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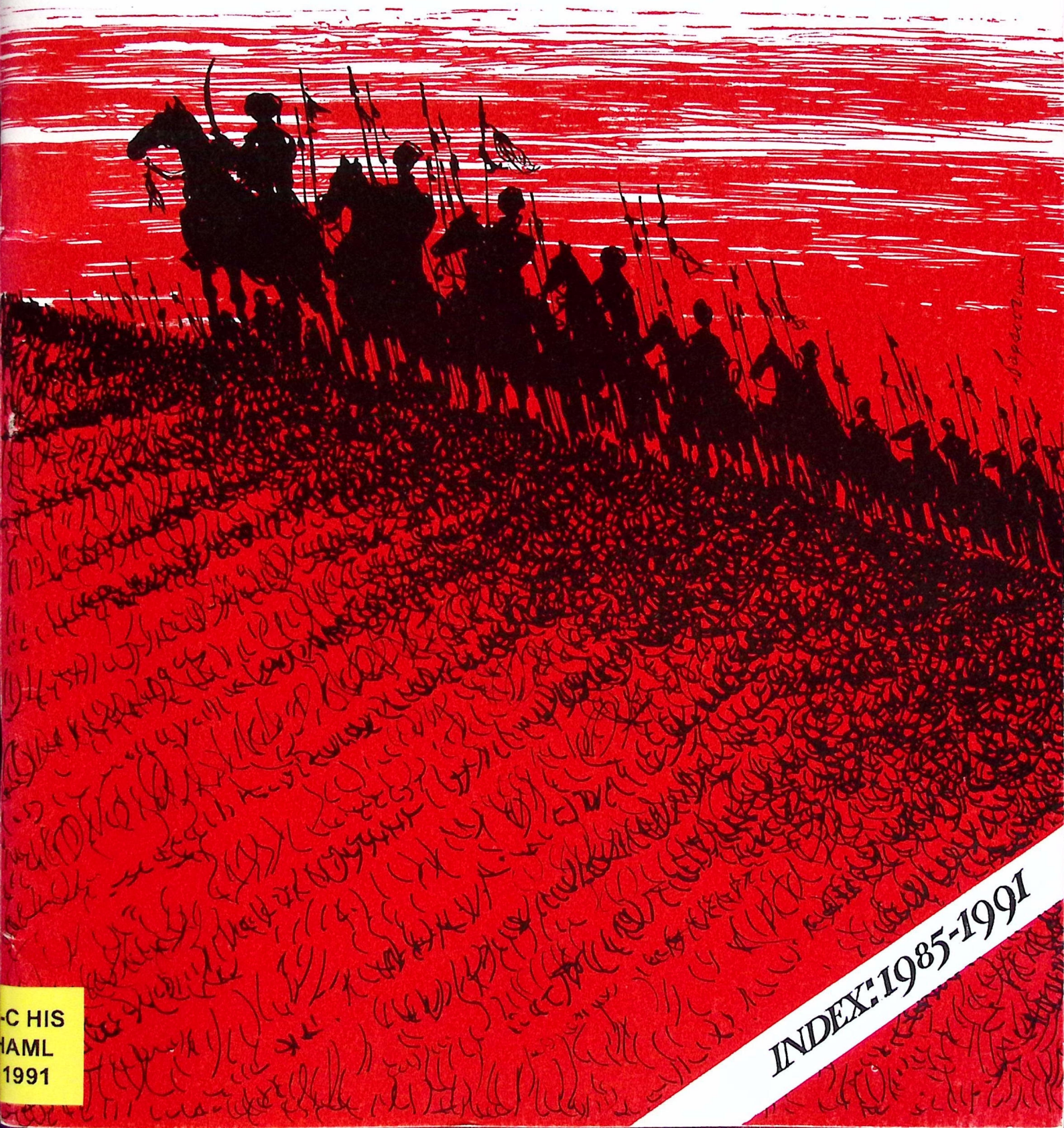

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Armenians in Britain

by Susan Pattie

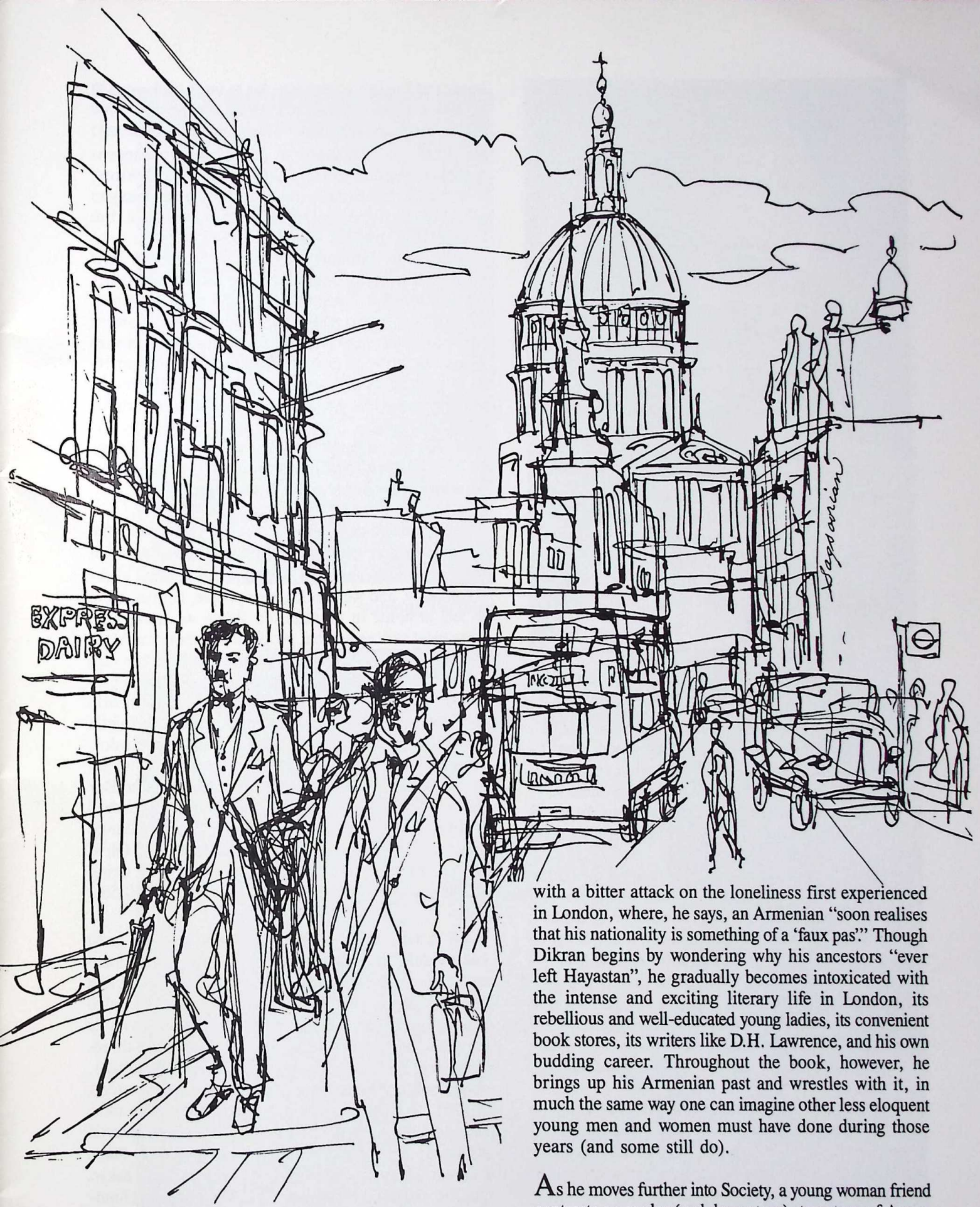
Armenians visiting from sunnier, brighter parts of the diaspora often wonder aloud just how their friends and relatives manage in Britain. The weather is often grey and cool, the people restrained and over-polite. Armenians are adaptable, but why not live where a lemon tree will grow and people shout when they're happy? Why not? "Well," say some of their kinfolk who have settled in England, "this is where we came and we have gotten used to it." Others are more positive, especially about England's attractions and list the many opportunities available in London, particularly in the fields of communication, education, finance, and the arts. The vast green parks, the antique buildings, the people, all have a quiet charm, as newcomers gradually discover.

Though Armenians have been living in Great Britain for centuries, only in the last thirty or forty years have their numbers grown large enough to support the numerous clubs, organizations, and activities thought to be the hallmark of a bona fide Armenian community. In the mid-19th century Armenians began gathering in and around Manchester, facilitating textile trade with their home companies in the Ottoman Empire; by 1870, an Armenian church had been built. Manchester Armenians were at the height of their prosperity between 1875 and 1912 when there were as many as eighty Armenian firms in the area. At the same time a smaller number of Armenians were working in London, in trading and banking.

With successive wars and deportations in the homelands, they began to look on England as a more permanent base and when news of famines and later massacres of Armenians reached Manchester and London, relief funds were raised and steps were taken to lobby the press and members of Parliament in order to help. Among those working on publications such as *Ararat: A Searchlight on Armenia* and speaking with Gladstone and others, was Aram Raffi, son of the celebrated writer.

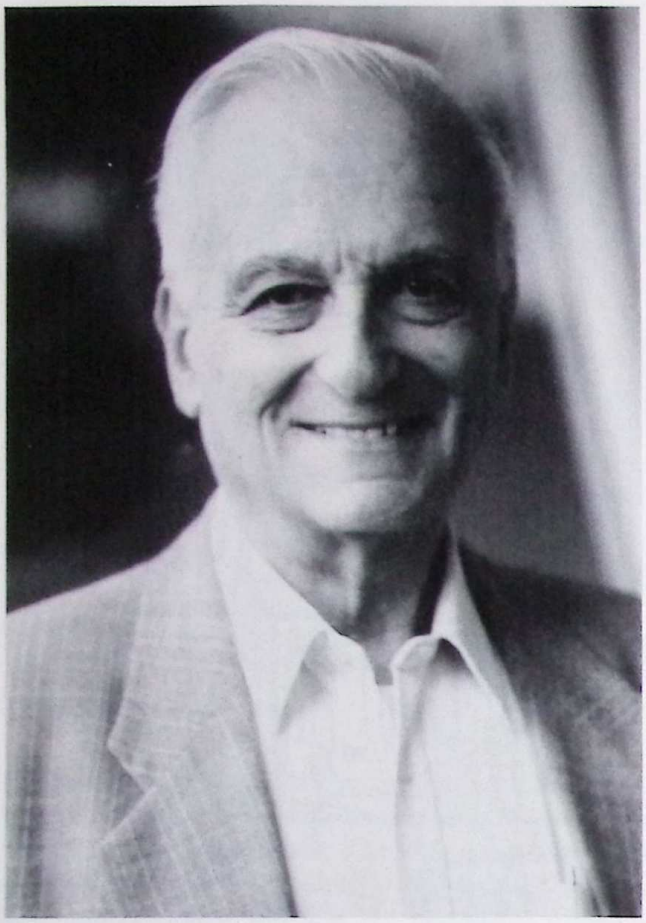
Later, in the 1950s, as the British Empire ended and alliances changed, more Armenians began settling in England, from India, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, and Cyprus. Their numbers were still relatively small throughout the '60s but rapidly increased with successive waves of emigrants from Lebanon an Iran—and continuing from Cyprus. Today the U.K. Armenian population is estimated at some 10,000 or more people, mostly living in the London area, though there remains a small, active community in Manchester. They work in a variety of fields and some have become well—known outside Armenian circles, while at the same time a number of women and men work hard within the community, keeping the motor of community activities well-oiled and ticking over.

In 1920 Michael Arlen published *The London Venture*, an autobiographical account of his early residence in the great city, having been raised near Manchester as Dikran Kouyoumdjian, son of a rather well-to-do family in the business of textiles. Passages concerning his Armenian identity give insights which are still resonant today, however quaint his descriptions of London society may seem. Dikran, as he is called in the text, begins



with a bitter attack on the loneliness first experienced in London, where, he says, an Armenian "soon realises that his nationality is something of a 'faux pas'." Though Dikran begins by wondering why his ancestors "ever left Hayastan", he gradually becomes intoxicated with the intense and exciting literary life in London, its rebellious and well-educated young ladies, its convenient book stores, its writers like D.H. Lawrence, and his own budding career. Throughout the book, however, he brings up his Armenian past and wrestles with it, in much the same way one can imagine other less eloquent young men and women must have done during those years (and some still do).

As he moves further into Society, a young woman friend contrasts a popular (and derogatory) stereotype of Arme-



Haig Oundjian

nians with his own appearance. "But you are quite English and civilized really, aren't you? This "compliment" is perhaps most telling and persistent even today. "Civilized" and "English" are still synonymous in many minds, including many Armenian ones. And, as Arlen points out, "restraint" a characteristic for which Armenians are not noted, is the cornerstone of that particular civilization.

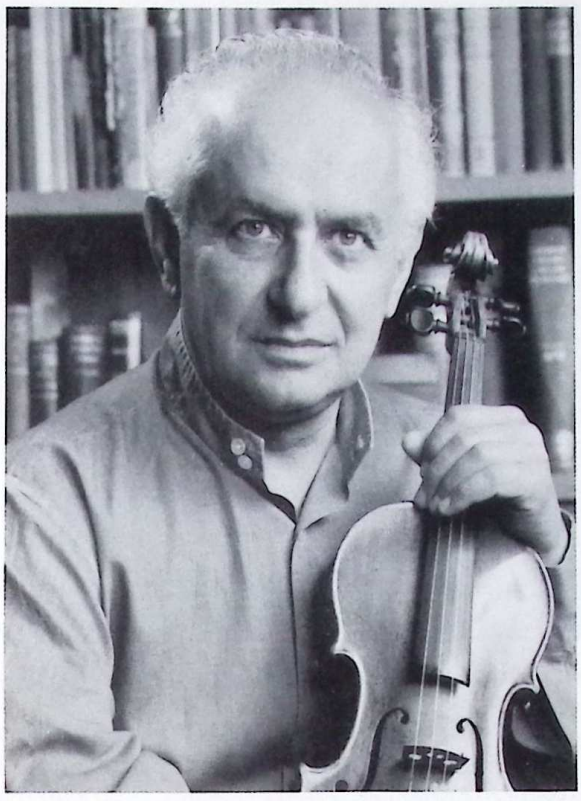
While Michael Arlen went on to fame as the author of *The Green Hat,* his family and many others remained in the north. Like the smaller number of London Armenians, those in Manchester were a combination of Armenians in "plus-fours and golf caps" as Michael J. Arlen [the son] describes them in *Exiles,* youngish Armenians trying their best to find a way into the glittering social class they had been educated to join, and older people who felt most comfortable with other Armenians and who wished to build a community.

Arlen, the son, mentions that Armenians at this time strove to be invisible—or felt invisible. This same word is mentioned by many others: Armenians and other minorities should be invisible if they want to get ahead in England, they say. Others are not so sure. Is it really possible to be invisible in a society where the slightest nuance of English accent is a clue to one's background? Each new wave of immigrants criticizes those who came before in a litany, variations of which are familiar around the diaspora, "They are so anglicized!" It happens without trying and yet there remains a distinctive Armenian presence in Britain, undoubtedly accomodating to all those "civilized, restrained" folk around them, but quite visible to those who choose to look.

Krikor and Zarouhie Shahbenderian, now in their eighties, are fondly described as the mother and father of the Manchester community. Krikor arrived as a young boy with his father, helping him in his cotton business while for long years the rest of the family remained in Egypt. He grew up in Manchester but Zarouhie arrived as a young woman and remembers the long process of learning English, mistaking advertising billboards for train station signs. Manchester in those days was difficult, she says: dirty air, terrible fogs, no central heating, no friends. But gradually things have changed and lately, even the weather seems to be improving.

Their friends recount the many years that the Shahbenderians have served on the Church Board, in the Ladies Club, helping to organize activities in the community, and welcoming new people, helping them to feel at home in Manchester. When we spoke both were most concerned that people learn about the Manchester community, not about themselves. They are very proud that the Ladies Club, founded in 1908, was preceded by a literary club in 1898 and that today nearly all young women and men go on to university (while a very small percentage of all British young people do). They also mentioned many other "Mancunians" whom they thought should be remembered, such as Arto Der Haroutunian, culinary author, poet, and artist (earlier profiled in *Ararat*); Dr. Roger Altounyan, inventor of Intal and the Spinhaler (both for asthma); and Olive Zorian, a well-known violinist who played in a string quartet and in the Julian Bream Consort in the 1940-50s.

Like Arlen, Zorian gravitated to London, the great cultural magnet, where a number of other professional and amateur Armenian musicians were also active and Felix Aprahamian, musicologist and critic, was also gaining recognition. Haig Oundjian, who had given up the piano as a profession in favor of becoming three-time British Open Champion in Fives (handball), remembers accompanying Zorian in a benefit concert in 1940. "A lovely woman with a great sense of humor, who died far too early (of cancer)." Oundjian entered the family rug business, leaving his son Peter to make a career in music, now as first violin in the Tokyo Quartet, based in New York City. The younger Oundjian studied for a short time with one of his father's



Manoug Parikian

friends, Manoug Parikian, who had arrived in London in 1936 to study violin at Trinity College. Born in Adana and raised in Cyprus, Parikian went on to lead the Philharmonia Orchestra, teach at the Royal Academy of Music, and play as a soloist and in a piano trio until his sudden death in 1988.

Another of Parikian's students was his nephew, Levon Chilingirian, first violin in the London-based Chilingirian String Quartet. Chilingirian, born in Cyprus, arrived in London at age twelve with very little English and anxious to fit in with his new schoolmates. Violin practice was abandoned for soccer for a happy nine months until a visit from his great-uncle and original teacher, Vahan Bedelian, from Cyprus. Bedelian ordered his own nephew, Parikian, to find a violin for the boy and soon afterwards Chilingirian entered the junior department of the Royal College of Music. He continued in the senior school where he received a number of prizes and met the future members of the Quartet among his fellow students. Since the Quartet's formation in 1971, they have performed throughout the world and made some twenty recordings, including one of Armenian music on the Positively Armenian label, produced by Shahan Arzruni. They often play one of the folk song



Levon Chilingirian



The Vartoukian family Haigouhie (Harp); Sonia (piano); Rita (flute); Krikor (strings).

arrangements by Komidas-Aslamazian as an encore after concerts and these pieces were televised by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in January 1990. Though he is immersed in a mostly non-Armenian professional world, Chilingirian has also made two BBC radio broadcasts of Armenian violin and piano music with pianist Clifford Benson.

Other professional Armenian musicians in London include Garine Georgian (cello) and Seta Taniel (piano) while in the next generation is a whole family full of gifted musicians, the Vartoukians. When the four children first played in public in 1985, the eldest, Haigouhie Louise, was thirteen and the youngest, Krikor, four. Their sisters Sonia and Rita joined them, playing their own arrangements of Armenian music with harp, flute, piano, cello, and voice, giving great enjoyment to their audiences. Each of the young people play several instruments and Sonia has received a scholarship to the junior department of the Royal College of Music to develop her exceptional talent.

Their parents, Krikor and Ani, have encouraged the children in more than one field, however, while also trying to instill an interest in their Armenian background. In their regular school studies, the children consistently place at the top of their class and Haigouhie is now working on a degree in philosophy, economics and politics at Oxford University. All four have attended the Kevork Tahtaian Armenian Sunday School in London and speak Armenian at home with their parents and two aunts, one a formar A-level examiner in Armenian language. Loris Tjaknavorian, presently conductor of the Yerevan Symphony Orchestra, lived in London for several years during the 70's and 80's and recorded for Victor Records, at which time he organized the festival, "Music Armenia."

The Tahtaian School was formed in 1978 and is blessed with an indefatigable headmistress, Mrs. Anahid Khazariantz. Born in Iran, like Tjaknavorian, Anahid is a trained librarian and has had a variety of voluntary



Anahid Kazarian

jobs, but feels she has found her real calling at the Tahtaian. Beneath a calm and elegant exterior is an energetic and well organized dynamo who guides the school committee and staff through its Armenian language and history curriculum and, equally important, fundraising activities. Because of the makeup of the London community, the Tahtaian provides paired classes of Eastern and Western Armenian at every level, so that families have a choice, the school serving about two hundred students each year.

Among the Tahtaian teachers are many working women who give up one of their few free days to teach, including one journalist who must arrange a regular substitute to accomodate her erratic life. Ani Manoukian King-Underwood is a producer at the BBC, the London AIM correspondant, and does frequent freelance work. She researches news around the Near East, Armenia and Karabagh, and translates for other BBC personnel, using her knowledge of some seven languages. Recently this latter work took her to Tunisia for a midnight interview with Yasser Arafat.

Born in Beirut, Manoukian came to London in 1967 to study languages and economics and found there were a lot of things other students knew about living that she had to learn very quickly. Coping with a sudden increase in social freedom, learning the day-to-day language and British humor, all were a challenge and when she began to enjoy it she realized she had become part of the British



Ani Manoukian King Underwood



Nairi Sahakian

community. "I wanted to adapt", she says, "because I believe you have to become part of the host society; you can't stand on the fringes. But that doesn't mean you reject or lose your original "Armenian-ness". It just means you have better tools to cope with the problems of schizophrenia."

A number of other U.K. Armenians have careers in the media, often using their knowledge of languages and experience of living in the Near East. These include freelancer Eve Dadrian and retired Reuters bureau chief, Shahe Guebenlian. Authors, scholars and translators active and working in Britain include M. Chahin, Hoosag Gregory, Mischa Kudian, Taqui Altounyan, Khatchadour and Hovhannes Pilikian (who has contributed poetry, fiction, and critical essays to *Ararat* and who directed plays on the West End) Nouritza Matossian, Vrej Nercessian, and others.

Those who have read *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation, The Minority Rights Groups Report* on Armenians, or any of the numerous articles and reviews authored by Christopher J. Walker will not be surprised to see him included in an article on Armenians in Britain. Long numbered as an "honorary" Armenian, Walker has devoted long years to research and writing about Armenian history and was recently awarded the AGBU Garbis Papazian Award for his work and dedication.

Walker grew up in south London and studied at Oxford University where he took an honors degree in Philosophy and Psychology. Though he is known as an historian today, these fields still inform his scholarship. "Philosophy gave me an interest in language," he says,



Taqui Altounyan in front of a water color of the family home in Aleppo painted by her mother.

"one which leads me to explore hidden political meanings within historical texts." His motivation stems also from a desire "to find out *why* what happened happened and that means first finding out *what* happened."

Walker urges young Armenian scholars to undertake research using primary sources, to learn the necessary languages and find the original words of the best eye witnesses. "Inaccuracy and exagerration hinder a case. Quietly spoken accuracy, expressed in a rational, convincing and modern way is the way to get the matter across." He is particularly concerned that "Armenians modernize their thought and use of the language of today. That means connecting the Armenian cause to issues of human rights and democracy, not treating it in a vacuum."

Human rights are also key words for Misak Ohanian, born in Cyprus, who for many years felt frustrated at a gap he perceived in the services offered by the traditional Armenian organizations. He gradually built up The Center for Armenian Information and Advice, a charity based in west London and supported by local government funds, which looks after the needs of the community's most vulnerable members: the elderly, the poor, the infirm. Ohanian has learned the fine art of successful grant application and the office now pays four members of staff as well as relying on volunteers to help carry out its programs. The staff work in close contact with other ethnic groups, lending each other support and ideas.

One purpose of the office is to make Armenians fully aware of their local rights and opportunities as British citizens or residents and the staff gives regular counseling on health and welfare programs available. At the same time, Ohanian is anxious to make the British people take note of the Armenians living among them and invites representatives of the local government to attend their programs, sending them regular updates of the Center's activities.

Another person who has become adept at garnering publicity for Armenians in Nairi Sahakian, artistic advisor and publicity director of The New Academy Gallery in London. Sahakian, whose husband, Armen, is head of the Armenian Community Church Council of Great Britain, was born in Iran, raised in the U.S., and studied to be a painter. She recently arranged an exhibit of "Contemporary Art from Armenia", selec-

ting the pieces there and then negotiating the long process of bringing them to London. Most of the artists were unknown to London Armenians, let alone the general public but Sahakian sent out a stream of press releases, resulting in a surprising number of major reviews in the national papers and specialist art journals. Sahakian also thoroughly briefed the gallery staff on Armenians and their history so they were prepared when one day an earnest visitor began to tell them all about the Armenians, a small Islamic tribe from the Middle East. "They not only educated him," Sahakian laughs, "but sold him a painting as well!"

Artists in the exhibit include one currently resident in London, Rudolph Khachatrian, best known for his ethereal, fine portraits, here showing semi-abstract figure painting on levkos. Others active in the art world include Edman Aivazian and sisters, Sophie and Edesse Aghajanian. Sophie, a printmaker working in Belfast, has exhibited widely while Edesse recently won the British Toymaker Guild's annual award for her whimsical kinetic sculptures. The brightly painted detail of these figures seems a contrast to the cool restraint mentioned earlier, supposedly a hallmark of British taste. But then there is the wider spectrum of British life, the theatrical and colorful royal parades, experimental drama and music, punks and their descendents, the noisy burlesque of Prime Minister's Question-time. Indeed, as Armenians who stay for very long discover, Britain's placid exterior barely veils a series of lively and often eccentric sub-cultures.

At the end of the twentieth century, urban Britain is no longer monolithically English and belonging to a different ethnic group is not necessarily a "faux pas". Those who embody the vague English ideal of tweeds, "plummy accent", and quiet reserve have yet to become an endangered species however, and Armenians and other minorities tend to either emulate or react against this. But Armenians have not yet dissolved in the rain, as some earlier sceptics predicted. They have made strong contributions to British life, as Armenians have elsewhere in the world, adapting enough to use the opportunities available without forgetting who they are.

Note: this article is the latest one in an* Ararat *series describing the history and achievements of the various Armenian communities in Diaspora. In the past, there have been articles or supplements devoted to Armenians in Australia, in Lebanon in India, in Iran, in Poland, in Syria, and in Latin America, chiefly Argentina and Brazil. In the future we hope to have pieces about Armenians in France, Italy, Spain, and The Netherlands.

SUNG FOR THE COMMON MAN

by Y. Stephen Bulbulian

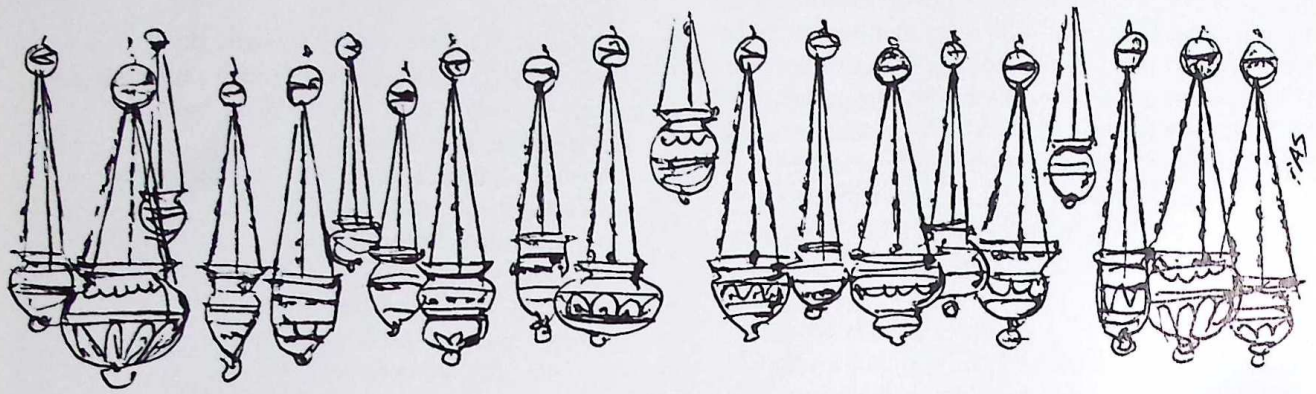
The dark featured men with light skin
and fingers yellowed from French cigarettes
have occupations like shoemaker, baker,
a sharpener of knives and tools,
Malaga pruning shears and kitchen knives
of Kurdish steel, now Americans,
life is a small framed houses
south of Ventura Street near Hazelood Tract,
in the shade of mulberry trees
among backyard gardens of squash
and melons, tomatoes and jicama.

