

# THE REPUBLIC OF MOUNTAINOUS KARABAKH



ARA AHARONIAN







ARA AHARONIAN

THE REPUBLIC  
OF MOUNTAINOUS  
KARABAKH

(ARTSAKH)

LOS ANGELES - 2011



# THE REPUBLIC OF MOUNTAINOUS

ARA AHARONIAN

This book is dedicated to the proclamation of the  
20th Anniversary of the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh.

*Translation from the Armenian by*

Dr. Arto Poladian, MD

*Designed by*

Stepan Partamian

YEREVAN Printing

Special thanks to

NAMISA Productions

Sponsored by the Friends of Mountainous Karabakh Republic

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA – USA

2011



“We are our mountains”



## PREFACE

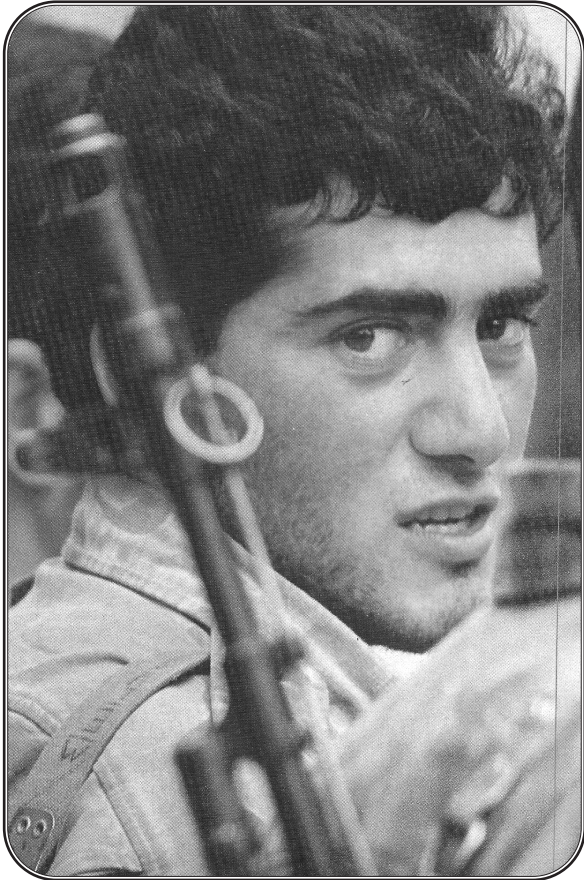
In February 1988, a new cornerstone was created in the centuries old Armenian history when our Armenian brothers and sisters opened a splendid page by establishing the sovereignty of Artsakh.

Indeed, in the heroic mountainous region of Karabakh, to put an end once and for all to the Azeri domination, the movement of liberation of the area took birth and soon was crowned by glorious successes which filled the heart of every Armenian with pride and futuristic hopes.

Throughout the region during these historic times, the Armenian people glutted with unshaken willingness, showed supreme sacrifice and succeeded to free its confiscated territories, and, on Sept. 2, 1991, founded the Republic of Mountainous Karabakh (Nagorno Karabakh).

To day, 20 years after that historic event, we collectively come together to renew one more time our vows to continue our sublime struggle till the full realization of the Armenian people's "Big Dream".

The Author



**ONLY VICTORY**



THE REPUBLICS OF ARMENIA AND NAKORNO KARABAKH (ARTSAKH)



# A CONCISE HISTORY OF NAKORNO KARABAKH





WE AND OUR MOUNTAINS

## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA ABOUT KARABAKH

Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh for most Armenians) is located South East of the Republic of Armenia.

The Mravian mountain chain is situated north of Artsakh. Its highest peak is mount Keamik (elev. 12,200 ft. or 3,700 meters). On the western side is the Artsakh mountain chain. Both of these mountain chains have a volcanic origin.

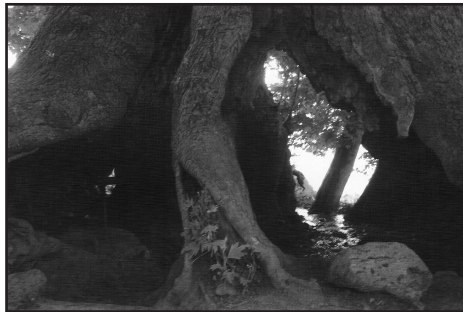
The region has several natural water sources which eventually turn into running rivers. Just to mention a few: the Tartar river, the Khachenaget, the Ghourouget, the Kiondolan, the Khonashen. Some of these rivers form the Arax basin and some form the Kur basin. Because of the speedy nature of some of these rivers, it is conceivable that electric power can be generated (in the future).

