

The Armenian Weekly

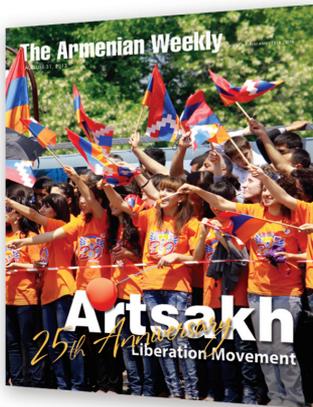
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Artsakh

25th Anniversary
Liberation Movement



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Celebrating 25 Years of a Free and Democratic Artsakh

BY ROBERT AVETISYAN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NKR TO THE U.S.

I want to welcome the initiative of The Armenian Weekly to dedicate this magazine issue to Artsakh, a stronghold of Armenian civilization and an inseparable part of our common Homeland. It is important to continue keeping Artsakh in our hearts and minds, to follow developments in and around the Nagorno Karabagh Republic (NKR), and to show to the entire world that the entire Armenian Nation remains involved in Artsakh's life and invested in its freedom and prosperity.

This year, Artsakh, Armenia, and our compatriots in the Armenian Diaspora celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Artsakh liberation movement. In early 1988, following decades of discrimination and injustice in an oppressive Soviet system, Nagorno-Karabagh's legislature requested restoration of the historical injustice by reunifying with Armenia. The reaction was as disproportionate as it was inhuman: A wave of anti-Armenian atrocities spread throughout then-Soviet Azerbaijan, which began a full-scale military campaign against the people of Karabagh. Our nation, however, through enormous sacrifice, has defended its freedom and laid the grounds for independent statehood.

Today, 25 years after that historic event, Artsakh is a free and democratic nation, with a vibrant civil society, a developing economy, an effective administration, and capable armed forces. The years that followed the declaration of independence are proof not only of the viability of Artsakh's statehood, but of its ability to solve complex issues. We have, after all, succeeded in rehabilitating the economy from nearly nothing, in rebuilding our infrastructure from ruin, and establishing democratic institutions while consistently reinstating them, all in the face of extremely scarce resources, a blockade, and massive post-war destruction.

Free, fair, and competitive elections have become an inseparable part of NKR's political culture. Since 1991, our republic has gone through five presidential elections, five parliamentary elections, and many local elections, all of which were assessed as free and transparent by international observers. Our political transitions have always been carried out in a legal and orderly manner.

All of this does not mean that we have achieved our goals; numerous problems still exist, and require consistent and tireless attention. Our young democracy still faces significant domestic and external challenges and threats. The political hotheads from our neighbor to the east, and their supporters, continue to ignore the reality on the ground, thus perpetuating the threat to our long-term regional stability. Nonetheless, over 25 years, *Artsakhtsis* have demonstrated the sustainability of their aspirations for sovereignty, and have proven that we are resolute in defending—and multiplying—our achievements in any realm. Four U.S. states and various parliaments have recognized this fact, and support Artsakh's independence.

We will continue to build a better and safer country that will protect the freedom and dignity of our heroic people. On our way to building a better and safer homeland, we have always felt the encouragement and support of our compatriots from throughout the world. We remain convinced that joint efforts by Artsakh, Armenia, and the Armenian Diaspora will lead us to further victories and achievements, at home and abroad. Unity is the strength that saved our people from extermination. Unity remains the necessary component for our continued development as states and as a nation. □

Nagorno-Karabagh

Preventive and Remedial Recognition vs. Azerbaijani

THREATS

BY ARTAK BEGLARYAN

The Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, one of the longest-lasting conflicts in the region, seems to have passed into an essential phase of its settlement. On May 30, the Legislature of Louisiana recognized the independence of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic (NKR; also known as the Republic of Artsakh). This action at the U.S. state level has precedents, such as similar resolutions passed by Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island in the recent months. The recognition of NKR's independence at the state level has gone beyond America's shores, as the largest Australian state of New South Wales also passed a resolution in 2012.

Although such resolutions by non-subjects of international law do not change the legal status of that de facto state in the international community, its political significance cannot be underestimated. Firstly, it warns Azerbaijan that time works towards the final recognition of Karabagh. This fact may put pressure on the Azerbaijani side during negotiations to recede from its maximalist position. In fact, it is a response to Baku's military rhetoric and heavy armament, upon which it clearly relies on the long term. The recognition campaign also raises awareness

about the Nagorno-Karabagh issue and the democratic merits of that non-recognized republic; that positive awareness will surely increase the chances of further recognition acts by states and sub-state units.

That recognition campaign, perceived by Azerbaijan as a risk, causes aggressive counter-reaction. In addition to its traditional military rhetoric, Azerbaijan regularly provokes tensions with grave incidents on the frontline and explicitly violates the rules of conventional arms control. Moreover, Baku recently took two

steps that escalated the tension around the Karabagh issue and deepened the gap of trust between the Armenian and Azerbaijani societies. The first shock was the extradition to Azerbaijan and the pardon of army officer Ramil Safarov. He had been serving a life sentence in Hungary for axing to death Armenian army officer Gurgen Margaryan in his sleep. It happened in 2004, when both of them were participating in the NATO "Partnership for Peace" program. As the murderer himself proudly said, the reason for his brutal



Artyk Danielyan/The Armenian Weekly

action was the hatred he felt towards all Armenians, a statement widely propagandized by the Azerbaijani authorities. Safarov's extradition to Azerbaijan in August 2012, organized together with the government of Hungary, and heroization in his homeland shocked the international community, causing worldwide outrage. At the diplomatic level, Armenia's response to Hungary's infamous deal with Azerbaijan was its suspension of relations with Budapest.

This scandalous step by the Aliyev clan was likely carried out for the following reasons: First, he aimed to nourish the nationalist sentiments of the Azerbaijani society, which are directed mainly against Armenians, and increase the bellicose mood in the society in preparation for further military actions against Karabagh. Or, using the Nagorno-Karabagh card and, in this case, pardoning the axe-murderer, Aliyev aimed to raise his legitimacy among the considerable nationalist masses of the society. Undoubtedly, that legitimacy is needed prior to the presidential elections of 2013, when this authoritarian leader is elected to an undemocratic third term, in particular since his legitimacy was shaken as a result of continuous violations of human rights and freedoms in Azerbaijan. Thirdly, it was a clear message to Armenia and the international community that Azerbaijan's position in the negotiations would not become softer; rather, its BATNA (i.e., renewal of the war) would be more probable. It is arguable whether the message has worked or not. What is clear, however, is that it spurred a negative reaction by the main great powers involved in South Caucasus affairs.

At the beginning, there was a risk that the Safarov case would freeze talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan; however, that risk has mostly been overcome due to the efforts of the mediators. In parallel to the calming down of the first storm, though, other clouds gathered in the Armenian-Azerbaijani sky. In recent months, especially, the tension over the Stepanakert airport has intensified. The authorities of the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic are planning to run the airport for humanitarian flights, but Baku has

Baku recently took two steps that **escalated the tension** around the Karabagh issue and **deepened the gap of trust** between the Armenian and Azerbaijani societies.

threatened to shoot down any civilian planes flying to and from Karabagh.

This is another demonstration of the anti-Armenian hysteria of the Aliyev clan. Who would ever think of attacking civilian aircrafts? Beyond simply creating/maintaining humanitarian obstacles for the Nagorno-Karabagh people, Baku is concerned about the legal consequences of allowing flights over the territory of that non-recognized state. Those fears made the OSCE Minsk Group (the main mediator body of the ongoing talks, with French, Russian, and American co-chairmanship) assert with a statement that the flights cannot affect the legal status of Nagorno-Karabagh. Despite this statement, the Azerbaijani authorities still continue to threaten downing civilian aircraft. This has become the top issue for the mediators in recent meetings, and it seems that Azerbaijan seeks to utilize the airport problem in the bargaining process.

