

# NATIONALITIES OF ARMENIA



CONFLICT RESOLUTION CENTER OF ARMENIA  
UNION OF NATIONALITIES OF ARMENIA

**NATIONALITIES  
OF  
ARMENIA**

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# SETTLEMENT OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA



## SIGNS

- State boundaries
- adm. unit's boundaries
- Assyrians
- Greeks
- Georgians
- Jews
- Yezidis
- Kurds
- Russians
- Molokans
- Germans
- Poles
- Ukrainians
- Others

# REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

## General Information

*Nikolay Hovhannisyan*

On May 28, 1918, Armenia was proclaimed an independent State under the name of the Republic of Armenia. It was the first Republic in the history of Armenia. The restoration of the Armenian statehood was a turning point in the modern history of the Armenian people.

The First Republic existed about 2,5 years.

On November 29, 1920, with the support of Bolshevich Russia and the XI Red Army, the Soviet Power was established in Armenia. The Republic of Armenia was renamed Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, which from 1922 was incorporated into the USSR, making its part up till 1990.

The Second Republic was formally a sovereign state within the Soviet Union, but in fact it had the status of a semi-independent State.

At the end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s, the Soviet Union entered the period of deep political, social and economic crisis, that ended up with disintegration of the USSR and emergence of 15 independent states, Armenia being one of them. On August 23, 1990, the Supreme Soviet of Armenia adopted the Declaration on Independence, and the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic once again was renamed the Republic of Armenia.

On September 21, 1991, following the Referendum, the Republic of Armenia was formally proclaimed an independent and sovereign State.

The Third Republic of Armenia was recognized by the international community, and on March 2, 1992, Armenia was unanimously admitted a member of the United Nations.

The first President of RA was Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who

held this post from October 16, 1991 up to his resignation on February 3, 1998.

In March, 1998, Robert Kocharyan was elected President of Armenia.

**Territory:** the area of RA is about 30,000 km<sup>2</sup>, which only makes a tenth of the territory of historical Armenia.

RA borders Georgia in the North, Azerbaijan in the East, Turkey in the West and Iran in the South-West.

**Territorial-administrative division:** RA is divided into 11 provinces ('marz'es) - Aragatzotn, Ararat, Armavir, Gegharquniq, Kotayq, Lori, Shirak, Syuniq, Tavush, Vayots Dzor, and Yerevan city with the status of a marz.

The capital city of RA is Yerevan. Population - 1,249,400 (1996). It was founded in 782 B.C. by King Argishti.

**Population of RA:** 3,763,000 (1996). 97% are Armenians, 3% - national minorities: Assyrians, Georgians, Germans, Greeks, Jews, Kurds, Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Yezidis, and others.

**Language:** Armenian. The Armenian language is one of the branches of the Indo-European family of languages.

**Religion:** Christianity, proclaimed State religion in 301 A. D.

**Church:** Armenian Apostolic Church.

The total number of Armenians around the world is 8,500,000. Armenians live in different countries, such as Russia (1,600,000), USA (1,200,000), Georgia (430,000), France (420,000), Lebanon (180,000), NKR (150,000), Syria (120,000), Argentine (95,000), Canada (75,000), Turkey, Istanbul, (70,000), Germany (32,000), as well as in Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, the Netherlands, Italy, Iraq, Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, etc.

## INTRODUCTION

*Nikolay Hovhannisyan*

This book is written within the framework of the Project "The Impact of the Resolution of Ethnopolitical Conflicts on Prevention of Migration in Armenia", suggested by the Conflict Resolution Center of Armenia and supported by the Union of Nationalities of Armenia.

The Project received the Grant of the International Organization of Migration.

This book is unique. It has no precedent. Its authors are leaders of the Assyrian, Georgian, German, Greek, Jewish, Kurdish, Polish, Russian (included the Molokans), Ukrainian, Yezidi communities of the Republic of Armenia. For the first time, the situation of the non-indigenous population of Armenia became an object of a special investigation, and the necessity of an edition like this has long been ripe.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the formation of the independent Republic of Armenia has radically changed the situation in the country. New economic, social-political relationships and state structures emerged. As a rule, the transition to new relationships is a painful process with a negative impact on the social-economic situation of the people. Unfortunately, Armenia was not able to avoid this. Moreover, the 'reforms' and 'reorganizations' conducted in the country in 1990s with no preliminary preparation and in accelerated speed, have drastically aggravated the people's living conditions. For some strata of the society they turned hopeless.

This heavy burden is equally shared by representatives of more than twenty nationalities inhabiting Armenia, which, in addition, face other, might it be said, their own, inner problems, such as the functioning of the national language, preservation



of the national traditions, customs and culture, retaining the national identity.

It would be incorrect, though, to regard these problems as solely 'their own'. The problems of the non-Armenian population of Armenia are our common problems, and their pain is our common pain. The needs and requirements of the peoples, who have found their second homeland in Armenia, should be outspoken in public and in full voice.

We, Armenians, ought to be sensitive to the problems of the non-Armenian population, and the President, the Government and the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia should see to it that the needs of the non-Armenians, living in Armenia, be met. This will promote a still deeper friendship among all the nationalities in Armenia and reinforcement of the internal political situation in the country. Hence, it is an issue of great political significance.

In one book, it is hardly possible to cover all the problems. Therefore, expediency considered, a definite circle of issues has been regarded: historical ties of the given ethnic group with Armenians; their present situation; reasons of migration processes, and - the most important - their needs, requirements and suggestions on how to improve the situation of non-Armenians, to protect and extend their rights for them to fully participate in public, political, and cultural life of RA, to retain the national identity of each of the nations.

#### *Acknowledgments:*

We are very much obliged to the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Moscow for financing the English edition of the book.

We would like to particularly emphasize the role of Mr. Gerald M. H. Portegies, the Consul of the Netherlands in Moscow, who did his utmost to carry out this unique Project.

## UNION OF NATIONALITIES OF ARMENIA

Vladimir Chatoev

*President of the Union of Nationalities Member  
of the Union of Journalists of Armenia*

Presently, at the threshold of the new millennium, we must bear in mind that knowledge and understanding of others is a key to peace. Isn't absence of them the cause of numerous conflicts, bloodshed and wars? Any human being with a different language, religion, color, undoubtedly, deserves a place under the sun - just like we do, no matter whether we like him or not. Nevertheless, to tolerate the fellow man for the respect to his rights is one thing, and quite another thing is to know him, to be compassionate to him, to understand him. Of course we don't know sufficiently about each other. Many a thing we know by hearsay only. For instance, we are not always fully aware of the Assyrians, Greeks, Poles, Kurds, Germans and other nationalities. Meanwhile, don't the national minorities have a far going history, rich culture? They are represented by scientists and art workers, craftsmen and just good people. And they all live next to us.

After the disintegration of the USSR, an amazing process of awakening of the national minorities started. This was manifest in their increased interest to the mother tongue, history, culture, religion. To the call of time, in December, 1994, the Union of Nationalities of Armenia was founded. The Union is supposed to facilitate the resolution of problems of each Community within one Union, and to serve link connecting the State structures with public and cultural organizations. The Union does not ally to any of the existing parties or movements. The organizations - members of the Union, retain their legal independence.

In his "Appeal to the Nation", Robert Kocharyan, President

of the Republic of Armenia, said, "Armenia must be native home not for the Armenians only, but also for the national minorities inhabiting Armenia".

The Assyrian, Greek, Georgian, Jewish, German, Polish Communities, The Council of Kurdish Intelligentsia, the Kurdistan Committee, "Russia" and "ODA" Societies, the International Center for Russian Culture "Harmony", the Foundation for Support of Russian Compatriots in RA, the Charitable Foundation "The Ukraine" are members of UNA. Besides the cited nationalities, in Armenia live also Byelorussians, Mordvinians, Ossets, Slovaks, Moldavians, Uzbeks, Bashkirians, Tatars, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Kabardians, Komis, Udmurts, Chuvashes, Italians. For the small number, they do not form their own national organizations, willing to cooperate with us. In the estimates of experts, representatives of more than twenty nationalities live in Armenia, which makes a total of three percent of the indigenous population. These are findings of the 1989 census and may not reflect the current situation. Let us not forget that the count was conducted in hard times - right after the earthquake, when refugees were fleeing from Armenia.

We may state with certainty that the Union of Nationalities today is the only public organization unifying the representatives of almost all of the nationalities inhabiting Armenia.

The concept of 'national minority' in all its aspects is more than understandable for the Armenian people, who had the fate to suffer the Genocide of 1915-1920. The number of the victims surpassed 1,500,000. Seemingly, a nation that experienced a genocide, should have been filled with hatred towards other nations, particularly those which participated in the genocide or took no measures to avert and condemn it. Not the Armenians. They did not only manage to return to life and stand on sure ground. They accepted the representatives of other nations as members of their own family. Invariably warm



and compassionate towards the national minorities, the Armenians thus not only manifest their generosity and good will with regard to the Perfection of Nature - the Human Being, but also confirm their right to be called a great nation, which in labyrinths of history is paving its own, specific, individual track. This phenomenon of the Armenian people has not been studied up till now and needs thorough investigation.

As is known, in the world there are no mononational states, and Armenia is not an exception - although there are many, who try to maintain the opposite. For long centuries, representatives of various nationalities had inhabited and presently inhabit this land, never experiencing discrimination. They found their second homeland in Armenia, and prove honest and devoted citizens of the country. Can there be anyone to claim that in all the accomplishments of the Armenian people representatives of other nationalities remained inert ?

The Union of Nationalities intends to actively participate in the economic and cultural life of the Republic, to support the consolidation of its statehood. As is well known, the promotion and protection of the rights of individuals belonging to the national minorities furthers the political and social stability of any nation.

National issues may be clustered up to the following characteristics:

- when there exists a national policy of oppressions, persecutions and discrimination;
  - when the State policy is oriented to compulsory or forced assimilation;
  - when the national policy is declarative;
- and
- when the national policy fully excludes physical, moral, economic, religious and any other kind of persecution;
  - when the state attitude to the nationalities promotes the successful development of all the spheres of life.

The latter two characteristics make them feel to be governmentally protected, completely free of the fear of forced assimilation. This, in its turn, replaces the notion of 'national minority' with that of the 'full and equal citizen of the country'.

The rights of the national minorities are protected by Article 37 of the Constitution of RA, which says: 'Citizens belonging to national minorities have the right to preserve their traditions, develop their language and culture'. In 1994 in Moscow, Presidents of CIS signed the Convention on "Ensuring the Rights of Individuals Belonging to National Minorities", which was ratified by the National Assembly of RA on October 11, 1995.

We see that the appropriate article in the Constitution of RA and the specific Convention exist. It is essential now to have a State body to implement them. It could be a Commission or Subcommission on National Minorities established within the National Assembly of Armenia. The formation of an agency responsible for the problems of nationalities in the Republic would positively affect the Armenians living in the near and distant outland. They number more than five million.

The national minorities of RA celebrate their national holidays without any restrictions, and freely develop their traditions.

Since 1994, the Union of Nationalities has arranged over 25 events, programs, conferences, meetings with the leaders of the Republic, the clergy, employees of embassies, as well as with the representatives of the inspection team of the European Union.

Within the framework of national diplomacy, an open letter addressed to the leaders of national and public organizations of Azerbaijan has been adopted that contained a suggestion to act as mediators between the two neighboring countries for the positive resolution of the Karabakh problem.

The Union of Nationalities took part in the ratification of the

Convention on "Protection of the Rights of Individuals Belonging to National Minorities" by the National Assembly of RA; the scientific-practical Conference "The Union of Nationalities - Problems and Prospects"; the international seminars - "The Rights of National Minorities and the Civil Society", "Building a Civil Society in Armenia and Georgia" - in cooperation with the Conflict Resolution Center of Armenia; the memorial meeting "Charents - to All Nations" at which the poet's poems were recited in Armenian, Georgian, Russian, Ukrainian, Kurdish, Assyrian, Polish and German. Besides, jointly with the Constitutional Court, conducted was Seminar on "The Rights of National Minorities within the Context of Protection of Human Rights"; jointly with UNESCO - the International Conference "Dialogue of Cultures and Shaping of an Individual at the Threshold of the XXI century"; jointly with the Association of the Assyrians of Armenia and dedicated to the 1700th Anniversary of adopting Christianity in Armenia - the Conference on "Armenian-Assyrian Church Relationships".

Two consecutive years, on the Independence Day of Armenia, the Union of Nationalities has arranged festivals of cultures. It has become a tradition to celebrate the Jewish, Kurdish and Assyrian New Years, the national holidays of Greeks, Georgians, Russians, Poles, Germans. The 850th Anniversary of Moscow was celebrated, too. These and other arrangements, in which representatives of the Communities, journalists, public and state figures, employees of diplomatic services took part, seem to further the process of building a democratic civil society in RA.

The Union of Nationalities closely collaborates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Science, Commissions of UNESCO, UN. The Union took part in the development of the First Report of the Republic of Armenia submitted to the UN Commission on

Elimination of All Kinds of Racial Discrimination, as well as in the International Conference, dedicated to the 50th Anniversary of adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, organized by the Foreign Ministry and UN Development Program at the support of other agencies of UN in Armenia

It is beyond any doubt that the Armenian people, striving to build a democratic society, will carry out with regard to other nationalities inhabiting Armenia a thoroughly elaborated policy, and will realize it with the entire State system. This will further both the consolidation of the Republic of Armenia, and the natural development of all the nationalities inhabiting its territory, as well as will diminish and allow to completely eliminate the processes of forced migration.

## ETHNOPOLITICAL SITUATION IN ARMENIA

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Widespread is the opinion that Armenia is a monoethnic Republic. At that, a specific meaning is assigned to the concept 'monoethnic'. It is almost perceived as an outcome of the Armenians' xenophobia and extreme nationalism.

But this is not true to reality.

Armenia is a multinational state, where for centuries have lived different peoples - some of them since antiquity, some others having emerged at a relatively later period, in the XVIII-XIX centuries.

Presently in Armenia, side by side with the indigenous population -Armenians, live representatives of more than twenty nationalities: Assyrians, Georgians, Germans, Greeks, Jews, Kurds, Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Yezidis, as well as representatives of Central Asian, Baltic and other nationalities.

The total number of the national minorities makes three percent of the population of Armenia. Is it much or little? In this context, it is not the quantity that matters, although it should be admitted that three percent is not at all a small number. There is another, more significant circumstance.

When saying Armenia is a monoethnic state, we, naturally, imply that there cannot be a specific national policy, i.e., a specific policy with respect to the national minorities.

It is quite different when Armenia is recognized as a multiethnic state. This suggests that the Government of Armenia has a well developed national policy, that it cannot neglect the interests of the national minorities, that it is bound to guarantee their rights and duties, and to ensure their free develop-



ment and preservation of their national identity, in compliance with the generally accepted international norms.

Therefore, the forces - those outside of Armenia in particular - adhering to the opinion that Armenia is a monoethnic Republic, i.e. those who ignore the existence of non-Armenian peoples and ethnic groups in Armenia, not only exaggerate the true picture of the ethnopolitical situation in the country, but also render an ill service to the national minorities in the Republic.

National peace has always reigned in Armenia. All the peoples inhabiting the country lived in peace and friendship; no confrontations arose between them, no clashes or conflicts occurred. Luckily, the situation retains like that nowadays, in our extremely complicated times. This is one of the peculiarities of the ethnopolitical situation in present-day Armenia.

To what has already been said, we should add that the national minorities have made a considerable contribution to the progress of economy and culture of Armenia.

The analysis of the ethnopolitical situation permits us to conclude that the national problem - in its classical interpretation - does not exist in Armenia. Policy of persecution based on nationality is not practiced here; one nation is not hounded at the other; no one is deprived of citizenship of RA based on nationality, etc.

This we consider yet another significant peculiarity of the ethnopolitical situation in Armenia.

For all this, the conclusion that everything is O.K. in Armenia, and no national problems exist in the country would be hardly correct. The problem does exist, and the interests of democracy and building a civil society, the interests of stability in our Republic and support of peace and cooperation among the nationalities require that the issues worrying the national minorities be outspoken in public.

## 1. The Migration Problem

After the disintegration of the USSR and formation of the Independent Armenian State - the Republic of Armenia - the public-political and social-economic structures in the country have undergone changes. This exerted an immediate influence on the ethnopolitical situation in Armenia. A number of new, previously unknown problems sprang up, the problem of migration and the refugees in the first place.

The initial wave of the migration process, being chiefly an outcome of political factors, involved Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Moslem Kurds. It followed the Resolution of the Soviet of People's Deputies of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, dated February 20, 1988, on transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region from Azerbaijan SSR to Armenian SSR. The Azerbaijani Government not only rejected the just requirement of the Armenians in Karabakh, but organized pogroms of Armenians in Sumgait, afterwards - in Baku, Gyanja and other towns and regions of Azerbaijan. As a result of this, about 500,000 Armenians were compelled to flee Azerbaijan, escaping death. About 304,000 of them found asylum in Armenia.

These events had sharply aggravated the political situation in Armenia, and negatively influenced the situation of the Azerbaijanis living here. Under the arisen circumstances, they no longer felt safe in Armenia, and about 165,000, including the Moslim Kurds left the country. The Moslem Kurds left with them, rather out of religious solidarity.

Furthermore, following the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, into Armenia fled Armenian refugees from Abkhazia. At present, their number nearly reaches 6,000.

Thus, in consequence of the first wave of the migration movement, the demographic picture of Armenia changed sharply.

Soon afterward, the migration movement involved other

ethnic groups, too, most of all the Russians, then the Molokans, Greeks, Germans, Jews, Ukrainians, to some extent - the Yezidis and others.

The major causes of their migration are:

Firstly, the unstable and unsafe situation in Armenia and all of Transcaucasia, owing to the ethnopolitical conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, in which Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia were involved.

Secondly, the difficult social-economic situation in RA, collapse of economy, unemployment, energetic crisis, economic blockade of Armenia by Azerbaijan and Turkey.

All of the above mentioned caused the second and the most powerful wave of migration from Armenia both of the Armenian and non-Armenian population. According to the official data, by the year of 1996, about 700,000 citizens had left the country.

These facts similarly affected the Armenians and the national minorities, i.e., the process was not discriminative by nature. The representatives of the national communities themselves many a time emphasized that their social-economic situation was as difficult as that of the Armenians. This is a most significant fact to be always born in mind while analyzing the causes of migration movements.

Thirdly, important is the fact that some of the national minorities of Armenia had an alternative of a better economic situation. First of all, this applies to the Greeks, Germans and Jews who have emigrated to Greece, Germany and Israel accordingly. The situation in the mentioned countries is safer and more stable, and the living standards are higher. This is also true for the Russians and Ukrainians, who migrated to Russia and the Ukraine, though these countries, too, are enduring a social-economic crisis. As a result, the number of the Russians has sharply decreased: from 70,000 to 13,000 - 15,000. The number of the Ukrainians, Greeks and represen-



tatives of other nationalities has also reduced by 20-30 %.

The fourth cause were the problems emerged in 1990s in connection with the functioning of the national languages and national schools, teaching in the mother tongue, getting higher education, in other words - those of preservation of the national identity. For the Russian, likewise for the Ukrainian and Polish communities, greatly mattered that the Russian language at State offices and in clerical work was not used any longer.

The changes in this sphere happened without any preliminary work but promptly, on one decision, and were met by the national communities with discontent, ultimately causing migration, predominantly of young people.

Today, the peak of migration processes seems past. The situation has become markedly stable. This, however, does not mean that no one leaves Armenia any more. Our concern is the stream of mass migration that has stopped. Currently, departures from Armenia are planned individually.