During summer time, the weather in Artsakh is moderately warm, but it is dry and cold in winter.

The land - being rich and prosperous, has fruit bearing fields and beautiful vegetation.

Different mineral ores exist in the area such as marble, granite, clay, gypsum and asbestos.

THE PLANE TREE OF  
SEKHTORASHEN



Artsakh's oldest tree

Platan Chinar - 2000 yrs. old  
Holtrow: 44 sq. m.  
Circumference: 27 m.  
Height: 54 m.  
The shade covers: 1,400 sq. m.  
Icy cold water flows under the tree.



## HABITATION & ADMINISTRATION

According to the census taken before 1988 during the socialist regime, the population of Artsakh was estimated to be 170,000 people of which about 81% were Armenians, 18% were Azeris/Tatars and the remaining 1% were Russians.

In 1979, Artsakh's total population was estimated to be 162,000 people of which 76% (i.e. 123,000) were Armenians.

It is worth to add that before 1923, Artsakh's population was estimated to be 214,000 people of which 70% (i.e. 151,000) were Armenians, 27% (i.e. 58,000) were Azeris/Tatars and other nationalities up to 5,000 people.

The population density has been evaluated as 100 persons per square mile and/or 39 persons per square kilometer. The religious discrimination has always been unamenable between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Islamic (Shiite) congregations.

The geographical boundary of Artsakh has been 1,741 square miles (i.e. 4,388 sq. km).

The South Western region of Artsakh is the closest to the Republic of Armenia and that is approximately 6 miles away from the Armenian border and is called "Lachin". That region was always inhabited by Kurds.

The self-administered area of Artsakh is subdivided into 5 regions: Martakert, Hatrout, Martouni, Shushi and Askeran.

Stepanakert has been and is the capital of Artsakh with a population of 34,000 before 1988. It is located in the Askeran region and is 335 km away from Yerevan.



SNOWY MRAVIAN MOUNTAIN CHAIN

## HISTORIC MONUMENTS AND EDIFICES

Across Artsakh, there exists more than 1,500 monuments, monasteries, bastilles, churches and stone carved crosses which have been Christian faith worshipping buildings throughout centuries. The oldest one bears a hand carved signature dated 4th century A.D. Here it is worth to mention some of the bastilles and monasteries, which have had historical importance in the Artsakh territory, e.g. Haterk and Djeraberd.

The governo-political status of Haterk has been of extreme importance because it has the center of trade and the administrative center of the government. It is subdivided into three areas: Shen, Gerk, Mgdasar. Three churches were discovered there of which only Holy Mother's church was saved. Of Haterk's main architectural monuments, it is worth mentioning St. Neshan church, the fortress of Agants, Bertavan, the cemetery of Moughdousou, Shoushavank, Khodorashen, Holy Cross church, St. Sarkis church, Bertakar etc.

Djeraberd (meaning fortress of waters) – a vast mountainous and rocky area near Mets Shen region is surrounded by multiple rivers. That fortress was first mentioned in literatures in the 7th century (620 A.D.). Being one of the most secure and powerful fortresses, it was the haven for landlords, princes and their families.

A riverbed links the fortress to Yeritsmankants monastery which had a church built in the year 1691. The monastery possessed living headquarters and special cooking facilities.

A step-by-step ladder – like secret passage was built connecting the Berd fortress to the Tartar River. This was called the “water thief passage”. Through ages, this fortress played an important role in saving the lives of many of its inhabitants due to its strategically designed structure.

On the right border of Tartar River, a monastery called the Holy Savior Monastery was built in the 12th century.

Examples of other ecclesiastical architectural buildings ornating the vast lands of Artsakh worth to be mentioned are the Dadivank, Gandzasar and the Getchevank.



Getchevank, 9th century



## HISTORIC OVERVIEW UNTIL 1914

Wayback, of the 15 regions composing Historic Armenia, Artsakh numbered the 10th. It was also known as Siunik Jr. and sometimes as Artsakh.