After some delay, the NKR authorities said that the airport would be launched soon. This decision likely took into account Armenia's statement that its anti-missile systems would secure the Karabagh flights.

Some experts argue that Russia is seeking to deploy peacekeepers around the Stepanakert airport as a guarantee of its security, thus increasing Moscow's weight in the region, since the Karabagh conflict is believed to be the most significant stability/instability factor in the South Caucasus. Indisputably, any Russian soldier on that ground would cause trouble among the other influential actors of and in the region, including the EU and the U.S. In order to avoid any possible change in the current balance among the

external players around the conflict, as well as to avoid a new devastating war in the region, all interested actors must prevent Azerbaijan from attacking the civilian planes, and instead provide the Armenian side with clear guarantees.

The airport will be launched sooner or later, since it has enormous humanitarian significance for the Karabagh people and no international law forbids its operation. However, the question of whether Azerbaijan will attack the civilian aircrafts is still uncertain. Since any attack to the planes, logically, will trigger the resumption of war, and the great players are strongly interested in sustaining the peace in the region, they must keep Azerbaijan away from any adventurous and terrorist behavior. How should they ensure the desirable peace in and around the conflict zone? The answer is explicit—that is, to act instead of talking. As the notion of security dilemma assumes, the arms race in the South Caucasus increases the chance of a new war. The abovementioned two shocks, along with the frequent incidents on the frontline, are considerable symptoms of the exhaustion of the security dilemma. To avoid such a scenario with large-scale humanitarian and geopolitical crises, as well as to resolve the Karabagh conflict once and for all, the best option will be for the international community to provide NKR with preventive recognition.

Undoubtedly, preventive recognition will become the powerful chain that keeps Azerbaijan away from attacking an internationally recognized state, forcing it to abide with reality, like Serbia does in the case of Kosovo. The concept of remedial recognition could also be applicable here. It may work not only as a remedy for the 1990's war and the ongoing deprivations and threats, but also as a response to the likely effects of possible warfare in the future. Hence, the resolutions recognizing the Nagorno-Karabagh Republic's independence by sub-state units have already paved the way to preventive and/or remedial recognition by the majority of the subjects of international law. One would hope that the international community will not miss the opportunity of establishing enduring peace in the region. □

illuminating

Artak

10 years after

BY ERIC NAZARIAN

Ever since I saw Steven Spielberg's masterpiece, "Empire of the Sun," as a child, the subject of war and its effects on children and civilians has been a theme of constant research and preoccupation. It's not so much war's mythos that makes for good cinema, but the "war after war's end" that has both disturbed and inspired me to write. This is what triggered my first journey to Nagorno-Karabagh in the late 1990's, as a student at USC Film

School. The war had finished a handful of years before, and the raw effects were still present in the faces on that bewitching and ancient patch of earth. After graduating I returned again, trying to understand the chaos, the displacement and civilian casualties of a war that was fought tooth and nail until the 1994 ceasefire, and that resulted in the displacement of over a million people and an estimated 30,000 casualties on both sides.

I recently dug into my dog-eared pocket notebooks from 2003 and found a line I had written after meeting my dear friend Artak Beglaryan in Stepanakert 10 years ago: "If there is anything in the world worth despising, it's war." I continue to despise war for the human

waste and ravage it leaves behind. Those who survive war, and those of us blessed never to see what war produces, have a responsibility to bear witness, illuminate empathy, and foster a meaningful human dialogue.

Driving into the capital of Stepanakert, I had this graphic-novel image of the ancient Phoenix curling into flames, then rebuilding itself from the ash. This city *has* risen again but there is still work to be done. A lot of the pockmarked buildings have been renovated. Busloads of pilgrims from the diaspora visit the ancient monasteries and villages. The new generation still grapples with the after-effects of the war, and many questions have yet to be answered. The dark weight of the post-war aura that I first remember feeling has dissipated for the most part, but the ghosts of war will always be present, cautiously reminding natives and visitors of the resilience and ravage that complete each other.

My dear friend Artak Beglaryan was blinded at the age of 6 after picking up an unexploded ordnance in the courtyard of his apartment building in Stepanakert.

I don't know if "Illuminating Artak" is the right title for this piece; I hope it affords a glimpse into his courage, humility, and panoramic vision.

Artak (R) and the author in Boston in May 2013



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Artak (L) and the author in NKR in 2003

The shrapnel robbed Artak of his eyesight, yet ultimately produced a young dreamer who is an inspiration in my life. His gift is willpower, survival, and a hunger for knowledge, for higher learning and self-betterment. War's irreversible damage only strengthened his resolve to learn, travel, and spur critically engaging dialogue that crosses borders and gives a human voice to the struggle of the Karabagh-Armenians.

I could write a book about Artak's journey as a child war survivor, and then as a young international scholar. Artak was 14 when I met him in 2003. I was out of film school struggling to piece together a film about the war and the civilian survivors on both sides of the line. Through the grapevine of this small city, all roads pointed in the direction of Artak's home. We met there for the first time. He recited poetry, sang the village ballads and folkloric odes of his grandfathers, and managed to beat me and my dear friend Spiros multiple times in chess. I vividly remember our first encounter, and his incredibly witty and effortless sense of humor. I still don't know how he does it, but five minutes into a conversation the belly laughs keep rolling.

Over the past 10 years, Artak has studied at Yerevan State University, at University College London, and at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Boston. He has learned English and is a speed-reader on the internet, with the aid of screen-reader software that allows him to speak-type and commit ideas to cyberspace and to paper very rapidly.

It was a short journey to Stepanakert, but a special one. Artak was turning 25 and I was happy to be there on the day he celebrated with his family. Surrounded by his brother Garen's family, we savored a few shots of homemade pear vodka while taking in the summer heat that dipped into a nice afternoon rain in Shushi. Melancholy swept over the rainy city as we drove back to Stepanakert, passing the Brotherhood Cemetery, where scores of civilians and soldiers lie side-by-side. It is a beautifully

groomed but sad monument to the many lives lost in the storm of war. The weight of that loss will forever hang in the air above these roads and in every home. And with this weight, life will go on and tomorrow will be a new day.

The next day, over a hearty breakfast of fresh bread, thyme tea, and honey from Garen's bees, Artak mused about the current state of affairs in Armenia and Karabagh, and of the Syrian refugees in Armenia and the diaspora. "I think, nowadays the most important thing for us is the demographic development of Karabagh," he said. "In this case, the Syrian Armenians currently are the core target because they combine the main goals of Armenians. The first is repatriation. Tragically, because of the war in Syria we have been given this chance to repatriate. The second dream is to develop and populate Artsakh, which would ensure a bright and secure, enduring future. The third goal, which is an occasion-based mid-term one, is to create a sense of security for Syrian Armenians. The diaspora and Armenia should be concerned first of all about the situation of Syrian Armenians, and that's why this process of repopulation is very important from that perspective. So, in supporting that process, one contributes simultaneously to the abovementioned three goals of Armenians."

In preparation for his journey to the Czech Republic, where he will continue his studies, Artak remembers Herbert Spencer's wisdom that "the great aim of education is not knowledge but action." Armed with Spencer's wisdom, Artak will continue his struggle for a better tomorrow—for all of Artsakh and Armenia—from his desk across the hall from the prime minister's office. His laptop and iPhone are his modern-day tools, but gadgets and software are impermanent, soon to be replaced by tomorrow's technology. The real sweat-of-the-brow work is done every day inside his encyclopedic mind, which has produced an inner field of vision that transcends blindness.

