armenian community, which interested greatly the Soviet Secret Service.

The vice-consul wished to make acquaintance with businessmen, scientists and other profound persons of the Armenian community. In order to avoid responsibility of an unpleasant assignment I told him that the 50th anniversary of Soviet Armenia was nearing and it was sensible to celebrate that date in the Soviet consulate. He agreed and on that day about two hundred Armenians were invited and the Soviet agents came into close contact with so many Armenian representatives of the Armenians community. In all-probability the results were prodigal, but without my participation. It followed also from the fact that the Soviet ambassador thanked me officially. The second event was connected with an assignment that the vice-consul gave me when he once invited me to have supper. It reminded me a detective film. He told me to go to our common tailor the next day and to fetch package with the name of N., among the other letters, and to bring it to him. The whole night I was thinking about the usual role for me that I had to play. The next morning as a callow conspirator I made arrangement with the tailor as if I was going to order a new suit. I went to the tailor but at the moment of my leaving I could discover that package on the window-still, a usual place of mail near the entrance. I carried out his commission though without any result.

It appeared lately that the Soviet Secret Service kept me under observation and often checked me to ascertain my loyalty. Besides, I noticed that during my sojourn in London I was put under double control both by the Soviet and the British Secret Services. While leaving the Soviet consulate my identity was several times checked by the British policemen, on the other hand the authorities of the Soviet consulate, who were appointed by KGB, inquired about my contacts with the clergymen of the Anglican Church. Luckily my relations with the vice-consul took shape of friendliness and sometimes after a tense working day he used to visit me at my lodging. I was glad to serve him as a cler-

gyman. During our last meeting we had a talk at supper and he told that after his leaving a new vice-consul would arrive as his successor. Then he added: "The new vice-consul had to establish contact with you're by the unwritten law, but I warn you not to be frank with him like us". Perhaps, he knew his successor quite well and his

conscience didn't allow him to plunge me into trouble. But soon my enforced conspiracy came to an end because I graduated from the University of London at the degree of Ph.D. (1972) "The Etchmiadzin" published an information about my receiving Ph.D. and returned home in 1973. Before that, in 1972 the Soviet-British relations were spoiled because of banishment of 32 diplomats. While I was in London some changes took place in the USSR political life, which were connected with detente. The "Thaw" and "Detente" were periods when the iron curtain of the USSR was a little softened.

And on one hand there was hope of softening of political tension in international relations on the other hand repression continued in the USSR. Yet, in 1970, the committee of Human Rights in the USSR was organized in Moscow. It was as an association of the author that was headed by A. Sakharov and others. The committee was the first independent social organization in the USSR that was a member of the International League of Human Rights. But the state continued to take control of the society. In 1972-73 the authorities began hunting against A. Sakharov. In 1973, after A. Soljenitsin's book "Archipelago GULAG" publication, he was arrested. Of course, such a political tense situation put everyone in the country, especially the Soviet citizens working abroad.

After my arrival I was appointed as the head of the foreign department of Church. It meant that besides spiritual service I had to be more active in the Soviet political life. It was realized through the foreign department of the Russian Church. Just at this

time I was ordained bishop and at the same time the capacity of Church was added. Thus I became a high-ranking figure in the Church hierarchy. Frequent mission abroad and participation in the sessions of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and other conferences were preceded by political consultations in the foreign relations' department of the Russian Church, in Moscow. Besides the KGB supplied us with pamphlets, used by the Soviet diplomats, for our political "education in the spirit of the Soviet ideology in order "to realize" the Soviet foreign policy's main principles on actual international problems during our meetings with foreign delegations. The Soviet ideological machine "trained" its propagandists in all fields of the Soviet reality including clerical sphere. The clerical persons leaving the Soviet Union for abroad were considered by the authorities as spokesmen of the Soviet propaganda. We were given instructions about our line of conduct during conferences and discussion. We were advised never to lose a chance to introduce the Soviet viewpoint, on actual international questions to foreigners. After return from foreign missions we had to report about the results to the Council of the Church Affairs of the government in Moscow. Our accounts were exaggerated and corresponded to the conception of the Communist ideology because any opposition to it led to repression. In 1974, persecutions against the Committee of Human Rights continued. A. Soljenitsin was banished from the USSR. In the same year A. Sakharov was awarded the Nobel Prize for peace, but the Soviet Authorities didn't allow him to leave the country to receive it.