In Greek history, it is named as “Orkhistine”. The name Karabakh was first coined by historian Thomas Metsopetsi meaning “Black Fields”.

According to the oldest historical records Artsakh has been an inseparable part of Historic Armenia as far as 5th century B.C. Evidence remains the same during the Arsacid (Artashesian) dynasty (190 B.C. 1 A.D) since Artsakh was always inhabited by Armenians.

With the demise of Arshakuni kingdom, Artsakh has been continually the target of every conqueror.

During the Arab domination of the region in the middle of the 7th century, Artsakh has been under Arab submission for a long while. Followed by the Tartars’ invasions of the region led by Timur Lang, the Armenian people suffered more devastation, mass destruction of churches, monuments, monasteries etc.

Later on in 1473, with the victory of the Ottoman empire, Historic Armenia as well the Artsakh regions were subjected to the Ottoman Turk domination.

Because of its strategical position on the way to Central Asia, the region was constantly a battlefield target between the Turks and the Persians.

In 1813, due to the Tsarist Russian invasion, a part of Eastern Armenia’s territory and the entire region of Artsakh became occupied by the Russian sovereignty. Hence some Tartar nomads living in the area calling themselves Azeris started troubles and demanded lands from the Armenians. These conflicts continue until 1905; then gradually subsided. During the Russian Tsarist occupation in the 19th century, Shushi becomes the “Pearl of Artsakh” and the Armenian crafts and culture reach their apices.

Before ending this chapter, it is worthy to add that with the beginning of the 17th

century, Artsakh gives birth to some prominent figures dedicated to the fight for the freedom of the land like politician Israel Ori, commanders Davit Beg and Mekhitar Sparapet, political activist Hovsep Emin, and Stepan Shahumian.

In those days a new dynasty of socio-economic infrastructure takes shape called the “Meliks”. In Artsakh’s history, the “Khamsa Meliks” (the five Meliks dynasties) grabbing acclaim are the Jeraberd, the Kachen, the Tizagni, the Gulistan and the Varanda dynasties.

## ARTSAKH DURING THE SOVIETIZATION PERIOD

During WWI, Artsakh was under the Russian domination and stays that way until the fall of the Tsarist regime. For a short period of time, while chaos ruled the region, an agreement between the Armenians and Azeri/Tartars gives birth to an administrative office to establish order in the region. Being a majority and using the independence of the Republic of Armenia as a pretext, the local Armenians name the area “Free Karabakh”. Unfortunately after the war the winning countries do not recognize Free Karabakh. That same year, in 1918, General Andranik with his troops endeavors into the task of occupying the capital, Shushi. A word of advice from the British Captain W. H. Thompson (in charge of the Caucasus area) to General Andranik was to relinquish the adventure and wait the results of the upcoming Paris conference. Andranik believing him retreats. In 1919, it became evident that the English did not have any interest to defend the Armenian cause. On the contrary, they supported Turkey, thus, stopping the advance of the Soviet troops into the area.

Again in 1919, immediately after the newly created independent Azeri Republic – due to the collaboration of Turkey and Great Britain, Artsakh and Zangezur fell under Azerbaijan’s ruling. General Thompson appoints the wealthy Khosrov Beg Sultanov as General Governor of Artsakh and Zangezur.

A bit later, the year of sovietization of Armenia (Nov. 29, 1920), the president of Azerbaijan Nariman Narimanov and his minister of Foreign Affairs Husseinov on November 30th send the following message to the residents of Artsakh: "The Mountainous Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhichevan are part of the Soviet Armenian Republic."

Then in March 16th of 1921, by a decree signed in Moscow between the Turks and the Russians, the region of Nakhichevan was relegated to the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan.