They ask, "Don't you remember the valleys
and hillsides where sheep graze,
the air bites cold and crisp
in blue mountains, white peaks?
Can you taste the salty goat cheese,
drink tahn, eat cracker bread and grapes,
see the festive nights triumph, the oil lamps glow,
the wine, the harvest song and dance?"
Here the edge of town is near the trolley car track
by the fence, near the ditch
where the vines grow wild among the weeds.

The old men stay away from the church
but not the card parlor next door
to the Armenian newspaper, Asbarez.
There they no longer hail the kings and queens
or patriarchs, having fled in fury
the homeland, hillside, mountain peaks.
In the afternoon, over small cups of strong coffee
our common memory makes us cry, weighing heavy
on our chest and bloody hearts; pierced
by ten thousand years of Armenia,
Saints, martyrs, common men' souls.



Armenians in Jerusalem



by Amos Elon

The Armenian quarter in the Old City bristles with defensive measures. It is an enclave, a closed compound, a miniature city within a larger one, entirely surrounded by a high, fortresslike wall. The heavy gates are guarded and locked at night as during the Middle Ages. During the day, visitors are stopped at the gate and asked to state their business. Within, some eighty seminary students and Armenian priests, headed by the patriarch, maintain a precarious balance with fifteen hundred laymen of Armenian origin, mostly professionals and tradespeople who rarely attend church. They make up the only lay community in Jerusalem that lives within the confines of a monastic order—the brotherhood of Saint James. The compound is what remains of a large convent built in the Middle Ages to accommodate and protect the flow of pilgrims from Armenia. In 1918, it received the more destitute among the survivors of Turkish massacres. A large lay community of Armenians is said, however, to have lived in it long before.

Armenian pilgrims flocked to Jerusalem over the Roman roads soon after their conversion to Christianity in 301, even before the Edict of Milan in 313 and the conversion of Constantine. Jerusalem is filled with early Armenian remains. The sixth-century Armenian-mosaic floor of Saint Polyeuctos in Jerusalem—magnificent birds in the branches of a vine—is the most beautiful mosaic in the entire country. In the seventh century, on the eve of the Arab conquest, the Armenian presence in Jerusalem and its environs consisted of no fewer than seventy monasteries and churches. The head of the Armenian church is said to have traveled to Mecca to secure an edict safeguarding the settlement in Jerusalem.

The Armenian compound is the only ethnic quarter in the Old City that today occupies the same site as it did in the fifth century. It takes up a sixth of the area of the Old City. Some of the refugees of 1918 and their descendants continue to live in the compound. It is a comprehensive little community with its own educational and other public institutions, a good library, a printing press (the first in Jerusalem, dating from 1833), a museum with illuminated manuscripts equaled only by those of Yerevan, residential quarters, several historical monuments, and a single shop. Narrow alleys flow into a wide public square. There are gardens with many old trees, the oldest in the Old City. The patriarch and his staff occupy a small palace where the walls are hung with portraits of long-forgotten European royalty and with a map of the long-defunct Greater Armenia (it allegedly stretched all the way from the Mediterranean to the Caspian Sea). The patriarchate's importance derives from its standing, under the famous status quo, aa a principal shareholder in the holy places. It also owns extensive property in and around Jerusalem. Its bishops, gazing out of their black hoods, don the heaviest emeralds and pearl-encrusted golden crowns.

The main church inside the Armenian compound, the Cathedral of Saint James, is the finest in town. Its treasures—its miters, crowns, and gold chalices inlaid with gems, its noble vestments and lamps—have been amassed over the centuries; all were brought from Armenia and Cilicia by the pious and pricely. Armenians rarely speak about their artifacts. Like the Jews, they are survivors, "people [that] dwell alone." The little quarter has always been a center of learning, much like the great Jewish yeshivas in prewar eastern Europe.

The Armenians have survived in Jerusalem for so long because as a national and a religious minority they have learned not to take sides. They are cordial with both Palestinians and Israelis. What is a mere quarter of a century of Israeli rule against the nearly seventeen hundred years of uninterrupted Armenian presence in

Jerusalem?

Just outside the city walls, the fourteenth-century Armenian monastery of Saint Savior stands surrounded by an ancient cemetery. The older tombs are decorated with carvings of working tools—a mason's trowel, a tailor's scissors, stonecutters' chisels, a bishop's crown. Some are inscribed with epitaphs in Armenian quite unlike those found on modern tombs:

Plant a rose on
My simple grave.
I, the sacristan Krikor
Sang prayers
And lit lamps
For forty years,
On the tomb of Christ.

Here reposes
Ghevond of Lake Van, a lover of letters.
The scribe
Who copied so many manuscripts
Old and new.

Sing Alleluia
For the binder
of books
the monk Mekhitar.

Once a year, in April, hundreds of Jerusalem Armenians gather in the cemetery of commemorate the victims of the Armenian holocaust of 1915 to 1918, when an estimated one million Armenians were massacred by the Turks. Another half-million went into exile. Armenian spokesmen use the occasion to emphasize their belief that Armenia was a rehearsal for Auschwitz. "The Armenian holocaust was forgotten or ignored. If it has not been ignored, perhaps Auschwitz would not have happened." (Hitler, preparing for the Final Solution, is said to have reprimanded a reluctant general with the words: "Who remembers today the fate of the Armenian?"). Armenians cite Israel Zangwill, the English-Jewish author, who at the time of the massacres pronounced eloquently: "I take the crown of thorns off Judah's head and put it on Armenia's brow." They will tell you that it was during a visit to Jerusalem that Franz Werfel conceived the idea of *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh,* the great bestseller of the 1930s that commemorated the Armenian catastrophe (and was also meant as a metaphor of the Nazi menace). The massacre of a million Armenians was official Turkish policy. It was carried out by a state bureaucracy similar to that used by the Nazis twenty-five years later. "Deportation" was a Turkish code word for mass execution, just as it was in Hitler's Germany. "I hate the Turks," the Armenian patriarch of Jerusalem told a newspaperman a few years ago, in a very Jerusalemite statement. "Christ enjoined us not to hate our enemy. But that was before Turks were born."

A few rooms in the art museum of the Armenian compound are dedicated to the massacres. Faded old photographs show ghastly heaps of corpses similar to pictures on the walls of Yad Vashem, the Israeli memorial on the other side of town that commemorates the destruction of European Jewry under Nazis. Both museums are dedicated to the impossible task of tracing and registering the name of every man, woman, and child and of every erased community. The testimony of

"The Turks have never recanted, nor assumed responsibility for the disaster."

Henry Morgenthau, United States ambassador to Turkey at the time of the massacres and perhaps the only member of the diplomatic corps to protest the outrage, is promimently displayed:

> *As the exiles moved they left behind them another caravan—that of dead and unburied bodies. . .The most terrible scenes took place at the rivers, especially the Euphrates [where] the gendarmes would push the women into the water, shooting all who attempted to save themselves by swimming. . .Tens of thousands were driven into the desert without food and water.*

Among Armenians, as among Jews, an annual day of mourning is set aside to commemorate the destruction. The ghastly memory of the past nourishes a central collective trauma among Armenians, as it does among Jews. The Armenian trauma takes on an additional bitterness owing to the fact that, unlike the Germans, the Turks haved never recanted, nor assumed responsibility for the disaster. As the procession of Armenian mourners winds its way back from the cemetery through the narrow streets, it passes walls covered with posters in English and Armenian protesting Turkish callousness. The sun beats down. In the mercilessly harsh light, the posters quickly fade and peel off the dusty walls. In the past, mystics used to refer to this light as the "outer garment of God."

Four Poems

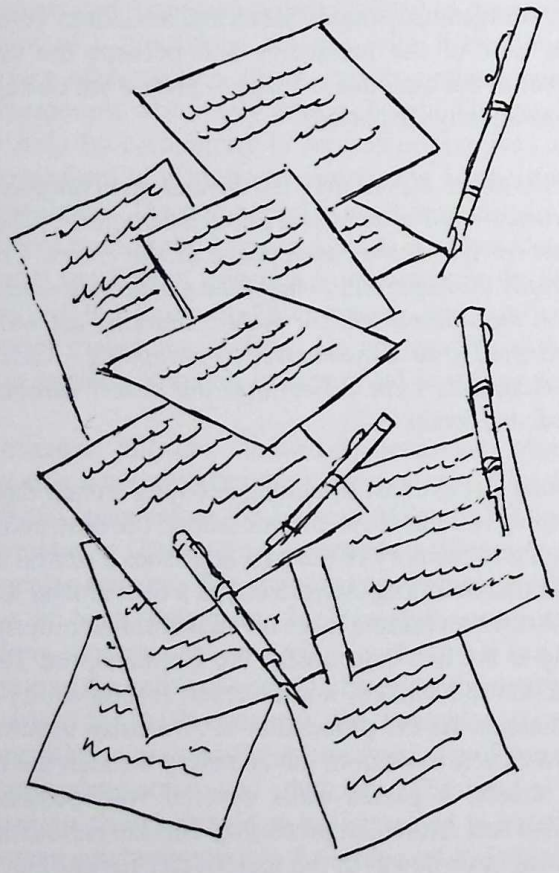
by Diana Der Hovanessian

THE POEM

". . .begins with a lump in the throat."
Robert Frost

It writes itself to find heart's ease;
it's not concerned with win or please.
Its aim is not to mend or gain
except perhaps to bandage pain.

It is a small map for the road home.
It can be thanks for favors shown.
It weeps for what had to fall
but has the last laugh after all.



I TALK IN MY SLEEP TO ARMENIAN POETS

Sylva, I say, dear Sylva, I agree,
it is a lover's love, a lover's longing,
we feel for lost lands we don't see.

Yes, more than love,
Vahakn, this is thirst
that parches our dreams

until Shiraz's mountain walks
through Emin's magic,
it seems.

Your shadow falls on my life,
Yuri, and Arevshad,
your words turn to light.

Medakse, Anahid, Maro,
your songs course with
the bloodstream tonight.

When I laugh in my sleep
it is Koutchag or Hovaness Grigorian
drying away tears.

When I talk to Armenian poets
the dream is sweet except
when Charents appears.

He brings turbulent
arguments on revolution,
about heroes, about art.

With Varoujan and Siamanto
with Roupen Sevag I am quiet,
respectfully keeping my peace.

Barouyr has been gracious
and I have even dared
to approach Nerses Shnorhali

for a blessing, but Narek
awesome Narek, stands far,
far apart.

BLACKBERRY SUMMER

The summer we were five
we would wander through
the woods picking
blackberries, raspberries,
blueberries that
stained the sunlight
jeweled our tongues.

That was the summer of
picking berries
along the railroad when
we saw the tramp.

Betty Carlson knew exactly
what to do.
I would have kept walking
toward him.
I would have said
hello.
And would have shown
the loaded blueberry bushes
if he looked hungry.

Betty and I
were both five, but born
to different eras.
She was an only child
brought up thinking
of herself as adult.

I was protected from
the knowledge of evil
because my parents
wanted me to grow up
"like other children"
before the burden
of an Armenian past
became mine.

She pushed me
into the lower bushes
and hushed me
putting her hand
over my mouth
while I choked
down a giggle
as the man went by
close enough to touch,
passed by and down
down the tracks
until he disappeared,
singing as if he were alone,
imagining his walk
would end at dusk
and not go on
forever in my mind.

"Why did we hide?"
I asked when we got up.
"Because he could have
killed us."

I laughed out loud.
No. There are no Turks
here to do that.
For, in spite of all
my parents' care,
I had heard the whispers.

BATTLES

To fight love with walking
to fight love with cold showers
to fight love with yoga
to fight love with aspirin
to fight love with demarol
to fight love with letters
to fight love with poems
to fight love with false memory
to fight love with altered vision
to fight love with novels
to fight love with cynicism
to fight love with laments
to fight love with other people's eyes
to fight love with otehr loves
to fight love with drink
to fight love with movies
to fight love with talking
to fight love with therapy
to fight love with time
to fight love with chocolate
is a losing battle.
Wave the white flag
throw in the towel
give up, concede defeat
prepare to sign
you may find the enemy
has gone home long ago.

Three Poems

by Bulat Okudzhava

In the Soviet Union Okudzhava (who lives in Moscow and writes and records in Russian) is as celebrated as Bob Dylan or the Beatles where in their prime in the west. He is of Armenian and Georgian ancestry.

PAPER SOLDIER

Once there was a brave soldier
handsome as he could be
but everyone treated him like a toy.
He was made of paper you sée.

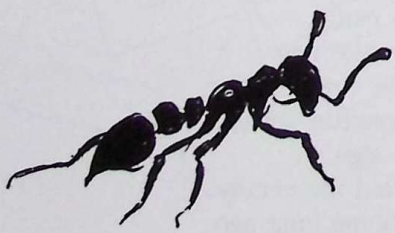
He wanted to change our world
making it happier for you and me.
But he was an ornament on a string,
a paper soldier you see.

He would defy, for our sake, fire
and smoke, dying twice willingly.
But we never took him seriously.
He was only paper you see.

We did not confide in or trust him
with directions or secrets or plans.
It was easy to ignore his humanity
when he was only a paper man.

He cursed his fate, not thirsting
for lasting peace. Not he.
Just pleaded for fire endlessly
forgetting he was paper you see.

—So it's fire you crave? All right, go.
One step and it's over finally.
With a death not worth a cent or a blink
because you're only on paper you see.



PICTURE AN ANT

I wanted to pray to something
like an ant who craves, who needs,
suddenly dropping to its knees
to confirm his own being and beliefs.

Picture the ant without peace.
Picture him less than whole
creating for himself a goddess
with his own image and soul.

On the seventh day she appears
out of the darkness of night
without any heavenly warning
wearing a coat, small and light.

Forgetting past happiness and pain
he opens his anthill in joy
to kiss her weatherbitten hands,
and adore her worn little shoes.

Over the threshold their shadows
swing as they talk without words,
beautiful and wise as gods,
sad as creatures of earth.

MAJESTIC WOMAN

Darkness curtains everything here,
with silence from lower depths and lower.
Majestic woman, princess of the north,
how have you found my door?

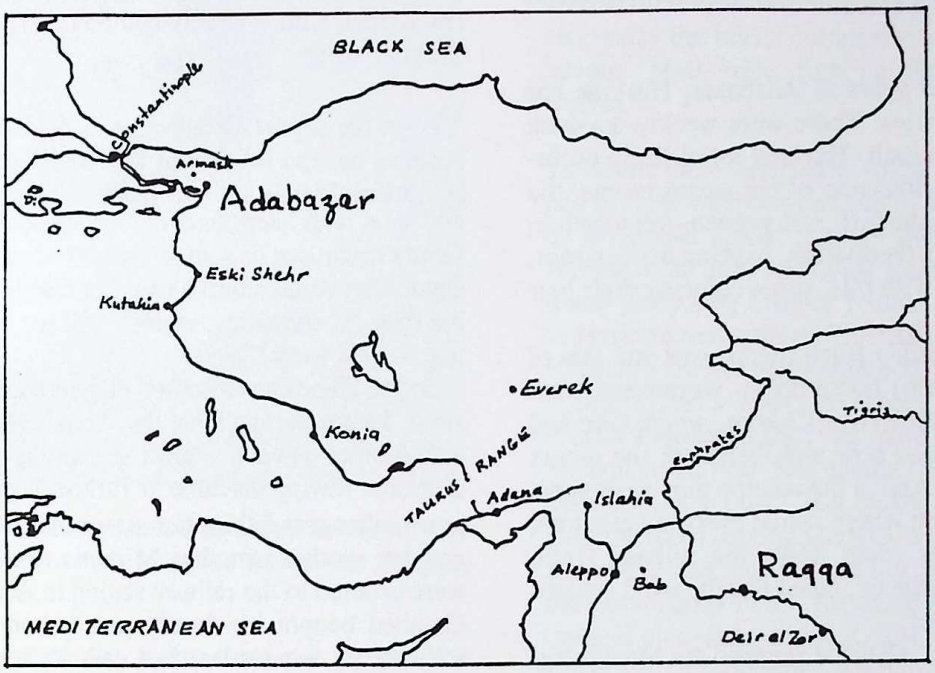
My electricity flickers and fails.
The roof definitely leaks.
Majestic woman, princess of the south,
is it really me you seek?

The sight of you is a conflagration.
The smoke makes it hard to breathe.
Why do you hesitate on the threshold?
Come in. Oh, come in, please.

Where do you come from? Who are you?
I'm playing the fool, I fear.
You simply mistook the door, the street,
the city, the century, the year.

(translated by Diana Der Hovanessian)

The Last Stop Before Der-El-Zhor



Harkine's Route from Adabazar to Raqqa

by Jane Wingate

It is a warm afternoon in June 1990, in a large mid-western city that has been home to Harkine Pilibosian Hagopian since 1921. In her cheerful living room, surrounded by family photos and colorful crocheted and knitted handwork she has made over the years, Harkine is remembering another June, seventy six years ago.

In June 1915, Harkine Pilibosian was thirteen, about to graduate from the eighth grade in Adabazar, Turkey. Eighty miles east of Istanbul, Adabazar was then a thriving town of 18,000 people. It was said of the Adabazaris that they were "a la franca," influenced by their sophisticated and cosmopolitan neighbors in nearby Europe.

Little Harkine Pilibosian's childhood was sunny and secure. She lived with her family in a comfortable three-story house along a busy highway near the market place.

On the ground floor, Harkine's father Garabed had his barber shop. In addition to offering the usual barber's services, Garabed pulled teeth and administered an occasional blood-letting, considered in those days to be a remedy for high blood preassure. Also on the ground floor of the house were a dry-goods grocery run by Garabed's brother Minas, and a third shop which Garabed rented out to a baker.

Upstairs lived Garabed and his extended family: his wife Mariam, Harkine and her older sister Arshaloys and, after his brother Minas's death, Minas's widow Iskouhi and her daughter Araxi. The house was furnished with oriental carpets, elegant coal-oil lamps and chandeliers, cozy beds stuffed with sheep's wool, intricate handwork made by the women in the household. The windows along the front of the house provided a fine vantage point for Harkine and her family to watch the wedding and funeral processions passing by on the street below.

Good food abounded in the Pilibosian household: simit and other breads from the bakery downstairs, olives and honey and all sorts of cheeses, fruits, fresh fish and meat from the nearby market, bastourmah, noodles made by the women, and fish and game birds that Garabed, an avid sportsman, would bring home.

In the Pilibosians' spacious back yard were flower and vegetable gardens and fruit trees, and while Harkine's older sister Arshaloys and her cousin Araxi stayed inside, busy with their handwork and helping with the housework, little Harkine, a wiry tomboy, played out-

side, skipping rope, playing marbles, climbing trees. Often she'd be so preoccupied with playing, she'd be late for supper, and once her father, thinking to cure her of her forgetfulness, locked her out. She banged on the door, called, pleaded; no one came. At last her mother let her in and gave her supper. But Harkine could not eat, and sobbed silently all night, frightened and hurt over the only punishment she remembers her father meting out.

Of those childhood years in Adabazar, Harkine has mainly happy memories. There were weekly day-long visits to the Turkish bath. Harkine loved these excursions, the lazy luxuriousness of the steam rooms, the cozy camaraderie of the girls and women—all together, gossiping, pampering themselves, basking in the steam, rubbing themselves with oils, some coloring their hair with henna.

On Sundays the family piled themselves and lots of food into a big covered horse-drawn wagon and went for picnics at the nearby river Charkh, where Garabed hunted and fished, and now and then took the others for rides in his boat. And in the autumn they went north for a month at Armash where, while everyone else took the gentle circuitous route down the hillside, little Harkine, strong and athletic, raced like the wind straight down the steep slopes.

From ten to thirteen, Harkine attended the Manoushag Stepanyan School, where she studied history and arithmetic, French, Turkish, Armenian, and the Bible. And there was a music teacher who taught the children the songs she learned from Gomidas. Harkine remembers going with her parents to hear the famous composer perform at Soorp Garabed's, the family' parish church.

On this day in June, eighty-eight year old Harkine smiles as she recalls all this, and in a shy, still-sweet voice, sings Gomidas's "Kele Kele."

But in that other, long-ago June, in that far-off place, Harkine's happy and secure childhood ended. Just before graduation—the girls' dresses were made, the children were rehearsing their speeches and music—the police came and arrested the teachers of the Manoushag Stepanyan School, and there was no graduation for Harkine. Turkish soldiers took over and quartered themselves in fine houses in the neighborhood, and from the windows overlooking the highway, where Harkine once looked down on other processions, she now watched the soldiers tramping by.

Harkine's father Garabed was responsible for keeping the records for his neighborhood, for reporting to the authorities the births and marriages and deaths of his people. When the police started going from house to house, routing out Tashnags and Hunchaks, and confiscating weapons, Garabed was able to warn his people and to furnish guns to those who didn't have them. And when, in August, the police locked people in St. Garabed's, and began beating them, demanding guns, Garabed did what he could to save them. By producing a gun, he secured the release of at least one man who had been beaten mercilessly, the wealthy owner of a silk factory. But he could do nothing to save his brother-in-law Krikor, who at twenty-two was conscripted into the Turkish army.

When the deportations began in Adabazar, Garabed, because he was influential and well-liked, was urged by Turkish friends to linger behind. Perhaps if he waited and went with later convoys, they reasoned, he and his family might not be sent so far and when things settled down, they could return home. But Garabed turned away his friends' entreaties, saying, "All my people are going. I have to go."

So the Pilibosians disposed of their household possessions, hastily selling what they could. Harkine's father and mother gave his favorite hunting gun and her treasured sewing machine to Turkish friends. Harkine, her mother and father, her sister and aunt and cousin and her mother's mother Miriam, who lived nearby, were ordered to the railway station in Adabazar. There Garabed bought his family passage on the Baghdad Railway (in windowless box cars so crammed full of deportees that sometimes the men had to ride on the roofs) bound for the death camps in the Arabian desert.

In the uncertain, sorrowful weeks that followed, the railroad that carried Harkine and her family toward death went south through Eskishehir and Kutahia to a place a traveler described as "the bleak uplands of Afion Kara Hissar," where thousands of people, mostly refugees from the Black Sea, were encamped. Then the line snaked south-easterly, through Konia and Eregli, ending at Bozanti, where it stopped at the Taurus Mountains. On the other side of the mountains, the railroad picked up again, passing through Adana, continuing east to Baghtche, where there was another break at the Amanus Mountains. Beyond the Amanus Mountains, at Islahia, the railroad continued on to Aleppo.

It was not a smooth, non-stop journey for the Pilibosians and the other deportees. Often they were ordered off the train to make room for soldiers, and though in the chaos it was easy to lose track of time, Harkine says sometimes they'd stay in the crowded, unsanitary camps along the railroad line (in what Harkine calls "just empty places") for several weeks at a time, forbidden to go into the towns along the route, huddled in makeshift tents that offered little protection from the elements, without food or any of the comforts that lend dignity to life, where typhoid fever and cholera and typhus were ram-

pant. A traveller observed that the Adabazaris, accustomed to an easy, genteel life in their cosmopolitan town, suffered terribly.



Arshaloys, Harkine's sister, who saved her family by agreeing to marry into an Arab *hareem* at Raqqa, Syria.

And then, when the trains were not needed for soldiers, the gendarmes swept through the camps, slashing the tent ropes—pushing, prodding, whipping the people back into the dark box cars, shouting "Yellah! Yellah! ("Go! Go!")

Garabed had decided, as long as the money held out, that his family should not walk, so at the railhead in Bozanti he bought them passage by wagon through the mountain pass called The Cilician Gates, to Adana, where they stayed another few weeks, until the gendarmes drove them on. East of Adana, the line ended again, and again the Pilibosians pushed on to the other side of the Amanus Mountains where, in Islahia, little Harkine, only a few months ago a secure, carefree tomboy emerging into young womanhood, was witness to events that were to destroy any vestiges of her innocence.

An Armenian elder recalls her extraordinary journey from the death-marches to freedom.

Islahia, as a Swiss woman living in Turkey at the time described it: "The camp was the saddest thing I have ever seen. Right at the entrance a heap of dead bodies lay unburied. I counted 35, and in another place 22, in the immediate neighborhood of the tents of those who were down with virulent dysentery. The filth in and around these tents was something indescribable. On one single day the burial committee buried as many as 580 people. Men were fighting for bread like hungry wolves."

In Islahia there were many soldiers who had been stripped of their weapons and put to work as slave laborers on a railroad tunnel through the Amanus Mountains. Among these dead and dying soldiers, Harkine's mother found her young brother Krikor, near death himself—as Harkine remembers, "just skin and bones." Though Harkine's mother and grandmother did what they could to ease Krikor's misery, the shock of finding her brother in such a wretched state was more than Harkine's mother Miriam could bear. She couldn't eat, she couldn't drink; her throat, she said, "just locked up," and within three days she died, leaving Garabed a widower, Harkine and Arshaloys motherless, and her own mother to endure the worst agony of all, the death of a child. The family dragged on to Bab, where Krikor died and where, again, Harkine's grandmother Mariam suffered the loss of another child, her one son, only twenty-two years old.

In Bab, the weary and grief-stricken family met up with a friend, and together Garabed and he rented a room. But instead of a finding respite from their exhaustion and sorrow, Harkine and her family met with still more tribulation. The daughter of Garabed's friend contracted typhus, and soon Harkine and her father came down with the disease. Before they could recover, the gendarmes came and drove the family out of their shelter: "Yelleh! Yellah!"

Somehow Harkine's grandmother, her sister, her aunt and her cousin managed to get Garabed and Harkine, both feverish and delirious, onto donkeys, and the family rejoined the endless convoy of deportees streaming toward the death camps along the Euphrates.

In her living room on this warm summer afternoon, Harkine remembers that the blanket the women put around her provided little protection against the night air of the desert, and that her bare feet, frostbitten, burned painfully. She slid off her donkey and was almost lost to her family. Even in her delirium, she was aware of some men saying, "Look at her—she's dying! Hey, look at her—she's dying!"

Now, all these years later, in the hushed, childlike voice of that thirteen-year-old girl who was almost lost forever when she rode out of Bab, Harkine, as if she

were there again, struggling for life, says, "But I wasn't dying."

And then, the death camps along the Euphrates. Harkine names them: Meskine, Abu Herere, Dibsi, Hamman, where there were tens of thousands of starving, practically naked people, exposed to the elements, prey to the dysentery that raced through the camps, in their dehumanized desperation eating the carcasses of animals and sometimes even the corpses of their own dead. Harkine remembers the stench of those camps. Remembers stepping gingerly to avoid human feces, remembers the lice crawling all over her and swarming, "just like ants", on the ground around her feet, remembers fetching filthy water from the river clogged



Miriam Shahinian, Harkine's grandmother and Nohir, Harkine's cousin. Three of Miriam's children died in the genocide.

with the bloated bodies of her massacred countrymen.

Harkine and her family straggled on toward Raqqa, the place Harkine calls "the last stop before Deir el Zor." It was here, on the south bank of the Euphrates, that an Arab named Mehmed Ali saw Harkine's pretty sister Arshaloys combing her hair, and fell in love with her. If she would marry him, he would save her family. He knew that they were going to be pushed on to Deir el Zor and what could happen to them there. Arshaloys did not want to marry Mehmed Ali but, considering the alternative, she consented.

As the family was about the cross the Euphrates to Mehmed Ali's home in Raqqa, the brother of Garabed's sister-in-law Iskouhi showed up. In all the confusion and commotion, Garabed left his one tattered coat with this man, and when he went to retrieve it, it was gone. Exhausted, penniless, upset over the loss, an angry Garabed told Mehmed Ali to forget about taking in Iskouhi and her daughter Araxi. He had cared for them all this time; let the brother look after them. So while Garabed and his mother-in-law and the two girls climbed aboard a raft with Mehmed Ali to cross the rushing Euphrates—a journey that terrified Harkine, who could not swim—Iskouhi and her brother and her daughter Araxi, with no one to protect them, were driven on to the final killing field.