Many events of that time were imprinted on my memory. I would like to present one of them to my readers. First of all I like to say that the state's renewed interest to the Church was connected with its financial and political interests. The USSR became a member of several international organizations. It is important to

notice that the Soviet ideology tried to do its best to prove that the USSR was the outpost of peace in the world. There was an organized Peace Securing Committee in the USSR. It appeared that the Church made more financial donations to that organization. When we trace the development of relations between the Soviet state and the Church we see that they undergone some changes during the time between 1920-1970. Despite the fact that the Soviet ideology obstinately kept to the atheist principle, it, anyhow, abandoned some brutal methods of the Church property's confiscation, which was accompanied by destruction of churches. In modern times the Church's wealth was cleaned out in more "civilized" way by enforced donations for different purposes to artificially formed governmental organization. Another point is that beginning from the post-war time the Soviet State involved the Church in its different political schemes. Those clergymen, who understood, that it was necessary to use this motive for the sake of the Church, they tried to stir up the interest of the authorities in the strengthening of the Church's position in the state. Since that times it became almost a tradition; His Holiness once or twice a year visited the Head of the Soviet Government. And little by little the Church high-ranking figures assumed the role of unofficial envoys. Foreign missions of clergymen reflected changes and new tendencies in the world policy. Aggravations of the Soviet-Chinese relations and the threat of the Chinese-American reapproachment forced the USSR to change many approaches in its foreign policy and to commence improving relations with Western countries. First of all was comprehended the arms race's absurdity. Very important steps, directed to the improvement of relations with France and the German Federal Republic, were made which contributed to detente. A radical moment from the "Cold War" to detente was fixed by the arrival of the President of the USA Nixon in Moscow (1972). At that time and later some important Soviet-

American agreements were signed which led to the disarmament and peaceful coexistence in the world.

In 1974, an unusual assembly of WCC took place in Geneva. Since 1962 the assembly in Delhi as I have mentioned once, the Armenian Church had also become a member of that organization. One of reflections of such changes was annual message of the Head of the Armenian Church to the head of the church's abroad and vice-versa. As a member of the Central Committee of WCC I had been invited to that assembly. After the official part of the assembly the USSR and US delegations met to discuss the burning questions. Un-compromised discussion continued at a stretch of several hours. During adjournment members of the Soviet delegation appealed to the Soviet Embassy for aid. Employees of the embassy arrived and rather strangely said that theological diplomacy of clergymen allowed them to find more flexible solution in political matters than politicians were able to give. The politicians were obliged to follow all instructions and act in accordance with them. Then he produced a paper from his pocket and told us that they had no right to deviate from its content. That precedent proved once more ramshackle of Soviet ideology.

The year of 1975 was prominent for signing the Helsinki Final Act by 33 European countries as well as by the US and Canada. The Act formulated the following principles: indissoluble of frontiers in Europe, the respect of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, refusal from the use of force. The Helsinki Final Act contributed to the improvement of international relations but stereotypes of political and ideological confrontation continued. As an example of such a situation, were détente's international official contacts that were intensified but the ice of the "Cold War" was not broken. I want to describe our mission to the US in 1975. The following meeting between the representative of Churches acting in the USSR and the US churchmen took place

in 1980. National Council of the US invited a delegation of representatives of the Church communities of the USSR to go in the hope of softening the political tension in the Soviet-American relations. In such cases official representatives of the clergy of the USSR gathered in the department of foreign relations of the Russian Church in Moscow and during several days they listened to official political lectures, delivered by different diplomats, about contemporary international problems. We left Moscow for New York, and then we went to Washington. There we met some senators, then visited the