## 2. Participation of National Minorities in State Structures.

In this sphere, a lot of problems remain unsettled, which justly worries the non-Armenian population of RA. The Constitution of RA has proclaimed equality of all the citizens of RA, guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities for everyone, regardless of nationality, religion, language, etc. In the real life, however, a bias from some provisions of the Fundamental Law is being observed, that has a negative impact on the ethnopolitical situation in Armenia.

First of all, this applies to the representation of the national minorities in the legislative body of the country - the National Assembly of RA. The seats of the deputies in the National Assembly are, surprisingly, occupied by Armenians only. Not a single representative of any national minority has been involved in NA. This fact is unprecedented and, naturally,

causes their resentment. Formerly, in the Soviet times, among the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR there were Russians, Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Jews, Ukrainians, etc.

One more circumstance should be taken into account. We, Armenians, are normally very sensitive to our problems and exert every effort - those living abroad included - that our rights be respected. Our achievements in this field are obvious: Armenians are represented in the parliaments of the countries of residence. Thus, in the Parliament of Lebanon, six seats are allotted to the Armenian community; in Mejlis in Iran - 2 seats; in the Parliaments of Syria, Cyprus and Hungary - one in each, etc. Seemingly, this fact should have compelled Armenians to be more circumspect with regard to the rights of the national minorities of RA in such an important issue as the representation in the Parliament of Armenia.

The injustice in the issue of representation can be, and ought to be overcome. Presently, amendments to the Electoral Law and the Constitution of RA are being developed. They must ensure at least two seats for the national minorities, and an appropriate mechanism to implement this.

It is also necessary to employ representatives of the national minorities in the governmental, legal and local administration structures.

Eventually, isn't it strange that in RA, there is not a single State structure, responsible specifically for the problems of national minorities. In our opinion, it is high time that such an office be established. We think it more expedient to establish a Council of Nationalities affiliated to President of the Republic as consultative body. The latter circumstance will attach influence and prestige to the Council and facilitate the realization of the adopted resolutions.

The Council of Nationalities affiliated to President should represent the national minorities.

This package of actions, being not related with expenses

and the blockade, may favorably influence the ethnopolitical situation, eliminate misunderstandings and promote the consolidation of the internal political stability in Armenia.

### 3. The Problem of Preservation of the National Identity

The national minorities are greatly concerned with the problem of preserving their national individuality, their language, culture, traditions, habits that constitute the essence of national identity as such. The problem has become crucial since the beginning of 1990s, when substantial changes were under way in the internal life of Armenia. The spheres of language and education did not remain intact. The new approaches had had a particular strong impact on the status of the Russian language. In fact, Russian unofficially had the status of an official language. In many State, Party offices and in other spheres, the clerical work had been performed in the Russian language. There were lots of Russian schools, the bulk of the contingent in which made Armenians. Many departments at higher educational institutions comprised parallel sections in Russian.

Since the beginning of 1990s, however, and after the adoption of the "Law on Language" by the Parliament of Armenia in 1993, the situation has changed radically. In Armenia, like in all the other Republics of the former Soviet Union, the language of the indigenous population - Armenian in our case - was recognized the only official language and, accordingly, the entire clerical work in the State, scientific, cultural, educational and other offices was directed to be conducted in the Armenian language.

This new approach - commonly accepted in all the countries all over the world - cannot be disputed. In this respect, no claims can be raised on behalf of the national minorities. The problem is that the above mentioned alterations should have been introduced thoughtfully, taking care of the established

traditions, after the adequate basis would had been prepared. In a word, the people should have been given the opportunity to enter the new phase smoothly, able to retain all the best that existed in the past.

Further, more care should be taken of, and more attention paid to the functioning of the languages of the national minorities, teaching in the mother tongue, keeping schools, providing them with textbooks. In a word, it is imperative to ensure all the necessary legislative, financial and economic conditions for the education in the mother tongue. Of course, under the new circumstances, the national minorities have a better command of the Armenian language than before, and this is for their own interests, since knowledge of Armenian provides them wider opportunities to be employed in economic, scientific and cultural spheres. This will also open new horizons for State and administrative activity.

The agreeable combination of these two principles is the only correct way, able to provide the interests of the given national community and the general interests within the Republic of Armenia. In this case, the fears of the national minorities with regard to their future, the preservation of their national identity might be reduced to the minimum.

Besides, this could be complemented by creating all the necessary conditions for the preservation and development of national cultures, for the performance of national cultural, educational, public and other unions and societies. Important is the State support of the national mass media, including TV programs for the national minorities.

No doubt, the realization of the aforementioned measures will change the ethnopolitical situation in Armenia for the better. To accomplish this, legal foundation is needed. Of principal importance may prove the adoption of the "Law on National Minorities" by the National Assembly.

The unique character of the ethnopolitical situation in

Armenia is that behind some of the national communities of the Republic of Armenia, such as the Greek, Georgian, Jewish, German, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian Communities, stand sovereign States, to which they ethnically belong. So the conditions in which 'their' Communities are, the way the rights, national traditions, language and culture of the Communities are respected, are under the thorough scrutiny of these States. The legislative acts of RA on the national minorities is within the scope of their observations, too. This is logical and understandable. The leadership of Armenia must take this into account, since any violation of the rights of the national minorities, their unfavorable conditions may cause tension and aggravate the inter-State relationships, provoke interference of the interested States, as well as the related international organizations in protection of the rights of the national minorities. In other words, it may become a dangerous source of confrontation and destabilization.

As we take into account that destabilization in Armenia, the same as in Azerbaijan and Georgia, produces a negative effect on the geopolitical situation in Transcaucasia and — to some extent - in Near and Middle East, the necessity of a policy of respect of the rights and preservation of the national identity of the national minorities will be obvious.

Armenia, as R. Kocharyan, newly elected President, stated in his inauguration speech, must become home not for the Armenians only, but for all the nations inhabiting the Republic. And home must be comfortable for everyone.

## **ASSYRIANS OF ARMENIA**

**Pavel Tamrazov**

*President of the Association  
of the Assyrians of Armenia "ATUR"*

The contemporary Assyrians are descendants of the ancient Assyrians.

Numerous sources verify that, after the downfall of Assyria, the Assyrian nation was not exterminated or assimilated. Many Assyrians found asylum in the inaccessible mountainous regions of Near East.

The Assyrian historian B. G. Arsanis writes, "After the downfall of Ninevia, thereafter - of Urha (Edessa), the Nestorian mountains from Diarbekir to Urmia and from Mosul and Arbil to Kotur for 2,500 years had become permanent asylum for the Assyrians, who were persecuted in the planes of Messopotamia and Iran".

Assyrians adopted Christianity in the I century A. D. They were the main disseminators of the religion in Armenia and elsewhere.

According to the Assyrian history, recorded by Shlimun from Targavor, in the region of Samoy only, in the XV century there were 565 Assyrian villages. To Persian records, in the XVII century over 400,000 Assyrians lived in Iran. Ya. D. Maloma indicates that in 1874, in Julamerk Kaza there were 790 Assyrian villages. Besides, about 60,000 Assyrians lived in Erzerum and more than 6,000 - in Diarbekir vilayet.

We see that in the course of a very long historical period the Assyrians lived in the vicinity of the Armenian people. Having historically almost identical fates, they labored side by side producing material wealth, uniting, waging struggle for their freedom and independence.

Both the nations were turning their glance to the neighboring Christian State - Russia - and always supported it in the



wars against Turkey and Iran.

It is not at all accidental that, after the Russian-Persian war of 1826-1828, the Russian Government, intending to reinforce its southern frontiers, allowed that hundred families resettle in Transcaucasia. Those Assyrians, chiefly from Iran, being good neighbors of Armenians, chosed Eastern Armenia, that after the mentioned war was annexed to Russia.

The Assyrian families settled down in Yerevan Province, in the villages of Koylasar (Dimitrov), Dvin Aysor (Verin Dvin) in Ararat Marz, Arzni - in Kotayk Marz, Sherior (Arptagers) in Armavir Marz (in the brackets the modern names of the vil-lages are given). In these villages, the descendants of the early settlers live up till now. In Yerevan live 500 Assyrians.

It has been for almost two centuries that the Assyrians and Armenians work side by side for the welfare of their nations. The major occupation of the Assyrians is agriculture - viticul-ture, gardening, vegetable growing. The Assyrians are known for their diligence. They have always been among the leaders in manufacturing agricultural produce.

The Assyrian population tended to increase in number. Thus, if in 1886 in Yerevan Province there lived 1,800 Assyrians only, in 1914 they numbered close to 2,500, to reach 9,000 in 1989.

Presently, about 7,000 Assyrians live in the Republic of Armenia. The reason for the decrease is the migration that took place in the period between 1992-1995 following the unfavorable economic situation in the Republic. The indige-nous population of Armenia also migrated - in search of employment. The Association of the Assyrians of Armenia exerted all efforts to stop the migration, and - to some extent - succeeded.

Today, when the century-old dream of the Armenian nation - the formation of an independent sovereign State - has become true, the people have enthusiastically taken up the

consolidation of the democratic principles, simultaneously creating conditions for the progress of all the peoples inhabiting RA, the Assyrians among them.

In 1989 the Assyrian Association "Atur" was founded. It was officially registered at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia in 1992.

In 1993, the Association was allotted office facilities, and this enabled its members to immediately undertake the settlement of the principal problems confronting the Association:

1. To ensure free national development.
2. To preserve and develop the national culture and the mother tongue.
3. To set up cultural centers, groups of people's art, youth sports clubs.
4. To train school personnel and reinforce Assyrian teachers.
5. To consolidate the traditionally friendly terms with the Armenian people, with the other peoples inhabiting RA.

In tsarist Russia, the Assyrians were taught at Russian schools, since there were no Assyrian schools. In 1924, in the villages where there were Assyrian dwelling blocks, primary schools (1st-4th grades) were opened, where the children were taught in the Assyrian language. The alphabet was not authentic Assyrian, but adjusted from Latin. From the 5th grade, the teaching went on in Russian.

In 1936-1938 the majority of the Assyrian intelligentsia in Russia and in Armenia, was repressed, which served ground for closing the Assyrian schools. School teaching was back to Russian from the 1st grade.

At present, in all the Assyrian villages there are Russian secondary schools. Hence, the school language for decades having been Russian, the Assyrians turned Russian-speaking people.

In the beginning of 1980s, to meet the requirements of the



Assyrian people, the Government of Armenia allowed to introduce the mother tongue into the school curriculum. This, however, brought about such problems as lack of prints with the Assyrian alphabet; lack of teachers of Assyrian; lack of textbooks, etc.

For support, we turned to George and Maron Arsanises, Assyrians living in Moscow. With their help, training courses for Assyrian teachers were organized in Yerevan; a minimal amount of textbooks of the Assyrian language for the first year of teaching was supplied to schools. For all that, the problem sustains vital up to date, since in one class with about 15-20 pupils, there is only one textbook.

This year, the Board of Secondary Schools in the Ministry of Education and Science of RA decided to promote the reproduction of some books, to more or less provide the schools with textbooks. Yet, this will hardly settle the school problem as such.

Crucial is the problem of the teaching personnel. In Armenia, there are no colleges to train teachers of the Assyrian language. The only way out is the reinforcement of teachers outside the country.

The situation with the higher education as such remains difficult, too. After finishing Russian schools, Assyrians are supposed to enter Departments, where the subjects are taught in Armenian. This accounts for the fact that nowadays there are but very few Assyrian students in the higher educational institutions .

In the development of culture, a major role is assigned to the people's art studios, amateur folk song and dance groups.

Pupils' hobby groups function in the village schools in Arznj and Verin Dvin. The Assyrian Folk Song and Dance Ensemble, greatly supported by the Ministry of Culture of RA, derives from these groups.

Unfortunately, there are no periodical editions in Assyrian,

nor are there Radio and TV programs in Assyrian.

Taking into account all the above mentioned, we suggest that:

1. Several seats in the higher educational institutions be allocated to the Assyrian applicants, out of competition.
2. Affiliated to the Faculty of Oriental Studies, a Section for Studying Assyrian be founded. This will eliminate the problem of teachers of Assyrian.
3. The potentials of the Assyrian intelligentsia be considered when forming the local, State and executive structures.
4. It be considered expedient to send a certain number of teachers to be trained outside RA, this being the initial phase in solving the problem of the Assyrian teachers.
5. Since the Assyrians do not have their own statehood and accept RA as such, the problem of financing of the Association of the Assyrians be solved to ensure its further existence and the accomplishment of the tasks confronting the Association.

## THE GREEK COMMUNITY

Edward Polatov

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If we have a look at the map of the Near East, and try to figure out the ways of migration of human streams in the course of centuries, we can distinctly see the route, along which the Armenians and Greeks were moving.

At the pre-Christian era, they were predominantly warriors, merchants, craftsmen, cultivators-viticulturists.

At the times of Tigran the Great (77 B. C.), the Cilician Greeks were given the opportunity to settle in the Armenian towns of Tigranakert, Artashat, Nakhijevan, etc. At that period they numbered 100,000. Up to the IV century A. D., the basic goal of migration was the development and strengthening of the economic and cultural ties between the two peoples, close in mentality and in the method of managing the economy. The other cause of migration was the Hellenistic culture, that attracted all of the Near East nations. A material relic of that period is the temple of Garni in present-day Armenia. Elements of the Greek architectural order are fully employed in it. Monuments of later periods - after the Armenian alphabet had been invented - are the numerous volumes of religious, historical and philosophical literature kept presently in Matenadaran. They were translated from Greek by Armenian monks-scholars.

The sameness of the religion, Christianity, played a fundamental role. Not only contacts of regal persons through their ambassadors, but also mutually enriching contacts of monks, preachers disseminated progressive ideas and knowledge.

Beginning from the XI century, active annexation of the lands of Western Armenia by the Byzantine Empire took place. The history has preserved eloquent evidences. In 1000,

David, ruler of Tayk, having no heirs, bequeathed his kingdom to Byzantium. Senekerim, king of Vaspurakan, presented Sebastia to Byzantium to save the land from the Turks-Seljuks.

In the XVIII century, following the Russian-Turkish wars, a large-scale migration of the Greeks to the territories of the present-day Transcaucasian countries began. In Georgia, they are chiefly the settlements from Batumi to Poti along the Black Sea coast, and the mountainous Tsalki region. In 1830 from Eastern Armenia only, up to 5,000 Greeks moved here. About 40 villages were founded by them. Alike rapidly were settled by the Greeks the area of the Lori plateau (villages in Jalalabad-Stepanavan) and the canyon in Alaverdi (Akhtala, Shamlugh, Kober) in Armenia. At the end of the last century, the Greeks were particularly attracted by the frontier town of Gyumri (Alexandropol, Leninakan).

Due to century-old contacts and side-by-side residence on the same area, as well as to the single religion and closeness of cultural and ethnic styles, conflicts and confrontations have never occurred between the Armenians and Greeks during one and a half century. This can also be explained by the fact that the Greeks, when resettling, occupied and cultivated new plots of land, far away and high up in the mountains, that had never belonged to anyone. So, they did never disturb the local people. On the contrary, the Greeks were quick in building roads for common use, developing trade with the neighboring villages. From 1950s, mixed Armenian-Greek families began to appear.

Why were the Greeks so willing to inhabit Armenia, cross impassable roads, settle in the farthest of the highlands, cultivate the untamed virgin soil of the mountains? The answers should be sought in the ethnic affinity, in the mode of life of the two nations. Both the Greeks and Armenians grew the same crops, bred cattle. The likeness of the landscapes generated

alike methods of cultivation. Yet, what mattered first for the Greeks, who are born stone-carvers, was the building stone that was always at hand.

It is worth mentioning that the Armenians fleeing to Greece at the period of the first and second Turkish Genocides, were welcomed and received likewise friendly. They settled down in Greece, set up villages. The opposite process was going on.

The Greeks, who were experienced explorers, had chosen the mentioned geographical regions, Alaverdi and Lori, due to the rich deposits of minerals, copper in particular. In fact, all the male part of the population of the surrounding villages worked in the mines of the French concession, later - at Alaverdi copper works. Among the Greeks, there were quite a few Honored Copper-Smelting Workers of Armenia. Many experienced workers went to work at copper-molibdenum industry in Agarak, Kapan, Kajaran in Zangezur, Dashkesan and Chiragidzor in Azerbaijan, Rustavi and Marneuli in Georgia.

Of the present Greek settlements in Armenia, one should single out the village of Hankavan in Hrazdan Region (former Miskhana, a copper settlement), founded in 1865 by the Pontians, refugees from the Turkish territory. The altitude of the village is nearly 2000 m above the sea level; the arable lands are ample Alpine grasslands, perfect for cattle-breeding. Here, mining exploitation has been conducted for centuries. Many young Greeks, having graduated from the Yerevan Mining Technical School and Polytechnic Institute, worked as technical specialists and engineers at geological sites.

Hankavan dwellers are born masons. They have made their considerable contribution in all the biggest construction sites all over the Republic. Back in tsarist times, masons from Hankavan restored the unique ancient Artashat bridge, irrigation systems; in Soviet times, the first brigades of blasting operators were formed from the Greeks for the construction of Shirak canal. The Greeks took part in the erection of the

Chemical Works in Kirovakan; worked on foundation areas of all of the hydro-electric power plants in the Caucasus. Teams of Greek road-builders have laid hundreds of kilometers of macadam roads and dozens of bridges all over the Transcaucasian region. In post-war times, many Greek experts worked at the high-altitude objects (pipes, salt-works) at "KANAZ" Factory, Hrazdan HEPP, Marmarik railway tunnel.

Yet, the preference of the Greeks was agriculture. They were skillful in sowing grains, cattle-breeding, making comfortable their villages and houses, their homesteads.

A typical point: the Greeks in Armenia, one and all, had native passports, none had been deported, and all the men of military call-up, side-by-side with the Armenian soldiers, participated in the Great Patriotic War and were awarded for valor. Greek patriots shared fraternally the fate of the population of Artsakh.

Until 1991 the number of Greeks in Armenia had been fluctuating between 10 and 12 thousand, the young people leaving for other Soviet Republics to study included. As a rule, the educational qualification of the Greeks was very high. Almost in every family there were 2-3 members with higher professional education. Everyone, born after the War, received secondary education.

This is the period when mixed marriages happen most frequently: Greek young men marry Armenian girls, and Greek girls marry Armenians. As a rule, both the languages are preserved in the family. Children attend Russian or Armenian schools, as teaching in Greek has been abolished at schools since 1936. In Soviet times, the number of mixed marriages normally was not fixed. Only recently the local communities try to keep the count. Children of mixed marriages are also registered.

Presently, no less than 6,000 Greeks live in Armenia, most of them - in Yerevan, others - in Aláverdi, Stepanavan,



Vanadzor, Hrazdan Region.

The migration process of the 90s did not go past the Greeks. Emigration - is it good or bad? There is no single answer. If we regard the goal - to survive - we are able to find some justifying points. People left for Greece, Novorossiysk, the Krasnodar villages to escape the blockade and unemployment in Armenia. Whereas thinking of the prospects - nothing good in departures. It is not that simple to leave home for the unknown, then to return and start from nothing.

The Greeks are hard working people. At the so-called stagnation period when hundreds of builders' teams left Armenia for Siberia to get jobs, the Greeks used to knock together teams of road-builders, masons, machine-operators and left for the distant points of the country.

Deprived even of this opportunity to make a living, having wasted a couple of winter and summer seasons doing nothing, the people easily adhered to the fashion to go abroad for earnings. They used to define it as departure to the historical motherland, although their actual roots - at least for four generations already - are here, in Armenia. What was called motherland was just a bare name. Not a single case of re-union of families was fixed there. The process started later, when the children came back to Armenia, to their parents, who had not abandoned their houses. The question is - what is the correct choice?