The world indeed is your oyster, my dear brother. □

‘Something Broke Inside Me’



Armenians who Fled Azerbaijan Speak



BY ERIN HENK

The woman sitting across from me stopped speaking. Tilting her chin downward she closed her eyes and shook her head slightly.

No.

Oh, I said, startled as I looked up from my notebook. I saw there were tears running down her face. *Oh, it's OK. You don't have to go on.* I turned to my interpreter. *Please tell her she doesn't have to continue if she doesn't feel comfortable.* I wanted to reach across the table and place my hand on her arm, to offer a reassuring touch. A sign of consolation. A pause. She nodded through the tears. A stiff smile crossed her face for a second, revealing a trace of relief. Her hands in her lap, she remained motionless.

I'm so sorry, I said. Please tell her I didn't mean to make her uncomfortable.

The woman had stopped herself mid-sentence, choking up while recounting the story of her neighbor in Baku. They had lived in the same apartment building for years. It was where, in the courtyard, the resident families would hold cookouts during warm summer evenings, where their children would play together, and where they would share meals during the holidays. It was the same building where she and her husband spent years remodeling the floors, the bathroom, and the kitchen to make it truly comfortable. And it was where one night a group of angry Azerbaijanis broke down her neighbor's door, grabbed her by the arms, and threw her from the window, four stories to her death on the concrete below. Then, in some twisted final act, the Azerbaijani men combined their might to hurl her large wooden bureau out of the window so that it landed on top of her.

I took a breath. *Where to go from here?* I thought.

This woman was one of the many displaced Armenians from Baku who I interviewed for my master's thesis. The quest to complete the thesis was bumpy, to say the least; I switched topics at least three times over the course of several months before settling on one that continues to fascinate me—the human face of violence and war. I did so by focusing on the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, specifically the pogroms of Baku, and the Armenians who fled Azerbaijan because of them. Setting out on an equally trying road of finding people to interview, I spent weeks searching, traveling up and down the East Coast to interview those who were forced from a place that their families had called home for generations. Through my interviews I tried to figure out how conflict-induced displacement had impacted the cultural identity of some of Baku's Armenians, now members of the Armenian Diaspora. I set out to explore the way people relate to others within their own ethnic group and their sense of belonging to that group. And while I focused on how this group of people expressed their identities through

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Family gatherings. Some had salvaged photos, which
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Vacations to the Black Sea in the summer, sunlight
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symbolic ethnicity—like language and the Armenian Church, for example—what moved me the most was much of the material I didn't include in the final product: the stories of abrupt and horrific violence, the heart-wrenching and shocking tales of neighbors turning against neighbors, incredible loss, struggle, survival, and subsequent rebirth.

After some silence the woman suddenly surprised me by continuing. *After that, I hid, all night long in a closet and then again for the entire next day. As soon as I could, I left on the ferry to Turkmenistan.*

The long-simmering dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabagh finally erupted into violent clashes in 1988 when pogroms were waged against Armenians by Azerbaijanis, first in the small industrial city of Sumgait, located about 20 miles outside of Baku. While tensions had culminated in several episodes of violence around Armenia and Azerbaijan up until that point, they were nothing compared to the gruesome violence of Sumgait. When about 50 people assembled in Sumgait's Lenin Square for a rally protesting Karabagh's unification with Armenia and demanded that Armenians leave Azerbaijan, violence

exploded on a seemingly unimaginable scale, engulfing the city as gangs tore through, vandalizing property, looting and destroying homes, and smashing and burning cars. People were hacked to death with axes. Metal pipes were used as crude weapons. Homes were destroyed. Women were gang raped in public. Some people were dismembered, some were set on fire. Thirty-two people died in the Sumgait pogroms—26 Armenians and six Azerbaijanis.

Many *Bakvetsis* were incredulous; the violence that struck Sumgait was atrocious, so horrifying, that most never believed it would be able to permeate a multicultural, downright cosmopolitan city like Baku—where Russians, Jews, Ukrainians, Azerbaijanis, and Armenians not only intermingled but were friends. While discrimination was embedded in the social strata, the differences between these ethnic groups were mostly overlooked in daily life.

In no other capital in the Soviet Union were people as proud as they were of being from Baku. After the genocide took place, these were the people who accepted us. Azeris were the people who accepted us, one man told me.

We are left with broken hearts,

one woman told me. My students asked me, 'Why did you leave?' I tell them that it's not like they knocked on my door nicely and said, 'Go. They killed and they raped.' Something broke inside me.

There were streets named after Armenians in Baku, there were Armenian schools and churches, and a specific neighborhood in the center of the city called *Armenikend*, or "Armenian Village." Armenians for the most part considered themselves integral to the history and the strength of the city.

Life in Baku, it was beautiful, many of them told me. Parties. Concerts. Barbeques. Family gatherings. Some had salvaged photos, which they spread out across coffee tables and in their dining rooms, showing me life as they had once known it. Birthday cakes. Singing around pianos. Vacations to the Black Sea in the summer, sunlight dripping off the palm trees. *Sure, Armenians were second-class citizens, but everyone was friends with everyone else for the most part*, they told me. Life was rich.

After Sumgait happened, Baku was relatively quiet until a certain tension and fear gripped the streets, permeating the fabric of the city. *It's not going to happen in Baku. It's never going to happen in Baku*, was what many of the people I interviewed said they thought after Sumgait. *It could never happen here*.

Then it all changed.

Things continued to shift, Armenians were targeted more and more. They feared for their safety when they were outside. Some were followed by Azerbaijanis and forced to make a quick escape by hiding in nearby buildings. Mobs of Azerbaijanis, sometimes as big as 30 or 40 people, would

comb the city, pulling people off of buses and out of crowds in an attempt to "catch" Armenians. If they couldn't identify Armenians based on physical characteristics, the Azerbaijanis would also run "tests" of shibboleths, like the pronunciation of the Azeri word for "hazelnut," (*fundukh*), which Armenians tended to say with a "p" instead of an "f" sound.

Eventually, a curfew was imposed. Threats increased. Many Armenians began to trade their apartments and sell their belongings in preparation for a way out of Azerbaijan.

In January 1990, rallies eventually broke out in the north of the country and in Baku following the decision of the Armenian Parliament to include Karabagh in its budget. When a list of Armenians' addresses was posted on the front door of the Azerbaijani Popular Front headquarters in public view, violence erupted in Baku. Ninety people died in the pogroms, known as "Black January," in violence just as horrific as Sumgait.

For one week, it was a bloodbath with no one to stop it, one man told me.

Azerbaijanis would break into homes, searching for Armenians, vandalizing everything. Once again, people were assaulted, killed, raped, and mutilated.

For many Armenians fearing for their lives, the acquaintances and the neighbors they had known for years turned their backs on them. There were those who helped, too, of course, like the Azerbaijani

neighbor who harbored one woman and her daughter in his apartment for days until they could finally be evacuated by a relative in the KGB, who escorted them out with the Russian families being evacuated from Baku. And there was the young group of Azerbaijanis who saved one of their friends from an inquisitive mob, insisting he was just one of them—a Tartar who couldn't speak Azeri. Or the kind neighbor who hid her Armenian friends in her closets and under her bed while Azerbaijanis raided her apartment building.

We are left with broken hearts, one woman told me. *My students asked me, 'Why did you leave?' I tell them that it's not like they knocked on my door nicely and said, 'Go.' They killed and they raped. Something broke inside me.*

The violence in Baku essentially drove the rest of the Armenian population out of Azerbaijan. Most—about 200,000—had left by the end of 1989 and had resettled in Armenia, Russia, and other former Soviet republics. Over the course of several days during and after the pogroms, the Armenians of Baku fled for their lives, gathering up their families and whatever few possessions they could to leave by plane or by train or by truck or ferry. They left everything behind, and their stomachs were weighed down with the horrible feeling that they were probably never going to come back. The 18 Armenians that I interviewed went to Armenia, and Moscow or southern Russia, primarily because they had some kind of personal connection to someone living in the country at the time, some family or friends who could provide support. Eventually, these 18 people came to the United States, primarily as refugees, where they started over a second time.