In Raqqa, Mehmed Ali gave Garabed and his family a room to stay in, and made sure they had food. Arshaloys and Mehmed Ali—blue-eyed, fair-skinned, handsome—were married immediately, though the arrangement was not a happy one for Arshaloys. Not only was her husband as old as her own father, it was against Arshaloys's Christian upbringing to be, as it turned out she was, one of three wives in Mehmed Ali's harem. By his first wife, an Arab named Khatun, Mehmed Ali had four children; two were the ages of Arshaloys and Harkine. His second wife, Raifeh, was Turkish. And now there was Arshaloys, whom he renamed Jemileh, the Arabic name for "beautiful."

So unhappy was Arshaloys that she became silent, and so desperate did Mehmed Ali become over her unhappiness, that he sent for Harkine and ordered her to speak Armenian with her sister, in order that he could hear the sound of his pretty young bride's voice. In the mornings, Mehmed Ali's son Aziz would come for Harkine, who would stay with her sister and the others in Mehmed Ali's household, returning to her father and grandmother only to sleep at night.

So while many other Armenians in Raqqa (several thousand found shelter there among the Arabs) were starving, living in stables, subsisting, Harkine recalls, on grass, grasshoppers and "anything they could chew up", Harkine and her family were, she says, lucky. Though she and her father and grandmother lived in a dirt-floor room with nothing in it, and had only the rags on their backs, not even a table and chairs and only a single pot to cook in, at least they were sheltered, and could always get something to eat from Mehmed Ali. He was, Harkine often says with gratefulness, the one who saved their



Missak and Harkine Hagopian and four of their five children: left to right, Lucy, Alice, Garo, Manoush.

lives.

But there was a price to pay. For Harkine was soon to learn that her brother-in-law had plans for her.

It was never clear what Mehmed Ali did. Some days he was flush with money, other days he had none. Was he a gambler? Along with others, he poked around in the ancient ruins of Raqqa and sold what relics he found. And now, here was Harkine, his sister-in-law, a commodity over whom he could claim proprietorship. Why not sell her to a rich Arab friend who would be pleased to have a pretty Armenian girl?

But Harkine resisted all Mehmed Ali's attempts to sell her into a harem. She was too young to get married, she said, and anyway, when she did marry, she would not be one of several wives. She wasn't blind; she could see how unhappy her sister was.

And Arshaloys herself was keeping an eye on her younger sister, urging her to resist Mehmed Ali's entreaties. For Arshaloys had another motive for saving her sister from her own fate. After all, she had married Mehmed Ali only to save herself and her family. The only chance she had of escaping her miserable situation was for Harkine to marry an Armenian who would one day rescue her from the harem and help them all escape Raqqa and return home.

There were some young Armenian men interested in Harkine, but they knew she was under the wing of Mehmed Ali, and he was not someone to be crossed.

Then one day Arshaloys heard that there was a baker in town, an older, eligible man whose wife and children had died of typhus. She and an Armenian couple she knew arranged to have Harkine take some dough to the baker, so that he could look her over.

Misak Hagopian had been deported south to Raqqa along with many of the people from Everek, a town that lay in the shadow of the huge mountain Erjiyas. Orphaned at seven, Misak was taken in by his brother Sarkis, who taught him the copper trade. Later, he was apprenticed to the village baker, who liked the boy and who had plans to marry him to his daughter.

And Misak did, in time, marry the baker's daughter. At nineteen, he entered the Turkish army as a bugler. After that, like many young Armenian men, he saw the opportunity to make money in the United States, so he persuaded his father-in-law to look after his wife and son while he followed his brother Sarkis to Detroit, where he worked for a couple of years at Ford Motor Company.

When he returned to Everek, he deposited his earnings with a banker. Misak and his wife had a second child, a daughter, and for a while, life went peacefully on.

Then the trouble began. The banker was among the first to be arrested and killed, and Misak lost all his savings. He and his wife and two young children were driven out of their homes with the rest of the Evereksis, deported south into Arabia, into what someone called "the sands of despair."

Having worked since he was seven, Misak was, as Harkine says, "always looking for a way to make a little bit of money." During the chaotic days of 1915, when the people of his town were being torn from their homes and frantically selling their possessions, Misak was buying and reselling, accumulating what money he could, seeming to know that in the uncertain days ahead, he couldn't have too much money. And of course he was right. For as the deportees were to painfully learn, even if there were any food to be bought along the way, it would be outrageously expensive. There would be bribes to pay to the gendarmes in charge of the convoys. There would be Kurds swooping down from the hills to rob and murder the deportees. And there would be the *chetis*, members of the Teshkilati Mahsousa, government-run gangs of vicious criminals let loose from prisons to rob and rape and slaughter. Misak knew money might be

what bought him and his family another day's life.

To prepare for the long journey, Misak secured a donkey and some big water jugs, which he strapped to the animal. Whenever he came to a village or oasis, he filled his jugs, and along the way, sold water to his fellow deportees. Misak the baker, and now, Misak the water-seller. In all the accounts about the sufferings of the Armenians on their forced marches through mountains and deserts, there is their repeated, desperate cry: "Give us water! Give us bread!" Misak, exiled into the desert with his people, seemed to know what would be needed and, himself a survivor, wisely saw a way to meet their needs.

Yet all his careful planning could not protect him from tragedy and sorrow. In Raqqa, he and his family were stricken with typhus. Misak recovered but, coming out of his delirium, learned his wife and children had died, leaving him all alone in this desert town, an exile from his northern home.

When his strength returned, Misak, ever determined to make a new beginning even in the face of extreme adversity, became friendly with the *mukhtar* of the town, who let the baker forage for bricks in some ruined buildings he owned. With the bricks, Misak built an oven next to where he lived. Shrewdly, he struck a deal with the mukhtar: in exchange for the bricks, he would bake the mukhtar's bread for free.

And then one day, Harkine is sent to him. Would he marry this pretty Armenian girl, so much younger than he, and save her from her sister's fate?

Three days later, a priest came to the house—secretly, because the Muslim Turks were particularly hard on the Christian Armenian priests—and married Misak and Harkine. For the ceremony, Harkine had to borrow a dress. Long gone was the pretty white dress she was to wear to her elementary school graduation.

Seven decades later, remembering her joyless wedding day, Harkine says, "Of course, I didn't love Misak. He was much older than I, and we were very different. And I was so green. I knew nothing about marriage, or loving, or where babies came from. But," she is quick to add, "He was a good man. He was the one that saved me, and my conscience would never let me leave him."

The day after her wedding, Mehmed Ali, hearing that Harkine had dared to flout his plans to marry her off into a harem, went on the rampage, bullying Arshaloys, even striking Harkine's grandmother in his efforts to lay blame for the marriage. At last, coming to where Misak and Harkine lived, he dragged her across the room, flung her down, flailing at her with a big stick, while Misak stood by helpless, knowing that if Mehmed Ali chose, he could turn him over to the authorities, because while Armenians were sheltered in Raqqa, there were periodic roundups of the men, who were taken away and never heard from again.

As it turned out, someone saw what was going on, and hurried to tell the *mukhtar,* who had Mehmmed Ali arrested. It was then that Misak's baking bread for the *mukhtar* paid off. The *mukhtar* asked Misak what he'd like to do with Mehmed Ali. Would he like him beaten, or thrown in jail? Misak wisely adopted a benevolent attitude, telling the *mukhtar* to let him go.

But Harkine was not yet safe. One night just after she and Misak were married, a couple of drunken, lecherous gendarmes—assuming that Mehmed Ali would no longer protect that headstrong Armenian girl who had defied him, and not knowing that Harkine and Misak were under the protection of the *mukhtar*—burst into the newlyweds' room, intending to rape Harkine. Misak raced to the *mukhtar,* who armed himself, seized the gendarmes, and stripped them of their jobs.



Garabed Pilibosian, Harkine's stepmother Vartanoush, and Harkine's two stepsisters.

Perhaps had some young Armenian boy taken Harkine's fancy, perhaps had she married someone less experienced than Misak, who knew the wisdom of mak-

ing friends in high places, Harkine might not have been, as she often says she was, "so lucky."

For a time, life in Raqqa, though not easy, especially for a girl whose childhood had been so comfortable, so sheltered, settled into a routine of sorts. Misak was diligently trying to make and save what money he could. He baked bread. He collected the bones of butchered animals, boiled them, skimming off and selling the congealed fat, doling out the thin broth into the tin cups of the hungry orphans who roamed the streets of Raqqa in search of something to eat (one Armenian refugee reported seeing about twenty starving children gathered around the carcass of a dead horse, hacking at the flesh with a tin can). And Misak popped corn, frugally drying the kernels that were too wet to pop, moistening those that were too dry, rigging up a big copper pot full of kernels over the fireplace in the center of their living quarters, devising a way so that with little effort, he could pop big batches of this food that was a hit with the villagers. Always mindful of the children, Misak filled their cups whenever he could. While Misak tended to his various jobs, Harkine spent days visiting with her sister in Mehmed Ali's house.

Soon Harkine became pregnant. Before her baby was born, her father and grandmother left Raqqa, heading for Aleppo and eventually for home in Adabazar, telling Misak that when he and Harkine could see their way clear to return to Adabazar, he should do everything he could to rescue Arshaloys from Mehmed Ali.

When Harkine's time to deliver came, the Armenian midwife was summoned and, after a brief labor, Harkine's baby was born, a boy she and Misak named Hagop. the baby was good-looking and healthy, a joy to his parents, the delight of the neighbors, who would come by and say, "We want to see Mr. Hagopian's baby!"

Harkine considered herself lucky. Mehmed Ali had saved them all at this last stop before Deir el Zor. Misak had married her and saved her from her sister's sorry fate. Misak had friends in high places. Unlike so many other Armenians, she never went a day without something to eat. But her luck was about to turn.

Her sister Arshaloys contracted syphilis. Then, suddenly, mysteriously, she became very sick. Harkine visited with her, making small talk, bringing her baby Hagop, whom Arshaloys adored, to see her.

As she lay dying, Arshaloys pined first for her father. Then, no sooner had she told Harkine she wished Mehmed Ali would come, then he did. Distressed at her extreme condition, he embraced his Jemileh and as he held her close, she died in his arms. Terrified, bewildered, Harkine ran home. But that was not all that lay in store for her.

A few days later her baby—her handsome baby Hagop, now four months old—became ill, then quickly sank into unconsciousness. There was no doctor to summon, and



Harkine Pilibosian Hagopian as she looks today.

nothing the helpless young mother could do. The baby died and a sorrowful Misak took him away, perhaps to bury him with his two other children.

Harkine does not know what killed her sister and her baby. Since they both died in late 1918, when the influenza that eventually claimed 20,000,000 people around the world was at its height, and since Arshaloys and baby Hagop were struck down so quickly, is it possible they were victims of that disease? Out of touch with the rest of the world, without benefit of newspapers or other forms of communication, Harkine heard no mention of the deadly pandemic. Because her baby was so healthy one day, and so sick the next, she thinks someone, envious of her beautiful healthy baby, might have put the evil eye on him.

As this June day in 1990 gathers itself in, Harkine recalls a dream she had three days after her baby died. My sister Arshaloys is in a long white gown, and she

is holding my baby, swinging him back and forth, laughing. I tell her 'That's my baby!' Give me my baby! But my sister, just laughs and says, 'He's my baby now' Harkine becomes silent, dreaming her dream again. A blue jay calls from a fall pine in her front yard.

World War I ended, and Armenians began to leave Raqqa for their far-flung homes, not knowing that in many cases, there was nothing to return to.

In early 1919, Harkine and Misak made their way to Aleppo where, along with hundreds of other Armenians returning home, they found shelter in an army garrison. That year, there was another wave of Turkish persecution against Armenians. Though the French and British soldiers in Aleppo were supposed to be keeping order and ensuring the safety of the refugees, they looked the other way when the Turks planned to set fire to the garrison, to burn alive the Armenians housed there.

Mehmed Ali in Raqqa heard of the plan to burn the garrison and its inhabitants. In a gesture that Harkine was not to appreciate until years later, he hastened to Aleppo intending to warn this girl he had come to look upon as his own daughter. Headstrong, wanting to put Mehmed Ali and everything associated with him behind her, Harkine refused to see him. That night, there was a fierce thunderstorm; miraculously, torrential rains made it impossible for the Turks to set the garrison afire and the next day, the plot was squelched.

After staying a few weeks in Aleppo, Harkine and Misak continued on to Adabazar. Much of the town was in ruins; the majority of the deported Adabazaris had died in the genocide. The Turks who had moved into the Pilibosians' house had returned it to Garabed, though it had fallen into disrepair, and the gardens once so lovingly tended by Harkine's mother Mariam had gone neglected. To Garabed's surprise, the two Turks gave back the hunting rifle and the sewing machine he and his wife had given them.

Though returned to the place of her birth, the center of her idyllic childhood, Harkine was never to be happy there again. For nothing was the same. There were too many changes: her mother was gone, her sister and cousin and aunt were gone, her baby was dead. Her father had resumed his business, and was renting out rooms in the house. The one woman Harkine had to turn to was her grandmother, who was living with her daughter Siranoush, the only one of her four children who survived the genocide.

Harkine and Misak moved into a room in Garabed's house. Harkine, still a teenager, was about to have her second baby. Then, Garabed married again, and Harkine hoped that in her new stepmother she would find the womanly support she needed. But Harkine and her stepmother Vartanoush did not get along, and soon after Harkine's daughter Hratchoui was born (again Harkine, her robust health standing her in good stead, had an easy delivery), she and Misak moved out of her father's home into a smaller house nearby.

Meanwhile, Garabed was pressuring his daughter to leave Misak. After all, it was one thing for her to have married this uneducated villager to save her skin in distant Raqqa, but now that the trouble was over, there was no reason she shouldn't leave him and marry someone more equal to her. What about that young man who taught Turkish at her old Manoushag School? He had set his cap on Harkine even back then, and now he and his aunts were ardently pressing his suit.

But Harkine, always a girl who knew her own mind, stood firm. After all, she kept insisting, Misak was the man who saved her life. He was a good man, a good provider, wise and intelligent even if uneducated, and she would not leave him. Her conscience would not let her.

Harkine and Misak stayed in Adabazar for two years. Then the Turks began still another wave of persecution. Harkine could see it coming. One day she was across the street at the neighborhood's water faucet which, since the town had been laid waste, was delivering water drop by drop. Two Turkish women came along and ordered her away from the faucet. She refused, telling them she had left her baby in the house alone, and as soon as her pitcher was full, she would leave. They shoved her, yelling "Kill her! Kill her!"

Sensing that more trouble was coming for Armenians, Misak decided to leave Turkey with his wife and baby. His brother Sarkis was still in the United States, and he would help them start a new life there.

In 1921 Harkine and Misak and Hratchoui came to America on the Greek liner *Themistocles.* Instead of settling in one of the cities where there were large communities of Armenians, such as Boston, New York, Fresno, or Detroit, they chose this large midwestern city where there was only a handful of Armenian families.

Though she wishes there had been more Armenians, and though it would have been comforting had there been an Armenian church to offer her community and solace, Harkine made the best of her situation. She and Misak struggled the immigrants' struggle. They became United States citizens, grateful for the opportunity and security their new country gave them. Misak often told his children that he was thankful he could go to sleep at night not having to worry that he might be dragged out of his bed and killed.

Harkine has five children, who themselves have nine children. In her children, and in her children's children, Harkine lives. And in them, Armenia lives.

CHEKHOV'S LAST SET

by Brenda Najimian-Magarity

Crossing the Caucasus
we enter your world
through the door
of one of your plays;

in a room set
like a poem
in search of its own meaning
you spent your last day.

Here we find life
unaltered as the Black Sea.

Your spectacles rest
marking your place
in a novel left open;

a chessboard lies
frozen in mid-game;

the table is set
for one.

The view from the window
is of the three sisters,
who still tarry
in the cherry orchard
like lost butterflies.

And there is Olga,
whose life in the theatre
kept her in Moscow
even when ill health
forced you away.

She's set the clock
on the mantel
to tick backwards.

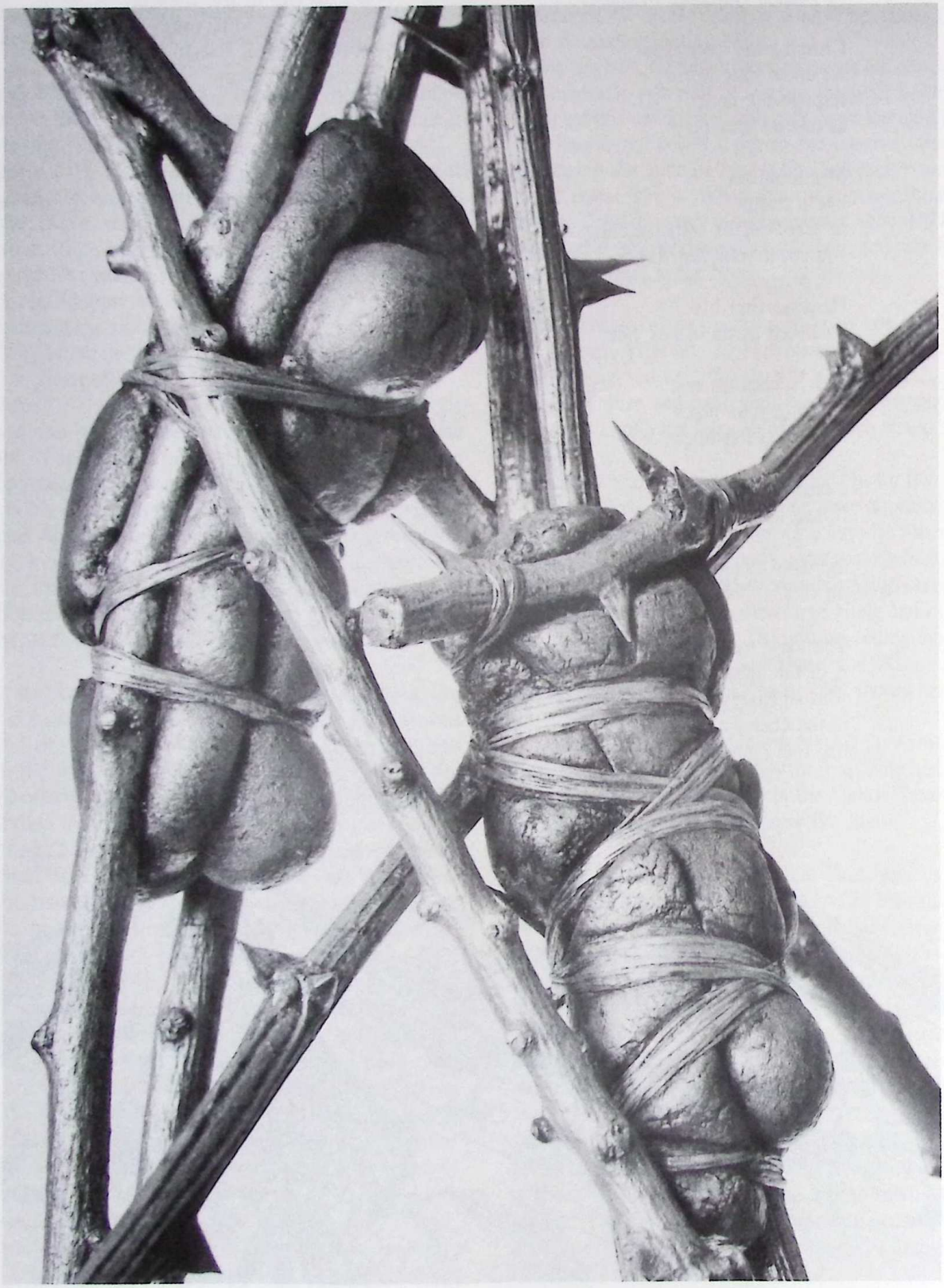
Olga,
whose love was quickened
by your touch,
is left to dream
of her part
in a play
you never wrote.

Each time
the clock chimes
out of tune,
she looks for bits
of your beard
in the cracks
of the floor
and asks:

Was there
no one
to serve you
a last bowl
of borscht
in the Ukraine?



Kardash Onnig: Postmodern Ashough

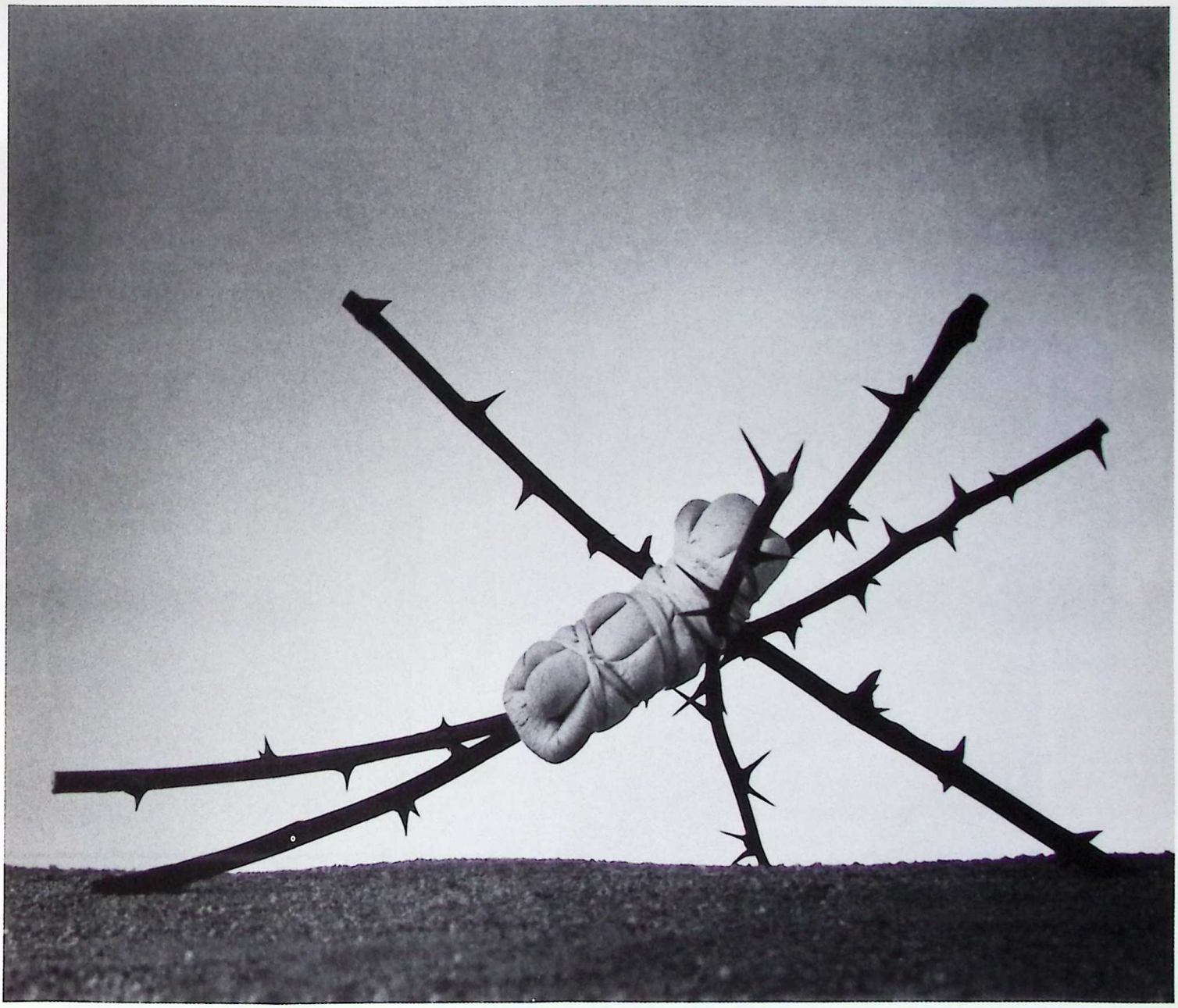


From WAY OF THE CROSS Station XIII "Crossing the Border." Twigs bread dough, raffia, silver leaf 8″ high, 1990 Stanfordville, New York.

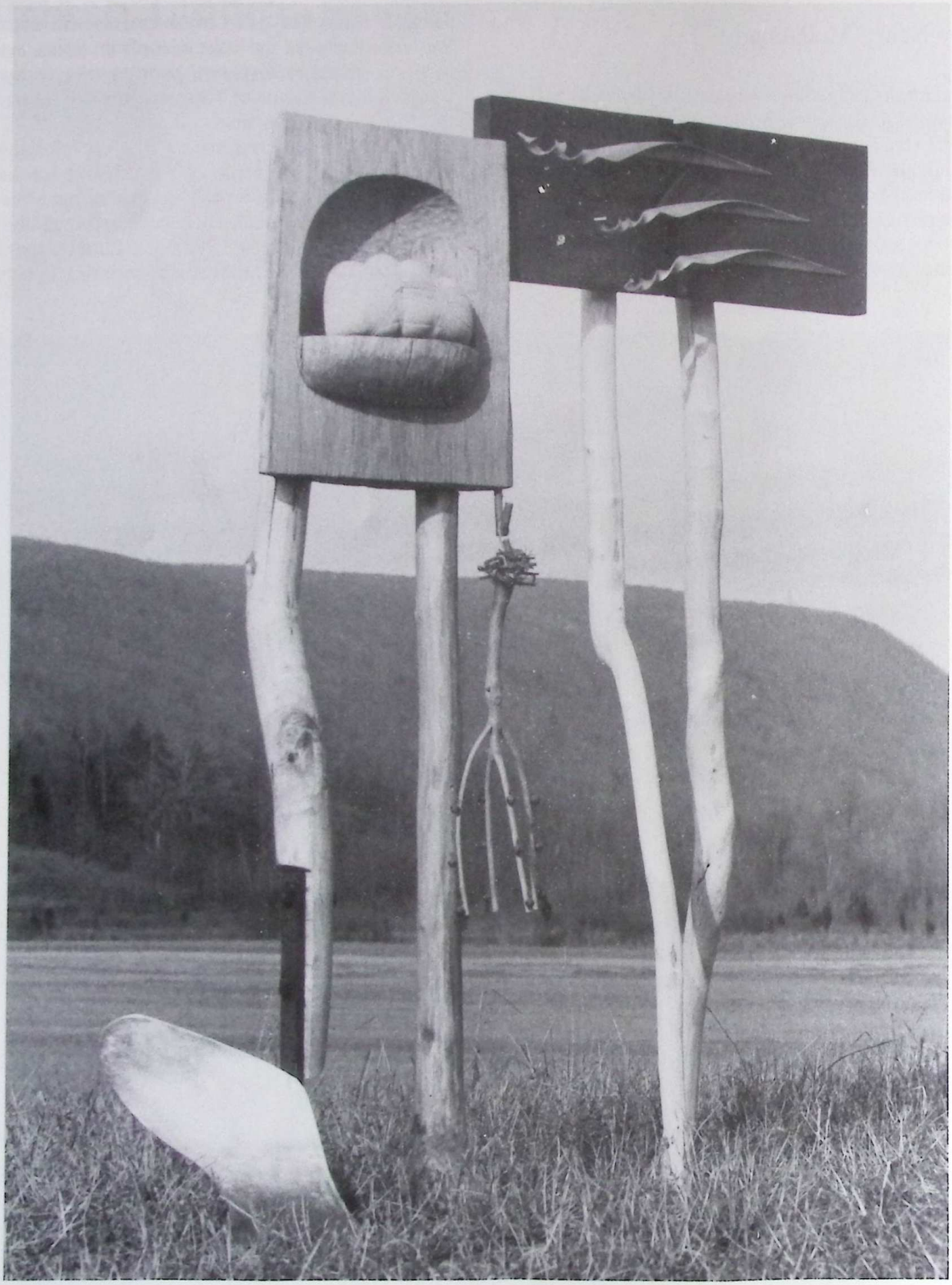
by Neery Melkonian

Kardash Onnig's life for the past two decades has been devoted to cultivating a common vision that attempts to celebrate the diversity of cultures living upon a shared land, the earth. Born in Zahleh, Lebanon to exiled parents of Armenian descent, Kardash believes that his creative endeavors carry residue of memories rich with the mixed traditions of ancient cultures that have sustained communal life for Middle and Near Eastern peoples. Also, Kardash's involvement with dominant Western society led the artist to confront issues familiar to all colonized or displaced peoples who struggle to integrate a semblance of harmony to their fragmented identities in the diasporas.