The problem of unemployment stood upright when all the serious specialties and professions remained out of demand. With closing of the copper-smelting industry in Alaverdi, curtailing mining works, scores of qualified experts lost their well-paid positions. Related enterprises stopped in neighboring Georgia, too. The ceasing of construction work in the earthquake zone, in Yerevan, and in other towns had dotted the "i"-s. People needed some place to go, and their choice happened to be Greece - even though they had no information as

to any metal-working industry of the appropriate profile in Greece. There was none.

The first torrent of emigrants tore off the place, having sold the houses, the property, killed the cattle. After they received the status of emigrants, at the friendly-concerned patronage of the Greek authorities, inspired by the new impressions, the people first seem not to see the same sword of Damocles - unemployment - hanging overhead. Then sobriety came, in company with nostalgia. The second and subsequent streams of the migrants proved more circumspect: they did not sell their houses and apartments for nothing, did not destroy their farms. Instead, they found reliable people among their relatives or Armenian neighbors and left their estate to their patronage. Hundreds of houses in the villages, many apartments in Yerevan, Hrazdan, Vanadzor wait, closed, for their masters to come back.

The other reason for disappointment, after the unemployment, was the necessity to rent a dwelling, and be compelled to count every single drop of water. Life proved different from the song saying in Greece one can find everything. The first and foremost need of a human being is work.

To be just it should be noted that, in the circumstances when Armenia has only started to build an independent State, when Karabakh was at war, when the Republic was in economic blockade, and the population was fleeing the country, the Governmental structures did not adequately qualify the precedence of the migration process as such. It has been historically substantiated and proved by the experience of many countries all over the world that the more nationalities inhabit a country, the richer it is from intellectual, economical and even moral aspects. The history of monoethnic states is always a sad story of narrow-minded nationalism growing into chauvinism. When it came to mass migration of the Greeks, Assyrians, etc., which, however, was in many ways artificial, a



second thought should have been given to the situation, and a way found to intervene the migration. The only justification could be that among the migrants, there were much more Armenians proper. They left their homeland to escape the life in cold and darkness.

All these events of the recent past are in everyone's mind. They were still more aggravated by dishonest individuals, who were in charge of the arrangements connected with migration. Sometimes they even acted under the aegis of public organizations. In the course of time, the stream of migration expired, but the problem remained on agenda. Moreover, an entire pack of new ones sprang up.

Above all was the search of jobs. In Greece there are no big state enterprises to employ qualified workers and engineers. One cannot consider adequate the situation when a University professor with a scientific degree is "retrained" to a night-shift baker, or the engineer-technologist of "Zvartnots" airport works as porter at a private hotel. Unfortunately, such examples are not singular.

The male part of our repatriates have to look for chance earnings in European countries, such as Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and others, competing with the low-paid Turkish "gastarbeiter"s. Young people with diplomas of engineers, lawyers, teachers make their living gathering fruit and vegetables on plantations. Of course, any kind of job is worth respect. Our concern is that we are losing a high quality intellectual potential. Armenia spent a lot of means to educate these people ...

It is an open secret that hundreds of our young women with diplomas, whose husbands or brothers are unemployed, work maids and servants to provide the subsistence minimum for their families. Is it a social achievement when an architect bakes cakes for sale?

A couple of words about the problems of Greek govern-

mental organizations that echo back in Armenia. As a rule, the majority of mixed marriages need birth certificates when registering the children. In Greece, only the marriage in church and christening is recognized. One cannot even imagine how many fake certificates are being sent from Armenia for the emigrant to obtain citizenship. Besides, even though both the Greeks and Armenians are Christians, to receive citizenship, it is compulsory to change the denomination, and Armenian Lusineh is re-christened into Photinia. The teenagers are in for an extremely hard process of adaptation. They have to switch over to education in Greek, as the Armenian schools - not numerous and not everywhere - are very expensive.

The number of the repatriates from the former USSR almost reaches one million in Greece. They are being settled in a buffer zone near the Turkish border. For the Armenian refugees this is a meaningful factor: some time in the past, their forefathers evaded such a neighborhood. "On the islands", the Greek refugees from adjoining Albania, Yugoslavia create competition in seeking jobs.

Whatever, let us set Greece and its problems aside, and return to our problems.

While restoring the economy in our Republic, the prospects of which cause no doubt, we find missing hundreds of capable professionals. The child potential taken abroad will also turn a big loss for the country. It is imperative to bring back the homesick landowners into their locked and nailed houses. Let them cultivate their gardens taken up by weeds, let the cattle-sheds be crowded with cubs and - the last but not least - let the people come to their smaller motherland, where they were born and grew up, learned, and worked, buried their dead, took care of the graves of their forefathers.

The example of Hankavan in Hrazdan region - presently abandoned, formerly a big and well-to-do village - can help to figure out the tragic blunders of the past, and foresee the

prospects. To the credit of Hrazdan administrators and the village self-government be it said, the village is in complete order, and the atmosphere of awaiting the one-time villagers sustains there.

It is important that departures of Greek countrymen have never been encouraged here. Vice versa, their relatives and friends felt sorry for them. The numerous buses plying between Greek towns and Yerevan are always full of Armenian passengers, who come to visit their relatives or former neighbors. From April to November, whole families of Greeks return home.

In RA, like in the other states of CIS, communities of national minorities began to emerge spontaneously. Later on, the process became controllable. Among the first to appear were the regional Greek communities. This call of time found reasonable solution in the national policy of RA. There has never been any preventive intervention, instruction or order. On the contrary, the atmosphere of good-will to all the cultural community initiatives has become a system through the years past after the Republic obtained independence. The formal registration of the national communities gave them a status of public organizations with a wide range of powers.

Friendship and mutual understanding at the national level between Armenia and Greece still more promoted the existing good relationships. A positive role in the process plays the Greek Embassy in Armenia. The Greeks in RA shared with the Armenians the hardships of the transitional period. It is important that the material aid rendered by the Greek Government through the Greek Embassy was evenly distributed among the ethnically pure Greek families and the mixed ones. Children of both Greek and Armenian families are sent to Greece to rest and study.

The rights of the Greek families, in their turn, have never been violated on nationality basis when material aid was dis-

tributed in Armenia.

The Greek Community in Armenia has equal and free access to the press, Radio and Television. When the Greeks celebrate their national holidays - the Independence Day of Greece, or the Okha Holiday - Armenian delegations invariably participate in the ceremonies. The memorial days of both the Armenian and Greek Genocides, carried out by Turk chastisers, are observed at the Monument to the Victims of the Genocide in Yerevan. In the marches, representatives of both of the nations take part.

The national policy of the Government of RA with respect to all the communities of national minorities is thoroughly worked out and correct. The formation of the Union of Nationalities, were along with Greeks, the Russian, Ukrainian, Assyrian, Kurdish and other communities are involved, made more compact the process of resolution of all the emerging problems. This issue is common both for the Greeks and the others.

Here are some facts typical for our everyday life: when on Yerevan Radio the fiery Greek music is being transmitted, the radio is turned on almost in every home, and smiles appear on the faces. Or else, such a routine feature of our market places: praising the goods on sale - oranges, olives, other produce, the salesman is sure to emphasize, smiling, that they are "Greek", and the buyer takes the parcel from his hands with an obliging smile. Seems nothing but a trifle, still renders the idea of sustainable friendliness and trust.

The cultural capital, erudition, ability to communicate among the likes, are the major components that constitute the general image of the nation. And it becomes evident by the ability of the given nation to respect the principles, the language and culture of any other nation living side-by-side.

In Armenia, it is next to impossible to find a Greek who wouldn't speak Armenian fluently. From 1936, when teaching

in the mother tongue, Greek, was prohibited at school, Russian and Armenian replaced them. Greek became a language of family communication only. Teaching of Greek has been restored thanks to the efforts of the Community. At present, under the auspices of the Greek Community, Greek is taught at kindergarten N52, and school N12. In the regional Communities, courses are organized for all comers. Negotiations are held on introduction of the New Greek Language as optional subject at some of Yerevan colleges and institutes.

The busy process of economic and trade exchange between Armenia and Greece has instantaneously increased the interest towards the modern spoken language. If, at the start, the courses were attended by the Greeks intending to leave, nowadays the applicants are those who stayed and want to learn the mother tongue. Young businessmen are also willing to study Greek.

Close contacts between the Armenians and Greeks are promoted by the closeness of the religions. With the personal assistance of Katolikos of All Armenians Vazgen I, the Greek Orthodox church in the village of Hankavan has been restored. It is the only church along the Hankavan gorge, so it is attended not by Greeks only, but also by Armenians and Yezidis - those who, regardless of their denomination, wish to light a candle. In their turn, the Greeks from the neighboring villages visit the Armenian sanctuaries in Haghpat and Sanahin.

Last year the Greek Community received benediction from the Byzantine Patriarchy.

Presently, about six thousand Greeks live in towns and villages of Armenia. They are farmers and workers, representatives of intelligentsia: teachers, music teachers, lecturers, accountants. To accumulate this cultural kernel in a single circle, is the everyday task of the Community. Not only the problem of providing these people with jobs is meant, but also the



vital need of regular contacts not to lose the unique cultural heritage of the nation. Setting up children's choirs, youth music bands, apart from the purpose to educate through useful labor, have another objective - to let the community members come together at the concerts and celebration ceremonies, to get an opportunity to relax and forget their daily concerns. The musical groups, during their official tours around the Greek towns, help to create an idea about the cultural potentials of the Greeks in Armenia. The works of Armenian and other composers of the former USSR performed at the concerts make the latter more exciting and attractive for the foreign audience.

The Community intends to found a Training-Cultural Center. The difficulty is in obtaining appropriate premises. In it the Program of sports events, developed in cooperation with the Yerevan Institute of Physical Culture, might be carried out. Incidentally, the Academy of Physical Culture in Athens was familiarized with the Program.

The active coverage by mass media of all the efforts of the Communities facilitates the planning and realization of many useful undertakings.

Preservation of national culture even within a community frame is a major feature to characterize the national policy adhered to in the given country. In our case, the preservation of the Greek culture characterizes the policy of Armenia with respect to the Greek community.

Uniting of national minorities into communities as a measure to preserve the ethnic groups, language, national peculiarities of culture is a natural, historically substantiated phenomenon. The Government of RA has positively responded to this social initiative, rendering moral and material support.

The formerly separate activity of the Communities could not but affect the effectiveness of their performance. It is not at all accidental that in due time, all the Communities united in

the Union of Nationalities, finding common interests and tasks, identifying their own cultural prospects inside the house they share with the Armenian people.

At this new phase of history, too, the Greeks and Armenians have much in common. The roots going as far back as Hellenistic, then Christian culture, laid the foundation of the affinity and unity of the world outlook of the two peoples, linked together with peaceful labor and holidays, and common sorrow. The cross of the genocide bear both the Armenians and the Greeks. The fate of the Pontian Greeks is from the political aspect very much similar to that of the Armenians.

Struggle for liberation is an ever lasting component of history of nations. The Greeks in Cyprus today wage a struggle for the liberation of their island. An analogous mission had taken up the Armenians in Karabakh. Tokens of kinship became the graves of the Armenians and Greeks perished for the freedom and resurrection of their nations.

These were the historical postulates that formed the basis of the program of Greek public organizations in RA developed by the Coordinating Council. The coordination of the potentials of the two nations in economic, political, military and cultural aspects meets the interests and realities of the day.

The six-thousand Greek Community, itself needing legal, judicial and political-economic support of Armenia, simultaneously is capable and tries to ensure close cooperation of the two countries in every sphere. Creation of Greek-Armenian financial-economic and cultural-spiritual potentials is a task reaching for tomorrow. With united efforts only, we will be able to create our legal and just welfare.

Greek investments and capital can and must be drawn into Armenia not at the national level only. Setting up joint ventures with mixed capital, training of managers, marketing and customs policy should involve knowledgeable experts, reinforce them based on those Greeks, who have left their Armenian



motherland, who today speak Hellenic and have obtained the skills of western market economy. Making job vacancies here, at home, and ensuring the social program of protectedness of a manufacturer are now the most vital goals of the Greek Community.

As it was mentioned above, no reunion of families took place when the Greeks left for Greece. It is being expected now, when they are coming back. The young Pontians will find their homeland in the village of Mekhmana in Karabakh, ruined in the war and now being erected with the help of the Greek Community; in Yaghdan high up in the mountains of Lori; in Hankavan where stand the abandoned houses of the once prosperous health resort of All-Union significance, of "Hankavan" spring water factory. Nowadays, the former personnel of these enterprises are knocking around in search of part-time work.

The capital, invested in the young, ought to yield profit. Speaking of the qualification of the Greek youth having left the country, we should admit that 70% of them are specialists with diplomas. The rest finished secondary schools. Such people deserve concerned attitude. The update information evidences that most of them are likely to come back - provided there is employment - and start out a new life on the land they are used to call homeland.

The Community may and ought to take up the responsibility of returning. What is necessary for that?

1. Considering the temporary nature of departure of the qualified personnel, everywhere - in towns and villages - a purposeful policy should be carried out to restore job vacancies of various profiles. These efforts will, undoubtedly, have in mind the indigenous population, pursue the goal of returning the Armenian specialists who live in the near and distant outlands. Simultaneously, the problem of specialists from national minorities should also be solved.

2. A commercial bank representing the interests of the Republic of Armenia, as well as of the Greek Community, should be founded affiliated to the Community. Necessity emerges to enliven the investment processes on the Greek part. The support of joint economic programs in Armenia is the most real factor of revival. The bank may render services for business trips and tours, transmit monetary aids. What is being done in this aspect nowadays, leaves much to be desired: too frequent are losses and discontent.

3. It is necessary to issue a periodical with information in Armenian, Russian and Greek. Part of the circulation may be dispatched to the region of Saloniki-Alexandropolis (to the towns of Kavala, Drama, Xanti, Komotini, etc.), where the majority of the Greeks and Armenians, badly needing information from homeland, have settled down.

It is well known that all the former Armenian citizens watch the special channel of Russian TV transmitted to Greece. Armenian materials are very scarce on this channel. Therefore, a bulletin containing news about Armenia namely would be absolutely desirable. We have mentioned three languages because the Greeks that emigrated from the former USSR are, as a rule, Russian speaking and do not understand English. In general, Greece does not admit of any American-European linguistic pressure. Therefore, a news bulletin like that could, certainly, count on participation of the Greek printing agencies. Thus, an exchange of news for the readers in Armenia and in Greece would go on, having cultural economic effect at the same time. The periodical would help to throw light on all the aspects of Greek-Armenian friendship and cooperation.

4. The Community has plenty of work to do in cultural sphere. It is imperative to establish a Cultural Center, able to acquaint the Armenian audience, spectators and readers with music, literature, theater and fine art of contemporary Greece.

In exchange, the Greek population would be given the opportunity to learn about the novelties and the traditions in our art. Such a Cultural Center must become an operative coordinator, act as mediator between the associations of countrymen. Let us not forget that there is much in common between the Greek Communities in neighboring Georgia, in Krasnodar territory, where the Greek villages are situated side by side with the Armenian villages along the Black Sea coast .

A lot of work has already been accomplished to found the Cultural Center. The premises and financial maintenance remain the only obstacles on the way to it.

5. Taking into account the established contacts between the Greek Community and a number of higher educational institutions in Yerevan, optional teaching of the Greek language may be introduced in some of them. To study Greek is attractive not only because it is the language of the oldest civilization in the world. It is also the spoken language of the country, where there is an influential Armenian diaspora visited by hundreds of Armenians.

6. The cultural sphere involves tourism and sports, too. The Cultural Center could arrange group tours around the historical sights of Armenia and Greece. This will be far from what is being done by the commercial tour agencies, serving exclusively the wealthy elite and the clients from the world of commerce, who are usually indifferent to the cultural aspect of the trips. Business and rest on the seashore is far from making the core of the relationships of the two nations with the rich history they have. Cultural values are what the young must focus on, and this requires purposeful efforts pursuing not only financial goals.

Here are some problems to be solved in the nearest future.

a) The most important, perhaps, is to take care of the Greek villages where old people need medical surveillance and service. With the assistance of the Greek Consulate they

receive some material relief, although not on regular basis. Social protection and health care measures are only within the feasibility of Republic structures. For instance, the village of Hankavan is 40 km away from the regional center, and there is not even a nurse there, let alone a physician.

b) The restarting of the copper-smelting industry in the shortest possible term in Hankavan and Kapan will definitely promote the return of the high quality mining specialists.

It would be appropriate to take into account that many Greeks in Alaverdi area worked at big fruit- and vine-growing State farms of the former Noyemberyan Region (State farms "Zeytun", "Haghtanak"), where the local agriculturists with alternating success tried to cultivate olive trees and to produce olives. Today, hundreds of Greeks are employed on private plantations, picking olives and making olive oil. Why not to make use of their expertise?

c) We can make a list of the real returnees (those who did not sell their houses and apartments), noting their specialty and qualification when they arrive for summer. This list may serve a basis to sign a contract with the returnees. No secret that many rural Greeks arrive in Stepanavan, Hankavan at the period when potato is to be planted and the bee hives are to be taken out to the meadows. In winter, their homestead is taken care of by their relatives or neighbors.

Obviously the life itself will prompt new decisions and methods, but the basic task facing the local Greek Communities is to find their own place in the process of restoration of the economic and cultural life in Armenia, to fruitfully utilize the national mentality, creative resources for the common benefit.



## THE GEORGIAN COMMUNITY

Tina Asatiani

*President of the Georgian Community "Iveria" in RA*

*Academician of Armenian NAS, Professor*

*Lenin Prize Winner*

The legend of the oldest period of Georgian history about Hayos and Kartlos brothers is not a fruit of a groundless fantasy. The bravest and wisest rulers of Georgia, who waged national-liberation wars of the Georgian people (Bagrat IV, David the Builder, Tamara, Irakli II - the last hero of the tragic history of Georgia) have always been sympathetic to the descendants of Hayos. Many a time they won over Ani and other Armenian towns from the Seljuks to protect the Armenian nation, the Armenian language and the Armenian religion. Bagrat III and Armenian king Gagik I stroke a crushing blow to Amir Mamlun, who had invaded Armenia. In hard times of the Seljuk invasions, Georgia and Armenia, without any foreign support, endured the terrible disaster.

In new times, in favor of the true fraternity of the Armenians and Georgians spoke I. Chavchavadze, A. Tzereteli, I. Grishashvili, H. Tumanyan, D. Demirchyan, Ye. Charents and other geniuses of the two nations, who with their genuine and veracious love reminded us about the two brothers - Hayos and Kartlos. The poet and bard Sayat-Nova spoke three mother tongues, he loved them all and was truly devoted to each of the nations. As H. Tumanyan said, our peoples remained inseparably tied by their common fate, full of worries. An Armenian or Georgian, who comprehended the highest interests of his own nation, has always defended his neighbor as himself. When the disastrous earthquake in Spitak happened, the Georgians were the first to reach out their helpful hands. The survivors in Leninakan, Spitak, and other towns will never forget it.



The great friendship keeps up today. True, the tragic events the Georgian and Armenian peoples had suffered, the subsequent hard social conditions in both of the States, the absence of proper communication makes it hard to maintain the once close contacts. The Georgian Government and Parliament, the Government and National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia make increasing efforts to consolidate and restore the economic, cultural and scientific contacts. This goal pursued President of Georgia and President of Armenia during their visits to Armenia and Georgia, as well as the exchange of Governmental delegations, the opening of the Embassy of RA in Georgia and the Embassy of Georgia in Armenia, the bilateral visits of the Speakers of the Parliaments, the meetings with the citizens, etc. As a result, agreements have been signed on "Trade and Economic Cooperation and Promotion of Capital Investments", "Non-Visa Travel of Citizens of Both the Republics", "Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Safety", etc. Putting these agreements into practice will be mutually beneficial for both of the States.