For some, seeking refuge in their historic homeland, Armenia, after the pogroms seemed logical. Even though they spoke Russian at home instead of Armenian, and even if they had no family members to host them, they thought they would have the space and the support to rebuild their lives in Armenia, and the shock of displacement would be lessened. For some it was a source of pride. *This was*

our land, our soil. We're going to have our roots there, they said.

Sometimes it was viewed as the only option. *We left Azerbaijan to go to Armenia because we had no other choice*, one told me. *There was nowhere else we could go.*

But it wasn't always the easiest experience. For some, life in Armenia meant struggle, and they were treated as outsiders. Some were criticized for having lived so far from the motherland or for not being able to speak Armenian. Others told me of being yelled at or even spit on, being called "Turks" or *shortvatz* (flipped) Armenians who had been happy living with the enemy.

Having come from a cosmopolitan city like Baku, many were in shock when they suddenly found themselves living in refugee housing in rural areas, where they were forced to grow their own food or wash their laundry by hand. *Our house became a refugee camp*, said one person whose three-room apartment in Abovyan was typically filled with 17 displaced relatives at any given time.

Others had similar experiences living in Russia, where they were called "black," a derogatory name for people from the Caucasus, or where they were physically assaulted simply because they were perceived as being different. This discrimination grew more persistent after the fall of the Soviet Union, concurrent with the rise of Russian nationalism.

During the 1990s, the United States allowed those fleeing persecution in the Soviet Union to come to the U.S. as refugees. Many Armenians—up to 100,000—came to the United States between 1989 and 1996, and many received priority refugee status in the early 1990s. Most of the people I interviewed arrived on U.S. soil with next to nothing—broken suitcases and no more than \$300 in their pockets. As adults who had established themselves as engineers, teachers, musicians, and scientists back in Baku, they had to reinvent themselves. Some took jobs in factories or cafeterias while they tried to learn English. Others pursued their educations and tried to get ahead. Struggles continued for some, and lasted longer than expected. And often, a

question arose: *Did we make the right decision to come here?*

For most I spoke with, the answer is yes. Armenians are no strangers to collective trauma and violence. It's no surprise these 18 people displayed the resiliency and the strength needed to not only rebuild their lives, but to succeed after being affected both directly and indirectly

For many, Baku is now just a piece of their history, the memories of which remain in the recesses of their minds. Perhaps that's what happens when there is really no way of going back home. Very few said they would ever go back, even if they were allowed to.

There is no such place, one woman told me. *That's all. It's gone.*

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Russia, and now I live in America.
Obviously I can adapt.

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by violence that is so often the consequence of geopolitics.

I've lived in Azerbaijan. I've lived in Armenia, Russia, and now I live in America. Obviously I can adapt, one participant said. *You have to lose part of you to become part of something else.*

Over the course of more than two decades they have turned themselves back into engineers and teachers. Some have become activists and writers in places like New Jersey and Boston and Washington. Some have become mothers and fathers and grandparents. Some have connected more to their Armenian roots. Others say they are indifferent.

Those I interviewed had many ways of describing how they thought of Baku now: a shut door, a closed page, a home erased, just as evidence of the Armenian presence in Baku has been washed away with the defacement and destruction of monuments and cemeteries.

While researching this topic, I found that while the violence of the pogroms was recorded, the long-term impact they had on the Armenians from Baku had scarcely been touched. More than once I was asked why I was interested in this topic. *No one really cares about this anymore anyway*, some said. Still, I was fascinated. And perhaps at the very least, I hoped to make some contribution to documenting stories that haven't really been told.

Toward the end of my interviews, one woman made a remark about how Baku Armenians are a dying people. *My generation, that's it. Our kids—they won't remember, they won't know. I will try to pass the memories, though. We still remember my dad's aunt. She was a Genocide survivor. She was 8 or 10 years old and they escaped the Genocide. We still remember her telling us about it. So we will probably do the same with our kids.* □

The Village of Togh

A Photographic Journey

BY AREVIK DANIELIAN

The village of Togh is in Hadrut, 20 kilometers north-west of the region's center. In the 16th century, the village constituted the center of the principality (*Melikoutyun*) of Dizak. The palace of the Meliks of Dizak is partially standing to this day.

Three churches from the 18th century stand here: The St. Stephen's Church, the St. John's Church, and the Desert Church. There are cross-stones from the 9th and 10th centuries near the churches.

The name of the village comes from the numerous earthquakes in the region, which the locals used to call "togh" (tremor). In the days of the Meliks, the village had up to 1,500 households and a population of 10,000.

Currently, the population of the village is around 700. The villagers rely on animal husbandry and farming.





Arevik Danielian / The Armenian Weekly



Arevik Danielian / The Armenian Weekly



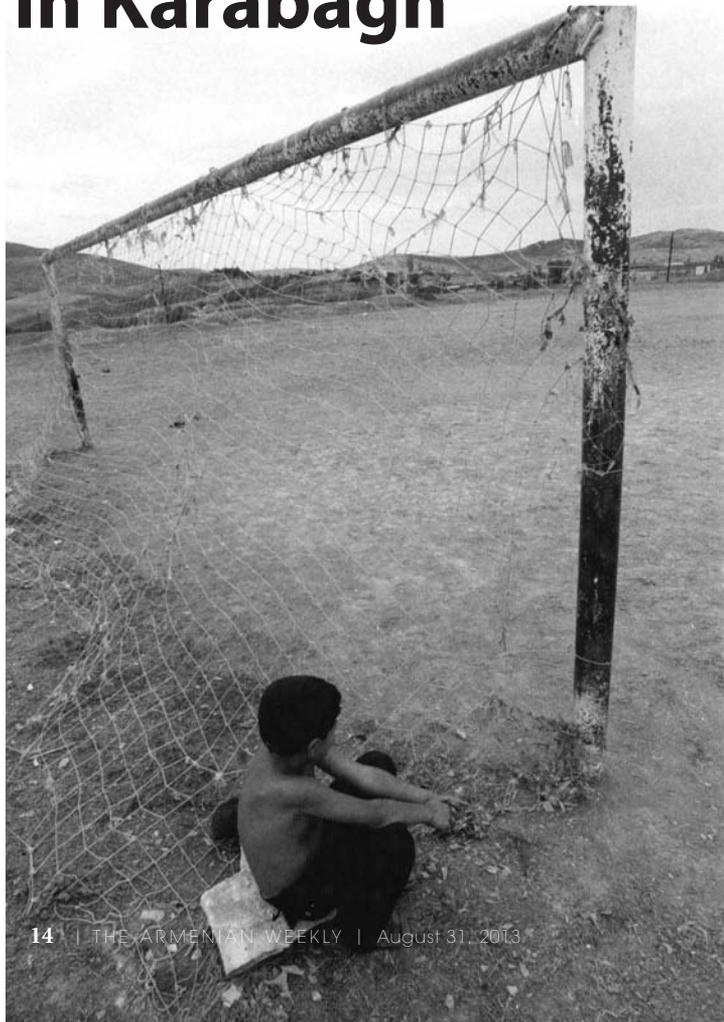


ERIC NAZARIAN

I photographed these images in 1998 and 2003 in Shushi, Machkalashen village in Martuni, and Stepanakert. I was researching post-war life for my screenplay about a child survivor from the war in Nagorno-Karabagh. On the road with my friends and family we met many wonderful people, young and old, full of grace and resilience who captured the essence of that ancient land. Here are some of their faces.