White House, the Office of the State Secretary and etc. From the first day of stay in the USA our delegation experienced great stresses because groups of hired demonstrators pursued us and scanned the "KGB agents "Wolves in sheep's cloth, leave our country" and other similar slogans. Once situation aggravated so much that demonstrators began to throw empty bottles at us. We asked protection from the American authorities. We were told that America was a free country and every citizen was free in his action. They have from that time during our state in the USA we had been escorted by security guards at airports and hotels, as well as in official places. Sometimes we had to enter buildings through basement entrances. When we arrived in Colombia I headed a part of our delegation. At the airport a pressman asked me directly whether it was right that the clergymen of the USSR were disguised agents of the KGB. Such provocative question fell incessantly upon us during unofficial meetings. On the other hand the organization that had invited the Soviet delegation of the clergymen expressed regret for such accidents. To soften the situation the American authorities granted us certificates of honorary citizens of Columbus. For fairness sake, it is necessary to say that some clergymen of our delegation stepped over their duties and very actively propagated the Soviet interests and official position

and it was the reason for renewal of provocations against our delegation. I have to say that those propagating speeches aroused even indignation of some of the members of our delegation. Of course there were many similar cases when our clergymen being abroad and in the USSR were propagating ideas of political character. For example, in 1976 took place the Christian Conference of peace, where were discussed the problems of disarmament. Just it was a part of enforced collaboration of the clergy with the Soviet authorities, under the pretext of active participation of the clergy in their peaceful policy of the USSR.

There were cases when the Soviet secret service openly (for us) used the Church's reaction for its purposes. Once a delegation of clergymen from the USA arrive in St. Etchmiadzin headed by the bishop of New York, for a dialogues with our Church. During three days of negotiations an agent of KGB was included in our group as clergymen. Since those time the agents of KGB had become frequent visitors of our meetings with foreigners. Once a delegation of the Catholic Church arrived in St. Etchmiadzin. When members of the delegation entered the Cathedral we suddenly discovered that an agent of the KGB replaced the seller of candles. Besides, we generally felt that the KGB had animosity feeling especially against the Catholic Church. Perhaps it was connected with the serious opposing feelings, which the Catholic Church exposed against the Soviet regime, for a long time. Above we have traced the relations between the Soviet System and the Catholic Church in 1920s. The KGB's activity was connected with cooling of the international relations. Detente appeared to be not a long process. Two or three years after signing the Helsinki Final Act detente stopped. Parallel to intensification the human rights movement the KGB watch-hunting activity increased. In 1976 a physicist Yu Orlov organized a social group to render assistance to the Helsinki Final Act's fulfillment. It consisted of eleven mem-

bers including A. Sakharov's wife E. Bonner. Similar groups were organized in many European countries and in some Soviet Republics including Soviet Armenia. New persecutions began and during several years 23 members of different groups were arrested and seven members were exiled abroad. These hostile actions against the members of Helsinki groups and their arrests stirred up indignation and protest of many people and brought to the formation of new social associations which led to consolidation of the human rights movement with the awakening of the national-religious consciousness. Unfortunately, the long anti-religious struggle of the Bolsheviks among other devastating effects gave rise to the appearance of many religious groups which had no connection with traditional religious and were especially alien to the Church of Christ. Such a religious discord resulted in existence of more than three thousand unregistered religious organizations, in the USSR.