Despite the hardships, in recent years the scientific and cultural ties have been enlivened. Such arrangements as Days of Armenia in Georgia; the scientific conferences via Internet in Nor-Amberd; the joint conference on the problems of building civil society in Armenia and Georgia organized by the Armenian Center for Conflict Studies, in which Georgian delegation and representatives of the USA and Israel took part; the festival of Georgian films in Armenia; the tour of the splendid vocal group "Aragvelebi" in Yerevan come to prove it. Public organizations, including the Georgian Community "Iveria", in cooperation with the Union of Nationalities of Armenia, have their input in this meritorious mission.

The idea to found the Georgian Community "Iveria" emerged in 1996. In December, 1996, the constituent meeting

was convened.

The objective of "Iveria" is the consolidation of cultural, business, educational and friendly relations between Georgia and Armenia.

"Iveria" is a non-Governmental, self-financing organization. It was registered at the Ministry of Justice in April, 1997; involves 110 members, 90 of which live in Yerevan and 20 - in Vanadzor. Members of the Community are those who have Georgian relatives the furthest 3 times removed.

The majority of the Community members speak Georgian and received higher education. 60% are employed, 15% are musicians, there are also scientists, professors. N. Togoshvili is elected deputy from "Shamiram" party. They actively assist in arranging cultural and other events. 40% are retired and need material assistance.

There is no migration of the Georgians from Armenia, since - but for a few exceptions - they are women married to Armenian men. Only 10% are men who had been sent to Yerevan to work, or had come here to study, then remained to work and, having formed families of their own, stayed for ever. The total number of Georgians in Armenia has not been determined yet.

The national policy of the Government of Armenia is basically correct. It is understandable that the present social and economic situation in Armenia does not allow to timely respond to all the problems of national minorities. Nonetheless, it is imperative that at least two deputies in the National Assembly of RA be elected from the national minorities; as well as specific structures, responsible for the problems of nationalities of RA, be set up affiliated to President and the Government of RA.

Definitely, one of the most important assignments of the national minorities is the preservation of the national identity in such spheres as human rights, education, culture, coverage of

the activity of the Community by mass media of RA and RG.

Despite the short period of existence of the Georgian Community "Iveria", its accomplishments are considerable. Contacts have been set up at Daniel Varuzhan school 89, and now schoolchildren at different grades successfully learn Georgian (principal - O. V. Petrosyan, Georgian teacher - M. Tarkhanishvili). The results are encouraging, although the school needs textbooks in the Georgian language, particularly ABC books in Armenian and Georgian. An agreement has been achieved with Shetsiruli, principal of Tbilisi Classic School, to establish contacts with school 89, to exchange students, to arrange trips to Tbilisi, etc. ABC books and books in Georgian have already been obtained. We will continue this work.

In the sphere of culture, the celebration of Georgian holidays Ninaoba, the New Year, the Maternity Day, the Georgian Easter are worth mentioning. They are an actual opportunity for the members of the Community to come together, to communicate in Georgian, to know each other better.

In May, 1997, the presentation of the Community was held at the Chamber Music House. Representatives of the other Communities were invited. A concert of Georgian classic and opera music was arranged. Seemingly it was the first after the long years of interrupted contacts. The presentation was dedicated to the Day of Independence of Georgia, and it was a great success. The Georgian Community, jointly with the Union of Nationalities, participated in the celebration of the centennial anniversary of Yeghishe Charents, and the jubilee of the Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko.

The Georgian Community "Iveria" has been able to sign an agreement with Soros Open Institute on the support of our activity in Armenia. We received funding and published the book of poems - translation from Georgian into Russian - of the artist and poet Diana Ukleba, the wife and devoted friend

of the famous Armenian artist Giotto (Gevorg Grigoryan). Jointly with the director of the National Picture Gallery, we published a monograph about them. On our advocacy, Giotto's grave was moved from Sovetashen to the central cemetery. A memorial meeting dedicated to Giotto's centennial anniversary was held in his memorial house. The event got a good press on RA.

Worth mentioning are the intensive charitable efforts of the Georgian Community "Iveria", focused on the support of the disabled with spinal problems. This is a specific category of patients, confined to the wheel-chairs. Many of them are survivors of Spitak calamity and Karabakh conflict. On the agreement between the Ministries of Social Insurance of the two Republics, the disabled from Georgia (among them - survivors of the Abkhazian conflict) are also being rehabilitated in Yerevan International Post-Traumatic Center for Spinal Problems. The members of our Community go to see them regularly, try to meet their most essential needs, help them to settle their problems connected with the impending surgeries. They do their best to entertain the compatriots: make preparations for their birthday parties, celebrate Georgian holidays, at that - speaking Georgian and singing Georgian songs.

Our Community, with the assistance of Academician V. A. Gelovani, President of NAS of RA F. T. Sarkisyan and General Director of the Post-Traumatic Center M. E. Mnatsakanyan was able to receive from Academician P. Velikhov, President of the Association of the World Laboratory of Information, 18,000,000 roubles. Besides, an agreement was signed between the Post-Traumatic Center and a computer firm (director G. Karapetyan). As a result, 3 computers have been installed and united into a single system. The Community is ever so much obliged to M. E. Mnatsakanyan, Director of the Center, for the continuous concerned attitude to the patients from Georgia.

In June, 1997, on the initiative of D. Chanturia, the representative of the Union of Nationalities of Georgia, and the Advisor of President on Nationality Issues I. Machavariani, a meeting with T. Asatiani, President of the Georgian Community "Iveria" in RA, took place in the Parliament of Georgia. During the visit, several items were discussed with the representatives of different nationalities, experiences shared. The visit was widely covered by Georgian mass media.

Our radio journalists E. Tugushi and M. Karumidze regularly broadcast through the Georgian Channel from Yerevan to Tbilisi programs about the activity of the Georgian Community. Two radio programs on "Hayk" radio channel told about the activity of the Georgian Community "Iveria". A video cassette telling about the Community has been shot for the USA.

The Georgian Community received humanitarian aid and apportioned amongst 30 most indigent members of "Iveria".

The Community, to keep on its fruitful efforts, needs a minimal financial support and own facility.

Based on the above cited, it is necessary that:

1. A building be allocated to the Union of Nationalities of Armenia, where there would be a common conference hall, and an office room for each Community.

2. Affiliated to President of RA, a position be constituted in person of the President of the Union of Nationalities, and the Union have a representative in the Government, for them to deal with the problems of nationalities of RA.

3. The opportunity be given to elect two deputies to the National Assembly of RA to represent the Union of Nationalities.

4. The radio program "Hayk" be restored for the national minorities.

5. The vital issues of the Communities be covered on national TV of RA.

6. With the support of the international organizations in



RA, programs be developed to stop the migration from Armenia.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to N. H. Hovhannisyan and V. Kh Chatoev for the organization of the program "The Impact of Resolutions of Ethnopolitical Conflicts on Prevention of Migration in Armenia". During the program, a number of round table discussions and meetings with representatives of the Government took place. Hopefully, it will prove helpful in resolution of the problems of the Union of Nationalities.

## THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

*Rima Varzhapetian-Feller*

*President of the Jewish Community of Armenia*

In the II-I centuries B. C. (140-50 B. C.), predominantly during the campaigns of Tigran the Great against the Near Eastern countries, thousands of Jewish families were resettled to Armenia. The most populated enclaves of the Jews were in the environs of Lake Van and in the newly built capital city of Tigranakert.

To judge by fragmentary information available, the Jewish community in Armenia in the XIX century was not united and comprised two sub-ethnic groups: the Kurdistani Jews and the European Jews, or Ashkenazim.

Scanty groups of the Kurdistani Jews emerged by the end of 1820s when, after the Russian-Persian war, the Assyrians and Armenians were resettled from Iran. Some Jews from the regions of Salmast, Khoy joined them. First they established themselves in the rural area of Yerevan province, thereafter to move to Yerevan and further - to Tiflis. There is information, however, certifying that in 1930s, separate families of this group of the Jews still dwelt in Armenia.

The spoken language of the Kurdistani Jews was based on the Assyrian language with borrowings from Hebrew, Turkic, Kurdish, Persian, Armenian and even Russian. The Ashkenazim called them "Persian" Jews (evidently, this was the way this ethnonym emerged on the pages of the Russian language pre-revolutionary editions).

The European Jews, or Ashkenazim, appeared in Armenia later than the Kurdistani Jews, in 1840s-1850s. They chiefly originated from the urban and rural population of the European provinces of Russia. The majority of them spoke Yiddish, later to acquire Russian.

The class representation of these two groups of Jews, basically uniform, consisted of urban population. The social status was not very high, being represented by petty traders and craftsmen in various fields. Despite the European Jews were forbidden to live in town area in Transcaucasia, the authorities, nonetheless, made exceptions for craftsmen, providing them special permissions for temporary residence.

As to the religion, the Jews were followers of Judaism. The difference in the language and culture of the Jews from Kurdistan and those from Europe accounts for the isolated religious lives of these groups. To the archive documents, at the end of the XIX - beginning of the XX century, a Jewish synagogue existed in Yerevan, where the religious needs of the Kurdistani Jews were served. The Ashkenazim held services in the Jewish prayer house, for which purpose they rented premises from a co-religionist in the center of the city. Religious ceremonies were administered on Saturday and on holidays. In the Ashkenazim view, the believers in the synagogue "deviated from the rites of the Old Testament. They, for instance, during the divine ceremony, apart from Hebrew, use Persian, Assyrian words, incomprehensible for us, the Russian and European Jews. At that, while praying, they sit like the Persians..."

The census of 1897 conducted in Yerevan province fixed 924 people professing Judaism, 799 of them spoke the mother tongue, and 125 - Russian.

The members of contemporary Jewish Community are people of high social-professional status. They are the 1st or 2nd generation of migrants, who found themselves in Armenia due to inter-republican migrations or inter-ethnic marriages. The noticeable predominance of the women over men (429 and 249 accordingly) indicates the high degree of marital partnership of Jewish women with men of other nationalities, the Armenians in the first place.

The findings of the all-Union census held in 1989 revealed a marked language assimilation of the Jews in Armenia. 25.9% only indicated their national language as the mother tongue. For 68.3% it was Russian, and 5.6% passed over to the language of the indigenous people - Armenian. The Jews numbered 676.

As a matter of fact, the Jews inhabited the Armenian territory through all the history of the country, never constituting a big demographic unit. Once, there were even Jewish villages in Armenia. In Yerevan, the Jews have never lived in a compact cluster, although they had a synagogue. The latter was destroyed in Soviet times. Most of the contemporary Jewish Community are the so-called Ashkenazim, i.e., descendants of the Jews coming from Eastern Europe. The considerable part of the contemporary Jewish Community arrived in Armenia in Soviet times with the families, following the general line of the national policy, as well as due to the mixed marriages (Armenian men married Jewish women).

Until recently, in fact, up to 1988-1989, in Armenia no Jewish organization existed, though individual families used to come together to study the language, traditions, Jewish history, to read the Tora, to celebrate holidays.

After 1991, the life of the Jews in Armenia got an incentive to develop. A Sunday Jewish school for children and courses for adults were opened, as well as the office of the Representatives of SOKHNUT (of the Jewish Agency) and the Repatriation Committee were opened. All the holidays, without exception, are celebrated. The indigent Community members are provided with affordable relief. In 1996, the Synagogue was reopened in Yerevan, thus enabling the Community to fully administer the religious component of their life.

The majority of the Community members (more than 90%) live in Yerevan, the rest - in the towns of Gyumri, Vanadzor, Dilijan, etc. An insignificant part only - predominantly mixed

families of refugees from Azerbaijan - were given housing in rural areas.

The overwhelming majority of the adults of the Jewish Community of Armenia are specialists with higher education - engineers, teachers, physicians, scientists, as well as journalists, musicians, artists. Yet, among the members of the community there are workers of various specializations, too.

The exact number of the Jews before the year of 1991 seems hard to fix now. The findings of the 1989 census showed 700 Jews in Armenia. At the registration of the Jewish Community of Armenia, about 400 members signed in. With the members of their families, i.e., with those entitled to repatriate to Israel, they numbered about 1,200.

Presently, about 700 members are registered in the Jewish Community of Armenia. They all correspond to the Community admission rules, i.e., they have the right to repatriate to Israel (the Jews and members of their families).

From 1990, quite an active migration of the Jews from Armenia began, connected with the removal of multiple bans easing the conditions of departure from the country. The first wave of migration, undoubtedly, was based on ideological reasoning: the Jews wanted to live on the land of their forefathers - in the State of Israel. The unstable political situation in the Soviet Union at that period - perestroika, attempts of coups d'etat, the downfall of the Union, etc. - urged the intentions to leave. Not anticipating anything good in the times to come, the Jews looked forward to obtaining as stable conditions as possible. At this period and later, part of the Jewish families migrated to the United States of America and Germany. This approach, however, did not acquire a mass character, and now the majority of migrants choose Israel.

From 1993, when the living conditions in Armenia abruptly worsened, the "economic" character of migration prevailed. Quite a few families, never before admitting of the idea to



leave Armenia, lost their jobs and means for adequate existence and determined to migrate. All of them were rendered the necessary assistance, on condition that they corresponded to the criteria of the Law on Return of the State of Israel. At present, the flood of the migrants has somewhat reduced, nevertheless, in the last 3 years no less than 100 people leave Armenia annually.

Unfortunately, during the years of the Soviet power, most of the Jews living in Armenia lost the key features of the national mentality. Only a few rather aged people know and speak Yiddish. In the beginning of the 90s, the national consciousness of the Jews began to change: they wished to learn their language (preferably the official language of Israel - Hebrew), to learn and observe traditions, to study history and culture of their nation. To this end, a Sunday school for children and courses for adults were opened. Those who presently live in diaspora have the opportunity to extend their knowledge in these spheres thanks to the educational institutions existing in the territory of the former Soviet Union - Jewish colleges, Jewish University, Open University of Israel, and others. Since 1997, the religious Jewish community of Armenia publishes the "Koelet" monthly, issues news bulletins about its own activity and supplies news for mass media in Armenia and beyond the borders.

In our understanding, under the existing circumstances, the Government of Armenia should exert every effort to prove to the world community that, along with the Armenians, other nationalities, too, live in the Republic. The world should realize that Armenia is not a mononational country. To our regret, we lack a clearly defined State policy on national minorities. They are not represented in the Parliament of RA. Migration in Armenia is, in the main, an outcome of the hard social-economic conditions. Many have lost their jobs for the insufficient knowledge of the Armenian language. The situation gets still

more aggravated by the impossibility to study in Russian, by expensive communal services, hard conditions in the army, etc.

The essence of any national policy is not the anticipation of a crisis, but the prevention of a conflict.

To this end, we think the following measures should be taken by the Government:

1. To solve the problem of double citizenship positively.
2. To publish all the Laws and Sub-Laws of the Republic of Armenia in Russian, too.
3. To make affordable the prices of the printing matter, the editions containing legislative acts in particular.
4. To allow to put the words "Armenia" or "Republic of Armenia" in the title of the Community.
5. To allot premises to the national Community for the school and cultural center, where other services (the management, the SOKHNUT office, the repatriation consultation office, the youth center, the charity team, office equipment, etc.) would be located.
6. Not to involve the non-indigenous soldiers on the active list into the battles in hot spots and in frontier troops, to exclude the situation that they act with a weapon in the hand against their own people from a bordering country.
7. To establish a subdivision in the governmental structures, responsible for the national issues.
8. To introduce supervision over the mass media, not to allow materials insulting the feelings and dignity of the non-indigenous nationalities inhabiting the Republic of Armenia, and provoking conflicts between the nationalities.
9. To review the tax and customs duties concerning the public organizations of the national minorities.

## THE YEZIDIS

### Jamal Sadakhyan

*Chairman of the Public Organization of the  
International Foundation of the Yezidis*

The Yezidis' (self name - Ezdi) anthropologically belong to the Armenoid (Front Asian) minor race of the major Europeoid race. The language of the Yezidis (Ezdiki) relates to the north-western sub-branch of the Iranian group of the Indo-European family of languages. The total number of the Yezidis in the world surpasses 2,000,000. The major areas of the Yezidis residence are: Iraq - regions of Sinjar, Shangal and Sheykhan; Turkey - Mubin, Diyarbekir, Mush, Sasun, Bitlis, Van; as well as Iran, Syria, Georgia, Russia, Germany. In Armenia live about 60,000 Yezidis.

The Yezidis are Sun worshippers. The religion is Shar-Fadin; the Mausoleum is in Sinjar. Their religious and secular leader is 'mir' ('mireh shekha'), the residence is in Iraq. The Yezidis worship the Single God and his triad - Malakeh Tausi (angel-peacock), Shekh Adi (an elder) and Sultanu ezdi (a juvenile). The god of the Yezidis, Khudeh, is endowed with supernatural powers and is considered the creator of the Universe.

In agriculture, the Yezidis cultivate field and garden crops, breed cattle (sheep mainly). The urban population of the Yezidis in Armenia is represented by scientists, engineers, art workers and others.

The National Union of the Yezidis issues its official newspaper "The Voice of the Yezidis" in Yerevan. The National Radio of Armenia broadcasts a daily 30 minute program in Yezidi.

Since 1996, the social-political organization "Ezdikhana" functions in Armenia. Its program goal is to render all possible assistance to the Yezidis - citizens of RA, to involve them in



the processes of democracy.

In the beginning of 1998, the "World Foundation of the Yezidis" ("Mlateh Ezdi") was established. It is a non-governmental organization aimed to facilitate the setting up of national scientific and cultural centers.

The friendship of the Armenian and Yezidi peoples derives from remote ages. Let us remember the murderous days of 1915, equally sorrowful and severe for the Armenians and Yezidis. Both the nations were persecuted and slaughtered. In these hard circumstances they supported each other. A fact from history: when in 1915 the Turkish Government threw the Armenians to deserts doomed to die, the Yezidis admitted to their midst about 6,000 Armenians, who by miracle had escaped the Turkish yataghan, and provided them protection, food and wardship. This was the reason for the Turkish and German Governments to announce the Yezidis their sworn enemies. It was in February, 1917. In spite of all this, the Yezidis were staunch, and continued to help the Armenians in every way.

It is appropriate to cite the statement of the great Enlightener of the Armenian people Khachatur Abovyan, "The Yezidis and their ideology, although persecuted and hated by everyone and everywhere, up to date remain unblemished thanks to their natural bravery that helps this people in the struggle against their deadly enemies".

In the nightmarish days of the Genocide, the widely known military cooperation of general Andranik and Yezidi Jangir-gha in their battles against the Turks became an symbol of the age-long friendship of the two nations. The Yezidis were active participants in the battles at Bash-Aparan and Sardarapat in 1918, that turned a new page in the history of the two nations.

In 1997, the decision was made to annually observe June, 15 as the Memorial Day to the innocent victims. We cannot for-

get the tragedy of the Yezidis happened in Turkey 80 years ago.

The friendship of the Armenian and Yezidi peoples is unbreakable. The events of 1988 come to prove this. The Yezidis took part in the national movement in defense of the interests and goals of the Armenian people. Many of them volunteered to the army for the liberation of Artsakh. About thirty Yezidi soldiers died in the battles. The Artsakh movement turned a real trial for the young Yezidi fidains, who fought for Goris, Vaiq, Yeraskhavan, Ijevan. Side-by-side with them, the Yezidi women fought. The Yezidis rendered financial and material support to Artsakh war.

The Yezidis, apart from their mother tongue, speak Armenian fluently.

Popularity is the opinion that the Yezidis and the Kurds are the same nation. It is groundless and deserves condemnation and criticism. The Yezidis are an original and separate nation with its own language, religion, habits and other ethnic peculiarities. To identify the Yezidis with another nation means to unreasonably deny the existence of a nation, firmly established for centuries.