Images

from Post-War Life in Karabagh





IN THE NAME OF HER SON

BY NANORE BARSOUMIAN

Black and white photographs of men—and some women—hang on the walls of Stepanakert’s Museum of Fallen Soldiers, reminding visitors of their absence. Tucked in a simple wooden frame, a picture of a man with a thin mustache and a Soviet-era cap stares back at Galya Arustamyan. “He was 17 when he joined the liberation movement,” says Galya of her son, Krikor, the young man in the picture. At 21, he was killed in battle. Ten years later, in 2002, Galya opened the doors to her museum, a tribute to those who lost their lives fighting for Karabagh’s self-determination. What was paid for with the blood of her son is non-negotiable, and that is the message she wants to convey to the international community.

The portraits of the 3,250 soldiers killed and the 132 missing lock eyes with visitors to the museum. The atmosphere there

is somber. “The pictures of all are here,” confirmed Galya. She would know; after all, she compiled the list of the soldiers, contacted their relatives, gathered their pictures, and took them to Yerevan where she had them enlarged and framed.

Personal items discovered on the soldiers—clothing, helmets, letters, books, weapons—are displayed in glass cases. A small shrine stands in a corner, and includes an accordion and helmets. The words, “Your Bravery Is Immortal,” are painted on one wall, above the soldiers’ pictures and beside a painting of the Mother Mary, cradling the naked and limp body of her adult son.

Galya established the museum together with the Karabagh’s Fallen Soldiers’ Relatives Union, which she also heads. The organization provides support to the families of deceased soldiers. But Galya wasn’t always an activist. Born and raised in a

village in Askeran in Karabagh, she moved to the capital of Stepanakert after completing middle school. Sometime in 1958, she began working in a textile factory, and kept the job until the factory burned down during the bombings in 1992.

“They were shelling the city all day long. You couldn’t find shelter anywhere. Buildings didn’t have bomb shelters. We just put up sand barriers. The situation was really bad. We were surrounded, completely encircled. There were no roads that led to Yerevan,” she said.

Soon, the war would claim what was most precious to her, and that led her to her current work. “I lost my son. He was born in 1971. I lost two nephews and my brother-in-law. Those were difficult years. Sometime later, I got involved in this museum. The work I did helped ease my pain a bit,” she said.

Galya hoped her efforts would also help others with *their* pain. “Parents continue to visit this museum. Their pain is heavy. Even though they say that their child died as a hero on the battlefield, they can’t help but think about how their kids weren’t married; how they didn’t have children; or if they did, how difficult it was to raise them...” In 2009, Galya published an 895-page book, titled *RMK National Liberation Struggle, 1988–2009*, which provides the profiles and pictures of the deceased or missing soldiers.

Against all odds

The museum serves both as a memorial to the fallen soldiers and as a tribute to their ingenuity. Homemade weapons, constructed with ordinary items such as forks and screwdrivers, are a source of pride. Outnumbered, outgunned, and fighting from disadvantaged positions, the Armenian soldiers, Galya’s son among them, accomplished what many considered impossible. “They were unarmed men facing tanks,” said Galya. “While the Azeris had Soviet weapons and ammunition—after all they were a Soviet republic, we were merely a province—they also had technical help from the outside and mercenaries. They managed to drive Armenians out of Kedashen and Mardounashen. But our eagle boys were able to regroup, and they engaged in a massive counter-attack.”

Galya recalled the words of Chechen commander Shamil Basayev who fought on behalf of the Azeris. “He said that he was one of the last fighters to leave Shushi. He said that there was so much ammunition with them that for a whole year, 100 fighters could defend the city. They had the advantage of a high ground. Our men climbed, and they seized the town,” she said. “Now, we’re also a republic.”

“There wasn’t even 150,000 of us in Karabagh—counting the infants and the elderly—and we had 7 million against us,” she continued. The right to determine their own fate and to live securely and without fear was the driving force behind the liberation movement. News of the pogroms in Sumgait, Baku, and elsewhere seemed like a distant echo from the Armenian Genocide.

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“We defended ourselves. Did they expect us to sit back and suffer the fate of the Armenians in Western Armenia? They massacred them all. Were we supposed to watch them massacre us all as well?” she asked. For Galya, Azeris are synonymous with Turks, and the Azeri pogroms were just another chapter in the bloody fate Armenians encountered under Turkish rule from well before and after the Genocide.

This perspective isn’t far from that of Azeri (or Turkish) authorities. It was Heydar Aliyev, the former president of Azerbaijan and father to current president Ilham Aliyev, who uttered the now famous words, “One nation, two states,” in describing the close relationship and ethnic loyalty shared between Turkey and Azerbaijan. The feeling seemed mutual. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has evoked those words before his “brother Aliyev” (while not forgetting to pay homage to the words of Kemal Ataturk): “Azerbaijan’s joy is ours, Azerbaijan’s grief is ours too.” And it was based on these principles that Turkey imposed a blockade on Armenia in 1993, and continues to do so until today.

Oil has bought Azerbaijan tremendous support in the international arena, said Galya. “We don’t have oil, and so they think of us as a weak state, while they consider Azerbaijan economically more developed. But we have good spirits, and good ideals. This was the war fought by our boys whose pictures hang on these walls. They’re all in civilian clothes. They were common people. We were a peaceful people. They forced us to fight,” she said.

Galya has one message for the international community: “Let them come to this museum and see what price we have paid in this war. Let them see how much we’ve bled. How could we live under Turkish rule again?” she said. “I always say, let the [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe] Minsk Group representatives visit this museum. Let them come and see what we have lost; how we have liberated Karabagh; how many men have sacrificed their lives, have been wounded, or have survived through miracles.”

Unity in time of crisis

Galya has another important message, this one to Armenians the world over: Strength, exhibited in the liberation of Shushi, was rooted in unity. If Armenians lose their unity, they will lose their strength. “After all we’ve been through we have to keep our unity. We have to stick together.”

Victory wouldn’t have been possible if it weren’t for help sent by the diaspora, she said, adding that she is grateful to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), a party revered by many in Karabagh. “They helped us in every way, and we were able to survive. They didn’t leave us to face our fate alone. The Turks, until today, say that we are pompous because of the Armenian Diaspora. We are not pompous, but we *are* proud that Diasporan Armenians stand by our side. We love them dearly. They have seen genocide, they are dispersed all over the world, but they unite when circumstances call for it,” she said.

Galya recalled one summer day in 1992, when her son came home with two men she had never met before. All three had black ribbons tied around their arms. “My son came to me and said, ‘Mom, fix us some food. We’re starved!’ I began preparing food in the kitchen. They were chatting, and then they were singing. I left what I was doing and came into the room where they were sitting, and gazed at the three of them. My son turned to me and

said, ‘Mom, come with us to the battlefield. You fight, while they sing.’ Later I found out that they were Dashnak boys. At that time, they had all come here. They were helping us,” she said.

The mere knowledge that Karabagh was in the hearts and minds of Armenians across the globe gave the people of Karabagh strength, said Galia. “From every corner of the world, Armenians came to our aid. Even until today, they [collect aid] and bring it here, so that Karabagh gets back on its feet—and it *is*. The war was in 1992. Now I get out on the streets and I can’t believe that this is our city, because it was destroyed, buildings were in ruins—the pictures are hanging right over there. That was our situation then. There were days that 70 or more people were killed. But we persevered because we were not alone. If we had been left alone, the Turks would have destroyed us long ago,” she said, and pointed to the portrait of Monte Melkonian, the Armenian-American commander who died in Karabagh. “We have the entire Armenian nation on our side.”