The invasion of the so-called limited contingent of the Soviet army caused a serious harm to detente. Politburo of CPSU passed a resolution (12th of December 1979) about bringing troops in Afghanistan. On December 27 the invasion began and the war lasted 9 years. It harmed greatly the prestige of the USSR on the international arena and demoralized the Soviet society becoming a catalyst of the Soviet Systems crash. The Afghan war aroused a new wave of the dissident movement which together with the ideas of the "Helsinki's Act" shook the foundations of the Soviet ideology. New persecutions against the ideological "rioters" echoed in our Church too. At the beginning of 1980s the KGB installed its agent in the office secretariat of the Armenian Church. It was an open act of violation of spiritual life and human rights of believers. The agent, at first secretly and then openly kept our conversations and generally the activities of the whole staff under observation. As soon as his spying had been exposed we offered

him leave office under any pretext. Once more we were assured that the KGB never trusted anyone and suspected all of us. Three KGB controlled our missions abroad. In 1980 I attended the WCC annual Conference in Geneva. That's why when I was removed from the post of the Chancellor of the Holy See to the post of the Primate of the Ararat dioceses, (1981-1983), in a new surrounding, I felt that I was under strict control of the KGB agents and informers, among them were some clergymen. As it appeared later I was rather independent in my actions and worked passing over KGB's regulations and the authorities disliked it. I must say that to isolate my activities from the first day of my new appointment I was specially instructed by the Chairman of the Department of Religious Affairs of the government about there circle of my activities. He said that while I worked as the Chancellor of the Holy See and the Director of Foreign relations I contacted with foreigners, in a new situation, I had to deal with the Soviet citizens who for 60 years had been brought up and educated as atheists. And the authorities as anti-state activity might consider so any action connected with their conversion to Christianity with all consequences. He advised me not to begin any activity in spiritual sphere. In the same day I returned to the Holy See and applied for retirement explaining that the proposed restrictions were very hard to be fulfilled. His Holiness asked me to postpone the question of refusal and then advise me to change my astute and agree to the appointment, at the same time to take into consideration the authorities' dictate. I couldn't refuse His Holiness' advise and began my work in a new capacity. In the course of time the authorities strictly reproved me for my independent activities. I ordained several deacons and it was considered as a departure from the state regulations concerning religious affairs. The authorities presented the case so that I as if organized a religious show in such a backward village there its inhabitants due to the Communist education

had forgotten the Christian traditions and became atheists. But I with my actions arose to their religious feelings and it was considered as a "crime" by authorities. Besides, one of these new ordained deacons, a teacher of the English language, instead of getting the teachers salary (100 rubles), as a deacon using the church finances of the parish Church began to get 200 rubles. I was accused that I demoralized the young soviet specialist, turning them into spiritual servants. And so the authorities considered my activity dangerous for the state interests.

I was not absolutely free in serving my religious duties too. Whenever I was going for the mass or preaching to the parishes of other town and villages I had to take through the Council of the State Department a permission from the active of atheist of those towns. And only after that it would be decided whether I had the right to go there or not. It was a great humiliation through which we had to pass in order to deliver the word of God to believers. And I was reproved for each my step, which might be, considered not corresponding to artificial instructions of the authorities. In this way the spiritual-cultural life was suffocated. For example the soloist of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and the honorary organist of Vatican was not allowed to perform in the Church. There were prohibitions concerning the 20th anniversary of my ordinance, of my painting exhibition. Besides while transmitting spiritual songs of folk character sung by me never had been mentioned the performers name with its spiritual degree. All this was considered as a threat to the Soviet ideology, because the authority of the Church was growing and the atheist propaganda was loosing its actuality, and it was contradicting to their reports sent to Moscow that the Church was dying.