It is commonly known that the Slovaks, Serbs and Croats speak the same language and belong to the same ethnic group, though their religions differ: Orthodox, Catholic and Moslem. They make sovereign States. For centuries, the Yezidis have had their unchanged faith and language, their own national and ethnic appearance. Once again it is appropriate to recall the words said by Khachatur Abovyan, "The language and faith preserve the nation". This has been the way the Yezidis have confirmed themselves - from the depth of the centuries up to these days.

The materials in the reference book "The Population of Armenia in the Last Century (1831-1931)" verify that in all the documents, the Yezidis are presented separately, at that - from



the Kurds, too. According to the census, the Yezidis lived in Aparan, Ashtarak, Talin, Kurdukuli, Vagharshapat, whereas the Kurds inhabited Basargechar, Nor-Bayazet, Vedi.

In the Republic of Armenia, representatives of about twenty nationalities live. In quantity, the Yezidis are the second. Up to the 1989 census, they number 53,980.

After the declaration of Independence of Armenia, the social-economic situation in the Republic worsened drastically. Let us remember the beginning of the 90s: cold and darkness, endless lines to buy bread, no transportation service, dozens of kilometers on foot.

No revelation to notice that this was the period when the minds of the citizens became haunted with the idea of emigration, absolutely unacceptable for us. The facts, however, evidence that the Yezidis did not remain untouched by this phenomenon. The census findings show that about 10% of the Yezidi population emigrated from the Republic of Armenia.

The migration of the 90s, involving both the native population and the representatives of other nationalities, was voluntary and caused by objective factors. The voluntary nature of the migration is proved by the opposite process: during the recent years, the Armenians and Yezidis, who had left the country, tend to return, the amount increasing day by day.

As is mentioned above, about 20 nationalities live in the Republic of Armenia side-by-side, in similar conditions. Their slogan reads: against any national animosity, for the unbreakable union of the nations. Any national culture feeds not only from its own sources, but also from the spiritual culture of other nations.

The Constitution declares the Republic of Armenia an Independent, Democratic and Legal State, in which the only master is the people. This makes understandable the solid logic of the newly elected President Robert Kocharyan, saying that any power is doomed without the support of the people.

The Constitution of RA, adhering the most important principles of the International Law, ensures protection of the human rights and freedoms and excludes any kind of discrimination - of language, nationality, religion, etc. This is convincingly illustrated by Article 15 of the Constitution, which says that the citizens of RA, despite their nationality, race, language, religion, social affiliation, etc., enjoy all the rights, freedoms and duties. Article 64 of the Constitution says that everyone who has completed 25 years of age, has been citizen of the Republic of Armenia for the last 5 years and resident of the Republic, and has the right to vote, may be elected deputy of the National Assembly. The Article clearly shows that discrimination based on nationality is excluded in this important sphere, too.

A couple of words about the culture, manners and other aspects of the national originality. The progress of a nation is possible only provided it is based on traditions of morals, national values, culture, familial and other traditions, in combination with the values and experience of the mankind on the whole.

For this reason, it is absolutely necessary to open national schools. And if in some regions, inhabited also by the Yezidis there would be difficulties, it is necessary to increase in the schools, the quantity of Yesidi lessons to maximum possible. Hence, a task of top priority for us is to publish textbooks in the mother tongue. The current policy in the sphere of education requires delicate approach to the educational-cultural requirements of the national minorities. In this connection, it would be desirable that representatives of the national minorities be admitted to higher educational institutions by way of interview.

Proceeding from the above mentioned, we suggest:

1. To draw the Yezidi intelligentsia in the consideration of the Draft Laws submitted to the National Assembly.
2. To provide the Yezidi Community with the opportunity to

nominate and elect their own deputy to the National Assembly.

3. To include the appropriate Yezidi specialists into the State management system.

4. To allocate premises to the Yezidi Community within the city of Yerevan (the former "Erebuni" cinema would be advisable) to organize a cultural center for the Yezidis, since there is none neither in Yerevan, nor in the entire Republic.

5. At the Institute of Oriental Studies, to open a Department of Yezidology. It will make an opportunity to study and make public our objective history, deteriorated and ascribed to another nation.

6. In the Union of Writers of Armenia, to establish a Section of Yezidi Writers.

7. To immortalize the memory of the Yezidi warriors, who died in the frontier areas of Armenia and in the battles for Artsakh, to name one of the streets in Yerevan after them, and to erect a monument to a Yezidi fighter for freedom.

8. To allot one hour a week on National TV, under the patronage of the Government, to a program in Yezidi.

9. Prior to the new elections to the National Assembly, to assign one representative of the Yezidis in the Parliament.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE YEZIDIS IN THE REPUBLIC OF  
ARMENIA  
1989

<i>Towns</i>	<i>Number</i>
1. Yerevan	7086
2. Abovyan	465
3. Alaverdi	9
4. Ashtarak	83
5. Ararat	54
6. Artik	64
7. Artashat	262
8. Goris	-
9. Dilijan	168
10. Echmiadzin	1007

11. Ijevan	1
12. Gyumri (Leninakan)	325
13. Kamo	1
14. Vanadzor	33
15. Armavir (Hoktemberyan)	928
16. Hrazdan	122
17. Kapan	-
18. Charentsavan	151
19. Jermuk	1
20. Sevan	155
21. Spitak	32
22. Stepanavan	168

11.133

<i>Regions</i>	<i>Number</i>
1. Abovyan	1840
2. Arzni	143
3. Byureghavan	55
4. Azizbekov (Vayq)	2
5. Akhuryan	237
6. Amasia	-
7. Ani	285
8. Ashtarak	2169
9. Aparan	72
10. Aragatz	4034
11. Ararat	2142
12. Artik	99
13. Artashat	2651
14. Gugaraq	38
15. Eghegnadzor	17
16. Echmiadzin	7303
17. Talin	4193
18. Tumanyan	83
19. Ijevan	37
20. Kalinino (Tashir)	567
21. Kamo	41
22. Krasnoselsk	140
23. Armavir	9952

24. Hrazdan	414
25. Kapan	4
26. Ashotsq (Ghukasyan)	3
27. Masis	3231
28. Martuni	18
29. Meghri	2
30. Nairi	2388
31. Noyemberyan	11
32. Shamshadin (Taush)	10
33. Sevan	269
34. Sisian	12
35. Spitak	4
36. Stepanavan	43
37. Vardenis	339
	<u>42.848</u>
	<u><i>Total: 53.981</i></u>



## KURDS IN ARMENIA

### Amarike Sardar

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of the Republic of Armenia*

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The notion "Kurds" is used in the broad sense, meaning both the Moslem Kurds and that part of the Yezidis, who consider themselves Kurds-Yezidis. Meanwhile, it is known that the other part of the Yezidis, having preserved their ancient religion - sun worshipping, consider themselves a separate nation.

Opinions differ as to this issue, and busy discussions are going on. Whatever the case, it is not our point now to dwell on this subject.

The historical facts evidence that in the beginning of the XIX century, some Kurdish tribes inhabited the territory of Eastern Armenia.

For the oppressive policy of Turkey, as well as the religious confrontation of the Kurds-Moslems and the Yezidis, incited by the Turkish Government in every way, the Kurds-Yezidis, during the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878, moved from Ayntap to Eastern Armenia and settled down in the regions of Tekor (Kars province), Surmalu, Aparan, Echmiadzin, Armavir, Ashtarak. During World War One, the overwhelming majority of the Kurds-Yezidis set off the Kars, Surmalu and Van provinces and populated the regions of Aparan, Talin, Armavir, Echmiadzin, Masis, Ararat, Ashtarak, Artashat. Some moved on to Georgia, mainly - to Tbilisi, Batumi, Telavi.

In Armenia, the Kurds-Yezidis live in the villages of Aragatzotn, Armavir, and Ararat 'marz'es. A lot of Kurds-Yezidis live in the villages with mixed population in the Ararat valley. They also live in Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, Abovyan,

Dilijan, Stepanavan, Tashir.

Most of the Kurds' villages lie up in the highlands, so the main occupation of the Kurds is cattle-breeding and agriculture. They cultivate barley, wheat, potatoes. The Kurds in the Ararat Valley do gardening, too. Among the urban Kurds, there are workers and office employees, engineers and technical workers. The national intelligentsia predominantly resides in towns.

It is worth to emphasize that, for the past seven decades, our community in Armenia has not only made progress, but also increased in number. Thus, in 1922, the Kurds in Armenia - the Moslems and Yezidis - numbered 8,650, while in 1989 census the amount increased up to 60,000.

In 1989-1990, the bulk of the Moslem Kurds fled Armenia, joining their Azerbaijani countrymen. The main cause of their migration was that they lived in the villages inhabited by the Azerbaijanis, were related with them by family ties, their children attended Azerbaijani schools. The number of the Kurds-migrates reaches approximately 10,000. Part of the Kurds-Yezidis (about 12,000) also left the country. For instance, in Yaroslav province in Russia presently live about 800 Kurdish families migrated from Armenia. They did not break the links with our Republic: they did not sell the houses; they transport their dead to bury them in Armenia. Now almost 40,000 Moslem Kurds and Yezidis live in the Republic of Armenia.

The basic cause that urged migration of the Kurds-Yezidis was the hard social-economic situation, which, however, was the same for the entire population. We have never sensed any national discrimination or persecution in Armenia; we are full and equal citizens and enjoy all the rights and freedoms provisioned in the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia.

Armenia is the country where our community has founded and developed our national culture at the direct support of Armenian intelligentsia. At present, the National Radio trans-

mits daily programs with the duration of an hour and 15 minutes. Since 1930, the Kurdish "Rya Taza" newspaper has been issued with the State assistance. In the Soviet Union it was the only periodical in the Kurdish language. At the Institute of Oriental Studies of NAS of RA, a group of specialists in Kurdology works. At David Anghaght University, there is a Department of Kurdology.

The very first feature and documentary films, reflecting the life of the Kurds, were shot in Armenia ("Zareh", "The Kurds-Yezidis", "The Kurds in Armenia", "The Armenian Kurds", etc.). The Section of Kurdish Writers in the Union of Writers functions for over 60 years now. At schools in the Kurdish villages, up to the State curriculum, in the second to eighth grades, two hours a week of the Kurdish Language and Literature are taught. The amount of Kurdish fiction, scientific and political books in the original and in translation, published during the past decades, surpasses that in any other country throughout the world. The Kurds in Armenia have quite an army of intelligentsia - scientists, writers, physicians, engineers, etc. To our regret, for the reason of difficult economic conditions, a considerable part of them departed from Armenia.

In Armenia, several Kurdish public organizations function.

Thus, in the conditions, exceptionally favorable for the Kurdish community, the national culture has made considerable progress, traditions have been formed. Currently, our efforts are directed to the improvement of the operating mechanisms, to the resolution of the newly emerged problems, the eradication of the still existing shortcomings and omissions.

In recent times, following the transition period, our community also faces certain hardships and problems. Being the first in number among the national minorities of Armenia, our community, unfortunately, does not have a representative in the National Assembly of RA. Especially as from 1918 through 1990, we had one and more representatives in the Armenian

Parliament. The imperfection of the electoral system accounts for the absence of the Kurds in the National Assembly. In our view, the experience of Iran and Lebanon could prove didactic. The national minorities in these countries elect their deputies on the community basis. So were elected the Armenian deputies.

Neither have we representatives in the executive bodies of the Republic of Armenia, although the appropriate potential exists. It would be desirable that in the apparatus of President or in the Government there be a person responsible for the problems of our community.

Quite imperative is the issue of training national specialists. Such traditions are well established in our Republic. The Kurdish Teachers Training College and the Section of Kurdology at the Department of Eastern Studies at Yerevan State University used to train enough specialists to meet the demand of the time. As we consider the existence of the Group for Kurdologic Researches, the Kurdish newspaper, the daily programs on the National Radio in Kurdish - the impossibility to provide these agencies with learnt personnel seems illogic. Opening a Department of Kurdology at the Armenian Teachers Training Institute and at Yerevan State University, or admitting 4-5 Kurd applicants to the Departments of Philology at the mentioned institutions out of competition, would fill the long observed gap in this field. The insufficiency of Kurdish textbooks remains a concern of top priority. It has been for 15 years now that no textbooks were published, and those in use do not meet the requirements of the time.

The role of TV in social, national and cultural life is specific and exceptional. Even short, but regular programs on TV reflecting the Kurdish problems would be an exciting undertaking worth to be encouraged. TV programs would acquaint the entire population of the Republic with the life of our community, the religion, national habits, etc.

Being a center of Kurdology and Kurdish culture, Armenia is noted for the rich traditions of friendly attitude both of the people and the State structures. Not at all accidental that our concern is not the creation of the elements of Kurdish national cultural life, but their development and improvement.

Eight villages in Aragatzotn region - Sipan, Alagyaz, Avshen, Derek, Jamushlum, Rya Taza, Sangyar, Amre Taza are within the disaster zone and were badly damaged by the earthquake. A lot of people died. Most of the houses are destroyed or at accident risk. Damaged are the clubs, libraries and schools. During the past decade, no construction or reconstruction work was carried out in these villages. The secondary school in Alagyaz is in a miserable state. Meanwhile, many of its pupils made popular scientists, writers, journalists, physicians, engineers, agriculturists, teachers, lawyers. Nowadays, the classes are held in temporary classrooms, with no opportunity to heat in winter. The situation in the secondary schools in the villages of Sipan, Derek and Rya Taza is not any better.

To the whim of the local "princelings", only the insignificant part of the humanitarian aid reaches the population.

Of 11 Kurdish villages in the former Aragatz region, a health post functions in Alagyaz only. In eight villages of the former Talin region there is none.

For many years, the villages have not had potable water. There is no bus communication. In some villages there is not a single telephone. Newspapers do not reach the villages; people cannot watch TV. There is not a single club or cinema in the villages. No wonder, they are deserted, with only the elderly, women and children remaining. The young have left to earn their living, to support their families back at home.

The major problems of our Community needed to be settled are as follows:

- \* to have one deputy at the National Assembly;



- \* to use the intellectual potential of our community in the executive structures;
- \* to train national specialists;
- \* to issue textbooks in the Kurdish Language and Literature;
- \* to have at least one hour a month on TV;
- \* to pay adequate attention to the reconstruction of the cultural centers, of the schools in Kurdish villages in the disaster zone in particular; to set up health posts and transportation service; to solve the problem of fresh water; to distribute the humanitarian aid fairly;
- \* to create conditions for delivering newspapers to the villages.

We are convinced that with the improvement of the economic life, the aforementioned problems, worrying our community, will be solved, too, since the national minorities have never been discriminated in Armenia.

## **-THE MOLOKANS IN ARMENIA**

*Ivan Semyonov*

*President of the Foundation of Help And Assistance  
to Russian Compatriots in the Republic of Armenia*

The largest number of the Russians in Armenia - 70,300 - was registered in 1979 census.

In 1980s, the flow of the Russian population out of Armenia increased, and in 1989 the Russians counted 51,000. From the beginning of 1990 up to date, the migration processes have sharply increased, and the number of the Russians diminished to 12,000-13,000. Of this number, approximately 5,000 are descendants of old-believers, exiled to Transcaucasia in the first half of the XIX century for their religious convictions. They make quite a unique and original ethnic group (sect) of the Molokans.

As is known, sectarianism originated in Russia as far back as five centuries ago. Most actively it was disseminated in the XVII-XVIII centuries, when the tsarist autocracy and the Orthodox church were gaining power. Escaping the arbitrary actions of the church and the police, the Russian sectarians moved from the central provinces of Russia to Siberia, Altay, Transcaucasia, Central Asia, Bessarabia and the Crimea. They not only adapted to the unfamiliar local conditions and ethnic surroundings, but also influenced quite favorably on the cultural and economic development of the regions they had settled down.

One of the most significant sects, widespread in the territory of the Russian empire, as well as in the USA, Canada, Mexico, Australia, is the religious ethnic group of Russian Christians, called 'the Molokans'.

The ancestors of the Molokans derive from the peasants of Russian and some other nationalities of the Russian empire. By religion, they since long have belonged to the Graeco-

Russian church, although by their inner conviction they have never accepted the worship of lifeless wooden, stone or other presentations of God, executed to the idea and imagination of an individual master. They profess the belief in all-mighty and omnipresent God, who lives in the soul of a live human being. They believe that such objects as a handmade icon and cross 'are not deity but man's fancy', so worshipping material presentations, such as a cross and an icon, is nothing but idolatry, recreancy from the true Creator of the Heaven and the Earth. In the period of formation, the Molokans' doctrine was influenced by western Protestantism (Baptism in particular), rejecting church with its attributes and clergy. The doctrine disseminated rapidly in the XVII century among the peasants and further - among the lower middle class and the merchants in Tambov, Voronezh, Saratov, Penza and other central provinces of Russia. These believers were first called iconoclasts. Afterwards, when separate communities of this branch had been formed, their members were named the Molokans, because they did not observe the fasts set by the Orthodox church, on fasting days they ate animal food, drank milk (the Russian for milk is 'moloko') - the most popular and available dairy produce in a peasant's life.

The ruling regime and the Orthodox church disliked these differently minded people. Persecutions and punishments poured down on them. It was after the enthronement of emperor Alexander I that the attitude towards the Molokans changed. On July 22, 1805, a manifesto was signed by the emperor proclaiming grace to the Molokans, as well as the other sect, called 'dukhobors' ('spirit-wrestlers'). They were allowed to freely profess their religion and perform their rites.

The situation aggravated in the epoch of Nikolay I, when persecutions, exiles and imprisonments for religious convictions started over again. The Molokans were prohibited to perform their rites, to come together for prayers, even to be

employed by people of Orthodox religion. They were prohibited to be given passports and be away from the location they were registered in, which complicated trade business and farm labor.

In 1830 a special decree prohibited them to inhabit some of the southern provinces of Russia where many of them intended to go, and were allowed to settle in Transcaucasia only. This very decree allowed voluntary resettlement of State peasants-sectarians, on their request, to their co-religionists in Transcaucasia. From that time on, the legalized removal of the Molokans and dukhobors from the Orthodox surroundings of Russia began.

On the decision of the regent in the Caucasus, for settling of the Molokans and dukhobors, the lands of the provinces of Tiflis, Erivan, Yelizavetpol (Gyanja) and Shemakhi (Baku), bordering on Turkey and Iran, were allocated. Hence, the formation of civil settlements of the Russian sectarians in Transcaucasia is related to the early 40s of the XIX century.

When conquering and assimilating the Caucasus, the Russian Government was not only guided by foreign political interests, but also by purely economic ones. Capitalism was making its way in Russia, it required market and resources. Therefore, after the military actions were over, following the army proceeded its rear subdivisions. They founded garrisons, military settlements with their farmstead and all the appropriate infrastructure. Besides, it was necessary to populate and fortify the annexed regions, to exploit the resources, to give a start to the economy, etc. To advance the economy of the area, relatively favorable conditions for the local population were created, and the Russian population was drawn in to stimulate the development of agriculture and to pave the way for the industry based on the local natural resources.

The Russian population was drawn in, on the one hand, through formation of military settlements - when the soldiers,



apart from serving in the army, were given their own houses to live and form families; and through resettlement of the civil population, such as the sectarians, on the other. Russian settlements - military and Cossack - were founded in the north-west of Armenia and the adjoining regions on the route of the Russian army to Kars and farther to Erzerum. In 1841-1845, in the territory of Akhatzikha district of Georgian-Imeretian province, eight more settlements emerged, where the dukhobors - from the Don Cossacks were exiled from Tavria.

Another wave of populating Transcaucasia by Russians came from Tiflis in the direction of Yelizavetpol (Gyanja) - Shemakha (Baku) - Dilijan - Yelenovka (Sevan) - Akhta (Hrazdan). These people came from Tambov, Orenburg, Penza, Saratov and Voronezh provinces. The first sectarian settlement in Transcaucasia (the village of Bazarchay) was founded in 1832-1833 in the territory of Eastern Armenia, in Nakhijevan district.