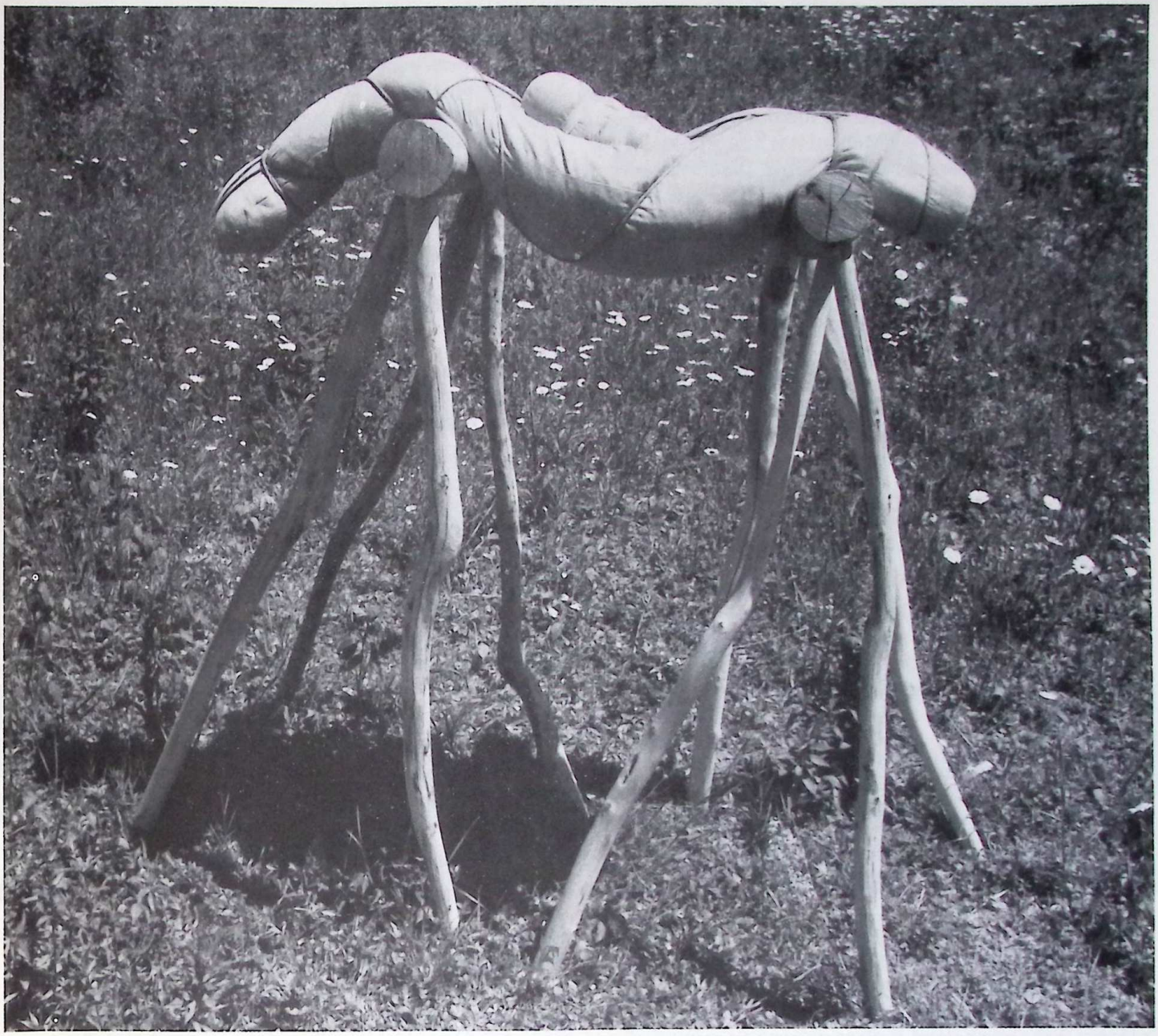
In the late sixties, the desire to reconcile the disparities inherent in such existence coincided with his father's advice—"Go to the mountain and carve out your own path." Kardash abandoned a successful career as a multimedia communicator for multinational corporations to begin a search for a three dimensional alphabet by



"Way of the Cross" Station III. Kardash Onnig, 1990.
Twigs, bread dough, raffia (photo by Kourken P.)



"The Ploughmaker." (photo by Kourken P.)



"12-Seven-1988". 1988 Los Angeles 80" high, earth, canvas, locust, oak. Collection of the artist. (photo by Kourken P.)

which a "Voki" (Spirit) could be transferred.

This search was encouraged by Kardash's occasional meeting with then an accomplished sculptor, Raoul Hague, who gave the young aspiring artist a Turner as a gift. A challenge and a tool to earning "the gift" eventually facilitated a number of direct-carved pieces, such as "Hayoun Vishdeh", which Kardash mastered during the first decade of his artistic career.

Having witnessed the exclusion of ancient myths in postmodern American cultural practices, he moved to Paris for a year. Upon his return Kardash published a book of poems which was a personal response to the rediscovery of the Goddess myth. "Tree of Life", "Mother and Child" and several other sculptures from this period link the artist with new feminist philosophies which attempted to re-identify the woman with fertility, earth and other attributes of matriarchal societies.

It wasn't till his move to rural upstate New York, however, where the artist settled with his wife and son in 1971, that Kardash began his meditations on principles

of "a stress point within a natural line" (an area in a bent twig, for example, where energy is most concentrated) which have since been the basis of his sculptures. Applying these principles to architectural accoustics, the artist built a "Mehian". Based on the floor-plan of ancient Urartian temples, the Mehian was a sanctuary for the arts and functioned as an alternative site for a host of unconventional exhibitions and performances that gained their legitimacy by a community of supporters who shared Kardash's aspirations of reconnecting with nature and returning to the indigenous.

In 1986 this objective took the artist to Los Angeles where together with sculptor Charlie Khatchadourian, they formed an artist's collective named "Hyekud". By advocating a search for and re-interpretation of symbols and customs of the Land of Urartu (pre-christian Armenia) Hyekud sought to re-establish a link between a lost mythical past and the stagnating present culture of exile.

This link was present in "Four Elements" (sculptures dedicated to the Pantheon of the Gods of Urartu), but it becomes more apparent with the "Portraits of the Dead" series. Gathered here are tree branches and leaves in bundles of bread-dough which transform discarded materials into sculptural portraits that stand as symbolic representations of the effects of rootlessness on a diasporan culture.

Through a series of public performances and exhibitions such as "Paradon" and "Hatstoukhneri Dzes", Hyekud reintroduced in modern terms ancient rituals and beliefs, while raising current issues related to racism, ecology and gender conflicts.

Perhaps more than any other single work "The Ploughmaker" embodies Kardash's socio-political ideals. The gist of this piece lies within transformation of three sword-blades into ploughshares. On the one hand, by placing these symbols of replanting over an outline of a carved map of Van to Yerevan, the artist pays tribute to Arshile Gorky whose well-known passion for this tool, Kardash reminds us, "was the result of a cultural transference which Gorky re-identified in America after his experience of crossing the borders of Van to Yerevan." On the other hand "The Ploughmaker" offers a new symbol of universal peace for all those who share the spirit or the way of Kardash's cultural survival. Hykud proposed that one can't preserve culture but develop it and underlying all of the collective's activities was a respect for differences and emphasis of positive relationships between various peoples and the earth. This synthesis offered an alternative to the confines of a collective national identity that had for 75 years defined itself, primarily, as victims of the genocide. In 1967 Kardash had already rejected this common identity-strategy of his own community, when at the New York City rally commemorating the Armenian genocide, he carried a banner proclaiming "UN—HATE A TURK THIS DAY". The artist has continued to renounce accusation without confession: reminding his countrymen of the long history of Armenian violence against their own and neighboring nations. But Kardash's path has not been politics as we know it, rather than advancing a specific platform or agenda, the artist seeks the vision that precedes politics, the current of community upon which politicians must chart the course of cultures.

In the context of renewed global awareness, Kardash asserts that the liberation of ancient peoples can no longer be dependent upon the subjugation of others, just as integration need not be based upon assimilation. In his life and work, he advocates a new perception of homeland unbound by geographical barriers and characterized mainly by a compassion for the earth and its inhabitants.

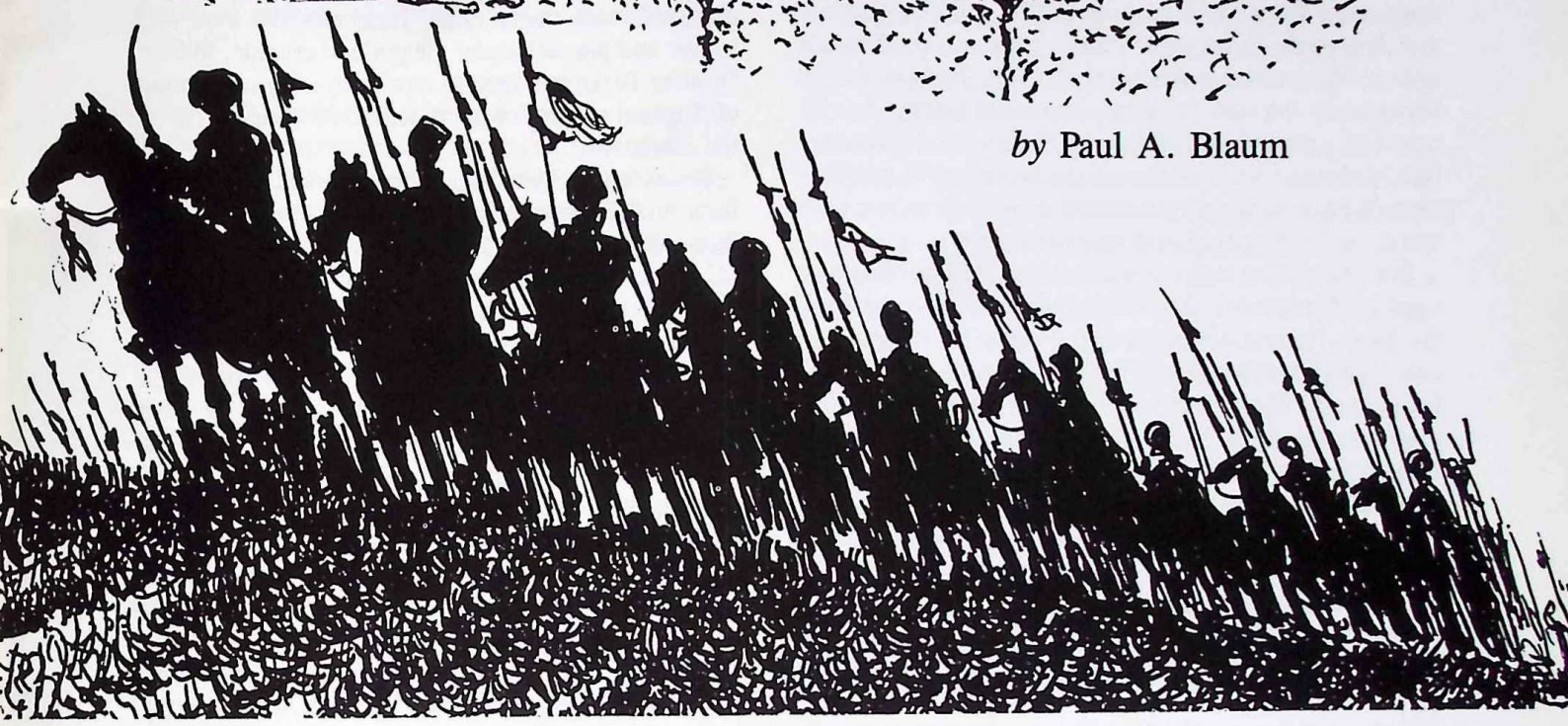
This desire was clearly expressed through Kardash's recent exhibition in New York City. On display in "Chapel of Crossing Hearts" (a portable Mehian) were the artist's "Way of the Cross" series. Once again Kardash has drawn upon nature for materials of his Fourteen Stations, utilizing thorny branches of the locust tree which occur in new growth from a hewn trunk, an analogy to the strength and rebirth of one's spiritual existence. Thematically the installation furthers a critical understanding of the mysticism inherent in the ancient story of Christ and renews the narrative's relevance to contemporary life.

Kardash's current project, "Crossing Borders," a multimedia and multicultural effort that entails a walk from Van (Turkey) to Yerevan (Armenia), can be seen as the next imperative step in realizing this larger vision. A post-modern variation of the role "ashoughs" (storytellers) played in the lives of those neighboring communities, Kardash along with a group of video and other artists, throughout their journey, plan to record and transfer the common traditions and values that have sustained the spirit of community life amongst people divided by political, religious and geographical borders.

It is the embracement of this sort of faith that allowed Mesrob Mashdots to realize his vision by creating an alphabet for the peoples inhabiting the Land of Urartu just as it has inspired others like Gomidas, Gurdjieff, Arshile Gorky and Raoul Hague to realize their visions. At specific junctures in history these individuals renewed the role of an ashough, since their gift while embracing indigenous sources, also transcended national boundaries Kardash Onnig carves a path of such visionary tradition.

THE SIEGE OF MANZIKERT

by Paul A. Blaum



The people of Manzikert had not been scathed during the first massive Turkish attack on Armenia in the fall of 1048. Like lava around a ponderous stone, the enemy advance had by-passed their fortified city, lunged westward, and reached the lofty plain of Pasin, east of Erzerum. There the invasion culminated in a furious nocturnal battle between the Turks and a combined Byzantine and Georgian force at the castle of Kapetrou (Saturday, September 10). The result was a stand-off, followed by a Turkish withdrawal. For the moment, it seemed that this *ghazwa* ("raid"), while vast and destructive, was only an aberration and not a foreshadowing of things to come.

The Turkish commander, Ibrahim Inal, uterine brother of the sultan Toghrul Beg, had been roughly handled by the Byzantines at Kapetrou. On the other hand, his lieutenants had vanquished the Georgians and taken captive their leader, the Armeno-Georgian warlord, Liparit Orbelian, a scion of the famous Mamikonian family. Liparit's capture was much applauded throughout the Muslim world, and he remained in Turkish captivity for two years. The Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus labored strenuously to have him released, even using as an intermediary with the sultan the venerable Kurdish emir Nasr ad-Daulah, who ruled Diyar Bakr and border sections of Armenia. Ultimately, Toghrul freed Liparit in a flush of generosity. Along with Liparit, Toghrul had sent the sheikh ul-Islam to the Byzantine capital to conclude a peace. Solemnly admitted to an audience with Constantine IX, the Seljuk ambassador arrogantly demanded that the Emperor pay tribute to the sultan. Constantine IX refused with great spirit, after which the envoy returned without a treaty.

He had better success in persuading the Emperor to honor Toghrul's demand that, if the Emperor wanted peace, he should renovate the mosque in Constantinople and there the *khutba* or traditional Muslim sermon on Friday should be delivered in the names of Toghrul

Beg and the Sunni caliph in Baghdad. The Syrian Jacobite chronicler, Bar Hebraeus, notes that the Emperor "restored the great mosque of the Arabs which was in the royal city (Constantinople), and hung lamps therein. And he appointed Arab praying-men thereto, and appointed regular wages for them. And he sent to Toghrul Beg one thousand bales of silken cloth, and five hundred pieces of various other kinds of stuff, and five hundred horses, and three hundred Egyptian asses, and a thousand goats, with black eyes and horns, which were very nearly as large as asses."[1] While Constantine IX and Toghrul failed to negotiate a lasting peace, their relations were for several years amicable, and we suspect that they made, if not an official truce, some gentleman's agreement to abstain from war. To this, Toghrul Beg—harassed by internal struggles—remained faithful for the next few years.[2] For the moment Toghrul and Constantine Mónomachus had become characters out of the Arabian Nights, Oriental potentates posturing to see who could be more grand and magnanimous.

Such posturing was not without significance. Toghrul —who fifteen years before had lived hand-to-mouth on the bleak steppes of central Asia—was now the premier ruler in the Muslim world in dialogue with his respectful peer, the Byzantine *basileus,* still the richest, most celebrated monarch in the Christian world. The negotiations between Constantine IX and the sultan, with the emir of Diyar Bakr as a supporting actor, show how little all the rulers of the Middle East, including Toghrul Beg, desired or even comprehended a change in the accepted balance of power. The underlying reality was that the old order was about to change with bleak and ominous implications for the Christians of the Middle East.

Within a few years, Toghrul Beg was provoked to fresh hostilities, and Manzikert, spared in 1048, would have its turn at facing the fire. Quite possibly, the sultan was piqued at the Byzantines for renewing their good relations with the Fatimid caliph of Egypt, the Shi'ite arch-enemy of the Sunni caliph in Baghdad and of Toghrul Beg himself. Toghrul Beg, as a staunch Sunni Muslim, was keenly interested in crushing the Shi'ite princes of Iraq and Iran—and ultimately the Shi'ite caliph himself. His chief mission was, not a *jihad* against Christendom for its own sake, but the restoration of Sunni Islam as the dominant force in the Muslim world, a task which would be hampered by the unholy alliance of Fatimids and Byzantines. But while Toghrul did not thirst for the blood of unbelievers, he unquestionably viewed campaigns into Byzantine Armenia as politically useful, for they would show Byzantines and Muslims alike that he was master in his own house. In sending his brother Ibrahim Inal to pillage Byzantine territory, he had been concerned mainly with diverting the warlike energies of the Turkmen tribesmen. Their nomadic habits and predatory instincts, while it made them formidable warriors, also made them a constant threat to the settled populations of Iran. The Byzantine contemporary writers, John Scylitzes and Michael Attaliates, note that Toghrul's control of the tribemen was often tenuous. Turkmen bands under Toghrul's paternal cousin, Kutlumush, and other chieftains remained clustered near the Armeno-Georgian frontiers and continued their forays despite the negotiations carried on between the sultan and Constantine IX. They were determined to remain staunch *ghuzat* ("fighters for the faith"), and they attracted many conservative Turkmens who were wed to war and plunder under the guise of crusade. But the frontier Turkmens were as much driven by resentment of Toghrul as love of booty and ideological hatred of the Christians.

It was no accident that Kutlumush and particularly Ibrahim Inal—both warrior-nomads of the old school—found their strongest following among those Turkmen chieftains who chafed at attempts by Toghrul to create an imperial sultanate, impose control over all the Turkmen tribes, and co-opt the despised methods of sedentary, bureaucratic government. In his opposition to Toghrul Beg, Kutlumush, who appears to have established himself in the region around Khoi (Her) in Azerbaijan, was even willing to send an envoy to Constantinople, offering himself as a friend and ally. Toghrul Beg could not let Kutlumush and his Turkmen nomads ricochet around the Caucasus, plundering at will and selling their services to Muslim and Christian alike. It appears that Toghrul now invaded Byzantine Armenia in an attempt to discourage cordiality between the Empire and his renegade Turkmens, while demonstrating both to Turk and Byzantine that his own prowess in war had not grown rusty.

Upon recovering from a severe illness, Toghrul Beg first moved to tidy up his northwestern frontier and bring the Kurdish princes to heel. In the Muslim year 446 (1054/1055), he advanced through Azerbaijan, and at Tabriz he received the submission of the Rawwadid emir, Wahsudan ibn Mamlan. He moved on to Gandja (now Kirovabad) and acknowledged the like subservience of the Shaddadid emir, Abu'l-Sewar. With his flanks secured, Toghrul now directed his attentions to Byzantine Armenia. It was the Armenian year 503 (March 8, 1054 - March 7, 1055), the Muslim year 446 (April 12, 1054 - April 2, 1055).[3] Toghrul, let it be said, was no Turkish Ozymandias intoxicated with delusions of grandeur, no Tamerlane reeking of gore. As if to commemorate his humble origins on the steppe, he had the figure of a bow placed at the top of his seal and, while enthroned for his public, he used two arrows for scepters.

He dressed simply in white cotton apparel and fasted on the second and fifth days of the week. "And," writes Bar Hebraeus, "he never at any time omitted (to say) his prayers." Never a great field commander—Ibrahim Inal customarily led the Turkish vanguard—Toghrul still commanded the loyalty of his men through sheer force of character, native shrewdness, and an unerring sense of purpose. Even his childlessness worked to his advantage, since he was blessed with loyal and capable nephews, not hindered by vicious or bumbling sons. Calculated policy, perhaps more than crusading zeal, guided him on his first and only personal venture into the *bilad ar-Rum*—as Muslims called the Byzantine Empire.

The Turks rumbled into Byzantine Armenia around the beginning of September. Toghrul came with a vast army, including cavalry, elephants, chariots, excellent siege equipment, and even women and children. The Armenian chronicler Matthew of Edessa describes his *ghazwa* variously as a "venomous and deadly windstorm," "a flaming black cloud," and "a deadly hailstorm." Matthew's words—hysterical rhetoric to modern ears—are beggared, traumatized attempts to describe the apocalypse of his nation. Toghrul first attacked the city of Perkri (Berkri), near the northeast tip of Lake Van, taking it by frontal assault. A frightful massacre followed, and the chief men of the city were carried off into captivity. Other towns fell to the Turks, and Toghrul next besieged Ardjish on the northeast shore of the lake. Ardjish—the Arzes of the Byzantines—resisted eight days of violent attack. Then, the inhabitants wearied of continued resistance against Toghrul's multitude, and they came out "with loud supplications" to appease his wrath. They offered him gifts in abundance—gold, silver, horses, and mules—and they made this proposal, "Sultan, lord of the world, go take Manzikert and then we and all Armenia will belong to you." This suggestion pleased the sultan, who left Ardjish and approached Manzikert or Manazkert—known as Malazgerd to the Arabs and Turks. Manzikert was one of the oldest fortress-cities of Armenia, located in the *gawar* (canton) of Apahuniq, in the province of Dourouperan. Apahuniq was a land strategically placed north of Lake Van, around the upper valley of the Murad Su, with mines rich in copper, natron, and magnesia; at this moment, it formed part of the Byzantine theme of Basparacania (Vaspurakan). Lying in the midst of a great plain, Manzikert was defended by a triple wall and irrigated with numerous fountains. Its garrison was commanded by the brave and capable *patrician* Basil Apocapes, of whom more will be said later.

Toghrul established his camp before Manzikert and occupied the valley all around. He soon realized that the city was stronger than he had thought and his troops could not subsist indefinitely on the neighboring country. He then sent divisions of his army to carry out the *ghazwa* in three directions: to the north, as far as the fortresses of Abasgia (western or coastal Georgia), up to the Parhal-dagh and the foot of the Caucasus range; to the west, as far as the forests of Djaneth (modern Djanig) or Lazistan; and to the south, as far as the mountain range called "Sim" (i.e. the Armenian Anti-Taurus, stretching from Lake Van to the Tigris, today the mountainous country around Sasun). Faced with this sudden onslaught, many of the Armenian inhabitants attempted to find sanctuary in the more remote districts of Khordzean (Khorzianene) and Hanzit. However, the Turks pursued them relentlessly, even into the forests and caves where they took refuge, and they made a vast slaughter. Frightful massacres were also committed in the *gawar* (cantons) of Terdjan and Ekeleats. One detachment of Turks passed through Taiq (now the Byzantine theme of Iberia) and reached the Chorokh River. They crossed the river and forged westward into the Byzantine theme of Chaldia. After taking booty and prisoners, they retreated toward the east and arrived at the fortified city of Baberd or Paipert—Bayburt today. There, they encountered, quite by surprise, a Byzantine force consisting of "Varangians"—Russian and Scandinavian mercenaries. The Varangians routed the Turks, killed their chief and many others, put the surviving Turks to flight, and recovered the spoil. They also freed the prisoners, "who praised God and each one went his own way." But the Varangians dared not pursue the enemy for fear of colliding with a much larger Turkish force.[4]

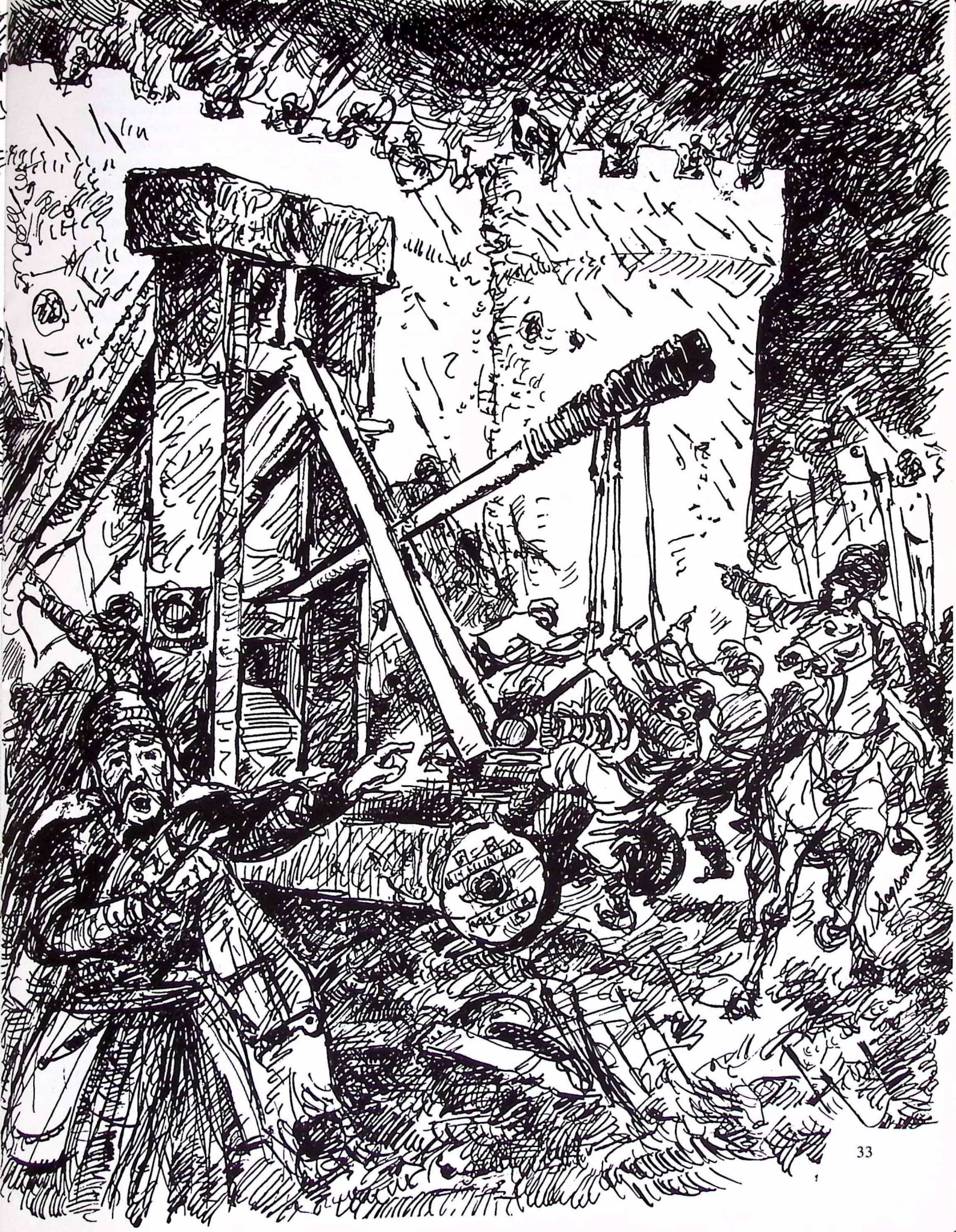
Another Turkish column sent by Toghrul plundered its way northward from Manzikert, accumulating prisoners and spoil, then assailed the Bagratid kingdom of Kars. There the Bagratid monarch, Gagik-Abas, offered a lonely but spirited resistance. His generals flung themselves on the Turks and inflicted great losses, but were ultimately surrounded, unable to break the blockade. The Armenian force was virtually annihilated, and thirty captains of noble rank were killed. One of the Armenian nobles captured was Thatul, "a man vigorous and warlike." He was brought before Toghrul Beg. The son of the "Persian" (Turkish) emir Arsuban having been grievously wounded, the sultan said to Thatul: "If he lives, I will set you free. If he dies, I will order that you be put to death as a sacrifice to him." The Armenian coolly replied: "If it were by my hand that he was wounded, he will not survive. If it were by the hand of someone else, I do not know." After several days, the young man succumbed. Hearing of this, Toghrul ordered Thatul put to death and his right arm cut off and sent to Arsuban



as consoling evidence that his son had not perished at the hand of a weakling.[5]

When Toghrul Beg had first arrived before Manzikert, the inhabitants lacked supplies both for man and beast. The contemporary Armenian chronicler, Aristakes of Lastivert, writes that, had Toghrul remained at Manzikert for ten more days, he would been able to conquer it, but "God put into the minds of the sultan and those with him a senseless notion." After three days before Manzikert, Toghrul led his army into the canton of Dvaradzo-Daph or Dovaradzadap'h, which lay between the upper Araxes, the Murad-Su, and the Bingol-Su. From there, the sultan continued north into the *gawar* of Basean (Pasin) and appeared before the redoubtable fortress of Abnikon—today the village of Avnik, about forty miles east of Erzerum. At Abnikon, Toghrul found that all the inhabitants of the area with their livestock had taken refuge. Their choice was fortunate, since Abnikon was clearly impregnable, and Toghrul shrank from attacking it. He pressed on to the northwestern border of Basean and came to a small village called Tou, the modern Boyuk-Tuya. Accompanied by only a small retinue, the sixty-year-old sultan set out incognito and clambered up a precipitous height overlooking the great fortress of Theodosiopolis or Karin—today Erzerum. Looking down on the city, he saw that it too was superbly equipped to stand siege.