It is necessary to mention that despite all obstacles we tried to establish contacts with official figures outside of the state mechanism in order to promote the cause of the Church. Different meas-

ures were applied to gain sympathies of some communist leaders and government officials. For example, we brought presents for them from our missions abroad. Among these presents were very popular drinks, perfumery, and materials for suits. We gave presents to high-ranking officials on holidays and other occasions, especially during official receptions around the arranged-table. But the "ear" of KGB was everywhere. After one of such receptions His Holiness advised me to be very careful because he learned that an informer fixed his words who was in our surrounding. Anyhow, the contacts with the state officials were very useful and any question of construction, administrative or economic character that arose connected with the Church, were settled on high level through our acquaintance. In this way the diocese center was built in Yerevan. This was very beautiful building built on the place of a half-ruined construction. For getting a permission to build the building we were able to get the general plan of Yerevan by the help of one official figure. So we had chance to get the place for our building. But the authorities didn't forgive me for building that construction. It was added to my other independent steps and I was considered to be a person who of authority. And so the authorities began to put obstacles on my activity road. Little by little I was removed from my post. For 2-3 years I stayed at home as if a person under home-arrest. At last in 1985, I was allowed to leave for Sweden, as the Primate of the Armenian Church there.

Then began the period of "perestroyka" (reconstruction) in the USSR. It was the period of deep crises in economic and political life and of destruction in nationality relations. Blood and enforced migrations of the national minorities marked it in conflicting Republic of the former USSR. The blood of innocent victims in Sumgait, Kirovabad, Baku, Tbilisi and Vilnius was the echo and agony of the Bolshevik totalitarian system. It bore its horrible sign

on the ethnic processes, which were under the yoke of the preceding seventy years of the Soviet Power. After the collapse of the USSR and its dissolution breaking off chains was very difficult and painful. At the beginning of 1990s independent Republics were established on the ruins of the former USSR.

Nowadays all spheres of life, including spiritual, are entering their normal course due to democratic way of development. Now I am calm and after retiring from official work in the Church hierarchy I am going to devote the rest part of my life to education the young generation of the Armenians in the spirit of Christian faith. I should like all of our brothers and sisters to know that several generations of clergymen in the former USSR suffered as through they were in hell. It was a horrible epoch of temptation. In order to weaken the church, conditions were such that no one had confidence in another person. During meetings and receptions, we were often suspicious of each other because of the aforementioned condition. Now, looking back over my forty ears as a servant of the church, I see that I am a living witness to the final period of the Stalinist repression of the church. For thirty of those years, I witnessed humiliation of clergymen and many of the harms suffered by the church because of attacks against the church by atheist followers. I have with sincerity and much effort, endeavored to overcome personal difficulties and temptations to write this story. In order to survive and to gather the dispersed children of the Church of Christ were real deeds of historic significance. Faithful clergymen behaved as politicians, diplomats, enforced collaborators of the secret services, administrators, and economists to save the Church. They adapted themselves to unfavorable conditions and endurance of the Church with the Cross of Christ. For the Soviet authorities the clergyman was an abnormal idealist and a light-minded and occasional man who being exposed to danger acted against the reality. But they didn't remember one very

important thing that our history proved that real servants of God would never perish. I apologize to all my brothers in Christ who passed all those trials, because I must say that I helped us to understand spiritually and physically what is the righteous covered with thorn road to divine eternity. Even taking into account all our experienced sufferings I think that some of our western colleagues must comprehend that the life of the clergymen during the Bolshevik regime was the martyrdom. The western approach to the contemporary spiritual life is, as I can see through Dr. R Shuller's interview. When I was in Los Angeles Dr. Shuller was presenting one of his new books. A reporter asked him whether he had any problems in his life. Dr. Shuller thought a little and then answered "No". Such an answer is very strange for me,

because I remember the words of Jesus Christ: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul. For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and WILL THEN RECOMPENSE EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS" (Mat.XVI.24-27).

ENDNOTES

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TERMINOLOGY INDEX

Armenian Apostolic Church - The national church of the Armenian people established in 301 by Tirdates III and St. Gregory the Illuminator.

Bartholomew, Saint - One of Jesus' disciples in A.D. 68 who introduced Christianity in Armenia.

Bolshevik - A political party led by Lenin in the October 1917 Russian Revolution.

Catholicos - Title of the religious supreme head of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the successor of pontiffs originating from the Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew.

Coup d'état - A sudden decisive blow in politics.