At first, the peasants were engaged in cultivating lands, what they learned to do back in the homeland. In the course of time, they got used to cattle-breeding, craftsmanship (carpentry, blacksmith's work, etc.), carrier's trade.

From that time on, a new phase in the development and free performing of the rules and rites of the Molokani dogmas began. Hard-working people consolidated by their belief, accustomed to the adversities of life, and still preserving heart and courage, full of hope for their bright future, started a new life. Great support and patronage was rendered to them on behalf of the Transcaucasian Administration and, particularly, the regent in the Caucasus at those times, Count M. S. Vorontsov.

By having Russian settlements in Transcaucasia, the Russian Government pursued its military-strategic goals.

It should be noted that the voluntary resettlement of the Molokans from the central provinces of Russia was going on



not in Transcaucasia only. For their religious belief and utter poverty, the Molokans and dukhobors were persecuted and reached Siberia, Altay, Central Asia, the Crimea, Bessarabia.

The introduction of some provisions and governmental acts intending to improve the situation and the status of the sectarians in Transcaucasia, certain tolerance in the issues connected with their religion, conditioned the increase in the number of voluntarily resettling Russian sectarians from Russia. Peasants were moving to new locations on permission of the local communities and authorities, given the agreement of the Transcaucasian administration.

Migration is always the privilege of enterprising people, and the new conditions of life required hard work and wit. The awareness of their responsibility in front of the family, the wish to improve one's own homestead required diligence and economizing in everything, sobriety and honesty in work. These features of the Molokans have preserved up to date, therefore many contemporary leaders of economy appreciate them as good and responsible workers.

It allowed the Molokans to quickly settle down in their own houses and lands and to form their families with a lot of children. Among the Molokans, being well-off is ranked as virtue. Inevitable was the stratification of the community into the rich and the poor. Following the dogma, they, nonetheless, considered themselves equal in front of God and human beings, preached the necessity to help their brethren in the community. One shall not covet the neighbor's wealth; shall not steal, shall not quarrel with own people, shall help the fellow man - these are the basic principles declared in their communities, which the members tried to keep to.

They successfully handled the problem of adaptation to the new places of residence not only complying with the natural conditions, but also coping with the authorities and local people. They have never had any problems with the chiefs, one of

the most important principles of the Molokans being obedience to the Law. "Any power comes from God" - one of the most revered postulates of their faith is being adhered to until now.

In the course of time, as the conditions and life were coming to order, the relationships with the indigenous population of Transcaucasia set forth. Their new neighbors were the Armenians, Azerbaijanis (at that time they were called Tatars), Georgians, Kurds. The relations were not easy, different in each case: the Armenians are Christians, the Azerbaijanis are Moslems. Different were the morals, religions, habits, languages. This required tolerance and respect for those whose lands they came to.

The local population had a lot to learn from the newcomers, as the Molokans brought into these regions more advanced tools of labor, new and better breeds of cattle, more advanced way of husbandry. The local population adopted the scythe, the four-wheel cart that began to gradually replace the habitual araba, the technology to grow potatoes, cabbage and other agricultural crops.

There was also a lot adopted by the newcomers from the local people. To thrash grain, they began to use the popular in the Caucasus wooden grater-board with silicic stones on one side; they learned to breed sheep, produce and widely use cheese, greens in the meals, etc.

The relations with the locals took a good turn exactly on the grounds of economic contacts, since no other spheres could ever exist at the time.

Thanks to the outstanding diligence of the resettlers, their capacity to create favorable conditions for the development of their enterprise, as a result of a number of manifestos by Alexander II, many of them set up solid farmsteads within a short period of time and considerably increased the status of their families. But the universal military service, introduced in

the end of the XIX century, rejected by the Molokans as an abuse of a human being, compelled them again to think of moving to places where they could escape it. In their imagination, the place where they could obtain peace, happiness and freedom of religion was the distant land of America beyond the ocean, where lots of unfortunate and suffering people had found shelter. The land thrown to the other end of the world, Australia, did not fall out of their vision. Thus, part of the young Molokans moved from Transcaucasia to America, Canada, Australia. Another reason for some families to migrate to Kars province (presently in Turkey) and Sal steppes (Rostov province) in the beginning of the current century, was the shortage of lands. The Molokani families predominantly had up to 12-15 members each, so as the family enhanced, the shortage of the land plots became obvious.

In seeking a better fortune and well-being, the members of the Molokani communities never forgot about the religious aspect of life, the careful preservation of the traditional course of life, the old Russian habits and rites. A special place in the life of the Molokans was assigned to the Bible - a desk book for the majority of the Molokani families up until now. The individuals who know well the Bible and other religious literature, were always highly respected. To some degree, this was an incentive for the Molokans to learn to read and write. In the families it was habitual to read in the evening not only religious, but also fiction books and periodicals. Great importance was given to the education of the children. In many Molokani families schools were arranged. Thus, in 1905 in Transcaucasia, there were 49 Russian schools in sectarian settlements in which 2562 schoolchildren were taught.

In the subsequent years, particularly with the development of the Soviet system of education, many children of the Molokans were enabled to study at higher and medium educational institutions, maintain theses, make highly educated

specialists. From their midst came quite a few prominent economic and political figures, leaders of regions, deputies of various ranks up to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, specialists taking part in the working up and launch of cosmic technique, professors, etc. Despite the fact that they fell out of the rows of the sectarians, they still enjoyed great respect of their fellow people.

After the Revolution of 1917, the political orientation of the new power was to destroy the reserved life of the Molokans, to fight against their religiousness and culture. The dispossession of the kulaks hit a new blow on the Molokans. Very many family heads were persecuted, imprisoned and deported not as much for the sake of depriving them of property, as for their religiousness. The former reason served just a mask for the struggle against the believers in God. During these years many left their houses to move to towns. The process became even more intense with the forcible enrollment of all and everyone in kolkhozes and destroying their lifestyle.

In the post-war years, the back migration of the Molokans to their historical motherland, Russia was taking place. In this, particularly active were the young people who, having graduated from the institutes and other educational institutions, were leaving the Transcaucasian republics. Despite internationalism was advocated here, they were unable to fully apply the acquired knowledge and capacities neither in economic, nor in social life.

Doubtlessly, not the least role should be assigned to the socially disadvantageous situation in the villages that urged the young to find ways not to return to the native land. The old followed the young. They chiefly moved to the rural regions of Stavropol and Krasnodar territories, where the fertile lands and favorable climatic conditions let them rapidly reach still higher living standard than in Transcaucasia.

Connected with the increase of national movements,



beginning from 1989 the migration process of the Russians obtained momentum. The clerical work turned to the mother tongue and the latter was given the status of the official language, which fact was negatively accepted by all the Russians living in the territory of the republics of Transcaucasia. Particularly strong impetus for the Russians to migrate from Armenia was closing the Russian schools and Russian sections in the institutes. Not seeing any prospects to acquire education and subsequent employment, the Russians began to abandon their native homes, selling for nothing the fortune they and their ancestors had made. At present in Armenia, of twenty Russian villages only two are left - Fioletovo and Lermontovo (in the latter, half of the dwellers are Armenians). The number of the Molokans has become five times as little as in 1959, and, as for now, makes approximately 5,000. Most of them live in Yerevan (about 2,000). They are mainly employed as builders, accessory workers for municipal services, drivers for various enterprises, etc.

Identical is their occupation in other towns (Vanadzor - 80 people; Dilijan - 200, Hrazdan - 60; Sevan - 80).

The Molokans living in the rural area number almost as many as those in town: in the village of Fioletovo - 800; in Tashir region (where formerly 12,500 Molokans lived) - 400; in Krasnoselsk (where formerly 3,000 people lived) - 50.

The mentioned population mainly consists of elderly people who cannot afford to leave for their historical homeland - Russia. The exception is Fioletovo: the number of departures is very small here. Moreover, the number and composition of the population remained the same as in the Soviet times.

As a result of the above mentioned causes, currently only two rural Russian schools are left in Armenia, and they have eight grades only. These schools (in the villages of Fioletovo and Lermontovo) do not even provide the level of knowledge required for entering a medium special educational institution.



This deprives the children in these villages of the prospects to acquire any specialty, let alone to receive a higher education. They are destined to perform accessory and hired work only. What is worse, the schools have no qualified teachers, the classes are held irregularly, the buildings after the Spitak earthquake were not reconstructed, the roofs leak, the classrooms are cold for the broken window glasses and lack of fuel to heat. There are no sufficient textbooks and other school appliances. The children are not seen by health personnel; jaundice, rickets and other diseases are frequent occurrences.

The villages are not well arranged; there is no water-pipe line or regular electricity. They lack even the minimal level of medical and pharmaceutical service. Consequently, untimely deaths and premature home deliveries occur.

The above mentioned, i.e. unwillingness to lose the mother tongue, morals, habits, culture, along with the material problems became the basic factor, bringing about the intense back flow of the Russian population out of the Republic.

To conclude, we may state that the adoption of the Law on Language, the closing of the Russian schools and sections at the institutes, proved the major cause of the mass departure of the Russian population from Armenia. It is not correct to see only economic factors in it (the blockade, the crisis, unemployment, etc.). The sources of the material well-being of the rural population (the bulk of the Russian population of the Republic lived in the rural area) are the land and private farmstead. When moving to Russia, the Molokans endure great material damage in selling for nothing their well-arranged properties. They will need years and years to build up at the new place of residence, to mix into the unknown environment, not very friendly to the sectarian Molokans. Even being perfectly aware of the hardships and shortcomings they are in for, the Molokans leave Armenia - their second motherland - with tears in the eyes.

To stop the process of migration of the Russian population, it is necessary to review the Law on Language, in the first place; to provide conditions for the Russian children to be educated at Russian schools (not in the Russian classes of Armenian schools); to open Russian language sections in the institutes; to increase the volume of the radio programs in Russian; to make the Russian language the second official language, thus letting the Russian speaking citizens not feel restricted and give them an opportunity to be employed in all the spheres of economic life and administration.

It is also necessary to ensure the representation of the Russian population in the State and Legislative structures.

Taking into account the necessity to preserve the spiritual link of the Russians with their historic motherland, to introduce the institute of double citizenship. This, undoubtedly, will bring about remarkable economic and political benefits to the people of Armenia.

It is necessary to support the revival of the Russian villages in Armenia. It will create a cheap agricultural market.

We think it expedient that the Russian recruits served in the military units of the Russian Army located in the territory of Armenia.

## CAUCASIAN GERMANS ON THE ARMENIAN PLATEAU

*Alexadner Yaskorski*

*Chairman of the Cultural Society of the Germans  
of the Republic of Armenia*

Usually the knowledge about the Russian Germans, particularly the German colonists of Transcaucasia, are confined to the fact that their resettlement was organized by Yekaterina II. Yet, the story of the Germans in Russia has much deeper roots, and the resettlement took place in several phases.

The first organized groups of resettlers counting 25,000-30,000 people arrived in Russia in 1764-1767. At the first stage, the German resettlers populated Povolzhye, the southern Ukraine and the Black Sea coast from the Dnepr river to the Caucasus. By 1850, German settlements emerged in Moldova, the Caucasus, the Siberia, in Georgia and Azerbaijan, as well as in Volyn. In 1908, in Russian empire there lived 2,070,000 German citizens.

There were two reasons to resettle the Germans in Russia:

The first reason is economic: allotment of land for private hereditary possession, deliverance from taxes, granting loans.

The second is the release from military service - in fact, half of the resettlers were Mennonites, whose religion does not allow of taking up arms.

Exciting is the story telling how the Germans appeared in Transcaucasia. The story much more reminds of Biblical plots than reality.

The idea of resettling the Germans in the Caucasus, including Armenia in 1816-1818, belonged to the leaders of a religious community headquartered in Wurtemberg. Protestant pastors of the society announced the impending end of the world, death of all the peoples and, in the aftermath, the sec-

ond advent of Christ, which will initiate the "Millennial kingdom" of peace and justice (this religious trend was called "chiliasm", from Greek 'chilias' - 'thousand').

All of these signs and miracles must have happened in the year of 1836. The place to be rescued was in Transcaucasia, in the proximity of the mount of Ararat, where the millennial state was to be built. The strength and conviction of the preachers was so great, and the religious trend - so popular that the resettlement to Transcaucasia turned an objective of a ample group of people. The courage of the Protestants impelled them to leave their houses and homeland and, not looking ahead of time, to set off on a long journey to the country where they might in peace and spiritual calmness await the glorious advent of the Savior.

The mother of that time Alexander I, Maria Fyodorovna, was a born princess Sofia Dorothy Augusta fon Wurtemberg, originating from the Wurtemberg royal house. This fact played its role fully, and the permission to resettle the community was received.

The first 40 families of the explorers left for Transcaucasia from Sweinheim in Wurtemberg. They set out on journey in September, 1816 and reached Tiflis in September, 1817. They founded a settlement 35 km off the town and named it Marienfield.

The news about the successful completion of the expedition was sent to the homeland, and in summer of 1818, about 8,000 members of the community gathered in Ulm, whence started for the South in 14 columns. This journey, however, did not succeed. The ships were overcrowded, the sick and well people were put together, so an epidemic broke out with multiple deaths to follow.

The Russian authorities in Tiflis warned the resettlers that moving ahead towards Ararat is impossible for the enormous danger, as the regions adjoining the mount of Ararat are inhab-

ited by wild, hostile Moslem tribes, and the situation is out of control there. The colonists were suggested to stop and found settlements near Tiflis. The first settlements to appear were Annenfield, Yelenendorf and Katarinenfield. The settlers lived surrounded by Kurdish, Tatar (Azerbaijani) and Persian tribes. The settlements were 35-150 km distant from each other. The colonies kept in permanent touch, and in an emergency rendered help to each other. Nonetheless, the robbers' attacks were, as a matter of fact, an everyday occurrence. This persisted up to 1826, when the settlements were destroyed in the assaults. Incidentally, they were reconstructed in no time.

In the course of time, two groups of German settlements formed in Transcaucasia: the eastern group of the "early" Swab settlements in the territory of present-day Azerbaijan, and the western group - in the territory of Georgia. The eastern group comprised Yelenendorf (presently - Khanlar), Annenfield (Shamkhor), Gergsfield, Alekseyevka, Traubenfield and Aygenfield (Kazakh). The western group made Katarinenfield (Bolnisi), Marienfield, Alexanderdorf (Tsalka), Traubenberg and Noy-Tiflis (this settlement assimilated into Tbilisi). In the Soviet period up until 1937, these colonies were united into two national German administrative regions.

It should be noted that the small groups of resettlers of several other nationalities - Swiss, Dutch, Italian - joined the Germans in Transcaucasia. In the town of Shushi, in the territory of the present Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh in particular, there was a settlement of missionaries from Basel, who were totally slaughtered during the Turkish Genocide.

The most exciting point in the story of the march of the Germans to Ararat is, perhaps, the fact that a small part of them managed to reach the goal.

Five kilometers south-west of Kars, in the territory of contemporary north-eastern Turkey, there are two small Turkish villages - Garakeren and Pashakeri. The neighborhood



dwellers still call them "Almankeyu" and "Nemiskeyu", meaning "German village".

In 1891 here, at the altitude of 1,630 m above the sea level, a daughter village of the German colony Alexanderhilf was founded. This practically unknown, not very large colony was named Petrovka after the governor of Kars, Pyotr Tomich. In 1911 in Petrovka, twelve families lived numbering a total of 200 people. They were engaged in cattle-breeding and dairy produce manufacturing. By 1914, besides Petrovka, Germans lived in the villages of Vladikars and Estonka, where they built dairy works. These three villages 4-5 km distant from each other constituted a small German region 60 km off the Russian-Turkish border, actual until World War One. In November, 1914, as the Russian-Turkish border was altered, carriages were sent from Kars for the German population to leave the locality. The majority of the Germans from Petrovka moved to the colony of Eigenfeld in Azerbaijan. Nothing was compensated for the abandoned houses and farms. The Estonians who stayed in Estonka - by the beginning of World War One they numbered 465 - during the Genocide of the Armenians organized by the Turkish side, were pretending Germans, "Alman", to save their lives. From that time on, the village of Estonka in these parts is called "Almankeyu".

Currently, there is not a place of compact dwelling of Germans in Armenia. In 1998 German Community of RA comprised 97 families, 56 of which live in Yerevan, 13 in Vanadzor, the rest — in Gyumri, Hoktemberyan, Abovyan, Garni, Byurakan, Ayrum, Noyemberyan, Artashat and Akhuryan regions - 2 or 3 families in each.

The Germans living in towns of Armenia are predominantly specialists with higher education. Those living in rural areas are peasants.

As to the beginning of 1998, the German Community consisted of 97 families, or 430 members. When the Community

was founded in 1992, 52 families with a total of 159 people joined it, all of them being inhabitants of Yerevan.

To evaluate the dynamics of migration of Germans out of Armenia, suffice it to say that of 52 families (159 members) involved in the Community in 1992, 13 families (35 members) were left in 1998.

The causes of migration of the German population may be divided into two groups.

The first group make the factors objectively affecting the entire population of Armenia: worsening of the material and social conditions, lack of jobs, effects of the blockade, etc.

To the second group might be related the factors affecting mainly the non-indigenous population of Armenia: the difficulty, sometimes impossibility to receive secondary and higher education in a language other than Armenian; the recently emerged language problems as being employed; the problems connected with the military service.

It should be mentioned that the families of the Germans living in Armenia speak predominantly Russian.

The German Community of RA closely cooperates with the German Training and Cultural Center of Armenia (DLKZ), which renders invaluable support to the Community from the very point of its foundation. The Community is a participant in the majority of programs and arrangements realized by the Center. For the past years, the basic trends of the activity of the Center have been: organization on permanent basis of language training courses both for children and adults; creation of a German folk group; celebration of national holidays. Many members of the Community actively participated at the seminars conducted in the Center, for which specialists from Germany were invited. The Community members also took part in preparing the editions of the Center. The Administration of DLKZ provided most favorable conditions for the Community members to attend the library, to make use of the

teaching and methodological manuals and of the other resources of the Center.

Of late, a considerable support to the activity of the center has been rendered from Germany through the German Embassy in Armenia.

The Community maintains contacts with the public organizations of the Russian Germans, the International Center for German Culture in particular. This includes exchange of information and of editions in the German language published in Russia; participation in seminars, where representatives of German public organization throughout CIS are usually invited.

With regard to the situation with German as a foreign language at schools, it has always been well provided with qualified teachers. Presently, it is important not to lose this basis, since from the beginning of the 90s, a tendency has been observed to cut down in the curriculum the number of German lessons, as well as of the classes which study German as a foreign language.

The problems the Community faces might be regarded as organizational and general ones.

The organizational are the problems of financing and of the lack of permanent premises.

The general are the problems of employment, medical service, military service, secondary and higher education.

The German Community of RA does not have any source of financing neither on behalf of the State, nor by any other organization. The Community is a non-profitable organization, the membership is free of due.

In our opinion, a State structure should be established responsible for the problems of the national minorities in Armenia. It is also desirable that the minorities have their representatives in the National Assembly. In the State budget, an Article should be specified for the needs of the national minori-

ties.

For the normal functioning of the national organizations, the Government should allocate from the State fund a building or individual premises.

To keep the young, as well as the national minorities (individuals of non-indigenous nationality) in Armenia, favorable conditions should be provided to receive secondary and higher education.

The measures to create such conditions might be as follows:

- opportunity to be taught at State schools and higher educational institutions not only in Armenian;
- allocation of privileged or free seats in State higher educational institutions for young people from the national communities;
- establishment of scholarships to promote the most gifted students from the midst of the national minorities;
- to admit students out of competition.