For Galya, that unity is critical, especially when the threat of renewed bloodshed is very real. “You see, [the Azeri authorities] haven’t let up. They haven’t accepted defeat. Day after day, their warmongering rhetoric continues. They constantly fire on our soldiers and our villages, and don’t allow our boys on the border to get any rest,” she said.

‘They are our soldiers...’

Once a month, Galya goes to the border to meet with the soldiers, and to offer them encouragement. She is, after all, the president of the coordinating body of the non-governmental organizations that cooperate with the army. She visits each battalion and, as a mother figure, never goes empty-handed. “We bring them sweets. We spend time with them, talk to them. They are our soldiers; we have to encourage them, and look after them. We are faced with our old enemies who don’t want us to exist,” she said.

Although there has been a ceasefire for two decades, Galya is wary of the language used by Azeri authorities. “They have become more insolent now and better armed, with expensive technology and aerial powers,” she said. “On May 12, 1994, it was the Azeris who asked for a ceasefire when they saw that they were going to lose more land. We shouldn’t have agreed to it... Now they have started mouthing off again. They want our lands again. But how could we give them any land? Every inch of this land is mixed with blood. How many boys have we lost? How many innocent civilians have we lost?”

It’s not uncommon for visitors to the museum to ask Galya what she thinks of Aliyev’s recent rhetoric regarding Karabagh. “Go ask folks on the street!” she always says. “Ask those mothers who have lost sons in the war! If Aliyev wants another war in Karabagh, let him send his own son to the front lines. See if he’ll want his war then. They are keeping their own children safe, while sending the kids of common folk to fight.” □



A small shrine stands in one corner of the museum, made of an accordion, helmets, and a few other items.



Artsakh's Prospects for Its Future

BY MICHAEL G. MENSIOAN

Ever since the 1994 ceasefire brought a semblance of peace to Artsakh, its people have made great strides in democratic self-governance and in rebuilding and improving the economic and social infrastructure wantonly destroyed by Azerbaijan during the Karabagh War. During these difficult years the people have maintained a collective esprit and energy that confounds the Azeri leadership.

The ultimate concern, whether we live in Artsakh or beyond, is the future viability of this historic Armenian land liberated through the heroic efforts of its people. There are several questions that must be affirmatively answered: Would Artsakh (and Armenia) be able to withstand renewed hostilities by Azerbaijan? Can Artsakh's interests be protected through negotiations? Does Artsakh have the resources to develop a robust economy, not only for its present population, but as a future frontier beckoning Diasporan Armenians wishing to return home?



Confronting renewed hostilities

Any number of reasons would—or should—deter Azerbaijan from renewing hostilities; if they did not exist, President Ilham Aliyev would have already exercised his oft-threatened military option. Yet, there is always the possibility that internal pressures or his outsized ego could override prudent judgment. This analysis will only consider the military strategy that Azerbaijan is likely to adopt if it *were* to resume hostilities, and the difficulties that a tactical implementation of that strategy would involve. Given these apparent difficulties, one might question why the strategy would even be considered. It is based primarily on the reality that the international community, and especially the neighboring countries, would not tolerate a protracted war. This reality requires a strategy that would (1) seek to occupy strategic objectives within a window of opportunity of 12–15 days; (2) seek to breach the heavily fortified frontier, preferably at both Agdam and Fizuli, within the first 48–72 hours; (3) engage the defenders along the entire front (the Northern, Central, and Southern Sectors); and (4) require the deployment of all three army corps,

or significant elements thereof, currently positioned along the Armenian-Artsakh border from Georgia to Iran.

Presently, Azerbaijan has five army corps in the field. The first Army Corps is concentrated in the vicinity of Ganja. It is responsible for the Northern Sector and the Armenian frontier. The third is stationed in the vicinity of Barda (Central Sector), and the second in the vicinity of Agdzhabedi/Beylagan (Southern Sector). The second also has responsibility for the Iranian frontier. The fourth Army Corps is stationed in the capital district of Baku, and the fifth is deployed in Nakhitchevan.

Yusif Agayev, an Azeri military expert who fought in the Karabagh War, doesn't believe "...the society of my country is ready for war. I think it would be a month or two. That is the amount of time the armed forces could fight for. If it drags on longer, then it will be a war that society will have to participate in, not just the army." It is not likely that Azerbaijan will have the month or two that Agayev suggests. A window of opportunity of about 12–15 days would be more likely. That is why the first 48–72 hours is so critical. Within minutes of the first shot being fired there would be an international demand for a ceasefire led by Russia, Iran, Georgia, and possibly Turkey supported by

Western Europe and the United States (covertly backed by international oil interests). Given the observable signs of an Azeri offensive build-up, these nations would not wait for the first shot to be fired before diplomatic pressure is applied. Although the conflict occupies a limited geographic area, its ramifications—the “unintended consequences”—could easily destabilize the entire region. Russia, Iran, Georgia, and Turkey each have ethnic minorities with long-standing socio-economic and political grievances who seek either independence or effective local autonomy. This conflict could be the spark that ignites this historic geographic tinderbox.

Since Azerbaijan realizes a protracted war is not viable, the strategy is to engage the Armenian defenders along the entire frontier. This can only be accomplished by simultaneously committing elements of the three army corps responsible for monitoring the Artsakh border. Given this strategy, the obvious objectives would be Agdam and Fizuli. To support these two major offensives, units of the second and third corps would engage the Armenian defenders in such tactical movements as holding actions to deny the redeployment of Armenian units to critical sectors of the front; diversionary maneuvers that seek to mislead or confuse the defenders; and diversionary attacks that would seek to relieve the pressure on the main forces attacking Agdam and Fizuli.

Diversionary attacks from Tartar toward Mardakert would relieve the pressure on the Agdam forces as well as protect their northern or right flank. At the same time a diversionary attack toward Martuni by elements of the second Army Corps would assist the main force attacking Fizuli and protect their eastern or right flank. The first Army Corps at Ganja would most likely engage in diversionary maneuvers and hold actions along the mountainous Northern Sector. Depending on the resistance encountered, the Azeris could commit elements of the first to a full-scale diversionary attack from Shahumian toward Mardakert.

The former United States ambassador to Azerbaijan, Matthew Bryza, has suggested that “the Azeris can’t retake Artsakh now. They are militarily incapable of doing it.” He further suggested that he “...didn’t think they could dislodge the Armenian forces from the high ground. Wayne Merry, a Senior Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council, agrees, saying that “a key factor is the topography, the extent to which Nagorno-Karabagh has created defenses in depth. Progress would come at a high cost.”

In addition to controlling the high ground, the Armenian defenders have had nearly 20 years to develop fortifications in depth, as well as construct obstacles that would impede and channel men and mechanized equipment into prepared fields of fire. To achieve the quick breakthrough required, the Azeris would seek to overwhelm the defenders by deploying a numerically superior concentration of infantry and mechanized units. Against heavily fortified positions a disproportionate ratio of perhaps four to five Azeri casualties to one Armenian casualty could be expected. These excessive battlefield losses would have a demoralizing impact on the Azeri units, keeping in mind that possibly seven out of ten men are either 12- or 18-month con-

scripts in addition to reservists who might be called-up to augment the professional army. Loss of morale would have a debilitating impact on unit effectiveness, which would contribute to an increased casualty count. Every tactical plan is dependent on an integrated hierarchy of units from squad, platoon, on up, with each unit supporting the mission of the next higher command, which could be a reinforced company or a brigade. All units involved must operate as one cohesive force with one overriding objective to have any chance of success.