Dashnaks - members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, which was formed in 1890.

David of Sasoon - Legendary folk epic of a giant hero who accomplished the impossible.

Diaspora -used to describe Armenians who do not reside in Armenia.

Ecumenical Council - Reference to the many Christian religious councils of which Armenia was an active participant of.

Etchmiadzin, Holy - Center of the Armenian Apostolic church traditionally believed to be established in 301 and location of the current Armenian Cathedral and Holy See.

Genocide - The deliberate, planned, and systematic annihilation of

a racial, religious, political, or ethnic group.

Gorky, Arshile - Arshile Andaman Gorky was an Armenian painter who was a pioneer Armenian Abstract Expressionism.

Gregory the Illuminator - First Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic church, known as the "Illuminator of Souls" and patron saint of the Armenian church who instituted the great conversion of Armenian paganism to Christianity.

Hitler, Adolph - Dictator of Nazi Germany and the man responsible for the annihilation of six million Jews during World War II.

Hunchaks - Members of the Hunchag political party and freedom fighters formed in Geneva, Switzerland established in 1887.

Islam - One of the three main monotheistic religions of the world. Islam was founded by the prophet Mohammed in A.D. 622 in the Middle East.

Lenin, Vladimir Ilich - Founder of the Russian Communist party, leader of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, and first head of the Soviet State.

Mesrop Mashdotz, Saint - Beloved saint and inventor of the Armenian alphabet in A.D. 404.

Mudros, Treaty of - Treaty of Mudros was signed between the Allies and Turkey on October 30, 1918.

Noah's Ark - Biblical ark that housed Noah, his family and pairs of every living animal.

Nuarsag, Treaty of - This treaty was signed between Armenia and Persia granting Armenia religious freedom.

Perestroika - Russian term of restructuring or reforming the economic and political system.

Politburo - A leading committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, having the responsibility of analyzing events, determining policy, between sessions of the larger Central Committee.

Ramgavar - Member of the modern Armenian Ramgavar political party which was established in 1921. The Ramgavar party is also known as the Armenian Democratic Liberal Organization.

Sakharov, Andrei - Russian nuclear physicist and 1975 Nobel prize winner who was supportive of Armenian humanitarian causes.

Stalin, Joseph Vissarionovitch - He was a participant in the 1917 Russian Bolshevik Revolution and became dictator of the Soviet Union after Lenin's death in 1924.

Vazgen I - Garabed Baljian he was born in Bucharest in 1907. He was elected Supreme Catholicos of all Armenians in 1955.

Zoroastrianism - Religion of the ancient Persians which still has some worshippers.

THE AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY



Archbishop Arsen Berberian was born in 1937 in Alexandria, Egypt. In 1947 he repatriated to Armenia. Despite the fact that he was not from a clergyman's family, he grew up in a spiritual environment. He attended Church every Sunday and sang in the choir. In 1955, he entered the Holy Etchmiadzin Theological Seminary. After graduating from the seminary, he studied for two years at the Theological Center in Moscow. After returning home in 1962 and being ordained as a priest, he was appointed as the private secretary to the head of the Armenian Church. In 1967, he stud-

ied at BOSSEI in Geneva, from 1968-73 at KINGS COLLEGE, LONDON UNIVERSITY, while simultaneously studying at the Royal Academy of Music. After graduating from London University with a Ph.D, he was invited to the Holy See, and appointed chancellor and Director of Inter-Church Relations, Department of the Armenian Church. Following the appointment, he was involved in international church relations, conferences, congresses, ecumenical movements and contacts with leaders of different churches. From 1981-1984, he served as the Primate of the Gugark Diocese in Armenia, from 1990-1996. After that stint of service, he retired and now resides in the US, where he is writing his personal memories of history. He is committed to helping others who desire to get acquainted with the Christian culture. His hobbies are writing literary works, art, painting, and especially, Armenian Church music.

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