As for military service, it is suggested to consider the issue of non-participation of the recruits from national communities in the zones of battles, if such appear.

The issues of employment and free medical service might be at least partly solved provided international organizations from the countries, ethnic representatives of which live in Armenia, are involved. To draw the attention and interest of these organizations, the State could envisage privileges in taxation of those structures of the national communities, that perform charitable activity. Of course, the complete solution of these problems of the national minorities would be possible only when the problems of the population in Armenia taken as a whole are solved.

## THE POLES IN ARMENIA

Alla Kuzminskaya

*Vice-President of the Communion of The Poles  
in Armenia "POLONIA"*

In 1995, a small initiative group of the Poles living in Armenia decided to establish a Polish Community that would unite people of Polish blood willing to learn about the history, culture, religion of their forefathers, to know better their historical homeland, its modern culture, life, traditions, habits.

In 1996, the Community received legal status. The first group of the Poles who decided to come together involved 60 members. They were people who knew each other, contacted among themselves. Thus, the Communion of the Poles living in Armenia was formed, and it was named "Polonia".

The Polish people had for centuries waged wars against various States for the liberty of Poland. As a consequence, the borderline had been redone, and a great number of Poles found themselves out of the borders of their motherland. In fact, Poles live in all the countries all over the world. Everywhere the Poles form communities, and they predominantly have the same name - "Polonia".

In different times, the political events forced the Poles to emigrate. As a rule, the emigrants - representatives of the Polish intelligentsia: political figures, writers, poets, military men, scientists, state figures protesting against the expansionist actions of the neighboring States, for the liberation of the Polish State and nation - chose European countries.

The Poles in Armenia... Known are researches certifying the interest of the Armenians to their compatriots who, for centuries, have lived in Poland and united into Armenian societies in many spots of the country. Information of the "opposite" nature is but scarce. In what way did the Poles find themselves in the Armenian territory, what fate brought them to



these distant lands?

The history of Poland of the last centuries presents a line of endless divisions of the country among three States: Russia, Prussia and Austria. The first division took place in 1772. Austria did not participate at the second division (1793), being at war with France. The third time Poland was divided in 1795, following which Polish ruler Stanislaw August Poniatowski abdicated from the throne. In 1797, the great powers signed the last agreements, and the Polish kingdom quit to exist.

In 1807, Napoleon I established Warsaw principality on part of the Polish land. The Vienna Congress of 1814-1915 took up yet another division of Poland. On the most part of Warsaw principality, the Polish Kingdom was passed over to tsarist Russia. In 1815, Russian king Alexander I was crowned to the Polish Throne.

At these period, in different places all over the country, national-liberation rebellions broke out: under Tadeusz Kosciuszko in 1794; then in 1830-1831, 1846, 1848, 1863-1864. All of them were subdued. The participants of the rebellions were repressed, exiled out of Poland, into Russia's depths, to Siberia, to the outlying areas of the empire.

The story about the emergence of the Poles in Armenia might be allegedly related to the second quarter of the XIX century. The Poles are experienced warriors. Many of them served in the tsarist army, took part in the military actions in Transcaucasia, in Turkey. They married local Armenians girls. Many of them during the Genocide of 1915 ran to Russian Armenia and settled down here. This was one wave.

The second wave make the exiled, participants of the national-liberation movements for the restoration of the Polish State. In the Community, there are descendants of those Poles, who were deported for "spreading discord in tsarist army", for participation in rebellions.

The third wave is our not remote past and represents the division of Poland between the USSR and Germany prior to World War Two. The year of 1939 was marked by mass deportations of people, the military in particular, to Siberia and Kazakhstan. After the War, some of them moved to the Caucasus. In Armenia found themselves a large number of Poles evacuated during the War from the Western Ukraine - Lvov, Brest and other places. Specialists from other Republics of the former USSR, married to Polish wives, were coming to Armenia to work. Many Armenian men married Polish women.

In recent years, business trips abroad also added to the number of the Poles in Armenia. Young people, while working in Poland, manage to marry local girls; some Armenian girls were able to make their Polish husbands to love Armenia and stay here.

In Armenia, there are no places of compact residence of the Poles. The majority of the families-members of "Polonia" live in Yerevan. Poles with their families (predominantly mixed marriages) live also in the disaster zone - Gyumri, Spitak, Vanadzor. A small group of Poles lives in Echmiadzin. We are confident that Poles (mixed marriages) live in other places of Armenia, too, but until now we have not had the opportunity to find out their number in different regions. For that purpose, we need funds to go to the provinces; a more active information service through the Radio and TV, which, unfortunately, is not operative enough. Thus, we know that in Nagorno-Karabakh there live Poles in mixed families, and we intend some time in the future to study this issue and, possibility provided, set up the branch of "Polonia" there.

The Poles living in Armenia predominantly represent intelligentsia. They are physicians, teachers (this number prevails), economists, physicists, musicians, engineers in various fields, technical workers, lawyers. To our regret, the lack of jobs is not the only reason of their unemployment. The bad command of

Armenian (cannot perform clerical work in the Armenian language) is the other one.

For the two years of existence, the number of "Polonia"'s members has reached 210 in Yerevan and 100 in other regions of Armenia. Before "Polonia" was founded, information of this kind was not available, as even in the census data, the Poles are registered either Russians, or Ukrainians or Bielorusians (depending on where they were born and whether it was reasonable to be known as a Pole in war time). Concerning the mixed families, in most cases the children were considered Armenians, Russians, etc. after their fathers.

For the period our Community exists, none of its members expressed a wish to leave Armenia. There are two young families (Polish wives, Armenian husbands), who are willing to leave Armenia for the reason of poor material conditions, but for the time being they are in Yerevan, since there is no certainty whether the departure would be a correct choice. Besides, one should not forget that an Armenian husband is hard to break off his relationships, with the native land and the kindred.

We cannot be sure, however, that no one will ever wish to leave for the historic homeland if the social and material conditions do not improve. Especially as, of late, Poland has been taking measures to invite those, who wish to return to the homeland of the forefathers and to provide them with adequate working and living conditions.

There is another circumstance that can cause migration of the Poles. It is the necessity to have a good command of not only spoken, but also written Armenian (to do clerical work, to teach). Besides, children in mixed families, let alone pure Polish families, grew basically in Russian speaking surroundings, and nowadays it is, in fact, impossible for them to acquire education, particularly a higher education.

"Polonia " unites people of Polish blood. Their interest in

the homeland, its culture, language, history has been obviously increasing. Most of the Poles living in Armenia do not speak the language of their forefathers, but for the recent comers from Poland or from the areas formerly belonging to Poland (the Western Ukraine, Lvov, Brest, etc.). That the Poles in Armenia do not live in a compact community, is yet another reason for that. Eventually, almost all these families speak Russian.

"Wspulnota Polska", the Polish organization in Warsaw uniting all the Polish communities out of Poland, has responded to our request and suggested to send a Polish teacher to arrange classes for the membership of the Community. We, however, had had to temporarily refuse this assistance, since the Community does not even have a permanent office, needless to say we are not able to compensate the labor of the teacher and provide adequate living conditions.

Studying Polish is very important for the actual operation of the Community. The command of the language would provide the membership of "Polonia" with more opportunities to acquaint with culture, history and religion of the motherland.

One of the problems also worrying the Poles is that of education. Closing the Russian sections in almost all of the institutes and universities makes it impossible for very many young people to get a higher education. The more so as, the entrance examinations in the Armenian language require a level of knowledge hard to be overcome even by Armenian school-leavers.

"Polonia" tries to make use of every opportunity to familiarize its members with Polish culture: we arrange meetings dedicated to famous Polish musicians and writers. This year the world community celebrates "Mickiewicz's Year", and "Polonia" is planning three actions in honor of the great poet.

The scarcity of literature about Poland, its history, culture and art should be also noted here. The small number of books



we received last year from Warsaw are actually inaccessible for the majority of our members, because very few of us can read Polish.

A point of ultimate significance for the activity of "Polonia" would become the opening of the Consul Department in Armenia. This would help to settle many a problem. There is no information as to the time when diplomatic relations between Poland and Armenia at Embassy or Consulate level will be established.

The Communion of the Poles of Armenia "Polonia" is a charitable NGO, not financed by the State, neither does it receive any support from any other organization. "Polonia" does not have an office to work in. At the beginning, the board of the Community held its meetings in the apartment of the leaders of the Community. To conduct a general meeting or other events, we were compelled to find some contacts or acquaintances as we could not and cannot afford renting premises.

In 1997, the Association of the Assyrians of Armenia permitted us to utilize a room in their office, which we greatly appreciate. Now we have to leave the room we occupied as guests for a year, as it is to become a classroom for the Association to teach its members Assyrian. So we remain unsheltered.

Most of the members of "Polonia" are unemployed, all of us live in hard material and social conditions. In every family, there are children who do not get even the least of what they need. The expensive textbooks, paid classes etc. add to it.

In the Community, there are many retired, disabled people who need medical care. Under the existing circumstances, it is a problem of top priority, considering the expenses on treatment.

Proceeding from the above mentioned, we suggest that:

1. a State structure be established at the level of the



Government of RA to deal with the most up-to-date problems of the national minorities of Armenia;

2. in the State budget, an article on the national minorities be included;

3. the problem of premises to be provided from the State fund be settled considering our multiple appeals and their multiple promises. It would provide offices and a hall for cultural arrangements to all the communities, members of the Union of Nationalities. The hall is particularly important for the communities to come together to discuss the problems which are common for all of them, so our request is to allocate a building for the Cultural Center of the National Minorities of RA;

4. to prevent the brain drain from the Republic of Armenia (young people of other nationalities leaving the country), favorable conditions for their education at high school should be provided. This implies a number of measures that must be developed and implemented, beginning with the language of teaching and ending with preferential conditions for the admittance of the young people - representatives of other nationalities living in Armenia;

5. with regard to the military service, a number of issues concerning the national minorities should be considered, among them, the issue of non-participation of the recruits from the national minorities in the zones of military activities, supposing such occur;

6. the problem of medical care provided to the representatives of the national minorities be considered and solved, taking into account the fact that many families do not have any relations who, as it happens with the local population, can come to help in case of disease, surgical operation and other hard conditions.

## THE RUSSIAN COMMUNITY: "ODA"

*Galina Kulikova*

*President of the Society of Russian Culture ODA*

The Russian community as a form of self-organization and collective self-preservation has proved its appropriateness. The basic incentive for the Russian communities to unite was the disintegration of the Soviet Union - the tragedy that turned the Russians into a split nation. Saying "Russian people" we most often think of the Russian nation that has been formed by way of admitting other bigger and smaller nations, that consider themselves Russian in spirit, and never in struggle for the purity of blood.

We all are Russians inasmuch as we accept Russian culture like our native culture, we feel the connection with the Russian history and realize the responsibility for the future of Russia. The revival of the Russian community and of the communal spirit in its new quality - public-political and national-cultural unity of the adherents of Russian culture, despite the nationality, may help not only prevent the dismemberment of the nation, but also unite it on common cultural, ideological-moral and material grounds. On the other hand, the threat to the mutual accord in which for centuries lived the Russians and Armenians, the threat conditioned by the tragic events of deportation of the Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, in which action Russian troops took part, awakened the spirit of the Russians living in Armenia. At the meeting held in May, 1991 in Yerevan Stanislavsky Drama Theater, representatives of the Russian and Russian-speaking intelligentsia adopted an appeal, "Citizens of Russia!! What are we doing!". It was sent by special delivery to Moscow and read at the meeting in Manezh Square. Thereafter, the initiative group made preparations for the constituent meeting and developed the Draft

Charter of the Community. At the meeting held on June 9, 1991, it was decided to name it the "Society of Russian Culture of the Republic of Armenia 'ODA'". Information was published in the "Golos Armenii" (the "Voice of Armenia") newspaper. The name "ODA" bears both its original meaning - a solemn song of praise; and, besides, these are the first letters of the Russian for 'Unity of the Friends of Armenia'. On August 26, 1991 the society 'ODA' was registered at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia. The society integrated such branches as the Molokans' communities of the regional center of Kalinino (present name: Tashir) and of the neighboring villages of Mikhaylovka, Medovka, Saratovka, Vidovka, Stepanavan, as well as of Pushkino, Kuybyshevo, Kirovo, Maksim Gorky; of Hrazdan and Tzakhkadzor. Branches were founded in Abovyan, Hoktemberyan and the village of Privolnoye, too. The current number of the families registered in "ODA" Society is 5,300 families. As we consider the national composition, it is a Russian-Armenian society, in which there are representatives of twenty other nationalities. Each family has a card with the findings of the sociological analysis of every member of the family. In Yerevan, 10 regional subdivisions are founded with a curator and a task force in each. The Community is run by the Coordinating Council. The trends of activity are developed by the Council of Intellectuals.

The ongoing political and economic changes in the Republic set forth problems in the religious life of the society. By the time when "ODA" Society was founded, there was no Orthodox Church in Armenia. In Kanaker, the building of the regiment church built in the beginning of the XIX century by the Cossaks, later on turned into a Culture House, has been preserved. "ODA" applied to the authorities of Armenia, to Patriarch of Georgia Ilia and Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Aleksiy II with a request to restore the church. As a result, the Orthodox Church of "Holy Virgin's Cover" in

Kanaker functions since August 1991. This has been the first action of "ODA" Society having for its ultimate goal the preservation and affirmation of the traditions of Russian culture. The revival of the Orthodox religious spirit among the Russians in Armenia symbolizes the religious treasure of the Russian nation.

The second task of "ODA" Society is uniting the efforts of culture, science and industry workers to protect human rights and freedoms. "The Legal, Political and Moral Aspects of Settlement of Inter-Nationality Conflicts" - this was the official title of the Congress held in Yerevan in September, 1991. The initiative and successful progress of the Congress was feasible thanks to the unselfish zeal of the organizer - the Society of Russian Culture "ODA", -wrote the daily "Respublika Armenia" on October 1, 1991. Incidentally, the Russian people in Armenia were the first to raise their voice in defense of their brothers and sisters in Christ. An Appeal "To All and Everyone Who is Able to Feel the Pain of Loss", calling to convene a Congress on defense of the rights of the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh, was sent to every corner of the former USSR. The Congress adopted a Declaration, which suggested to carry out several important political and legal measures, among them - the recognition of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic declared on September 2, 1991, and the release of the hostages. The Congress also adopted a Resolution recognizing it as a public organization acting on permanent basis. Another Resolution was adopted on establishing a Historical-Legal Commission on the Problem of Nagorno-Karabakh. At the Congress, appeals were received to further setting free the peaceful citizens taken prisoner in Gyanja. The participants of the Congress were representatives of 67 regions of the former USSR and 8 foreign countries. The general attitude of the participants of the Congress could be put in two words, "Forgive, Armenia".



The activity of "ODA" Society on protection of human rights and freedoms involves: the press-conference in defense of the Russian Language held in the editorial office of the "Golos Armenii" newspaper and the Statement adopted on this issue; the open letter to the Prime-Ministers of Russia and Armenia about the exceptionally miserable state of the distinguished veterans of war and labor; the Appeal to the Minister of Social Welfare of RA; the Appeal "To All the Fellow Citizens Professing Kindness and Justice As Supreme Spiritual Values".

Located in the building of Stanislavsky Russian Drama Theater, "ODA" Society has always done its best to support the Theater through rendering humanitarian relief; reaching an agreement on funding a performance with the Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation; setting the interior of the Russian reception-room in the foyer, where the new productions are celebrated. Jointly with the Theater, we arrange such monumental events as: the Festival of People's Talents; the holidays "Vokhchuyn (Hello), Russia"; "May God Help Us", "Front-Line Soldiers, Pin Your Orders", and many others.

A great support is rendered to "ODA" Society by the International Congress of Russian Communities, the Council of Compatriots affiliated to the State Duma of RF.

"ODA" Society maintains close business and creative contacts with the Armenian diaspora in Russian Federation - in Moscow, Stavropol and Krasnodar territories, in Rostov province. The active members of Moscow Armenian Community help to provide the schools with textbooks, as well as assist in raising humanitarian goods.

On June 8, 1994, an Agreement on Joint Activity and Cooperation was signed with the Armenian Community "Erebuni" in the town of Stavropol. In accordance with this Agreement, which envisages various trends of cooperation, the members of "Erebuni" took active part in supplying the first



need food to "ODA" Society. President of the Community, I.G. Adikhanyan, contacted the manufacturers personally, arranged the lowest possible prices, allotted a vehicle, free of charge, to transport the food - it took several days - to the forming frontiers' column, for our humanitarian cargo eventually to reach Yerevan.

Those Members of "Erebuni" Community, who work for the Air Company IMAC", have twice helped us transport our cargo free of charge: 4 tons each time, and 2-3 attendants. In September, 1995, the Company arranged the flight and welcome meeting for a group of actors of the Russian Theater from Yerevan to Stavropol. The Council of "Erebuni" Community takes up the initiative to take care of rest, treatment and tours for the compatriots - members of "ODA" Society, who are in utter need.

The Armenian Community in Pyatigorsk (President Isakhanyan R. G.) rendered assistance in church items (candles, coal, books). It is also willing to render assistance in providing housing for the compatriots arrived to have a rest. For its part, "ODA" Society has taken up the delivery of textbooks for the Armenian schools in Pyatigorsk.

On the initiative of the Board of the Armenian Community in Nor-Nakhijevan (the former Rostov-on-Don), "ODA" appealed to the Ministry of Culture of RA to pass the statue of Empress Yekaterina II over to Nor-Nakhijevan.

The Armenian Cultural Society in Krasnodar (Chairman Melkumyants E. M.) organized on TV raising of warm clothes and humanitarian cargo (2 tons of sweets for the children for Christmas). All of this was delivered by car to Stavropol, whence the frontiers transported it to Yerevan.

The Russian and Russian-speaking citizens of Armenia do not encounter any difficulties neither based on nationality, nor on political orientation. Nevertheless, there are some problems from legal aspect.

Causes:

\* Discriminative nature of the Law on Language, which in no time has ousted the Russian language from every sphere of social life;

\* Absence of the Law on Citizenship;

\* Absence of representation of the Russian-speaking population in the power structures of the Republic of Armenia.

\* Lack of the elementary conditions for the activity of the public organizations: industrial-financial base, office premises, lack of contacts with Russia on account of the blockade.

The Russian and Russian-speaking citizens of Armenia are in wretched situation for the total unemployment caused by stagnation in economy, on the one hand, and by giving the Armenian language the status of the official language of the State, on the other. Negative effect has also the impossibility to set up contacts with Russia. During 7 years, we attempted to contact with Russian businessmen, but our efforts bumped into the deaf wall of Russian authorities.

One should particularly emphasize the situation in which veterans of the Great Patriotic War and of Labor are. They are not protected by the Government, their pensions are equaled to pensions of housewives, who have never worked in their life. Among the War veterans there are defenders of Moscow and Leningrad. Russia never supports them, which is nothing but immoral.

There are not any signs of support of the Orthodox Churches (they are three: in Yerevan, Vanadzor, in the village of Privolnoye) neither on the part of the authorities, nor on the part of the Moscow Patriarchy, in which jurisdiction the Orthodox Church in Armenia is.

Thus, let us formulate our problems, requests and suggestions:

1. to provide the Society with an office;
2. to consider the issue of the status of the Russian lan-

guage in the Republic of Armenia;

3. to render material support to the Orthodox Churches in Yerevan, Vanadzor and in the village of Privolnoye;

4. to provide with jobs at least the young (over two thousand unemployed aged between 18 and 35);

5. to consider the feasibility of the representation of the Russian-speaking population in the power structures of the Republic of Armenia;

6. to support the initiative of "ODA" Society to establish an All-National Foundation "The Outstanding People of Armenia";

7. to sponsor the reconstruction and equipment of the Russian House attached to Stanislavsky Russian Theater;

8. to provide the Molokani population of the Republic of Armenia with agricultural machinery and to cut down the taxes on earth;

9. to render Governmental assistance in the implementation of economic projects, business-plans and agreements on cooperation with Russian businessmen.