Engaging the Armenians along the entire front is sound strategy given the realities of the situation, but it is also a catch-22 situation. A phased deployment of units would favor the defenders, while committing significant elements of its three army corps simultaneously in a tactical bid to overwhelm them before an expected ceasefire can be enforced is no guarantee of success, and would most likely result in unacceptable losses in men and equipment. It is highly unlikely that the civilian population (if aware of the losses) or the field commanders (senior officers) who must follow orders would tolerate such losses.

The prized Azeri objective would be Agdam. To the east of Agdam is the Kura River floodplain, part of which is below sea level (the Kura River empties into the Caspian Sea, which is about 90 feet below sea level). From this floodplain the elevation rises westward in a step-like fashion to the high plains just west of Agdam (which is about 1,200 feet above sea level) that give way to the hillier terrain toward Stepanakert. If Agdam is occupied, it would allow the Azeri forces to spill out onto this plain, thereby facilitating the increased deployment of mechanized equipment such as tanks, armored troop carriers, self-propelled artillery, and rocket launchers for a final push toward Stepanakert and Shushi, with a smaller force moving south to join the attack on Martuni.

To the south, a second major offensive would be underway toward Fizuli. A diversionary attack on Martuni would seek to ease the pressure on the Fizuli force as well as protect its eastern or right flank. Holding actions at Hadrut would protect the western or left flank of the Fizuli force. If Fizuli were to be occupied, the main force would most likely split with the larger force wheeling eastward toward Martuni. Should this happen, the Martuni defenders would face a three-pronged enveloping maneuver that would either force them to fall back or be cut off from the main Armenian forces (assuming the Azeri offensive could succeed).

The second smaller force would augment the Azeri units engaged at Hadrut. If Martuni were occupied, the combined Azeri forces would then move toward Shushi/Stepanakert from the southeast to support the Agdam forces attacking from the northeast. The Azeri Hadrut units would be given the mission to protect the western or left flank of this final thrust toward Artsakh’s core area.

While this might be the essence of the Azeri strategy, its success is far from assured; the deterrents are many. First and foremost, this analysis does not consider the defensive and offensive capabilities of the Armenian forces, who have played out the

various strategies the Azeris might adopt. An instant problem for the Azeris is the recognition by unbiased observers that the Armenian military force is much better prepared. Also it is unlikely that the Azeri soldier has the emotional and psychological stamina or determination of the Armenian soldier, who is prepared to fight for his family, his land, his children's future, and for his right to live as an Armenian. What reasons would the Azeri soldier have to sacrifice his life in a war he might neither accept nor understand?

It is the expected immediate international call for a ceasefire that would require Azerbaijan's massive deployment of men and equipment in a military gamble that seeks to overwhelm the defenders and breach their fortifications. It is this tactical decision that could result in extremely high battlefield losses against a determined, entrenched defensive force. It is not possible for Azerbaijan to gain any advantage from a surprise attack because the intelligence gathering technology available to the Armenian military allows for the real-time gathering of information. This intelligence effort is likely aided by Russian input and, during a conflict, possibly by covert Iranian input.

Every strategic target within Azerbaijan is within the effective retaliatory capability of the Armenian defenders. Pre-selected targets would be engaged immediately, some of which may have a devastating impact on Azerbaijan's war effort. So much emphasis has been placed on the publicized expansion of its army that it is accepted as doctrine that numerical superiority in men, which is not the same as the principle of force concentration (achieving numerical superiority at a given time at a given place), is the key element on the battlefield. It is not! The Armenian defenders have the ability to achieve force concentration to gain a tactical advantage at any sector of the front based on their shorter interior lines of communication that facilitate the rapid deployment of troops and equipment. In addition, a defending force occupying heavily fortified positions may have a ratio of three or four to one advantage over the attacking forces: The Azeri staging areas where units are readied for movement to the front; their approaches to the line of contact; as well as their supply and resupply routes, are all vulnerable to effective Armenian counter-measures.

Adding to the deterrents is the sophisticated level of planning, coordination, and execution required and the real-time evaluation and response to evolving situations at the fronts that may require immediate tactical changes; the augmentation or redeployment of units; resupply; and the evacuation of battlefield casualties. It is highly problematic if the Azeri military command has this capability at the level required. Some of the officers and a smaller number of non-commissioned officers (NCO) may be veterans of the Karabagh War. Assuming the publicized expansion of the army is accurate, most of the junior officers (captain and below) who fill the majority of the combat slots in any unit, as well as the NCO's, may well be the weak link in the Azeri command structure in terms of training, leadership, and indoctrination. A resumption of hostilities is not likely to provide President Aliyev the solution he seeks.

Can negotiations protect Artsakh's interests?

The principles advanced by the Minsk Group (represented by Russia, France, and the United States) to guide the negotiations, no matter how nuanced they have been over time, continually stress (1) the inviolability of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and (2) that when and how Artsakh's final status is determined, it will be no better than limited autonomy under Azerbaijan's jurisdiction. This raises an important question: If Artsakh had the legal right to declare its independence under the principles of remedial cessation or self-determination, or under the laws of the Soviet constitution, the negotiators, including the Artsakh representatives, should be discussing the timing of Artsakh's recognition; indemnification for displaced people/refugees (both Armenian and Azeri); its final boundaries; and the status of Shahumian, and the occupied border areas of Mardakert and Martuni. It may be difficult to accept, but some adjustments in the area to be included in Artsakh may have to be considered. An offer giving Azeris married to Armenians (possibly including their extended families) the right of return to Artsakh might also be considered.

Azerbaijan continues to claim that its territorial integrity is being violated by Armenia. This is a specious argument ostensibly supported by the Minsk Group. Azerbaijan is purposely misinterpreting Principle 4 under Chapter 2, Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, which prevents a state from threatening the territorial integrity of a neighboring state. It is the Artsakh Armenians who threatened the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan by having legally declared their independence. However, Principle 4 does not apply to Artsakh. Armenia's intervention was limited to providing humanitarian and military assistance to protect a beleaguered population from the indiscriminate use of military force by the Azeris. The present Armenian presence in Artsakh represents a stabilizing influence that facilitates the recovery effort and a preventive measure against a renewal of hostilities.

Economic development

Artsakh's natural resource base is more than adequate to support at least ten times its present population of approximately 140,000. However, several interrelated factors—a reverse domino effect—represent serious obstacles that must be addressed before a robust economy can develop. The most obvious are (1) Artsakh's tenuous political status, which (2) inhibits foreign investment, which (3) discourages in-migration.

Tenuous political status

Artsakh declared its independence in 1991 and has, since the 1994 ceasefire, met all of the "unofficial" requirements for *de jure* recognition. (Unfortunately, recognition is a highly subjective political decision.)

Until recognition is granted, it is vital that Artsakh continue to invite foreign government leaders, as it did recently with Uruguayan parliamentarians. While recognition will not come solely or immediately from these visits, they will lay the groundwork as well as the perception that recognition is highly likely to occur. It is an important first step (which Stepanakert already recognizes) if investment is to be encouraged. Dependence on the level of aid presently received is not adequate to stimulate a robust economy that can independently sustain Artsakh. However, this aid has made significant improvements in basic infrastructure that has improved the quality of life for the people—the foundation upon which Artsakh's future will be built.

To facilitate this process Artsakh must continue to expand its public relations effort through the various political, humanitarian,

Strategic Resettlement of Artsakh,” The Armenian Weekly, Feb. 19, 2011). Stepanakert must be prepared to effectively assist these newcomers to Artsakh. It cannot be expected that these 21st-century Armenians are pioneers able or willing to “tame” the wilderness. That type of settlement program is a prescription for disaster.