Scylitzes echoes Aristakes's account here, although in less detail. He notes that Toghrul moved through the Byzantine theme of Iberia, penetrating as far as the fortress of Comium or Castrocomium (Okoumi), in Basean. Toghrul found, however, that all the inhabitants had taken refuge with their goods in the many powerful fortresses that studded that region. He was therefore able to accomplish nothing. Then, hearing that Byzantine forces were mobilizing at Caesarea (Kayseri) in Cappadocia and for that reason hesitating to advance further west, the sultan decided to fall back on Vaspurakan. Once again he found the population safely sheltered behind the ramparts of strong fortresses. It was then that he besieged Manzikert in earnest.[6] During the absence of Toghrul in Basean, the people of Manzikert had not been idle. They had quietly gone out of their city and gathered food for themselves and fodder for their livestock, for it was the time of harvest. When Toghrul again came before Manzikert, the inhabitants were amply supplied with provisions. Recommencing the siege of Manzikert, Toghrul surrounded it on all sides and took up his residence at a place which Matthew of Edessa



calls K'arakloukh ("Top of the Rock"). The next day, at daybreak, he ordered the trumpets sounded, to which his troops responded with a deafening roar. They then strove against Manzikert with the greatest bravery and tenacity, and the inhabitants resisted in kind. Matthew of Edessa writes: "What shall I now say concerning this town full of Christians who courageously fought as combatants, the whole population of the town fighting together, and who resisted the unceasing assaults (of the enemy)."

Their commander was worthy of them. The *patrician* Basil Apocapes is described by Matthew, sincerely but formulaically, as a "benevolent and pious man, compassionate toward orphans and widows, and a benefactor and conciliator of people." Aristakes writes that Apocapes was "a pious man who humbly submitted himself to God through fasting and prayers. He invoked the aid of the All-Powerful God, and, being thus armed, he fortified himself in the faith."[7] The Byzantine chroniclers—who dwell more on his prudence and valor—are no less admiring of Apocapes, and he deserves a degression. Basil Apocapes was the son of the patrician Abu K'ab or Abukap by a Georgian mother. The scion of an illustrious Armenian family, Abu K'ab had formerly been tent-guard of the famed *curopalates* ("lord of the palace") David the Great, prince of Taiq, and no doubt entered Byzantine service when Taiq fell to the Byzantines after David's death (March, 1000). He remained a powerful feudal lord in his native Taiq, but served the Empire elsewhere in various military capacities, almost certainly under the name of Michael Apocapes. Thus, he joined that well-known subspecies who were both Byzantine functionary and Armenian warlord.

As a prominent army chief already deep into middle age, Abu K'ab, now Apocapes, had accompanied the Byzantine emperor Romanus III Argyrus in his abortive campaign against the emir of Aleppo in 1030. He warned the Emperor of impending treachery in his own ranks, and for that reason, it seems, Romanus gave him command of the frontier city of Edessa (Urfa) and neighboring marches. Apocapes, writes Matthew, "built up and organized the surrounding territory." As governor of Edessa, he settled new inhabitants in Edessa after the disastrous Muslim siege of 1031/1032, wisely befriended the local Monophysite Christian population, and encouraged the Monophysites to rebuilt their churches after the Muslims had burned them. Apocapes was probably commandant at Edessa when the city was attacked in the spring of 1036 by a large coalition of Arabs and Kurds led by the Arab emir of Harran, Shabib ibn Waththab. Hard-pressed, the garrison took refuge in the citadel and held out for over a year until reinforcements came from Antioch. An Arab force subsequently attempted to capture Edessa through a Trojan horse stratgem, but this was foiled by the cunning and vigilance of the "Iberian" *protospatharius* ("first sword-bearer") Varasvatzes—whom most moderns identify with Apocapes. Having weathered a long Muslim blockade, "Edessa remained to the Rhomaye, and they ruled and flourished therein." Apocapes's protege, the Byzantine *protospatharius* Eustathius Boilas, calls him "the most illustrious and famous *dux*," but otherwise speaks ill of Apocapes father and son, stating in his will that they had slandered him, defrauded him of four village properties, and even plotted against his life. Perhaps the Apocapes family were indeed bad neighbors, but the complaints of Boilas may be yet another sign of the bad blood between Greek Byzantines and the Armenians, even those of the Orthodox faith.[8] Eustathius Boilas states that Apocapes senior had died in Taiq, "in seemly fashion," by 1059. Under such a father, Basil Apocapes had the best of apprenticeships and was thus prepared for his moment of destiny.

Matthew writes: "He [Basil Apocapes] strengthened the entire town [by recruiting] courageous men and women, and in the name of the emperor promised all of them honors and high positions; thus day and night he never ceased encouraging and exhorting the whole town." Night and day, writes Aristakes, Apocapes exhorted the priests of Manzikert to pray and chant the psalms. The priests passed day and night in continual processions, carrying crosses and beating the *jamahar*—a wooden gong struck with a mallet to summon the faithful—and making great cries of supplication to God. Tired of hearing these clamorings, Toghrul Beg inquired as to the cause and was told that these were the invocations of the besieged to God. The sultan lay siege to the city for one month. Each day, he ordered two attacks, one at daybreak, the other in the evening. Fortunately for the garrison, a Turkish prince and one of Toghrul's own familiars betrayed the assault plans of the sultan at every turn, sometimes by word of mouth, sometimes in writing. More than once, he wrote the sultan's plans on a piece of paper, which he attached to an arrow and fired into the city while in the guise of directing an assault. The traitor would tell the garrison what spot to defend on the following day, and thus, in whatever place the enemy attacked, whether by night or day, the Christians stood at battle stations. The Turk's warnings were particularly useful when Toghrul Beg sought to dig a tunnel under the walls and enter the city from within. On one occasion the defenders of Manzikert built a countertunnel to intercept the Turkish sappers and were able to capture the whole party of diggers, including Toghrul's own father-in-law, called in

Armenian Ozguedzam or Oskecam ("the Golden-Haired One"). They dragged their captives to the top of the ramparts and executed them en masse.[9]

The enemy then brought up engines of war with which they carried on the siege. At that point, an elderly Armenian priest with a gift for engineering set up his own ballista and neutralized the Turkish catapults with well-aimed shots. Aristakes writes that, whenever the Turks placed a stone in the sling of their catapult, the priest directed his ball straight at the oncoming stone and intercepted it in mid-air, knocking it back on top of the Turks. The Turkish artillerymen attempted to fire their catapults seven times, and each time their stone was brought down by a rock from the priest's ballista.

Toghrul now ordered a catapult of colossal size to be hauled to Manzikert from Bitlis. This monstrosity had been built over three decades before by the Byzantine emperor Basil II and designed for an attack on the Muslim city of Khoi in Azerbaijan. The Armenian historians tell us that it weighed fifteen *adil* or about 7,500 pounds, required 400 men to drag it along, and could hurl a stone weighing sixty pounds.[10] When this weapon was in position, the Turks loaded the catapult, called in their language a *baban,* and fired a stone which crashed into the wall of Manzikert, tearing open a large breach. Three sentinels were killed, as well as "a sentry of the advance guard who was thrown into the town." At the sight of the breach, terror seized the people of Manzikert, and they beseeched God to come to their aid. Joy reigned in the Turkish camp. The following day, the leader of Toghrul's Dailamite troops offered to lead his men in a grand assault.[11] An intrepid warrior, he drew near to the breach and sought to fight his way into the city. Suddenly, he stumbled and fell. At once, some of the defenders threw down an iron hook which impaled the Dailamite, dragging his body up the face of the wall and into the city.

This setback demoralized the Turks, and they returned to their camp, while the people of Manzikert were gladdened by this change in fortune. Their spirits improved when the priest aimed his ballista at the Turkish catapult and smashed its tie beams. "Thus," writes Matthew, "the town was given new strength and courage, for the inhabitants were beset by fear." The Turks now erected a protective barrier made of bales of cotton and like material to shield the catapult from the missiles fired by the priest. After a few days it had been restored to service. Once again, the Turks began hurling huge rocks against the ramparts, and "all the inhabitants of the town were terrified and trembled in fear."

Basil Apocapes now sent out a proclamation to all the defenders: "Whoever is able to go forth and burn down that catapult will receive much largess in gold and silver and many horses and mules from me, and honors and a high rank from the Emperor. If he is killed by the infidels and has a relative or son, all that will go to him." A mercenary and stranger took up his offer. His name has been lost to history, and we know only that he was a "Frank" or "Latin"—a soldier of fortune from Western Europe. His timely intervention at this moment of peril was the stuff of miracle, even of myth. It was inspired, writes Michael Attaliates, by "the omnipotent God, who governs all things in our interest, the God who always watches over the Christian people." The Frank came forward, and Matthew of Edessa recalls his words to the people of Manzikert: "I will go forth and burn down that catapult, and today my blood shall be shed for all the Christians, for I have neither wife nor children to weep over me." The Frank asked for a sturdy charges and placed a helmet on his head. His only armor was a buckler or cuirass which covered his back. On the end of his spear, he carried a letter and in his bosom, he cradled one, or perhaps three, glass jars of an inflammable substance. Aristakes remembers it as a mixture of naphtha and sulphur. The Frank rode out of Manzikert and entered the Turkish camp, crying out that he was a *mandator* or messenger. Matthew writes: "When the infidel troops saw the letter on the end of his spear, they took him for a courier and said nothing. It was midday, and since it was extremely hot everyone was sleeping in his tent. Coming up to the catapult, the Frank stopped before it. The infidels thought that he was admiring the hugeness of the machine; however, at that moment he took hold of one of the bottles and threw it against the catapult. Then, like an eagle, he circled around the catapult and threw another bottle against it. He came around once again and hit the machine with the third bottle." Instantly, huge violet flames shot up, devouring the catapult and reducing it to ashes, along with its protective barrier of cotton bales. The Frank

One of the great moments in the long history of Armenian courage and resistance was the siege of Manzikert. Paul Blaum recounts the crucial battle that took place between the Seljuk Turks and the defending Armenians.

wheeled his horse around and rode hard for Manzikert. Astonished, the Turks leaped on their mounts and attempted to overtake him but without success. The Frank returned to Manzikert without a wound, and the infuriated sultan ordered the camp guards put to death.

Matthew of Edessa writes: "All the Christian faithful were extremely happy, and the Frank was honored with largess by all the townspeople. When the emperor Monomachus heard of this, he sent for him and elevated him to a high rank. Even the sultan marvelled greatly at what the Frank had done, and he asked to see this person who had accomplished such a courageous feat so that he might give him gifts; however, the Frank refused to go." Apocapes now commanded the people of Manzikert to go up on the walls and hurl invectives at the sultan. Enraged, Toghrul ordered his sappers to resume attempts to undermine the walls, but the townspeople took courage, "paying no heed to his (war) machines." When the Turkish diggers came close to the walls, they were seized with iron hooks, dragged up to the top of the rampart, and butchered. Baffled by his repeated ill fortune, the sultan wished to abandon the siege. One of his generals approached him, however, and urged him to persevere one more day. Unremembered by the Armenian sources, this man is called "Alkan" by John Scylitzes, who describes him as commander of the troops from Chorasmia (Khwarizm), in what is now Uzbekistan. Toghrul granted his request to lead one more assault against Manzikert, and Alkan made his dispositions for the next day.

At dawn, Alkan had all Turkish engines of war massed at the eastern gate of the city. There, the ramparts appeared weaker and less elevated—and the garrison more vulnerable to arrows and other projectiles fired from the opposing heights. Toghrul and his principal officers stationed themselves on high ground before the same gate. Alkan now launched his attack. The Turkish artillery bombarded the walls with a ceaseless rain of stones, and enemy bowmen raked the parapets with arrows. Under this cover, a large storming party led by Alkan himself moved forward under the protection of ponderous four-wheeled mantelets sheathed with hides. From the walls, Basil Apocapes took stock of this new tactic. He had his men conceal themselves behind the battlements after having armed themselves with all types of missiles. After a time, the Turks noticed that no defender returned their fire, and they assumed that their artillery and bowmen had cleared the walls. Alkan and his men, sheltered by the wheeled mantelets, advanced to the foot of the wall and prepared to climb up. At that moment, Basil Apocapes cried out, "May Christ be with us!"

This was a signal for all the defenders to rise up as one man. Some of the Christians wielded huge beams sharpened at the end, which they used to ram the mantelets and send them crashing to the ground. The Turks were now exposed to a full panoply of defensive weapons. Some of the defenders threw down the dreaded iron hooks and snatched up enemy soldiers with the barbs, thus, becoming, in a bizarre parody of the Gospel, fishers of men. Those Turks who evaded the hooks were showered with a steady downpour of rocks, javelins, and arrows, until not one member of the storming party was left alive. Alkan, like the others, had been concealed under one of the mantelets. His magnificent armor betrayed him as a person of consequence, so that two young soldiers came out of Manzikert, seized him, and dragged him into the city by the hair. Basil Apocapes immediately ordered his head cut off and catapulted into the midst of the Turks.

Dismayed by his latest discomfiture, Toghrul Beg ordered the assault ended. Filled with bravado, the townspeople took a sow and catapulted it into the sultan's camp. "Then," writes Matthew of Edessa, "all the inhabitants of the town called out and said, 'Oh sultan, take that pig for your wife, and we will give you Manzikert for a dowry.' When the sultan heard this, he became filled with anger and had those who had brought him to Manzikert decapitated." Attaliates exudes: "Then the enemy leader, discouraged and comprehending the great stupidity of his own people who were denouncing the cowardice of the Romans (Byzantines), whereas the latter were possessed of a virtue so remarkable, immediately broke camp and returned to his own country." For his brilliant defense of Manzikert, Basil Apocapes was named duke of Edessa and launched on an illustrious career. By 1059, he would hold the titles of *magistros* and *archon* of the Bulgarian theme of Paradounabon.[12]

Toghrul Beg withdrew from Manzikert two days after the burning of the catapult. According to Scylitzes, he informed the people of Manzikert that he was called home by urgent matters but that he would visit them again the following spring with even greater forces. Muslim sources tend to corroborate this; Bar Hebraeus writes that "he (Toghrul) turned back to pass the winter in 'Adhorbijan so that he might return to the territory of the Rhomaye."[13] In the course of his retreat, Toghrul passed by the Armenian city of Ardzke, built on a hill overlooking Lake Van. The waters of the lake provided a natural bulwark on one side, while on its landward side the city was protected by imposing fortifications. Thus, the inhabitants of Ardzke were not alarmed by Toghrul's approach. But the Turks discovered a sand bank, forded the lake, and stormed into the city. They massacred many of the defenders, took prisoners and booty, and departed. With this salve to his honor, Toghrul returned home without attempting to occupy any of the

territory he had ravaged. His retreat seems to have been hastened by stiffening Byzantine resistance. The Emperor Constantine IX was ailing badly now and in fact had only a few months to live. Nevertheless, he had quickly sent to the eastern front whatever troops he could muster. They were led by the *patrician* Michael, who held the rank of *akolouthos* or "acolyte"—that is, commander of the Varangian guard or *druzhina* at the imperial palace. The Emperor ordered Michael to concentrate the detachments of Frankish and Varangian mercenaries scattered throughout the themes of Iberia and Chaldia. Hearing of these preparations, Toghrul Beg decided not to risk battle with these formidable troops, but decamped in haste and retreated toward Tabriz. About the same time, Constantine IX transferred Byzantine troops to the East from the Balkan theme of Macedonia. A popular superstition predicted that the Turks would be destroyed by an army similar to that which Alexander the Great led against the Persians. Thus, the Emperor was careful to send troops from the theme of Macedonia.[14]

Toghrul Beg never again invaded Armenia. He seems already to have received an invitation from the vizier to the Sunni caliph urging him to march on Baghdad and overthrow its Shi'ite ruler. Soon after his return from Manzikert, the sultan mobilized his troops anew and concentrated a vast supply of munitions at Hamadan. A year later, he entered the Muslim capital in triumph and established firm control of the Islamic heartland. Warned by the example of Manzikert, he was content to leave the conquest of Byzantine Armenia to his successor.

ENDNOTES

[1]**Bar Hebraeus (Gregory Abu'l-Faradj),** *The Chronography,* translated from the Syriac into English by Ernest A. Wallis Budge (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), Vol. I, Book X, 230, p. 206; Gustave Schlumberger, *L'Epopee Byzantine A La Fin Du Dixieme Siecle,* Vol. III (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1905), p. 560.

[2]**Michael Attaliates,** *History,* translated from the Greek into French by Henri Gregoire, in *Byzantion,* Vol. XXVIII (Brussels: Fondation Byzantine et Neo-Grecque, 1959), Chapter XXVI, p. 355; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography,* Vol. I. Book X, 231, p. 207; Schlumberger, *L'Epopee Byzantine,* Vol. III, p. 598.

[3]**Matthew of Edessa,** *Chronicle,* translated from the Armenian into English by Ara Edmond Dostourian and submitted as a thesis requirement to the graduate school of Rutgers University (New Brunswick, New Jersey: January, 1972), Part II, 3, p. 137; Schlumberger, *L'Epopee Byzantine,* Vol. III, p. 610, note 1.

[4]**Aristakes of Lastivert,** *Recit Des Malheurs De La Nation Armenienne,* French translation from the Russian text of Karen Yusbashian by Marius Canard and Haig Berberian (Brussels: Editions de Byzantion, 1973), Chapter XVI, 87-88, pp. 79-80. The correct identification of the Byzantine mercenaries as "Vrang-K" or "Varangians" is preserved only in the most ancient manuscript of Aristakes at the Matenadaran, while in other manuscripts the mercenaries are called Franks, a mistake which Schlumberger and Rene Grousset repeat, perhaps with Gallic pride. See Aristakes of Lastivert, Chapter XVI, 88, p. 80, note 1.

[5]**Aristakes of Lastivert,** Chapter XVI, 88, p. 80; Rene Grousset, *Histoire De L'Armenie Des Origines A 1071* (Paris: Payot, 1947), p. 599; Schlumberger, *L'Epopee Byzantine,* Vol. III, p. 603.

[6]**John Scylitzes-George Cedrenus,** *Compendium Of The Histories,* incorporated in the *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* (Bonn: Weber, 1839), Vol. II, p. 590; Schlumberger, *L'Epopee Byzantine,* Vol. III, p. 599; Bar Hebraeus writes: "And he (Toghrul) attacked the fort of Minasgerd (Manzikert), and sat down by it for a long time, but he was unable to take it; and he seized the country district (round about). And he came and seized also the country of Arzan ar-Rum, which up to that time had been under the Rhomaye." See Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography,* Vol. I, Book X, 231, p. 207.

[7]**Aristakes of Lastivert,** Chapter XVI, 90, p. 82; Matthew of Edessa, Part II, 3, p. 139 and Part II, 71, p. 252.

[8]**Scylitzes-Cedrenus,** Vol. II, pp. 515-516 and pp. 520-521; Bar Hebraeus, Book X, 217, pp. 194-195 and 221, p. 198; Judah Benzion Segal, *Edessa: "The Blessed City,"* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 218-220; Speros Vryonis, Jr., "The Will Of A Provincial Magnate, Eustathius Boilas (1059)," Chapter V in *Byzantium: Its Internal History And Relations With The Muslim World* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1971), p. 264 and p. 276.

[9]**Aristakes of Lastivert,** Chapter XVI, 91, p. 83; Matthew of Edessa, Part II, 3, p. 139; Schlumberger, *L'Epopee Byzantine,* Vol. III, pp. 603-604.

[10]**Aristakes of Lastivert,** Chapter XVI, 92, p. 85; Matthew of Edessa, Part II, 3, pp. 139-140.

[11]Earlier translations of Aristakes state incorrectly that the charge at the breach was led by a general with the proper name of Ordilme, not by a commander of the Dailamites. See Aristakes of Lastivert, Chapter XVI, 92, p. 85, note 1.

[12]**Michael Attaliates,** Chapter XXVII, p. 356; Matthew of Edessa, Part II, 3, p. 142; Scylitzes-Cedrenus, Vol. II, pp. 591-93; Schlumberger, *L'Epopee Byzantine,* Vol. III, p. 610; Vryonis, "The Will Of A Provincial Magnate," p. 274.

[13]**Bar Hebraeus,** *Chronography,* Vol. I, Book X, 231, p. 207; C.E. Bosworth, "The Political And Dynastic History Of The Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1217)," Chapter 1 in *Cambridge History Of Iran,* Volume V, edited by J.A. Boyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 44.

[14]**Scylitzes-Cedrenus,** Vol. II, pp. 606-607 and p. 611; Schlumberger, *L'Epopee Byzantine,* Vol. III, p. 598. Scylitzes erroneously dates the siege of Manzikert to 1050 and speaks of a second invasion of Byzantine territory by Toghrul Beg in 1052, but the two invasions are not distinguished by other historians and no doubt are one and the same.

Two Portraits

DEDEH

by David Kherdian

Dedeh, I was to find out much later, meant Grandfather in Turkish. It could also mean Father of the Race, in which case the name could be taken as a title, or as an earned honor—an acquired name that effaced the given name of the man.

I was not aware of it at the time, but Dedeh, I am sure, had been named in this way.

He was in no way noble or outstanding. Nor was he distinguished, or in any way special. And yet, as the accumulation of lived moments coalesce and pass gradually into memory, what emerges from my own remembrance is a man who possessed these qualities, along with the still greater quality of humility.

He was, I believe now, all of these things because he was none of them. He was none of them because he thought of himself as nothing. I don't think he even thought of himself as simple or unimportant. Perhaps he thought of himself as insignificant.

It was because of this right attitude—that is possessed by so few, and understood and valued by even fewer—that he was able to find his function, which he had assumed, I am sure, without appointment, and had fulfilled without any special thanks.

Whenever I rode my bike up State Street, he would be there, sitting on his metal folding chair, mornings and afternoons, in front of the doors of St. Mesrob Church.

Traveling west from home, I would pass first the fire station, and wave to the blue uniformed firemen, sitting in threes and fours in their sturdy wooden chairs. They would wave back and call out, and I would be proud to be recognized by men whose badges flashed so brilliantly in the sun.

And then, just next door, I would see Dedeh again, in his old clothes, seated, serene and silent, and I would look away and bicycle on.

Sundays he would stand in front of the church and enter with the last of the parishoners. But all week he kept his vigil alone, nodding to his countrymen as they passed, as he did to those who occasionally entered the doors he sat beside.

The meek shall inherit the earth, the Bible says. Dedeh had inherited his portion of it while he lived.

He grows more understandable and cherishable with each passing year.

THE STRANGER

What was it I wanted?

What was it that kept me from ever having the security that seemed the birthright of my companions?

The farther out my life went the more I became aware of my origins, the complexities that drove me, the conditions of my life that seemed to give me no peace.

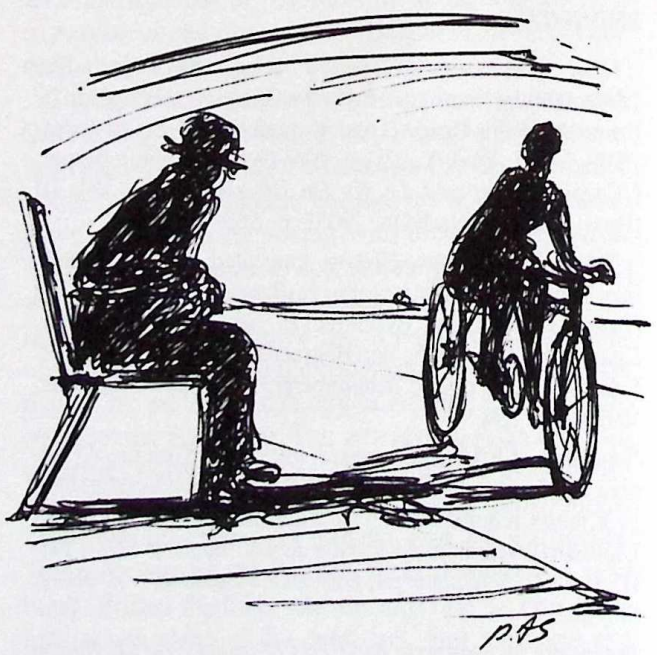
But then, little by little, I began to see that the life I had been given was the life I needed. I had to understand my life, not anyone else's. But I needed all the other lives, too. And all the other places, as well as the longing for my own place: the one I had left and the one I was seeking to find.

What was that place? Was it also myself?

I began to find my way, and my way was writing. Through words I was able to recapture images from the past, and I began to find an order in the chaos in which I had lived. My meaning grew, and in growing it began to reveal the meaning of my life on earth.

It had happened in mystery, the mystery of words, the mystery of breath, and the mystery of earth and the many roots we had placed there.

I had found a way, my own way, to persist.



The Weaver of Wisdom

by Martin Robbins

After he invented the Armenian alphabet, the scholar-monk Mashtots invited those who would use it to "recognize wisdom and good counsel" and to "understand the words of genius." Nearly a millenium after Meshtots did his work at the library of Alexandria, a modern Armenian publisher is living up to that admonition by doing his work with words in his apartment in Manhattan.

During the past ten years, Jack Antreassian has recognized Mashtots' wisdom in more than two dozen books which he has published under the imprint of Ashod Press. He's also exercised good counsel on behalf of the Press. For example, when he learned that Michael [Depoian] Casey's book of poems about the Vietnam war, *Obscenities,* had gone out of print, he contacted him. Recalling that one critic had praised the poet for having the best ear for soldier speech he had ever encountered, Antreassian wanted to keep the book in print. After the Yale University Press turned the rights over to Casey, Ashod Press printed a second edition.

Antreassian has also translated four of the Ashod Press books himself, which not only shows his understanding of "the words of genius" but also illustrates his dedication to the writing of others and his sense of the contemporary idiom.

The twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth Ashod Press books came out in 1990: Diana Der Hovanessian's second book of poems with the Press, *Songs of Bread, Songs of Salt,* and Hagop Nersoyan's *From Istanbul to Aghtamar: An Armenian Pilgrimage.* If we placed them next to the other Ashod titles on a book shelf, together they would measure almost two feet—though such a material way to measure a small but significant contribution to Armenian literature seemed a bit beside the point to Antreassian.

There's better way to judge the praiseworthiness of Ashod Press books. In one of *The Fables of Mkhitar Gosh,* which Jack published in 1987, the medieval cleric and traveler wrote: "A lavishing of praise on what lacks the capacity to generate light is to be rejected."

Ashod Press has brought to light a variety of books, ranging from poetry to cookbooks, from memoirs and fiction about the Genocide to Eghishe Charents's Selected Prose, *Across Two Worlds,* which Antreassian translated with Marzbed Margossian.

"I've published the books I've liked," said Antreassian. "Our purpose has always been to publish good books by good writers which might not otherwise have seen print."

Does Antreassian think he's succeeded?