## **THE RUSSIAN COMMUNITY: "ROSSIYA"**

*Galina Chernousova*

*President of the Society "Rossiya" of the Republic of Armenia*

*Member of the Council of Compatriots at the  
State Duma of Russian Federation*

The history of contacts between the Russians and Armenians counts centuries. As long ago as in the XI century, the first Armenian settlement came into existence in Kiev Rus. In the course of time, Armenian villages emerged in Moscow, Mozdok, Astrakhan, Novgorod, Petersburg and other areas.

The relationships of the Russian and Armenian peoples are colorfully presented in lots of documentary and fiction literature, in journalistic and many other genres of material and spiritual culture.

Armenian-Russian historic relations were different, depending on the circumstances and times. Currently they are expanding, which is certified by the Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Support Between Russia and Armenia.

This document, undoubtedly, is a major contribution to the progress of Armenian-Russian relations and reflects the current level of the political will of the States, encompassing all the aspects of cooperation - politics, economy, defense, security, science, culture, education. The Agreement was ratified at State Duma of the Russian Federation and the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia.

The public organization "Rossiya" of RA did not emerge by chance. It was predetermined by a number of historical reorganizations that took place after the disintegration of the USSR and formation of free and independent States. Simultaneously, broken was the once single cultural-educational space. This complicated the situation of those citizens, who, despite the nationality, considered Russian their mother



tongue. The adoption of the "Law on Language" in Armenia, declaring Armenian the official language and prohibiting the use of the Russian language in clerical work, affected the system of public relations. The situation of the Russian-speaking population still worsened because of the closing of the Russian schools, Russian Sections at the higher and medium educational institutions. Of course, this turn of events proceeds from the necessity to unite the people into groups on national and language indications. Thus, in July, 1993, "Rossiya" Society was registered as public organization at the Ministry of Justice. It involves the dwellers of big industrial centers and other towns of Armenia - those, who arrived here to erect the industrial works, the Nuclear Plant Power, the Underground and other important objects of the national economy of the Republic. In the course of time, they settled down, received apartments, got accustomed to the Armenian surroundings. Apart from this, in Armenia there are compact settlements of the Molokans, who have lived here for over 160 years already. One should notice that in the Republic, the rights of the Russian population, which makes a little more than 1% of the total number of citizens of RA, were never violated in the past, nor are they violated now.

The Society comprises the sections of: education, external relations, sociological researches, culture, charitable activity, law, organization and economic, commerce, medicine, work with the young. Each of them acts in compliance with its profile, based on the Regulations and program confirmed at the highest assembly - the Central body of the Society. Its distinct structure, the high professionalism of the section leaders, the active attitude of the membership of the Society allowed "Rossiya" to gain ample experience in work, to make one of the leading public organizations of the Republic of Armenia.

Thus, having received an official status, the Society began its activity, the principal goal of which is uniting the Russian



and Russian-speaking population living in the territory of Armenia to implement the civil, economic, social, cultural rights, freedoms and legal interests. The range of tasks of the Society includes: settling the problems of employment and education; arranging cultural, charitable and humanitarian events; rendering assistance to the unemployed disabled, sick, and elderly people, orphans and other socially dependent strata of population. For its almost five year old history, the Society has a lot of accomplishments.

Relations with the other Russian organizations in Armenia and in other Transcaucasian Republics have been established. The Russian communities in the region founded a Coordinating Council, which has adopted a document of primary importance - an Appeal to the Heads and Parliaments of the Transcaucasian States - calling to promote peace and calm in the region. Among the issues of top priority are the efforts to consolidate the friendly relationships between Armenia and Russia. An evidence of it is establishment and development of direct contacts with the Parliament, Government and State structures of both of the States, which allows that the specialists of the Society take part in the economic projects of RF in the territory of Armenia.

"Rossiya" incorporates sections and branches situated in 23 regions of Armenia. The biggest organization is that in Yerevan; it encompasses district branches. The Society is admitted into the "International Federation of Peace and Accord" and the "World Center of the Slavs".

Plenty has been accomplished to stop the migration of the Russian population from Armenia. In this respect, quite important is to expand the network of Russian educational institutions: to open a Russian lyceum, Slavic schools, Russian University of Armenia. To this end, the Society has developed curricula, feasibility factors and suggestions and submitted them to the Governments of RF and RA. Still, we cannot claim

that the migration has been halted. The following example sounds convincing: until 1991, 52,000 Russians lived in Armenia. Nowadays the number has been lessened to 16,000. Apart from the impossibility to get education in the mother tongue, the departure of the Russians from Armenia was urged by the hardest social-economic conditions, unemployment, the closing of a number of industrial enterprises where Russians were employed.

To recreate the atmosphere and improve the state of the Russians, we suggest:

- \* to make amendments in the Law on Language; to resolve the problem of the status of the Russian language;

- \* to employ the representatives of the Russian population in the power structures;

- \* to restore the Russian day care centers;

- \* to resolve the problem of the Russian Secondary School;

- \* to legally establish that for the insufficient knowledge of the Armenian language people cannot be denied jobs at any of the State, scientific, industrial and other enterprise and company;

- \* to facilitate the foundation of financial-industrial groups, joint and other ventures and organizations, and forms of economic cooperation within the framework of inter-governmental agreements on commercial and economic cooperation;

- \* to support the adoption of the Tax and Customs Law to stimulate the establishing of industrial and commercial contacts between the objects of the Republic of Armenia and the Russian Federation;

- \* to arrange the Russian program "Summing Up the Week" on TV;

- \* to settle the problem of the Russian Cultural Center;

- \* to allot premises to the secondary "Slavic" school.

## THE UKRAINIAN SOCIETY

*Romania Yavir*

*President of the Charitable Foundation "The Ukraine"*

The history of appearance of the first Ukrainian settlement in the territory of Armenia relates to the middle of the XIX century. Striving to increase the number of the military settlements, playing a considerable role in the strategic plans of Russia, the decision was made to resettle the "Malorussian Cossaks" in Transcaucasia.

In 1853, 200 Cossak families were moved from Poltava and Chernigov provinces to Gori district of Tiflis province, where they dispersed in different villages - Daby, Bakuriani, Sadgery, etc. - parts of Borzhomi estate. The resettlers were to pay taxes in favor of Borzhomi estate, which weighed a heavy burden on the Cossaks' shoulders. In search of a better life, they sought to move to other areas, and by 1860, only 34 of 200 Ukrainian families remained in Borzhomi gorge.

In the spring of 1858, 26 families (157 people in total) left the village of Tskhisjvari for the Lori steppe, where they were allotted 118 dessiatinas (measure of land = 2.7 acres) for farming, meadows and pastures opposite the Lori fortress. This is the way the village of Nikolayevka came forth.

In 1860s, the number of the villagers increased by 15 Ukrainian families from Bakuriani.

The property of the Ukrainians was scanty: a few heads of cattle, the necessary clothing and some wooden tableware. The resettlers were compensated for the houses left in Borzhomi estate, and allotted 150 quarters of wheat out of the reserve of the village of Privolnoye right on the arrival - for the summer working season.

Not only Ukrainian peasants were settling down in Nikolayevka, but also "fugitives", differing from them in temper,

nature and habits. The Governor's characteristic, handed to them, reads, "God-fearing and devout, quiet, even - might it be said - gloomy and dismal, thrifty, not sociable, revere home..."

They chiefly cultivated lands and bred cattle; among them there also were carpenters, coopers, smiths.

The Ukrainians have preserved their traditions and habits of old times, like singing Yuletide charols.

In 1886, 337 people (45 farmsteads) lived in the village, in 1917 - 524 (59 farmsteads).

The expedition activities revealed the last names of the pioneer settlers - Nagoga, Jula, Barabash, Globa, Alekseenko, etc. Incidentally, some of these names still occurred among the Ukrainians in Borzhomi.

Thanks to the recollections of the elderly, some of the villagers found their relatives in Kobelyak region of Poltava province, and Ukrainian guests began to visit Armenia.

The old people told also that the resettlers had long dwelt in dug-outs before they were able to build houses, designed and furnished much to the native traditions.

In 1970s, there was a 'long living' house in the village, that completed 100 years. The wooden walls from outside and inside were covered with mud and white-washed. The floor was earthen, solidly rammed, covered with a thick layer of mud and hay. The hay roof was tiled at the end of 1960. Around the peasant's house, as usual, there was a small mound of earth. In front of the house there was a garden.

For long, in Nikolayevka there was no church, and the peasants used to attend the Orthodox Church of the village of Jelal-oghly (the Russian one; there were Armenian churches, too). At the end of 1890s, only a small wooden church was built and named after St. Nikolay.

On the 9th of May on the old style, Russian and Armenian guests from the neighboring villages used to come to Nikolayevka to celebrate the Patron Saint's day. After holding

the church service, tables were laid in the square, the treatment being purchased on the money raised among the villagers. Thereafter, the festivity went on in the houses.

Until recent times, the St. Nikolay Church was operating, but after the earthquake it is closed for the accident risk.

The second wave of resettlers from the Ukraine came over at the period when Armenia was integrated into the Soviet Union, and an intensive advancement of the industry began in the country. At that very time, a big flow of Ukrainians, predominantly, specialists in various fields, scientists, teachers rushed to Armenia. Not the least role in it played the Soviet Army: Armenian soldiers serving out of Armenia, married Ukrainian women and came back home with them after the completion of the military service.

The Ukraine and Armenia are countries with century-long common history. It is known that as back as in the XI century, resettlement of the Armenians to Rus (the old name of the Ukraine) took place. The inflow of Armenian refugees in the Ukrainian lands was particularly intensive in the XIII-XIV centuries following the Mongol invasion and downfall of the Armenian Cilician kingdom.

At the mentioned period, over 20 Armenian settlements came to life in the Ukraine. Towns of Lvov, Kamenets-Podolsky, Snyatin, Stanislav, Brody and others became economic and cultural centers of Armenian life.

Our countries have always cooperated and supported each other, exchanged specialists in various fields of economy, industry and culture.

When the Chernobyl disaster befell, the Armenian specialists reached out their hands to 'calm down' the nuclear monster. After the earthquake in 1988, Ukrainian builders came to support Armenia. They erected the Taron district in Vanadzor. They are well remembered in many spots of Armenia, the same as the Armenian builders - in Chernobyl zone (in the



town of Slavutich).

On the dreadful days of the Armenian pogroms in Sumgait and Baku, many Armenian refugees found shelter and compassion in the Ukraine. Not accidentally, the first Armenian church in the former Soviet territory was built in Odessa.

Nowadays, when the Ukraine and Armenia obtained independence, it is desirable that all the good, achieved by our nations through centuries, be multiplied; economic and cultural ties restored; and that our diasporas prove mutually helpful in the process.

The restoration of the bilateral contacts of the Armenian and Ukrainian peoples was confirmed by the first visit of President of the Ukraine L.D. Kuchma in May, 1996 to Independent Armenia, and the visit of President of Armenia L.A. Ter-Petrosyan to the Independent Ukraine in 1997. In the aftermath, the Embassies were opened in both the countries, which signifies renewal of political, economic and cultural contacts.

The history of the close of the XX century is still going on, and its pages will be written down by our children and grandchildren.

The Ukrainians in Armenia are dispersed all over the territory: Abovyan, Vayq, Stepanavan, Kapan, Hoktemberyan, Hrazdan, Charentsavan, Echniadzin, Sevan, Akhuryan, Ararat, Masis, Meghti, Vardenis Regions and in Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, Dilijan cities. One may come across Ukrainian settlements anywhere, no matter whether it is an industrial or agricultural region.

The research data show that 50% of the Ukrainians have acquired higher education (physicists, chemists, aviators, printing and publishing workers, textile workers, shoemakers, teachers, pedagogues). Presently employed are less than 10% only. As most of the enumerated specialists arrived in Armenia in the 30-40s, half of them are currently pensioners,

elderly people. 30% of the Ukrainians are specialists with medium technical education. The rate of their employment is still lower, and not to specialty. The rest are workers with no jobs, students and schoolchildren.

According to the 1989 census, 8,341 Ukrainians live in Armenia: 3,000 of them live in Yerevan, 5341 - in the regions and regional centers.

Our Society did not intend to take the census of the Ukrainian population (it is the priority of the Government), but to interview target groups to identify the social groups and the rate of employment of the population as to date. We'd like to notice that the data given do not reflect the real situation, although on the research data, less than half of the Ukrainians, no more than 3,500, stay in Armenia.

Causes of departures of the Ukrainians are numerous. Objective or subjective, they have never been forced.

The main causes are:

1. Migration of the Ukrainians started with the disintegration of the USSR. It was the leaving of the military.

2. The earthquake of 1988. The research findings certify that in the earthquake zone, 30% of the previous number of the Ukrainians left. We may also state that the number of the representatives of our nationality decreased not only because of the migration conditioned by social hardships (lack of dwelling and subsistence), but also for human losses.

3. Not the least cause of the migration became the blockade of Armenia: long absence of electricity, closed industrial objects, no jobs.

4. The adoption of the Law on Language was followed by yet another stream of migration, particularly of intelligentsia (teachers, pedagogues and scientists).

5. The socially unprotected poor, not having any relatives in Armenia, left the country. This factor is important enough, as when they needed help, they were not supported by their rel-

atives.

The Ukrainians living in Armenia have never been oppressed on nationality basis: regardless of the political orientation of Armenia, there has never been any discrimination or violation of their rights, provisioned by the Constitution of the Republic. We will mention only one omission on the part of the Armenian Government, that is - keeping the national minorities away from the political life of the country. Up until today, not a single nationality representative has been employed in the local power structures, the Parliament, the Government or in President's apparatus.

The uneasy realities of today set forth national problems, the solution of which is sometimes postponed for a long time. This issue is particularly actual, as Armenia is just going to enter the European Council, and such details can halt the process of admittance.

In Armenia, like in other States of the former USSR, a process of democratic changes is under way. The awakening of self-consciousness in every individual is natural in this period; everyone may ask himself, "Who am I?". It is an open secret that the Soviet ideology has managed to annihilate the awareness of everyone's own 'self'.

The democratic reforms in Armenia have promoted the uniting of the Ukrainians in Armenia. Our Society was able to unite the Ukrainians living in Yerevan, as well as in all the big cities and regions. In Gyumri, Vanadzor and Hrazdan branches are set up.

One should notice that the years of life within the USSR facilitated the assimilation of our population. Many Ukrainians in Armenia (70-80%), the young in particular, do not speak Ukrainian. And the assimilation was proceeding through Russian, not Armenian. At that time, it sufficed to know Russian - the common language for all of the Soviet Republics. Our primary duty is to restore the knowledge of the

mother tongue among the Ukrainians, and to study Armenian as it is the official language of the Republic. We handle this problem with the help of:

1. the "Dnipro" newspaper: the materials under the heading "The Ukrainian Language" help to learn the mother tongue;
2. the Sunday school, for which textbooks and manuals for studying Ukrainian have been purchased (the classes at school are, unfortunately, stopped for the lack of classrooms).

Significant advancements are observed in the cultural life of the Ukrainians of RA. Having united, the Ukrainians have partly restored and go on restoring their traditional holidays, habits, art. In the Cultural Center (operates in rented premises), groups of Ukrainian song are organized in Yerevan and in Vanadzor - named "Verbychenka". The "Dnipro" newspaper is issued in Ukrainian and Armenian once a month.

Recently, the editors of the "Dnipro" assign a column to the national organizations - members of the Union of Nationalities - that do not have their own printing agency.

Issued is also the "Orient" - an advertising supplement to the "Dnipro".

Ukrainian programs, based on the National Radio, are broadcast in Yerevan and Vanadzor.

To better organize the cultural-educational life, the Ukrainian community needs a building for the Cultural Center. It would solve the problem of allowing facilities to the Sunday school, the Ukrainian library, the newspapers, the various hobby groups: of people's art, songs, dances, of reviving the national holidays.

It is also necessary to provide free in-patient and out-patient medical service and drugs.

To sum up, the suggestions of the Ukrainian community are as follows:

1. To resolve the problem of participation of the nationalities in the State structures of RA: in the Government,

Parliament and President apparatus.

2. To resolve the problem of funding the "Dnipro" newspaper, as it has been done in the Ukraine for the newspaper of "Aragatz" diaspora.

3. To deliver the national public organizations from taxes and customs duties, since they all, in fact, operate on charitable basis.

4. In the Law on Public Organizations, to necessitate the indication of the country where the national organizations belong, i.e., the Republic of Armenia.

5. In the schools in Yerevan to choose a class for studying Ukrainian at the State level.

6. For the applicants, to allot a certain number of preferential seats.

7. To ensure that the recruits to the National Army of Armenia do not serve in the zones of military operations (for instance, in Karabakh).

Apart from this, it is desirable that the representatives of the national minorities be granted double citizenship, and in their passports the line 'Nationality' be added.



## **SUGGESTIONS ON THE EXTENSION OF GUARANTEES OF THE RIGHTS OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN ARMENIA**

Armenia is a multinational State, where together with the Armenians, live more than twenty nationalities. They are - Assyrians, Georgians, Germans, Greeks, Jews, Kurds, Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Yezidiz, and other ethnic groups, the total of about 3% of the population of Armenia.

In Armenia they have found their second homeland and, as far as possible, take part in the progress of economy, science and culture of Armenia. They, like Armenians, endure the difficulties proceeding from the current social-economic conditions. Yet, along with it, the national minorities have their own problems, connected with their legal status, participation in the State and political life of Armenia. The reasons for concern are the preservation of the national language, education, traditions, national culture, i.e., the preservation of the national identity.

The national minorities of Armenia welcomed the statement of the newly elected President of the Republic of Armenia Robert Kocharyan, made at the inauguration ceremony, in which President particularly noted that Armenia must be native home both for the Armenians and the national minorities living in Armenia. The measures taken in this direction will promote the protection of the rights of the national minorities, the consolidation of their friendship with the Armenian people, the development of democracy and reinforcement of the internal political stability of RA.

The basic requirements of the national minorities are as follows:

1. To adopt the Law on National Minorities to legally determine the status of the national minorities and to guarantee their right in compliance with the International norms.
2. In the Law on Elections, to ensure the representation of the national minorities in the National Assembly of RA, allotting them 2-3 deputy seats. As is known, the national minorities currently are not represented in the National Assembly of RA.
3. To involve the national minorities into the State,

Government, Legal structures, into the local Administrations.

4. To establish a Council on Nationality Issues - a consultative body affiliated to President, involving in its work representatives of the national minorities.

5. To ensure that the State promotes the development of education in national languages, of culture of the national minorities of RA, as well as of the preservation of their national identity.

6. To create favorable conditions for furthering the mass media of the national minorities. To consider it expedient to allot time on National TV to programs about the national minorities.

7. To give the Union of Nationalities an appropriate facility for the Cultural Center.

8. In the State budget to envisage funding for the advancement of the education system and culture of the national minorities.

1. Conflict Resolution Center of Armenia
2. Union of Nationalities of Armenia
3. Assyrian Association "Atur"
4. Public Organization of the Greeks of Armenia "Patrida"
5. Georgian Community "Iveria"
6. Jewish Community of Armenia
7. Public Organization of the International Foundation of Yezidis
8. Board of the Council of Kurdish Intelligentsia
9. Foundation of Support and Promotion of Russian Compatriots of Armenia
10. Cultural Society of Germans of RA
11. Communion of Poles of Armenia "Polonia"
12. Society "Rossiya"
13. "ODA" Society of Friends of Armenia
14. Charitable Foundation "The Ukraine"