As Stepanakert increases its connections with various organizations and institutions beyond its borders; as it cultivates relations with foreign governments; and as the world community (including our diaspora) are given reasons to support Artsakh, an aura of inevitability with respect to recognition will encourage greater interest from foreign investors, including Armenians. Although Artsakh has already benefited from visionary diasporan entrepreneurs, *de jure* recognition is essential to open the floodgate for foreign investment



and philanthropic organizations that are already committed to its cause. Without getting into the political aspects of the Artsakh issue, its long-term viability should represent the most significant issue on the Armenian national agenda. The more the Armenian Diaspora knew about Artsakh—its achievements and potential—the greater its response to aid in Artsakh's development.

Measured population increase

Increasing the population should go hand-in-hand with economic development. However, what is required and doable is a measured increase in population as a means to meet political and economic needs. Politically it is difficult to claim “empty” lands however justified that claim may be when the lands are not reasonably integrated with the core area. We should have learned from the Turkish inspired genocide that emptied historic western Armenia of our people to weaken if not eliminate potential territorial claims by Armenia. A program of selective immigration would seek to meet the political and economic objectives identified by a government master plan for strategic resettlement (see “The

Renewable energy sources

Present available data for Nagorno-Karabagh indicate a significant potential for the development of renewable energy. This is important given the absence of carboniferous energy resources. Several sites in the vicinity of Jermajur and Vaghuhas in the north and in the Stepanakert-Shushi region have been identified as “most appropriate” for constructing wind turbines to generate electric power. Other secondary sites exist, as well as sites in Kashatagh that have yet to be fully evaluated.

The region receives an average of about 23 inches of precipitation annually, which is sufficient for agriculture supplemented by irrigation if or when necessary. Precipitation generally increases from the south/southeast toward the higher elevations to the north/northwest. In the Kashatagh Region precipitation increases north toward the Eastern Sevan/Mrav Mountains. Surface flow and the many deep narrow valleys provide sites that may be used to construct dams for water storage, hydroelectric generation and irrigation, as well as preventing floods

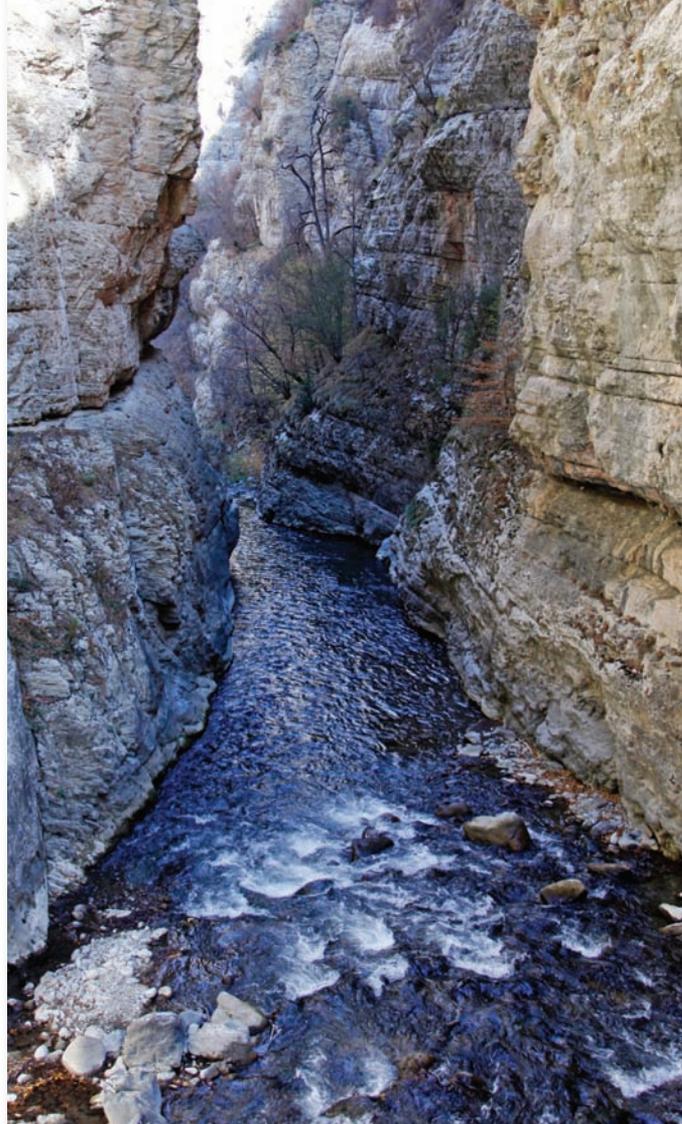
from the annual spring snow melt from the higher elevations that dominate the north and northwestern portions of Artsakh. The average precipitation would suggest a greater proportion of days with less than one-quarter of the sky covered by clouds. This would result in more hours of daily sunlight, which would facilitate the development of solar power. Renewable energy would be a boon for the remote villages, which could draw upon locally produced energy. In addition, Artsakh's balance of payments situation would benefit by eliminating or reducing payments for energy imports.

Potential sectors of the economy

Artsakh's farmers should be able to produce a wide variety of field and tree crops (including viti culture). Some specialized products would include processed and comb honey, a variety of berries, nuts, and fresh-cut flowers. Natural and upgraded pastures could support commercial dairy farming including poultry and egg production, cattle and sheep rearing, and hog raising. In addition, the by-products associated with each animal are able to support a variety of economic activities. A recent trade report cited the shortage of pork production in China (a potential market). Given present technology, a hog carcass in Artsakh can be deboned and cut up to reduce its weight and bulk, flash frozen, vacuumed sealed in "cryovac" and boxed to be economically air lifted to a foreign market. Historically the region was home to the Karabagh horse. No reason why rearing horses could not be reintroduced on a much larger scale.

Given the emphasis on the agricultural sector the processing industry could be an important source for exports. In North America there are significant nodes of Armenian population—Boston, New York, Philadelphia, DC, Los Angeles, Montreal, and Toronto—that could be developed as markets for some of Artsakh's products, including wine, vodka, brandy, bottled water and beer. This would require appropriate advertising and maintaining trade representatives, possibly in New York and Los Angeles. These markets could also serve as conduits to introduce Artsakh's products to a wider geographic area and a larger population. If the Stepanakert International Airport could become operational, it would be a significant political and economic triumph that would give Artsakh the potential for direct links to the world. Is it no wonder that Azerbaijan is so vehement in its opposition.

Artsakh's forests could support an important domestic construction materials industry that would include such products as dimension lumber and timbers, composition board, specialty wood products, and roofing materials as well as furniture manufacturing. This could be augmented by quarrying for building stone, sand and gravel, limestone for cement, and the manufacturing of ceramics and glass. Given its resource base and an educated workforce, Artsakh has many options to pursue in developing a viable economy including an expansion of its incipient information technology industry.



Finally, Artsakh's history, its ancient structures, archeological sites, breath-taking scenery, and mineral springs are ideal for tourism. Not to be overlooked are the gracious, friendly people and the cuisine. Tourism is a means for visitors, diasporan Armenians included, to become acquainted with the people and their country. Tourism is a catalyst that generates the need for better roads, transport facilities, lodgings, publications, a multitude of support services, a wide range of goods to meet the needs of the tourists, and most importantly, occupational opportunities. Although tourism does not generate high-paying jobs, it does provide valuable experiences for first-time employees to learn various skills as a way to move up the employment ladder. It is also a means to improve the balance of payments situation.

Several years ago I wrote an article entitled, "Artsakh: The Key to Armenia's Political and Economic Future" (The Armenian Weekly, January 2010 Special Magazine Issue). Three years later I am even more bullish on Artsakh's prospects after having witnessed the tremendous progress its people have made. Artsakh is a land of unlimited opportunity that can and will become our nation's future frontier beckoning Armenians to return home to participate in rebuilding an ancient land that has been reborn. □