"I might say yes: 26 books so far are, after all, 26 books; but there is so much more than can and needs to be done, so I might say no."

He started Ashod Press after Ararat Press was "stupidly aborted." He had founded the magazine *Ararat* and served as one of Ararat Press's three editors, so Antreassian knew that "we had good writers and good literature that we felt should be given some attention. And who would do that if we didn't?"

The press was named after his older brother, Ashod, who was killed in 1938 while serving in the Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish civil war. A look back into Armenian history shows that the name may also suit the function that a small press performs in the current American publishing scene. Ashod the Great, founder and first king of the Bagratid kingdom of Armenia (884-890), realized the danger of Byzantine expansionism and maintained an independent policy with his empire.

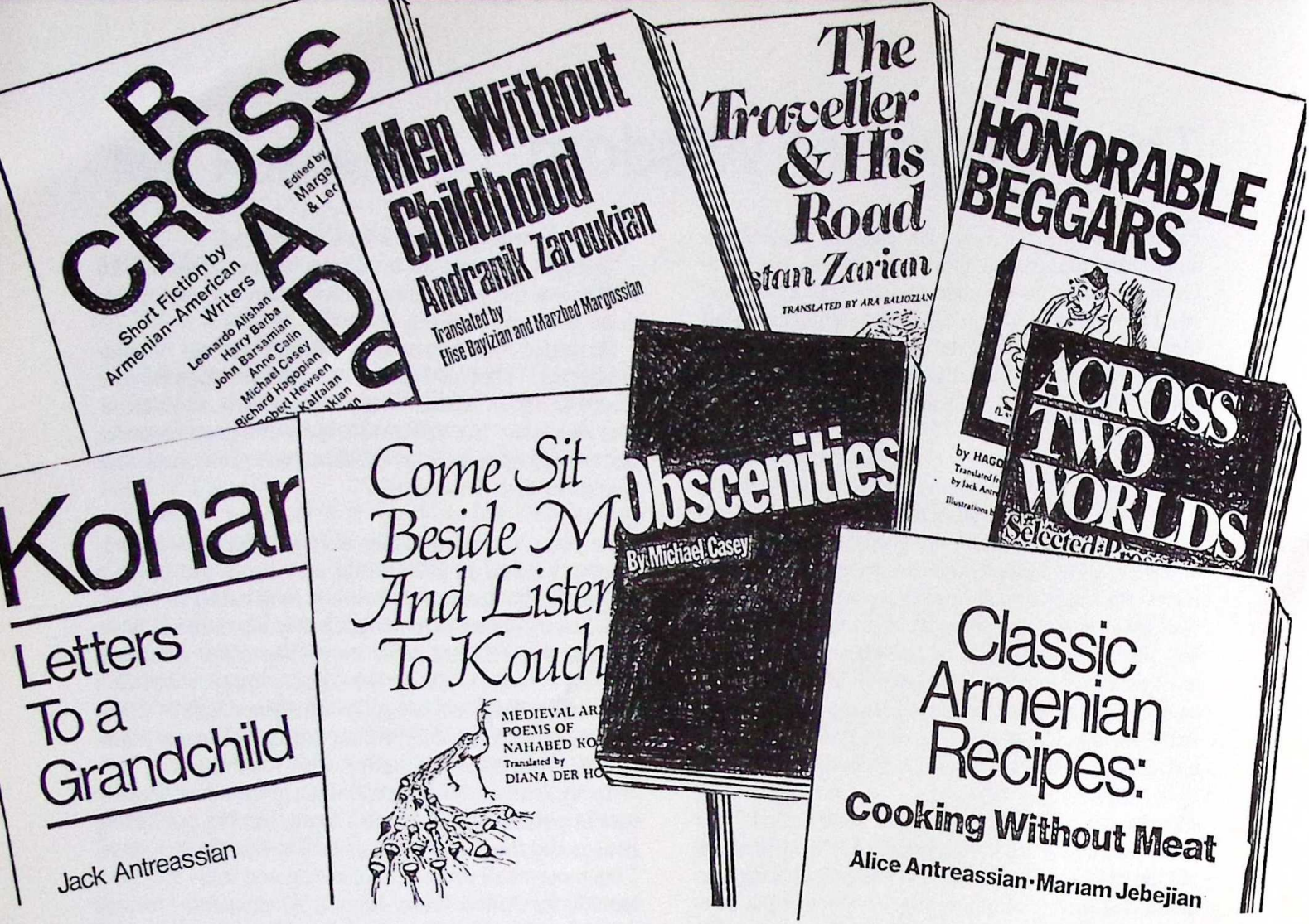
Today, pursuing an independent policy has become rare in publishing. More and more, the big publishing houses and the literary agents go for blockbuster sales. Like most small presses, marketing and sales are problematic for Ashod Press. In fact, Antreassian admitted that "our principal shortcoming has been in promotion and distribution."

The operation has remained the same over its ten years: all the work is done in Antreassian's apartment in Manhattan. Although he stores books in his son Michael's cellar in Flushing, Jack keeps 30-40 copies of each title in the work room in his apartment.

The first Ashod Press book, his older brother Antranig's *A Cup of Bitterness,* is a short story collection about the psychological problems of Genocide survivors, which Jack translated from the Western Armenian dialect. The last line of a story written in 1949, "Uncle Baghdasar," not only reveals Antranig's feelings but also shows Jack's attitudes toward giving undue reverence to the past: Ararat's "name no longer held my consolation or illusion."

Some Ashod Press books show less known sides of the Armenian character—humor as opposed to pathos. Had he set out to correct some common notions about Armenians? Antreassian said that by publishing books which expressed humor and not suffering he hadn't tried to correct such notions. "But I am weary of the stereotype of suffering, maybe reinforced by the recent quake."

Reflecting on the variety of books he's published, Jack



said that "much of the translated stuff is critical if not damning." For example, in 1983 Ashod Press published Hagop Baronian's *The Peril's of Politeness,* which Jack translated. As Michael Kermian wrote in that book's introduction, "Baronian aimed his bitter shafts at the false values of his time."

Ashod books are beautifully designed by Adrina Zanazanian, a painter and a commercial artist, who has also illustrated some of them. Most of the books are softbound and 6x9 inches, which Antreassian finds to be a convenient format. About one-fifth have been put out in odd sizes.

Two of these were cookbooks his wife did, *Armenian Recipes: 40 Days of Lent* and *Classic Armenian Recipes.* The cook books have sold well and have been well reviewed in the general press. The *L.A. Weekly* called the latter title "one of those rare works which do so much to slow down the loss of authentic ethnic cuisines. *The New York Times* praised the recipes and the book—" conveniently presented in loose-leaf form, with a washable green plastic over that folds to create an easel so that recipes are easily read during cooking." Mimi Sheraton discovered Armenian cuisine through Alice's books.

Obviously, Alice Antreassian succeeded in making the cookbook "a *living* book, not one that sits idly on your shelf" ("Foreword"). She compiled *Classic Armenian Recipes* with matriarch Mariam Jebejian, who comes from a long line of Armenian priests and archbishops, speaks no English, and still cooks as they did in the old days. Together they may well have evoked some of the Armenian spirit, or *voki,* when they wrote that "the skillful blending of spices and herbs can be an art as creative as that of a musician or painter."

As for the future, Antreassian has no thoughts of retirement yet. He doesn't have to make the kind of projections for Ashod Press which the editors of large publishing houses have to show to their marketing people.

He is currently finishing his translation of the first volume of his brother Antranig's trilogy. Tentatively titled *Toward the Sunset,* the book deals with life in Armenia before the Genocide. Jack hopes to publish this volume in late 1991 and will then have two volumes of the trilogy out—with *Death and Resurrection: A Novel of the Armenian Massacres* long in print with the Ashod Press. Antranig, now 81, is working on the third volume. Jack hasn't decided on an English version of the general



title, the Armenian being something like *Devastation and Revival.*

There are two writers Antreassian plans to publish because he thinks they will give continuity between the old and the new expression of Armenian life: Axel Bakounts, for his novels and short stories, and Hrant Matevossian, for his short stories and plays. In addition to working on these projects, he plans two more books in 1991, a translation of an Armenian poet, and a collection of Armenian-American short stories, most of which appeared in *Ararat* over the years.

Antreassian has a long-range vision for the future of Armenian publishing in America. He wants "a sustained program that would make Ashod Press look like nothing." "My dream is seeing some institution, church (unlikely) or cultural, or even an independent group establish an ongoing publishing operation that will produce eight or ten books a year, and go on from there. The Diocese could serve as an excellent distributor and we could have a book available in 50 to 100 parishes all over the country."

Antreassian hopes that the new generation of leadership will have a "different idea" about the importance of publishing, distributing, and reading Armenian books. He said that he "wants it to keep going, not based on one guy's interest. Otherwise, why knock myself out."

Over the first ten years of its existence, the Ashod Press has certainly exemplified Antreassian's goals. His list shows balance between books about the homeland and its rich past, and the yearning for—as well as the bitterness over—what has been lost and destroyed by time and the Turks.

Perhaps in the short run, and in response to an outsider's question, he did agree that "every thinking Armenian is like a radio station in the middle of a storm." Yet the messages which Ashod Press has sent to distant places have received answers, have generated some light.

A better description of what Jack Antreassian has accomplished occurs later in Gostan Zarian's book when the traveller has gone to "The Village of the Orphans." In that chapter, Zarian observed that "people live and endure when they follow their inner law. What counts in life is not multiplicity of ideas but a certain quality of attitude, action, responsibility, commitment, and the creative urge."

Yet when one examines the shelf of Ashod Press books, their titles printed in bold primary colors, one discovers

that the content and tone vary, as well as the genre. There are books with wit and wisdom, and in addition to personal and fictional histories of the Genocide, the list of Ashod books includes several volumes of poetry and fiction, as well as the charming medieval *Fables of Mkhitar Gosh.*

The balance in the Press's list of publications might be illustrated by an observation from the poet and critic Victor Howes. In his introduction to Vahan Tekeyan's book of selected poems, *Sacred Wrath,* translated by Diana Der Hovanessian and Marzbed Margossian, Howes writes: "As an Armenian during the Turkish persecutions. . . [Tekeyan] lived at the capital of pain," yet he "is not a poet of lasting bitterness. More commonly his spirit is renewed by contact with the things of this world, by the sea, the sun, by growing things. By his love of the Armenian language."

A quick check on sales at the bookstore of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research in suburban Boston revealed that, as always, poetry doesn't sell well. Vahan Tekeyan's *Sacred Wrath* and Diana Der Hovanessian's translation of the medieval poems of Nahabed Kouchag (in an edition that included the Armenian) matched the sale of the prose, but contemporary Armenian poetry written in America sold less well.

NAASR director Manoog S. Young is certainly pleased to stock and sell Ashod Press titles in his bookstore in suburban Boston. He says that "Jack is performing a great service in publishing those books." Young reported that one such work, Gostan Zarian's *The Traveler and His Road,* is one of the "best sellers" at NAASR. A precise and perceptive report from a writer "on the bitter road of exile abroad," as the book's translator, Ara Baliozian, writes in his Introduction, the book has as its central theme the "past splendor and present misery" of Armenia.

Antreassian confirmed that over ten years, the edition of 900 of Zarian's book has sold out. Why? Antreassian answered with his usual candor, "It's a pretty good book." He's reprinted it and plans to keep "all of our titles in print," something the big publishers who remainder books when sales drop off don't even dream of.

In the Author's Note to *The Traveler and His Road,* Zarian writes that "every thinking Armenian is like a radio station in the middle of a storm sending messages to distant places and receiving no answer." Does this metaphor apply to Ashod Press?

Antreassian replied that "the metaphor is apt, more than you may think. Our writers don't get any answers even when there is no storm." He recalled a literary weekend sponsored by the Diocese in Manhattan a few years back where one speaker concluded that Armenian-American writers spend their time, money, and talent writing for each other.

But Ashod Press books do "send messages to distant places." There's the Azizian Book Center at 17 Roehampton Lane in London and the Armenian Studies Center at 2 Soulioton in Athens. In the United States, Ashod Press books are sold by the Abril Bookstore and by Shirag in Los Angeles, Berj Stationery and Armenian Reference Books in Glendale, and, of course, at the Armenian Prelacy and the Armenian Diocese in New York City.

If we look back into literary history, there's a strong precedent for the effectiveness of a one-man editing and publishing operation. Charles Dickens, as his biographer Edgar Johnson reports, "maintained a vigorous, a dictatorial control" over his periodical *Household Words.*

Hearing that, Antreassian laughed at the comparison to Dickens. But he said he has always known that "you can't edit by committee, can't write by committee." At Ararat Press, he, Leo Hamalian, and Harry Keyishian gave each other ideas for books, but "whoever worked on a book went ahead with it on his own."

Antreassian then agreed with the American poet William Stafford's definition of an editor as "a good friend who won't let you publish something that really isn't finished." But he added that "if I like the work of a writer I give him freedom. I'll make suggestions and changes in conference with a writer, but I usually bend to him."

Working with translators is something else. When a translator inexplicably deleted more than two pages from an eight-page short story, Jack didn't use that translator. How much of a text the translator can change depends on the original, and Antreassian recalled one or two cases where the translation improved the original. Translating poetry is harder than prose. As he explained, not only must the words give the meaning, but they must also echo the rhythm and sound so that the spirit of the meaning comes through.

"We sell about 250 copies of each book the first year," Antreassian said. After that sales slow down quite a bit. The energetic editor recalled being disappointed a few years ago when he placed full page ads in four or five of the Armenian community papers. These ads listed all the Ashod Press books—yet only about a half-dozen books were ordered.

"But maybe there's no cause for disappointment," he continued. "Why should we expect others to read Armenian literature—especially when few Armenians do. After all, how many Americans outside of academia had even heard of, let alone had read, Vaclav Havel before he became president of Czechoslovakia?"

Armenian Friendship *by* Mitchell Kalpakgian

One of the special events that occurred in my father's life was his lifelong friendship with a dear man I came to call "Grandpa," Yeghia (Eli) Hovagimian. Once often reads of the demise of friendship in the older classical sense, the relationship of Orestes and Pylades, Damon and Pythias, David and Jonathan. In these friendships men made supreme sacrifices and laid down their lives for one another in their profession of eternal constancy. My father's lifelong companionship with "Grandpa" Eli belonged to this order to heroic friendship celebrated by Aristotle and Cicero.

It began one day when a gruff, outspoken, opinionated Armenian came to my father's locksmith shop and asked to have a key made and a lock repaired. As he watched my father go about his work, Eli began criticizing his skill and expertise. In no uncertain terms he made it clear that my father was a mere amateur in the trade. He alleged to knew more about locks and keys than the Milford Locksmith was ever going to comprehend, and so upon this first meeting an established businessman had to listen to a stranger's open ciritcism and free advice, vexed to no end at such "chutzpah" from a rude, eccentric intruder. Neither person was impressed with the other; needless to say, this was not friendship at first sight. However, this seemingly crude, uncivil boor who appeared to be totally dissatisfied with a locksmith's work and skeptical of his knowledge, kept returning and bringing more business. The regular visits brought about a casual acquaintance that began to grow into friendship, once they realized how much in common they shared.

The similarity of their backgrounds and experience drew them together. Both men having emigrated from Turkey because of the atrocities of the genocide, they felt the bond of suffering. Both exemplified the Armenian philosophy of life—the love of family, the courage to endure, the love of honest work, and the Christian ethic of justice and charity. Indeed they were both truly fearless men, having confronted death and survived by sheer courage. Both would haved laid down their lives for the ideals they believed in. Eli, although living securely in America, had returned to Turkey to fight for his people, joining Antranig and his men during the massacres. My father, a Marine, volunteered to fight in World War II so that his children would receive all the benefits of his service. Thus their Armenian heritage, their courage and strength, their willingness to live and die for their people drew them together, despite the surface friction and seeming incompatibility that appeared in the first meeting. They soon came to respect and admire each other.

One episode in particular sealed this friendship and made it a sublime bond. As a result of an injury, Eli was out of work, and he was also unable to collect any unemployment benefits. He came to my father in his need and asked to borrow money, until his injury healed and he was able to return to work. Gladly and willingly, because he knew destitution himself, my father gave Eli all the financial assistance he needed during his convalescence over a period of months.

So profound was Eli's gratitude to him for this charity that he devoted himself to showing his appreciation and attempting to repay what he regarded as unrepayable debt. For the rest of his life, Eli worked in the locksmith store during his leisure hours and became endeared to us a "Grandpa." After laboring all day in the shipyard in Quincy, he would come to my father's shop and keep the store open until 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. On his days off and his vacations, he worked during his free hours and refused to take a penny for wages during the twenty years of their friendship. Even the tips he received for shining shoes were put in the cash register. So moved was he by my father's loving-kindness toward him in his moment of dire need that he devoted the rest of his life to acknowledging this debt of immense gratitude.

He loved all his friend's children like a father. A lifelong bachelor, "Grandpa" attached himself to our family and cared for us with a tenderness, concern, and generosity that one expects only from a parent. He bought us clothes and expensive toys. He took us on trips to Boston, where we frequented Red Sox baseball games, amusement parks, zoos, the restaurants. In short, he spared nothing. All his earnings were spent on us children, just as all his free hours were given to working for my father. As Gabriel Marcel observes, in giving one receives in unforeseen and unexpected ways.

Together my father and "Grandpa" taught me that an Armenian never forgets any kind deed or thoughtful benefactor. Rather, an Armenian tries to repay his debt tenfold. In the words from one of Mahatma Gandhi's favorite poems:

For a bowl of water give a goodly meal;
For a kindly greeting bow thou down with zeal;
For a simple penny pay thou back with gold;
If thy life be rescued, life do not withhold.
Thus the words and actions of the wise regard;
Every little service tenfold they reward.

These beautiful words perfectly express Grandpa's lifelong gratitude and unending service to our family; truly he did for a simple penny pay back with gold.

Self-Portrait

by Edward Alexander
(as told to Nubar Poladian)

Allow me to say few words about myself. I am Edward Alexander (Alexanian), born in 1920 in New York City of Armenian parents, both of whom survived Abdul Hamid's massacres. According to my father, who sternly insisted I always speak Armenian at home, as a child my Armenian was better than my English.

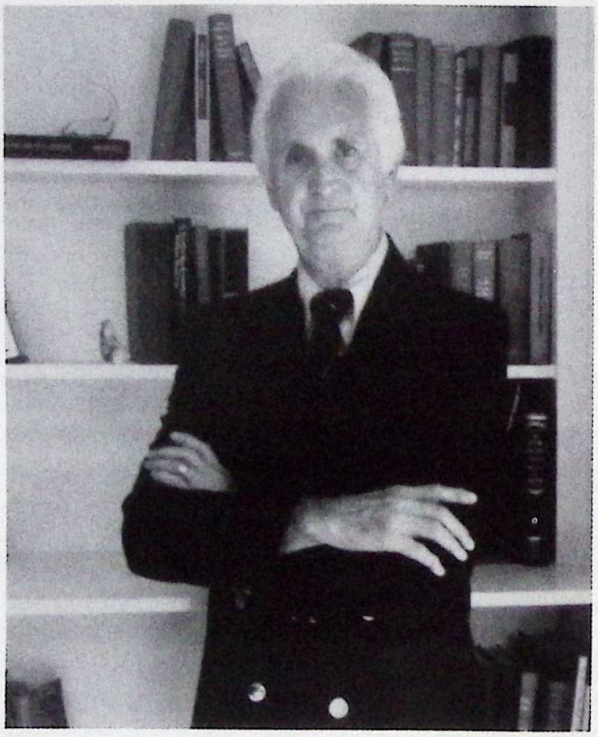
I attended schools in New York, then entered Columbia University in 1937. I had intended to make a career in music criticism and musicology and therefore majored in music (theory, history, opera, string quartet, symphony) and in the fine arts (painting, literature, poetry, drama), with other emphasis on philosophy, aesthetics and sociology. After I received a Bachelor of Arts degree, I entered Columbia's School of Journalism and received a Master of Science degree in 1942.

War had broken out and I entered the U.S. Army, serving in the Psychological Warfare Division (which used pamphlets and radio broadcasts to have the enemy surrender). At first I worked in General Eisenhower's Headquarters in England and France, then for General Bradley in Verdun and Frankfurt.

When I returned to civilian life in 1946 I worked for Sir Laurence Olivier's two Shakespearean films *Henry V* and *Hamlet* as public relations director, which took me all over the United States and into Canada, where, after Toronto, I spent four delightful months in Vancouver and Victoria.

In 1950, I learned that the State Department wanted to expand its *Voice of America* broadcasts to the Soviet Union and was looking for someone to recruit staff for broadcasts in Armenian, Georgian, Azerbaijani, Uzbek and Tatar. I was selected for the position and one year later when the broadcasts began, I was made Chief of the Armenian Service.

Although my Armenian had always been Western, I quickly learned the Eastern mode, working with several former Soviet Armenians at the *Voice,* one of whom was the son of the poet Hovhannes Hovhannesian. Those eight years at VOA intensified my interest in Armenian affairs and I began to do research in various aspects of Soviet Armenian society. I wrote articles for *The Armenian Review, The Caucasian Review, The Russian Review, The Slavic and East European Review,* on various subjects concerning Soviet Armenia: Crime in Armenia, Solar Energy, Soviet Exploitation of the Armenian Church, Anti-American Propaganda, and The Thaw in Soviet Armenian Literature. I also wrote a long article



Edward Alexander

for *The Shakespeare Quarterly* on Shakespeare's plays in Armenia. Interestingly, thirty years later, Vartan Gregorian (now President of Brown University) was asked to give a lecture in Washington at The Folger Library on this very subject and when he began he said that the subject had been covered very well by me, and then quoted my article throughout his lecture. Later, I wrote two articles for *Problems of Communism,* the first an evaluation of the situation in Hungary in 1970, and the second a lengthy examination of the views of the Marxist philosopher Gyorgy Lukacs, shortly after his death.

In 1959 I entered the Foreign Service as an American diplomat and was assigned first to West Berlin as a

Cultural Affairs Advisor, then in 1965 to the U.S. Embassy in Budapest, Hungary as First Secretary for Press and Cultural Affairs. Next I was transferred to Washington as Deputy Director for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the highest position I held, from 1969-72. My next assignment was to Athens, Greece as the Embassy's Counselor for Press and Culture, and then four years later I was transferred to East Berlin in the same capacity. Finally, in 1980 I retired from the Foreign Service but was called back to become a Consultant to the Board for International Broadcasting (which oversees the broadcasts of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty), and as an Advisor to the *Voice of America*, and to the State Department.

In 1985-86 I was asked to serve as the Spokesman and public Affairs Advisor on three United States Delegations to Helsinki Human Rights Conferences in Ottawa, Budapest and Bern, Switzerland.

When the two catholicoses, Vazken I and Karekin II, came to the United States in 1989 to thank the American people for their earthquake relief, the State Department asked me to be the escort officer and interpreter for their meeting with President Bush in the White House. Last year when Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan came to the United States, I accompanied him also to the White House.

Americans and other peoples, have to be made aware of our history and our suffering to understand why we think as we think, why we say what we say, why we behave as we behave.

I conceived the idea of writing *Serpent and the Bees* after I had retired. Initially, I had not intended to write a book, but as the KGB persisted over the years—fifteen in all—with Armenian agents always confronting me, I realized that this was an unusual story from which others could learn.

Primarily, that the KGB does not always deal in murder, kidnapping, blackmail and other devices, but plays on the ethnic sympathies of people. When the KGB discovered that I was Armenian and proud of it, they interpreted that to mean pro-Soviet and tried to enlist my services to work for the Soviet Union—first with money, and when that failed, then with other lures, such as free trips to Armenia. But eventually I did go to Armenia.

While I was working at the U.S. Embassy in Hungary, I met an Armenian art critic from the Soviet Union named Shahen Khatchaturian, who had come to Budapest with a Martiros Saryan exhibit. We became friends and he insisted that I, and my wife, who is also Armenian, should make a trip to Armenia. This happened in June 1967, actually on the day that the Six-Day War broke out in the Middle East.

I was afraid that the KGB would get me in Armenia, but I was somewhat protected as a diplomat and the desire to visit Armenia was greater than fear of the KGB.

My visit was five days, but five of the most exhilarating days of my life. This was largely due to Shahen who met us the first night and from that moment on, I hardly slept. It turned out that those few days were culturally very active and, thanks to Shahen I was able to meet and talk with a number of prominent cultural figures, beginning with Saryan in his studio. The Varbed was in great form, highly spirited, full of good humor and genuine affection. My wife and I loved him.

Besides Saryan, there were a number of others: Gostan Zarian, Serge Paradjanov, Yervand Kochar, Minas Avetisian, another talented painter named Rudolf Khatchaturian, and of course Shahen himself, a sincere, patriotic Armenian filled with all the virtues of our people. But there were many others as well.

And long before going to Armenia, I had already met William Saroyan and Rouben Mamoulian, the great film director. I had also already met Tigran Petrosyan in New York and Aram Khatchaturian in Berlin, Budapest and Moscow. I have written about all of them too in my book. Once, in Budapest, I also met Victor Hambartsumian who was lecturing in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and talked to him after.

Prior to my visit to Armenia, I had many contacts with Armenians in Europe. Wherever I went, I would look for Armenians and find the opportunity to talk in our wonderful language. Always, my interest was reciprocated. Armenians, especially in East Europe were fascinated to hear an American diplomat speaking Armenian.

In Budapest, there was a small Armenian Catholic church. In Bucharest, I had a long visit with the Arme-

nian priest outside of whose church was a statue of Antranik. That is the same church, by the way, where Catholicos Vazgen once served. In Plovdiv, Bulgaria, with a large Armenian church community, the Mayor was an Armenian, Diran Parikian. Elsewhere, one of the most memorable figures I have met was Archbishop Ayvazian of Athens, a man of spirit and depth. Finally, in, Rome, the great Cardinal Aghajanian, who gave me and my family St. Vartan medals.

What is happening in Armenia today is the direct consequence of Gorbachev's policies of glasnost. Yet, strangely, he is no longer the hero in the Soviet Union that he was. Is that not odd? This is the man who has changed the face of Europe, who has ended the Cold War, had allowed small captive nations such as Armenia to lash out at Moscow and declare their independence. Unfortunately, there is also the other side of the coin, namely, that by relaxing the reins of terror and control, his policies have released long restrained nationalist forces which have created, especially in the Caucasus, near civil war. At present, Gorbachev does not seem to be in full control.

I am speaking of Kharabagh, partly, and let me say something about that problem to underline how mystifying it is to Americans. My American soul asks—how is it possible that when the leader of the Soviet Union visits the united States for the first time and learns that a massive earthquake has struck one of the constituent republics, cuts short his visit, flies to Armenia to show his concern, what greets him—despair for the thousands of dead and half a million homeless? No, all he hears is—unite Kharabagh with Armenia! To Americans, who incidentally were tremendously generous with aid, this was totally incomprehensible.

And my Armenian soul says—we as a people have suffered persecution like no other nation in history; we know what terror is; we know what isolation from our compatriots is. Kharabagh is just exactly that kind of problem—persecution, terror, isolation. Earthquakes can be overcome, their damage repaired, but the people of Kharabagh are living in a permanent earthquake from which there is no relief and no peace. Armenians comprehend that, but Americans do not.

After all, Armenia needs the United States and its strong Armenian community. Americans and other peoples, have to be made aware of our history and our suffering to understand why we think as we think, why we say what we say, why we behave as we behave.

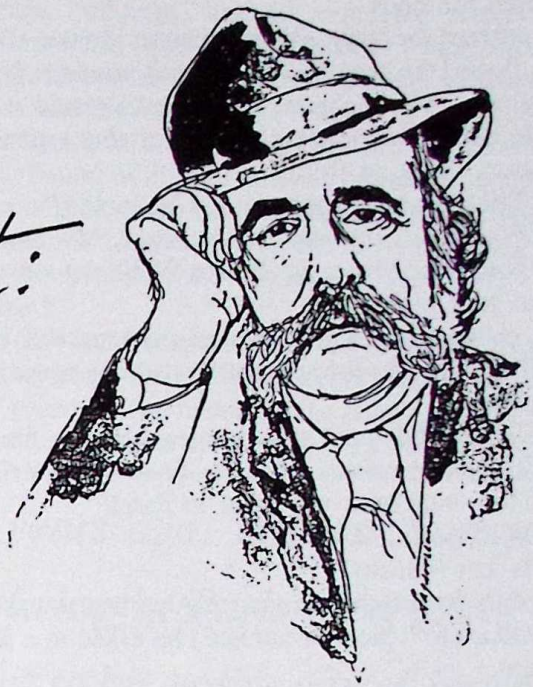
That is why I have written my second book *A Crime of Vengeance* to help non-Armenians understand us through our recent history. There was a time when I truly believed Charentz's message, that our only salvation was in collective strength. But look at the Diaspora. It is filled with antagonism and disunity. Political parties, social groups, even charitable relief organizations, revile each other, and the Armenian Church struggles for some semblance of unity. As the white assimilation slowly drains us of our Armenianness, the concept of The Armenians as a people fiercely loyal to their Christian faith and their nation, becomes ever dimmer. In writing this book about the most wrenching experience in Armenian history—the Turkish genocide of our people—I hope to remind the older and inform the newer Armenian generations of our past. But most of all, I want the vast *odar* reading public to know tht despite our suffering, our pride in our nation and its past is undiminished.

I decided that to lure the American public into reading about Armenian problems, I had to do something dramatic. Therefore, I took the story of Soghomon Tehlirian and told of his suffering, of his tracking down of Talaat Pasha, of his assassination of the Turkish criminal, of his trial in Berlin, and of his vindication. I have used what is known in film terminology as flashbacks to illuminate the past and tried to tell it in a highly readable manner. It took me five years to research the material in archives throughout Europe and in the United States and even in sources in Armenia. I was fortunate in getting one of the most prestigious publishers in the United States, The Free Press, who put the book out close to April 24h.

I am working now on a novel about Beethoven and Hungary but in a contemporary setting and filled with intrigue. Of course, there will be a few Armenians in it.

Finally let me pass on what I have learned from my father. In 1910 while still in Turkey, he experienced the betrayal of the Young Turks and became a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, and, incidentally, remained so until his last breath in 1987. But at the age of 85 he went to Soviet Armenia and although keenly aware of the political system, was gratified at what he found. In fact, near the end of his life twelve years later, he told me he regretted he could not see Armenia again. I think the message there is obvious. But let me give you another. In the 1920s my father, a Palvetsi, organized a society to raise funds for the rebuilding of Palu. The three-man executive board consisted of my father, a Dashnak, the second a Ramgavar, and the third a Hunchak. During their weekly meetings, I never once heard angry words or even raised voices. Why? Because they had but one aim—to rebuild their native Palu. These lessons from my father have always remained with me: flexibility, tolerance, and unity of purpose.

Paris, Here's My Hat:



Saroyan's Exile Years 1960-1981

by Edward Hagopian

In Paris there is a saying among political exiles, expatriate artists, writers, deposed monarchs and Algerian street sweepers, that if you sit in any of the popular sidewalk cafes, you will see most of the world walk by. And if you sit long enough you will see someone from back home, a friend, a classmate, an ex-lover or some freaky flake you wish to avoid will see you and spoil your afternoon. I can truthfully say most of the above happened to me, but that was not how I met William Saroyan.

So how did I meet Bill?

One day in early April 1960, having put in my five hours of writing, I was eating lunch and reading the New York Herald Tribune when a small ad in the classified section somehow caught my attention.

How do we explain it? Call it chance? Coincidence? ESP or whatever? Here we were two Hyes from Fresno, in Paris, a city of more than three million, some 7,000 miles from home. My mother had a simpler explanation—*djagad akir.* Fate! Translated: "as inscribed on our forehead."

This was the substance of the ad as I remember it: William Saroyan, Armenian/American author, offers three original manuscripts in exchange for a six month lease for an apartment overlooking the Seine. Call Passy 43-68.

After some hesitation I dialed the number and immediately was put through by the hotel receptionist.

"Mr. William Saroyan?"

"Yup."

"This is Ed Hagopian from Fresno. Welcome to Paris!"

There was a suspicous pause, then: "Ed Hagopian? From Fresno? What part of Fresno are you from? he asked.

"Around 11th street and Ventura."

"I know the neighborhood. I used to live a few blocks away on El Monte Way," he shouted. "Now tell me, Ed Hagopian, what the hell are you doing in Paris? You on some kind of tour?" (I learned later why he repeated my name several times. This was Bill's way of remembering names.

"I live here with my wife, Jan, and my four year old daughter, Raffi," I said.

"Raffi? You named your daughter after the great 19th century Armenian novelist?"

"It was Jan's choice."

"Ed, old boy, I've got to meet you and the family. Where do you live in Paris?"

"Near the Arch of Triumph," I said.

"I'll be damned! We're neighbors. I'm at the Hotel La Perouse just a stone's throw away. Tell you what. I'm working and I'll be tied up for the next two hours. Why don't you come by the hotel around 4 o'clock for a drink. I'm in the attic penthouse. See you then." Click. He hung up.

Promptly at four o'clock I arrived at the Hotel La Perouse, called from the lobby, took the old fashioned caged elevator to the six floor and with some trepidation knocked on the door.

"Come on in, Ed Hagopian," bellowed the voice from

behind the door.

I entered the large attic penthouse, the late afternoon sun flowed through the three French windows facing the southwest. He was in his shirt sleeves seated at a small table behind his ancient Royal portable typewriter, a cigarette hanging from his lips.

"Tell me about yourself, Ed Hagopian."

"Where do you want me to begin, Mr. Saroyan?

"Forget the Mister bit. Bill or Willie is good enough. Take your pick."

I chose Bill. Willie seemed disrespectful because Willie Linke was the ape protagonist of a comedy I had written.

"Tell me, Ed, what made you leave Fresno, for Paris?"

"The same reason you left. To see the world."

"How long have you lived in Paris?"

"Nine years," I replied.

"Is Jan French?"

"She's from Nebraska, and as American as apple pie."

"Odar eh?" (non Armenian?) he asked in a Bitlistzi accent.

"Yup."

"Nothing wrong with mixing the genes."

"Her forebearers go back to the Mayflower."

"And ours came off the Ark," he said, roaring with laughter. "Let's go for a walk. You don't mind if we walk and talk, do you? Your butt gets pretty sore after a few hours behind the typewriter."

We left the hotel walked to the Arc de Triomphe then turned east and strolled down the Champs-Elyees to Fouquet's, the swank cafe restaurant on the corner of Avenue George V and the Champs.

Over several congnacs we had some kef (a bit of old blarney). We were like two long lost cousins finding each other in Paris. During our conversation I asked if he recalled our first meeting in Boston in June 1939? Of course he couldn't.

He had come to a Sunday afternoon joghow (public meeting) at the Hairenik building where speaker after speaker droned on in cultured and eloquent Armenian. Along with other dignitaries, Bill sat on the stage, his hat pulled down over his eyes, his ankles crossed, half asleep, half listening to the rich orations of hot air of and about Armenians which had little relevance then, and none today. He snored several times under his hat and once nearly fell off his chair. He remembered the interminable boredom of that Sunday afternoon and had a vague recollection of meeting with a group of high school students, myself among them. Now 21 years on we sat at Fouquet's talking up a storm.

He asked why we had chosen to live in Paris and not London, Lisbon or Rome? I replied that Paris was the cultural capital of the world, that she a haven for free thinkers and non conformists, that she inspired avant-garde artists, writers, composers and philosophers to her bosom, where Rome was too holy, too Catholic, too close to the Vatican. London was too provincial, too puritanical, had a Lord Chamberlain, the queen's censor, who would one day ban one of my plays (1965). As for Lisbon or Madrid? I had no love for the dictators Salazar or of Franco in Spain.

"So when did you arrive?" he asked.

"On February 13, 1951," I said. "We'd been married seven months when we gave up God's country, sliced bread, toilet paper one could tear, mom and applie pie and sailed off on the Queen Mary to study at the Sorbonne. We arrived in the bleak winter of post war Paris, survived the cold, the wet, the month long Metro, bus and taxi strike, and by April we adapted to the Bohemian life style of the Left Bank and joined the "Second Lost Generation" of expatriate Americans."

For those who lived though the 1950s and those who didn't, but wish to learn a bit of history of those times: coffee was still a nickel a cup and doughnuts a dime. The 1950's was an era of fear, of mounting hysteria—of loyalty oaths, witch hunts, finger pointing, naming of names, and tongue biting silence. It was a time that tried the conscience of the country, a time when snitchers and stoolies were honored and esteemed as patriots, when the question of questions was asked: Are you now? Have you ever been a member of the still legal, but forbidden party? That was the inquistor's question!

Still there was some good news. Pepsi Cola was still a nickel.

The bad news? We were fighting the communists in Korea. Joe Mc Carthy, and his congressional posse was riding at full gallop routing out Reds in government and out.

Most Europeans were bewildered. Moscow was closer to Paris than Washington. An ocean and a continent separated the former allies, yet America was paralyzed by paranoia. Communist and socialist parties were legal in Europe, their newspapers and magazines were openly sold at news stands and kiosks. In the land of sweet liberty Americans were hunting for communists under beds, in closets, in books, in movies, with spies, conspiracies and betrayals everywhere. Across America college students and ordinary citizens were too terrified to read, much less sign petitions to support the Bill of Rights and the Constitution of the United States. Thus the "silent generation" was born.

Happily bubble gum could still be bought for a penny which prevented lockjaw for those brainlocked by fear.

More bad news.

Tricky Dick was soon given a new title: "Sticky Fingers," when he was caught in the slush fund scandal. After a well rehearsed Checkers speech, Richard Nixon was kept on the Republican Party ticket and was elected vice president and became the slightly soiled Mr. Kleen, though no amount of PR or GOP scrubbing could ever remove his "ring around the collar" image.

Still more bad news.

To purge the evils of communist influence in the USIA libraries abroad, Senator Mc Carthy dispatched his two outriders, Roy Cohn and David Schine to Europe on an eighteen day sweep to clean out the library shelves of subversive literature causing panic in the large Paris library where the popular Le Drugstore now stands.

Some good and bad news.

Real coke was still a nickel (and the snorting kind was the coming future shock) J. Edgar Hoover never did find out about Cosa Nostra. And hamburgers were still a dime as were fries. Remember?

A decade after the burning of two witches at Ossining, New York, the long silence ws finally broken. The Civil Rights Movement began to stir. Camelot arrived and tragically departed in 1000 days. Students and faculty found their voices and the Free Speech Movement was born in Berkeley, Calfornia. LBJ, the peace candidate, defeated fast draw Goldwater. The Great Society was born, but sank in the quagmire of Viet Nam. The price of coffee doubled to a dime. But the decade wasn't over.

A spent "C" class actor was elected governor of California. After the bloody Chicago riots of 1968, a political "has been" who helped create the "silent generation," rose from the ashes with a secret peace plan for pulling us out of the Viet Nam quagmire with honor. When his notion of an honorable withdrawl was rejected, the bombing intensified, the peace protests continued, he urged the "silent generation," now reborn as the "silent majority," to stand up for law and order and help silence the peaceniks.

Sanctimonious news.

It seems with each jump in the price of coffee gives birth to another generation of morality watch dogs. The religious right begat the "Moral Majority," until sex scandals, sleeze and chicanery undid their sanctimony. Then came the greed is good decade. Followed by the S.& L., the HUD, the Junk Bond dealers, the Jail Builders and the feel good majority! After which came, by jingo, the flag wavers, the flag savers, the flag saluteers, the flag wearers, and the God Bless American Society all wrapped in yellow ribbons. Remember?

Unlike American cities, Paris displays flags only on government buildings, has no numbered streets or avenues, no Main Street, High Street or Maple Street. Instead she honors men and women of letters, of science, of history and the humanities. Where? In what city in America would we find a larger than life bronze statue of Mark Twain, William Faulkner or Jack London to compare with Auguste Rodin's statue of Henri Balzac on the Boulevard Raspail? Where is the American Pantheon? On Hollywood's Street of the Stars? In Disneyland?

In the days and weeks that followed as the old Armenian saying goes: Parisi poghotz nerra chapetz ink. We literally paced off and measured the streets of Paris and boulevards often ended up at Fouquet's for a drink. Most evenings he spent with us at our apartment regalling on Armenian, French or Spanish food which our maid had prepared or he would invite us out to dinner at a fashionable restaurant. (This was during his high living, freewheeling days.)

Ten years ago, William Saroyan was living in Paris, preparing to return to his native city of Fresno. Here is an account of a memorable meeting.

One afternoon toward the end of May, Bill announced that if he was ever to pay off his debt to the IRS, he had to move out of the La Perouse which was costing him and arm and a leg. He ws seriously considering moving to Lisbon where living was cheaper and apartments were more available.

"So who do you know in Lisbon?" I asked.

"Calouste Gulbenkian," he said. (Also known as Mr. Five Per Cent. At the time reputed to be the world's richest man for receiving a 5% royalty for every barrel of oil pumped out of the Middle East.) "I had lunch with him several times."

"What did you talk about?"

"Money, what else?"

"Does he know about your tax problems?"

"Yup."

"Did he offer any advice?"

"Yup."

"What was his solution?"

"Simple. No income—no income taxes," he said, roaring with laughter.

"He's got a drole sense of humor," I said. "So who else do you know?"

"Now that you mention it, none that's worth knowing. Still I need a place to hang my hat, an apartment or a large studio," he said. "Staying at expensive hotels doesn't leave much to pay off my I.R.S. debt."

"What about your ad in the Herald Tribune?"

"Got lots of calls. Got some right here," he said. "If you've got the time we can jump in a cab and look them over."

I noted the addresses scrawled on the back of an envelope. None were remotely close to the river.

"Most have been real dumps, but the callers were friendly." he said. "Let's have a look anyway. Who knows what we'll find?

"Why not? What did we have to lose."

Of all Paris taxis Bill preferred the black, low slung Citroens which reminded him of the gangster cars of the 1930s. So off we rode and to Bill's amusement we added three more dumps to his list, along with the dump dwellers who one day might be a rich source for future stories.

About this time I began discovering the kinks and quirks to his character, one which psychiatry could call the Dostoevskian syndrome—his obsession to gamble. Sober, he was a good gambler. Boozed, he was a loser. He'd get high on a few of drinks then as the alcohol took affect, he'd turn wild, reckless—and throw a bundle (from a $1,000 and up) on the turn of a card.

Often after midnight when he knew I would be at my typewriter writing, he had the whimsical habit of phoning, slightly stoned, feeling no pain nor embarrassment, he'd call from the Grand Cercle or the Aviation Club, both within a few minutes walking distance from our apartment and ask how my writing was going? Then he'd suggest that I take a break and join him for caviar and champagne at Monsieur Marcel Peretti's expense. (Marcel was head honcho of the Corsican family that ran the gambling clubs in Paris) Before hanging up Bill would hint that he had hit a bad streak and to bring along any spare cash, dollars or francs to help recoup his losses? This I did with great reluctance, for it would have been better to offer it as alms to the poor or thrown to the street urchins. When he wasn't possessed by the betting bug he was generous to Parisian clochards, New York pan handlers or Fresno down and outers.

One afternoon towards the end of May, when I realized that Bill's losing streak would continue, I suggested that he invest in a Paris apartment before the $60,000 he had put in a Swiss bank account to pay his IRS obligation totally disappeared. Since Bill mistrusted all agents including real estate agents, I offered to help. That same afternoon over coffee at our favorite cafe, we looked through Le Figaro newspaper, Bill studying the horse racing section as I went through the classified ads.

By queer chance I saw an ad for a four room apartment with a large terrace at 74 rue Taitbout, near the Opera. It was around the corner from the Hotel de Berne off rue de Chateaudun where we lived from February to May 1951. When told that it was a colorful neighborhood with an ethnic melange of mostly Armenians and Jews in gold, diamond and jewelry trade, there was no holding Bill. He hailed a cab and off we went.

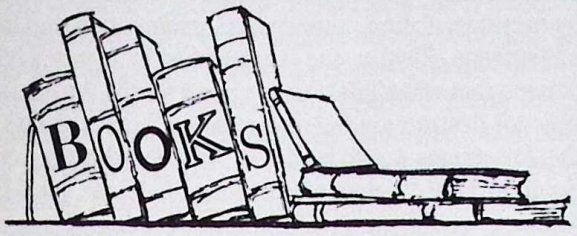
At 74 rue Taitbout we entered the ancient cobblestone court yard, turned right to the long stairway and started our climb. After a rest stop to catch our breaths, we finished the 107 steps up to the top floor. There two real estate agents greeted us and as stated in the ad, the apartment, though old, was redecorated in off white semi gloss paint, the oak floors waxed and polished with a fireplace in each of the rooms which adds charm and romance to the flat, but translated means no central heating when cold weather comes. Two large rooms with twin French windows opened on to the terrace facing west on Rue Taitbout. A smaller room looked on to the court yard and a wide entrance way that lead to the rooms, small pullman kitchen and small bath completed the living area. The asking price was 11 million old francs. When I translated the amount Bill quickly calculated that it was a bargain and without batting an eye lash, he shouted, "I'll take it!" Fortunately, neither agent understood English so after some haggling I managed to reduce the price another ten percent. We closed the deal with a nominal deposit, then with hardy handshakes as is the custom in France, we left for the law offices of Coudert Freres to conclude the legal details of the sale.

That spring of 1960 was the beginning of a rich, wild, sometimes rocky, often whacky friendship which lasted until his death in May 1981.

One fear his often expressed when he in a melancholy mood, that after his death his works would be unread, tht he would be forgotten. I reassured him saying that as long as books were published, stories read, and plays performed, the name William Saroyan would remain in the hearts of humankind until the end of time.

Today, over the entrance at 74 rue Taitbout, is a marble plaque with this inscription: WILLIAM SAROYAN, American author lived here from 1960-1981.

On May 22, 1991, for the first time in history, the United States and the Soviet Union will jointly issue a commemorative William Saroyan Stamp honoring him in his native land, as well as in Erevan, Armenia, the land of his ancestors.



WAS MORGENTHAU A LIAR?

by Roger W. Smith

THE STORY BEHIND AMBASSADOR MORGENTHAU'S STORY. The Isis Press, Istanbul, 1990. 90pp.

Heath Lowry, executive director of the Institute of Turkish Studies in Washington, has made a career out of denial of the Armenian Genocide. He has an instinct, moreover, for attacking the accounts of the Genocide that are best known to the public and members of Congress. Several years ago, Lowry argued that Hitler never uttered the question attributed to him: "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" Now he turns to *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story,* a work that he thinks is the single most important source among the public for the "belief that the Young Turk Government of the Ottoman Empire perpetrated a premeditated massacre of its Armenian minority under cover of World War I." He tries to call into question the reliability of Morgenthau as a source for the history of the period by pointing to what he sees as "wide discrepancies" between what Morgenthau wrote in his "Diary," frequent letters home, and dispatches to the State Department, and what appears in his memoir published in 1918. Surprisingly, he does not challenge the accuracy of the eyewitness accounts, consul reports, and cables that Morgenthau sent to the State Department, the British government, and to the German humanitarian, Dr. Lepsius, who published his own account of the atrocities. Indeed, he says that his study is not designed to answer the question of whether the "fate" of the Armenians "should or should not be described as genocide," though he surely has an opinion on this as he repeatedly places the term in quotation marks.

Much of the "discrepancy" Lowry sees, however, is the direct result of an assumption he makes about the nature and use of historical records. He tends to assume that everything that takes place will be recorded at the time it occurs, and if anything additional (and not just different) is stated later, it is a fabrication and lie. Thus, he notes that one of the major themes of Morgenthau's book is that the basis for the attempt to "eliminate" the Armenians was an extreme Turkish nationalism (a point made by numerous scholars). But Lowry does not find any mention of "Turkey for the Turks" in the "Diary" or letters and thus hints that Morgenthau's repetition of the theme of Turkish nationalism is "designed to convince us that the Young Turks were racist ideologues." Similarly, he rejects as "fiction" Morgenthau's account of Talaat's request for a complete list of Armenian life insurance policy holders, suggesting that no such language appears in Morgenthau's records and that this is just another attempt to "blacken the reputation of Talaat."

Why, according to Lowry, would Morgenthau lie about what he had seen and heard in Turkey as the United States Ambassador? For Lowry, the key to all the "discrepancies" is that *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* was written as wartime propaganda, intended to mobilize support in America for the war against Germany. He quotes from Morgenthau's letter to President Wilson in November 1917:

> *For in Turkey we see the evil spirit of Germany at its worst—culminating at last in the greates crime of all ages, the horrible massacre of helpless Armenians and Syrians. This particular detail of the story and Germany's abettance of the same, I feel positive will appeal to the mass of Americans in small towns and country districts as no other aspect of the war could, and convince them of the necessity of carrying the war to a victorious conclusion. . .*

Lowry performs an important service in uncovering this letter, but it does not follow from what Morgenthau says that his book is intended as a fabricaiton: the demeaning element is that Morgenthau is planning to

***"What is the story behind Heath Lowry's* Story?"**

appropriate the tragedy of the Armenians to generate support for the war against Germany. The letter also informs us (the memoir more fully) that Morgenthau held Germany responsible for the spirit of nationalism that had led to the Genocide and that he held its government responsible for not restraining Turkey from the murder of so many innocent people. This may help to explain his sharp comments about the German Ambassador Wangenheim, but it is not the basis for his detailed description of conversations with Talaat and Enver and for the nature and course of the atrocities.

Long before he wrote his book, Morgenthau had received numerous eyewitness accounts from missionaries, his own and other countries' consuls, and had, as early as July 1915, cabled reports of the systematic slaughter to the State Department: "Persecution of Armenians assuming unprecedented proportions. There seems to be a systematic plan to crush the Armenian race."

Yet, in certain respects, Lowry does help us understand Morgenthau's *Story*. If he distorts the context, at least he calls our attention to the circumstances under which the book was written. He points out, too, the way in which it was composed: Morgenthau dictated the book daily to the journalist Burton Hendrick, officials in the State Department went over the drafts suggesting deletions and at least one addition, and the final version was written by Hendrick. The direct quotations from Talaat, Enver, and the German Ambassador are not found in the "Diary," letters, or cables, though Lowry concedes they may well be accurate. More troublesome, on several occasions Morgenthau states that "Talaat told me," when the source (possibly true and believed to be so by Morgenthau) is indirect, sometimes third hand. Lowry sees this as a journalistic convention used by Hendrick to make the story more believable and immediate, but he is unable to contest the truth of the statements reported.

Lowry's conclusions are that Morgenthau is a liar and his book is nothing more than wartime propaganda; as a historical source it is to be rejected. My own conclusion is that Lowry, a hostile critic in the extreme, was able to find only minor flaws in Morganthau's book. This should, in fact, increase confidence in its use as a source for the study of the Armenian Genoncide. Yet if Morgenthau had never written his book, there are numerous other sources, including Turkish records, that confirm the reality of the Genocide. One of the best of these, wholly immune to the charge of wartime propaganda, is the book by Leslie Davis, *The Slaughterhouse Province: An American Diplomat's Report on the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917.*

Dr. Lowry is right in thinking that a close scrutiny of such an important text as *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* is long overdue. It is thus unfortunate that he overgeneralizes and draws conclusions that are not warranted by the evidence at his disposal. Most of the specific criticisms he makes are minor (does it really matter when Morgenthau shaved his beard?), but Lowry goes on to state that Morgenthau's book is characterized by "crude half-truths and outright falsehoods . . . from cover to cover," conclusions that do not follow from his analysis or the evidence he can mashal. His discussion of many of the "discrepancies" seems flawed too by over-speculation, unwarranted assumptions, and lack of evidence. Finally, one is astonished by Lowry's conclusion that what Talaat had in mind for the Armenians was not destruction but "segregation," that the fate of the Armenians was to be that of American blacks in the South in 1915! "A man who believes that," the good Dr. Johnson would say, "will believe anything."

If Henry Morgenthau made mistakes in his presentation, at least he had the excuse that he was not a trained historian. Dr. Heath Lowry, a student of Professor Stanford Shaw at UCLA, has no such excuse. One might well ask, "What is the story behind Heath Lowry's *Story?*"

A PRIMER ON ARMENIA AND THE ARMENIANS

by Edward Alexander

ARMENIEN GEORGIEN—Zwischen Ararat und Kaukasus. By Tessa Hofmann. 393 pages. Munich: Mundo Verlag. 1990. 34 Marks.

Armenia's geographical remoteness and political isolation have been the prime factors in the absence of a good travel book on the smallest republic in the Soviet Union. But if Armenia had previously not enjoyed the attention of a Baedeker or Michelin, this vacuum has now been filled by a superb volume, although presently inaccessible to those who do not read German.

Its author is Dr. Tessa Hofmann, a German scholar living in Berlin who, as an active member of a German human rights organization, has labored indefatigably for some years on behalf of Armenian causes. She has spent much time in Armenia (and Georgia) and has written a remarkably detailed account of both countries in one volume, more than half of it devoted to Armenia's history, culture and ancient sites. Illustrated profusely not only with stunning color and black-and-white photographs but with schematic plans of Armenia's many churches, this paperback was published last year as part of a series of more than thirty travel handbooks embracing all six continents.

But to label her work a 'travel book' does Dr. Hofmann a grave injustice, for what she has accomplished in the 180 pages on Armenia is so comprehensive that any would-be tourist who absorbs her text will be better informed about Armenia and the Armenian nation than most Armenians. All the more pity that it is not in English, for if it were, Armenians themselves would profit greatly from its scholarship.

No stranger to Armenia, Tessa Hofmann is masterly in her descriptions of its earliest history, working her way skillfully to the later years of Ottoman rule and the brutal excesses of Abdul Hamid II and the Young Turks. Fortunately, she has written her fact-filled book after the advent of *glasnost* and *perestroika,* so that the reader can judge Armenian develoments within the context and perspective of the pre-and-post Gorbachev eras. Thus, in covering Karabagh, nothing is omitted as she describes and explains the political and ethnic factors which today fuel the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict.

Having summarized the great panorama of a 2000-year old past, the author might now be expected to settle down to the tradition of all travel books and inform readers of sites to visit, how to behave, what to eat and drink. But Dr. Hofmann apparently does not feel she has provided adequate background for her reader to appreciate the small but dynamic nation.

Consequently, in successive chapters she takes on the problems of the economy and the environment, the role of women, the influence of the church, the alphabet and language, the literature, and the architecture (music is also discussed, but here she depends on Margarita Voskanian, who contributes an article). In each instance, again, the author explores her subject with an approach that is best described as 'German thoroughness.' Thus, whether it is Etchmiadzin, St. Hripsime, Mt. Ararat, Spitak, Kirovakan or Geghard, we are given not only a description but the history and significance of these and many other ancient structures and sites.

Never bowing to conventional wisdom or accepted notions, she dismisses the accepted fictions about Armenia, as for instance when discussing political jokes. The jokes attributed to 'Radio Yerevan' which came into circulation in the 1960s in the West, she insists, are not Soviet and not Armenian. Their antecedents are of still more questionable origin: racist-colored jokes from the czarist era, in which the Armenians appear to be fools, with a certain peasant slyness. In fact, writes Dr. Hofmann—

> *The Armenians possess a native element of sharp wit, common sense, sober skepticism, and the precious and delightful virtue of self-irony. Armenia is not the country of the often malicious and clumsy Radio Yerevan jokes but rather the country of pungent phrases and proverbs, sagacious abstract puzzles and wise fables.*

The section on literature is peppered with word portraits on the great names ranging from Mesrop Mashtots and Movses Khorenatsi, through Krikor Narekatsi and Nerses Shnorhali, Khachadour Abovian and Raffi, the modern Western Armenians Vahan Derian, Siamanto and Daniel Varoujan, and finally the Eastern Armenians Yeghishe Charents and Axel Bakountz and the fate they suffered at the hands of Stalinist persecutors. Dr. Hofmann's detailed knowledge of the works—which are named and described—of all these giants of Armenian literature, and many more, is astonishing. She underlines Armenians' love of literature by pointing out that "Armenians were the first people in Asia and much ahead of many European peoples to print books."

It is in the chapter on Armenian architecture that Dr. Hofmann indulges in one of her several asides, or private commentaries—in this case, on the Armenian earthquake of December 1988. At first, she is dismayed by poor

"Armenians were the first people in Asia and much ahead of many European peoples to print books."

Soviet construction prior to the quake—cracked concrete, sagging balconies, elevators so shaky that she mutters a quick prayer—but after the catastrophe, she is outraged by what she sees and what she learns. Discussing what she considers the danger of tolerating the day-to-day shortcomings of Soviet life, Dr. Hofmann writes:

> *Armenia delivered the worst example. There, not only had the danger of earthquakes been ignored for decades and multi-storied apartment houses erected, but they were botched up irresponsibly, as everywhere else in the USSR.*

She attributes much of this to the widespread nightly stealing of building materials, such as cement and bricks, and in Armenia she is devastated by what she witnessed:

> *The highrise apartments, which had been erected not of concrete but only of sand, became death traps during the December 7 earthquake. Armenia lost a great part of its youth because kindergardens, schools and institutes, built just as poorly as the houses, collapsed like houses of cards.*

She is angry and looks for retribution. Well and good, she comments, that no more houses will be built ex-

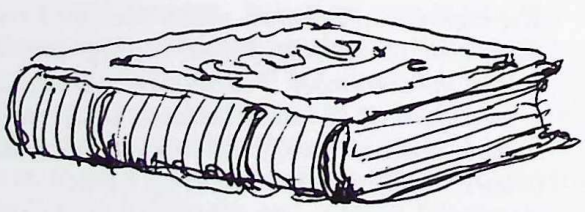
ceeding four stories, but—

> *What about those officials who were responsible for construction in Armenia? And what about those functionaries in the Internal Ministry in Moscow who already in August 1988 had been warned by geophysicists of an earthquake that would erupt in late November or early December, and despite that, took no precautions to limit the damage?*

The reader is now at the halfway point, and fully primed for a visit to the small republic in the Caucasus. After a discussion of Armenian food and beverages (Dr. Hofmann cannot resist telling us that the first French coffeehouse was founded by an Armenian in 1670), the remaining eighty pages, which are in the more traditional format of travel books, single out the countless places of historic interest which should be visited. Yerevan, of course, receives the most attention—fifteen pages—and from then on, the Madenadaran, Sardarabad, Leninakan (the names had not been changed yet), the various famous churches, Lake Sevan, and the monastaries, with whose histories Dr. Hofmann is demonstrably conversant.

The final pages are devoted to invaluable travel tips on every contingency which a tourist might face, from the temptations of the black market to the hazards—for single female passengers—of taxis. The bibliography and index climax what can only be considered a magnificently executed task. As though this alone were not a major accomplishment, Dr. Hofmann then proceeds to do exactly the same for Georgia.

When this book is translated into English, there will never be a need for another written guide to Armenia. Far from a mere travel book, however, it is the most succinctly encyclopaedic portrait of the Armenian nation in print and comes, fortuitously or not, at a time when, owing to political upheavals and natural disasters, Armenia is emerging on the world scene. But if this book can promote tourism from just the three German-speaking countries of Europe, the influx of hard currency may contribute handily towards meeting some of Armenia's more pressing problems.



A STORY THAT MUST BE TOLD

by Claire Hsu Accomando

A CRY UNHEARD by Sarkis A. Takesian. Royal Publishing, P.O. Box 953, Yorka Linda, CA 92686. 290 pages. 1990.

In *A Cry Unheard,* Sarkis A. Takesian relates the poignant story of Armen and Neeta's separate escapes from Turkey, and of the love that sustains the couple through tragedy and a nine-year separation. Though written as a novel, the book is based on the lives of Takesian's parents.

The story begins in central Turkey, in the Anatolian village of Chakmak, and ends in the San Joaquin Valley, California. The sixteen years that separate these two events are filled with advanture, suspense, horror, despair and finally when all seems lost, hope and courage.

In 1910, Armen, the blue-eyed hero, and his cousin Karnig decide to flee Turkey. It is the year of their conscription and the two men are so determined to avoid being drafted into the Turkish Army that they resort to an unusual and dangerous ruse. They fill their cart with barley and set out to sell it. On the way they stage their own deaths. Then, with passports provided by a relative, Armen and Karnig plan to ship out for America.

Prior to the "accident," Armen informs Neeta of his escape plan. However, he says nothing about the sheep he intends to slaughter for its blood so as to make it look as if the cousins have been murdered by bandits.

Takesian repeatedly refers to the dread of this Turkish conscription which, he states, often results in death, but he never really explains how. I would like to be told specifically. This is important, not only historically but dramatically. The author needs to make a very strong case for draft evasion in order to justify the agony Armen inflicts on his wife, when a Turkish official hands her a bundle of blood-soaked clothes and her husband's death certificate. At that moment she believes he is dead.

The subterfuge works so well that Armen's death is not questioned on conscription day. However, the Turkish Captain wants to fill his quota of draftees and, in a chilling scene, orders Armen's old father to be seized.

Neeta, who has two young children, does not find out about her husband's faked death until weeks later. And, it is only after she receives a coded letter from America that she knows he has arrived safely. In Boston, Armen begins to save money and plans to send for his wife and children by 1913. This hope is thwarted because in that

year Armen's brother reaches conscription age and the family decides that the money Armen has saved should be used for the young man's passage rather then for Neeta's and the children's. This event is interesting because it gives us insight into the Armenian family's sense of priorities.

Here, the author has a second opportunity to deal with the problematic conscription, but he does not. He also fails to mention how Armen's brother leaves Turkey. One would think the Turks, who forced grandfathers into service, would no doubt be on the look-out for draft-aged Armenian men.

The decision to save the brother first, turns out to be a tragic one for the young couple because it ultimately results in their children's death. Two years later, in 1915, both youngsters are bayoneted by a Turkish soldier.

The chapter which deals with the 1915 Turkish massacre of Armenian civilians is heart-rending to read. It must have been excruciating for the author to write as it describes the death by gutting and decapitation of most of his relatives including small children. In this chapter, and in some of the very dramatic ones that follow, Takesian refrains from using the many adjectives and adverbs that abound elsewhere in the book. This restraint from qualifying everything that is done or said makes for tighter, stronger writing.

The author effectively switches point of view in a manner of a cinematographer who focuses his camera from one scene to another without wasting time in cumbersome transitions. You can almost see the chapter headings across the screen: Boston 1910, California 1926. This is a simple and direct way of dealing with events that touch many lives and span two continents.

A Cry Unheard is a story of physical and spiritual survival, and as Sarkis A. Takesian states in his author's foreword. "This is a story that must be told."

A SERVICEABLE REFERENCE

by Alice Antreassian

ETHNIC COOKBOOKS AND FOOD MARKETPLACE edited by Hamo Vassilian. Armenian Reference Books Co., P.O. Box 231, Glendale, CA 91209. Comb-bound paperback, 124 pages. $34.95 (plus $2.00 for shipping)

Anyone interested in ethnic foods will find this compilation useful, though the price might seem a little high. Its large-format pages offer information on 239 (no, I didn't count them) cookbooks, arranged by author, title and subject for varied reference. It also lists more than 2,000 food marketplaces in the United States and Canada, including Armenian, Iranian, Afghan, Middle Eastern, North African and Greek.

Publishing reference works of this kind has its peculiar virtually unavoidable pitfalls. In my own first book I included a limited list of stores where Armenian staples could be purchased. By the time the book got through the press, a couple of the stores had gone out of business, some phone numbers had been changed, causing no little consternation, not only to me, but also to my readers. The problem is clearly evident in this book as well. Understandable as it might be, readers should be forewarned.

Perhaps the book tries to do too much; some titles appear four times, in an effort, I suppose, to present them in every conceivable dimension. It doesn't always work. *A Book of Favorite Recipes,* for example, appears under Armenian Cookery, understandable enough; then again under the caption, Book of Favorite Recipes, for what purpose I could not fathom.

The listing of prices and publisher addresses would be more useful, with some note as to whether the book are still in print.

The marketplace listings could be more specific about what ethnic food each carries. "Lebanese Grocery" and "Lev's Armenian Market" may be clear enough, but what are we to make of "L. & H. Superette?"

Minor matters perhaps that might be addressed in future editions. Even with such reservations, the book represents a serviceable reference for ethnic cooking.

YOU'VE BEEN AWAY

by Alan P. Akmakjian

I am desert heat
sand
thrown upon paper
medz mayrik

dusty film on
a rose
red grows darkness
my days

below your gravestone
treading moonlit
pages of water

I do not wake

I've Been Reading

by Ara Baliozian

TRACKINGS: COMPOSERS SPEAK WITH RICHARD DUFALLO. By Richard Dufallo. 418 pages. Illustrated. Index. New York: Oxford University Press. 1990. $48.95.

In these 26 interviews with the world's leading composers from Boulez and Stockhausen to Cage and Xenakis, Cathy Berberian is mentioned and discussed on a number of occasions. At one point, Richard Dufallo, himself a conductor of international stature, describes her as "a marvelous performer who has a sort of built-in theatricality, no matter what she performs." He goes on to explain that, by introducing innovations in vocal technique, she influenced several composers. One composer who discusses this influence is the the American Jacob Druckman (b. 1918). When asked whether Luciano Berio (a noted Italian composer and husband of Cathy Berberian) was an influence on him, Druckman replies: "Sure he was an influence. There is, I think, an equal influence along with Berio, and that was Cathy Berberian. Cathy's input was enormous. I think pieces like *Visages* are so much Cathy. I often had the feeling that she was present, to an extent, as a co-composer. I was thinking of her when I wrote *Animus II*. Her voice was very much in my ear." *Lamia* was also written for her, in 1975-76.

Cathy Berberian is further discussed by Elizabeth Swados, *Listening Out Loud: Becoming a Composer* (208 pages; New York: Harper & Row; $26.95). In this highly informative guide to the musically gifted person who wishes to develop a career as a composer, Elizabeth Swados, herself a composer of operas, revues, and scores for TV and films, writes: "Singing the national anthem with every note a quarter tone flat or sharp, as the late avant-garde soprano Cathy Berberian taught me to do, introduces your ear to a technique for creating sounds that are humorous as well as sour, or otherwise strange or interesting."

THE GENOCIDE MENTALITY: NAZI HOLOCAUST & NUCLEAR THREAT. By Robert Jay Lifton & Eric Markusen. 346 pages. Index. Notes. New York: Basic Books. 1990. $30.95.

By "genocide mentality" the authors mean a frame of mind that is willing to assume a passive stance and accept the development of weapon systems and scenarios which, if implemented, could put an end to life on this planet. In a chapter subtitled "Nuclear Numbing," they discuss the process whereby most people and nations desensitize themselves by acknowledging the possibility that terrible things will happen to others but never to them. Selective memory, they explain, is one mental gymnastic that promotes this type of false security; and it is in this connection that they discuss the Armenian Genocide. "The politics of selective memory," they write, "extends to America's official reluctance to condemn *as* genocide the Turkish slaughter of Armenians in 1915 because of our present military alliance with Turkey." They go on to explain that "failure to confront historical examples of genocidal killing contributes to contemporary nuclear numbing—to the inability to acknowledge the nuclear threat to our species and to mobilize the new ethical requirements for confronting that threat."

THE AWAKENING OF THE SOVIET UNION. By Geoffrey Hosking. Index. Notes. 182 pages. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1990. $28.95.

In this lively analysis of the social, cultural, and historical developments in the Soviet Union, Geoffrey Hosking, a professor of Russian history at the University of London, provides a unique perspective on the Karabagh issue. "The oil wealth of Baku is running out, having mostly been siphoned off to fuel the Soviet economy as a whole," he writes, and goes on: "The Azerbaijanis, as they see it, are left only with the pollution. Their past culture has been placed at two removes from them by not one but *two* alphabet reforms. For them the Armenians are rich neighbors who have enjoyed an undue share of the Soviet Union's aggregate wealth: many of the better-off or more privileged citizens of Baku and Sumgait are Armenians. Doubtless such frustrations lie behind the appalling massacre in Sumgait, where a hundred or so Armenians were murdered in what seemed to many like a systematic fashion by their Azerbaijani neighbors."

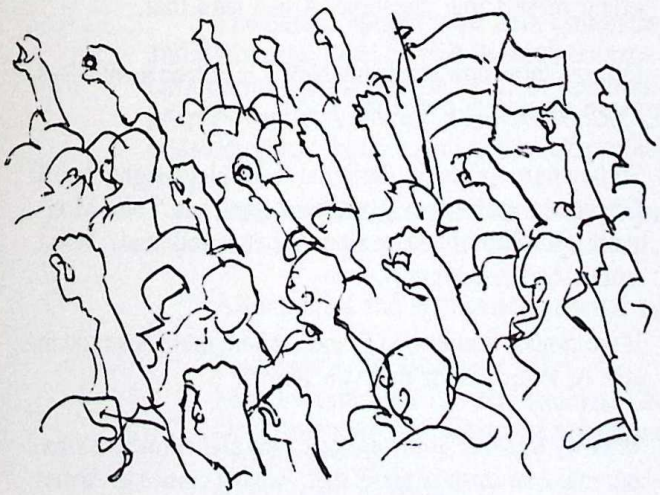
Elsewhere we read: "The Armenians are an ancient people, one of the oldest Christian nations in the world, with much more than a mere millennium to celebrate. But for them territory and statehood have always been a sensitive issue, since for many centuries their population was uprooted and scattered between different empires. This has made them vulnerable to inter-communal violence, of which the Ottoman massacres of 1915 were

only the worst example.

"Karabagh is the easternmost area of Armenian settlement, a mainly pastoral and viticultural region. From the monastery within it, the 17th-century Armenian Patriarch is said to have first written to the Russian tsar requesting protection against the infidel tyranny. That is why the decision of 1921 to include Karabagh in the Azerbaijani Republic, with its Turkic population, has always deeply offended Armenians. The region was at that time more than 90 percent Armenian in population, and the subjection to an alien race reminded them forcibly of the orphaned and vulnerable condition in which their people had so long lived.

"'Nor is it merely a matter of a historically based insult. In the one-party state, administrative subordination affects all aspects of life. Jobs, housing and economic development all depend ultimately on the Azerbaijani republican authorities in Baku, who tend to give preference to their own co-nationals over Armenians. Moreover, after four years of primary schooling, all parents must choose for their children whether to continue their education in Russian or in Azerbaijani. The language of the republic: Armenian is not an option."

Further down we read: "In autumn 1987 the Armenians sent a petition with 75,000 signatures to the party Central Committee calling for the historical injustice of Karabagh to be rectified. They never received a proper reply. This tacit slighting of their claim coincided with agitation over another grievance which has figured frequently in recent ethnic protest, that of environmental damage. The air in the Armenian capital city of Erevan is so polluted by chemical factories that intellectuals sent an open letter to Gorbachev, talking of 'biological genocide' and citing a huge recent increase in cancer, cardiac and respiratory disease, and in birth defects. The merging of these two streams of protest imparted the decisive mass appeal to the Armenian national movement."



THE LABYRINTH OF EXILE: A LIFE OF THEODOR HERZL. By Ernest Pawel. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 554 pages. Illustrated. Index. Bibliography. $39.95. 1989.

Although Armenians are not mentioned in the index of this major new biography of the founding father of Zionism, they are discussed at considerable length in the section dealing with Herzl's negotiations with sultan Abdul Hamid II.

Pawel accurately captures the Sultan's naive overestimation of Herzl's influence as a journalist, and Herzl's arrogance in assuming that he was smart enough to manipulate an Oriental despot.

On the massacres of the Armenians and other Christian minorities within the Ottoman Empire, Pawel writes: "[They] were on a scale foreshadowing the genocidal fury of our own century: they spared neither women nor children and aroused vociferous but, as usual, largely ineffectual protest in the West."

He goes on: "Abdul Hamid blamed the press for much of his trouble at home and abroad. The butchery of a few thousand Armenians received what he considered disproportionate and tendentious coverage in newspapers all over the world, stirring up anti-Turkish sentiment and inspiring terrorist acts. If Herzl wanted Turkey to help the Jews, let the Jews first help the Turks by influencing public opinion in their favor."

At first the Sultan played hard to get by refusing to see Herzl. "Abdul Hamid declared that in view of his past experiences with the press, he would never grant an audience to Herzl, the journalist, but would gladly welcome him as a friend once he had demonstrated his sincerity by moderating the anti-Turkish bias of the major European newspapers and by bringing the Armenian rebels to the negotiating table. . . ." Herzl complied by filing "a mildly pro-Turkish report on the Armenian situation."

The Sultan, however, was not satisfied by this gesture of loyalty and made financial demands as well, on the assumption that Herzl also represented powerful banking interests.

After describing in some detail several more twists in this sinister comedy of errors, Pawel concludes that these negotiations produced no tangible results for either party.

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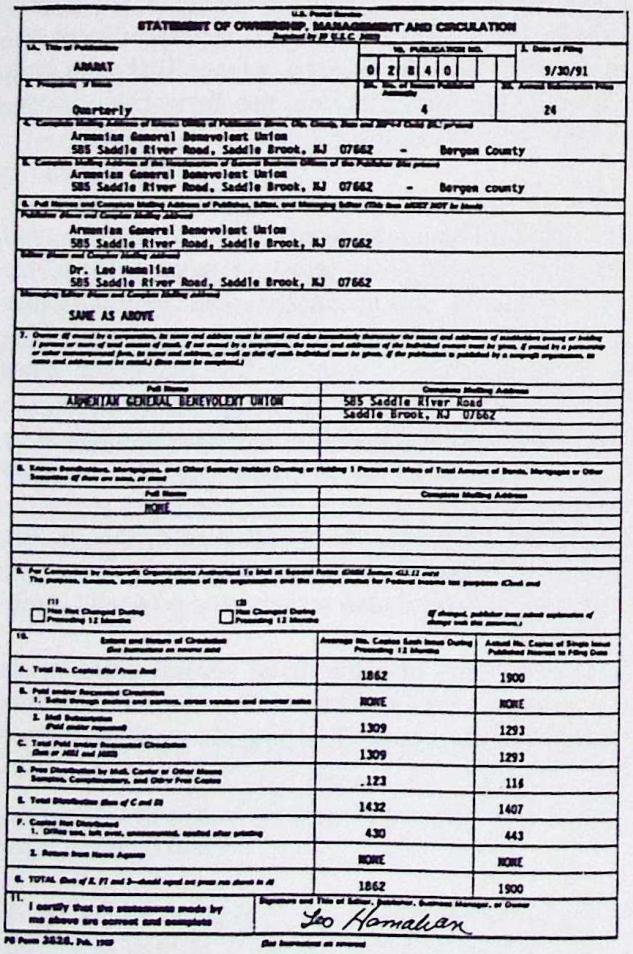

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A SAMPLING FROM SHAHAN SHAHNOUR

Translator's note: Brilliant and controversial novelist, critic, and poet, Shahan Shahnour (1904-1974) was born in Istanbul but spent most of his life in Paris. Sometime in mid-career he gave up writing in Armenian and under the pseudonym Armen Lubin, published several critically acclaimed works in French. The following quotations come from his book, The Sunday Issue of My Paper *(Beirut, 1958).*

Some of my readers complain that my books can't be read by their mothers or daughters. "Write something so the whole family can read and enjoy," they tell me. And when I inform them such a work is in preparation, they demand to know when it will come out and what it is about. "It will come out in December," I tell them, "and it is a wall calendar."

I experienced one of my first major disappointments when I was told that God was not an Armenian but a Jew—not even an Istanbultsi Jew at that, but a Jew from Palestine.

When I write, suffering comes to an end sooner or later. One more reason why I prefer literature to life.

Run as fast as you can towards a specific goal but first make sure you have the right direction.

Don't look into a dry well if you want to see a reflection of the moon.

Armenians who say, "I don't like Armenians from Istanbul (or Ismir, or Yerevan) because they are not nice," remind me of the little girl who on first seeing her baby brother said: "Mama, he's ugly! Let's return him and get a refund."

If a supernatural power appeared before you and said, "Make a wish and I will grant it," what would you answer be? Two days have gone by already and I haven't asked myself that question. A bad sign that.

Do you know how devilishly hard it is to feed a child?—I mean of course a wealthy child.

Somewhere [French diplomat and playwright Jean] Giraudoux writes that "Armenians smell bad." No, Monsieur Giraudoux, Armenians don't smell bad. What smells bad is adversity.

If we cannot find love in France, where there is so much talk of love, where shall we find it?

We may think of Turks as backward and careless slobs, but make no mistake about that: when it comes to Armenians, they can be very, very calculating and methodical.

(translated by Ara Baliozian)

ONE OF TWO

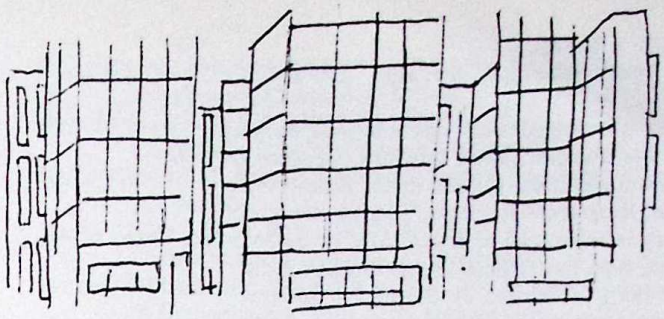
by Kevork Kalayjian

The sky is more expensive here
simply because there are too many windows.

Its no use, but you keep on trying
you press the elevator button for the top floor,
the lights will indicate that you are going up
but down and down you will go
till you reach the temple of faith,
where all the believers are busy praying,
their prayer consists of rearranging the furniture,
until by chance, they will find the invocation,
the furniture arrangement, which will please their gods.

And when you are exhausted, tired of moving the furnishings,
run out to the street and wait by the main entrance
for the delivery man, to bring the missing parts of your soul,
delivered to your door, C.O.D.

Remember the village, remember the farm,
where you did something with your own hands,
you milked the cow, now everything is sold,
nobody milks the cow, they just watch the animal
dance, in the middle of an air conditioned auditorium.



THE CHILDREN

by Charles Fishman

I thought my poems were finished
—the dance of death I was called to—
but your pain, your tears for the children
and for the mothers who could not bear
and for the mothers who had to quieten their young
forever . . . your tears woke the words in me
again where they had slept, where my thoughts
had withdrawn from the pain of so much death.

Dear wife, I have you to blame for this yielding
to memory, this warfare of the spirit. I have you
to thank: you, and your wise heart that will not retreat
to the safety of ignorance. You have called me again
to witness and be maimed, to name and remember,
and to not be healed.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at UCLA announces the position for a new Narekatsi Chairholder in Armenian Studies, to be appointed effective July 1, 1992.

The Department is authorized to make an appointment at the Full Professor level.

The person sought must have complete control of the classical and modern languages and literatures, must be able to teach courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels in both periods, must be able to direct doctoral dissertations in both periods, but may have primary research interests in either period. She or he must be a distinguished scholar to be considered for appointment at the full professor rank.

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Search Committee for the Narekatsi Chair in Armenian Studies
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405 Hilgard Avenue
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Los Angeles, CA 90024-1511

ARARAT - Index;
Spring 1985 through Autumn 1991

This index is arranged under the following headings:
Art Reviews, Articles, Book Reviews, Concert Reviews,
Fiction, Film Reviews, Letters to the Editor, Poetry,
Reference, Restaurant Reviews, Theater Reviews.
Each entry is organized alphabetically by author's last name,
first name, type (ie. Article, Book Review, etc.),
issue number (1= Winter, 2= Spring, 3= Summer,
4= Autumn), volume number, page, year and title.
N.B. Book Reviews are listed alphabetically by the author's
last name, also listing the reviewer's name and the title
of the book reviewed.

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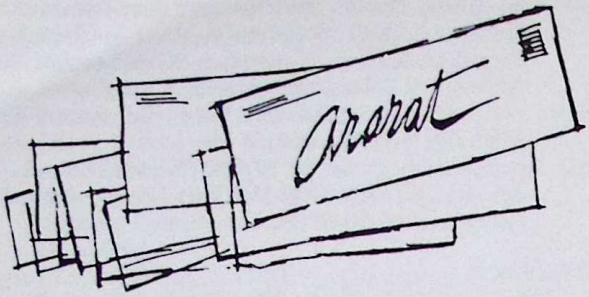

"Another View of Parvin's Novel"

Manoucher Parvin's *Cry For My Revolution, Iran* (revieved by Mark Gavoor in the Winter 1990 issue of *Ararat*) is in the author's own words "a historical novel—a novel of fact." Parvin means that he cannot and does not want to be pinned down as either historian or novelist. He means to reanimate historical events through the lives of individuals. He ends up writing a semi-fictional chronicle of the Iranian revolution, imbued with his commitment and idealism.

This novel also attempts to introduce Western readers to the complex and long history of the Iranian revolution. By choosing to write his book in English, Parvin deliberately places himself on the other side of the cultural and political barrier which has long separated Iranians and Americans. Parvin's open and jubilant admiration for revolutionary ideals, however, risks alienating the more cynical readers or those who do not share his political beliefs. But this is not Parvin's primary concern. He does not write an apology but rather a eulogy for a failed revolution: "This novel is dedicated to the unknown revolutionary who shouted in front of the firing squad, 'I will come back, Iran.' "

This is the spirit which moves the plot of *Cry For My Revolution, Iran.* The story begins in New York in the sixties where we find the protagonist, Ali Keshavarz, deeply involved in the radical student movement at Columbia University. His passion for politics is balanced with his love for Sara Patrick, a student of journalism. However, Ali's romantic hopes are quickly dashed when his rival, Eric Saunders, frames him and facilitates his deportation to Iran.

Once in Iran, Ali quickly becomes drawn into the underground movement to depose the monarchy. In his opposition to the Shah, he is joined by numerous other Iranians who represent a wide range of political, religious, and, ideological perspectives. His brother is drawn towards the Muslim clergy's movement. Yet, his sister and brother-in-law, an Armenian, have purely secular objectives. With this array of characters, Parvin demonstrates the extent to which the Iranian nation, including its religious minorities, was united during the early stages of the revolution. He shows the Armenian and the Muslim cleric fighting side by side and making equally painful sacrifices.

In one sense, Parvin succeeds in his juxtapostion of history and fiction. He puts history on a human scale. In another sense, though, he does not give himself enough room for character development. Quite often, his characters become one-dimensional or are reduced to types. The figure of the narrator, Professor Pirooz, suffers from some of these shortcomings. For the most part, we know him and his devotion to humanity, justice, and peace through his long and passionate classroom speeches. There is enthusiasm and energy behind these portrayals, but sometimes too much of the bare outline shows.

These problems notwithstanding, Parvin's novel should be of interest to readers eager for answers to the enigma of the Iranian revolution.

Nasrin Rahimeh
Department of Comparative Literature
The University of Alberta

THANKSGIVING

by Sara Baranian

I'm pretty hungry and it's Thanksgiving
all of America is sharing a festive table
I'm alone and pretty hungry and it's
Thanksgiving

I want to go hungry
for the lost children of America
for the original people of this soil
whose generosity was abused
and used to bury them

people like my people
who were driven from an ancient home
who were starved and decimated
who survive, who remain
in such small numbers
that hardly anyone who isn't one
knows more than one

on this day when some of America
stuffs itself to bursting I think I'm starving

and then I think of the Trail of Tears
and then I think of the Turkish Death March
I think of the Midwestern winters
without heat, without blankets
and the Mesapotamian deserts
without shoes

I think of a whole race of people
pregnant from starvation
a bloated belly producing death
instead of birth a bloated belly
dancer dancing on a stage of corpses

I feel for the hunger of my people
a hunger I've never tasted I feel
for the victims of this American
red letter day

I think of America I think of Armenia
I think I'm not so hungry and it's
thanksgiving

ERRATA

In the spring issue of 1991, D.H. Melhem was identified as a professor of English at Long Island University. She no longer teaches there.

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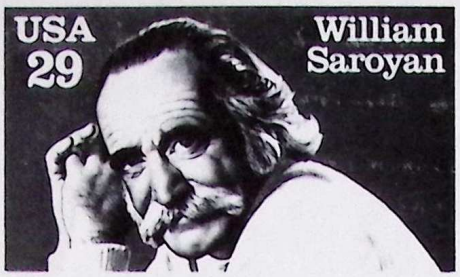



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