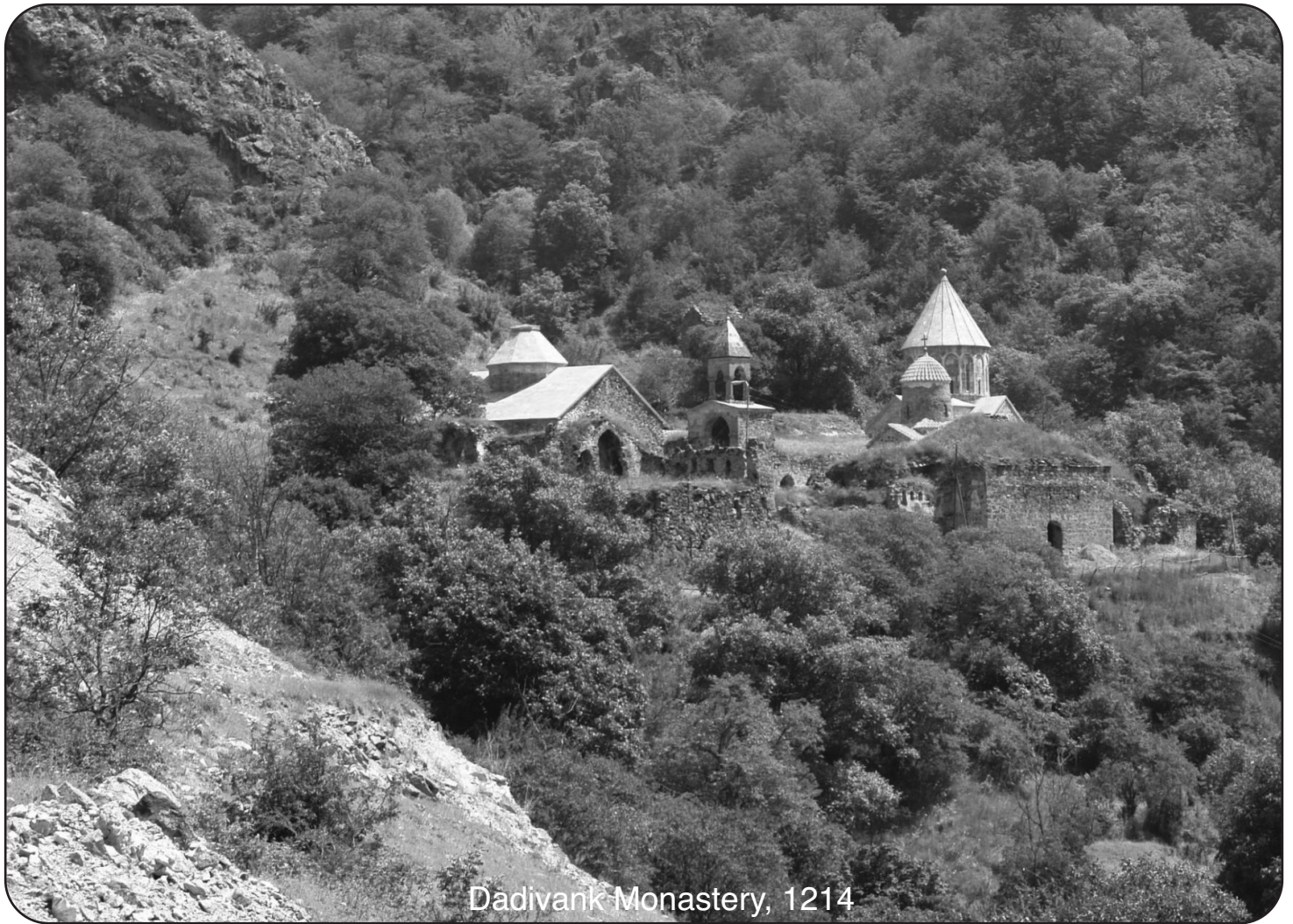
Stalin's bleak decision on July 4 to cede the Artsakh region to the sovietized Azerbaijani Republic is considered the culmination of injustice for the Armenian people. In 1923, Artsakh becomes a self-proclaimed autonomous republic within Azerbaijan and keeps that status for 65 years till its claims for total independence in February 1988.



Amaras Monastery, 4th-17th centuries



Gandzasar Monastery, 12th century



Dadivank Monastery, 1214





1232, Targmanchats (Translators') Gospel  
by illustrator Grigor





ARTSAKHIAN  
CLAIMS OF INDEPENDENCE  
DURING  
THE SOVIET REGIME





Farewell to Arms. Long live PEACE.

- For the first time, in 1927, the Armenian people of Mountainous Karabakh desiring to unite with their counterpart in Soviet Armenia distribute pamphlets voicing their desire.
- In 1935, Agassi Khanjian, First Secretary of the Republic's Communist Party of Armenia meets Stalin demanding the union of Mountainous Karabakh to Soviet Armenia.
- In 1956, a manifesto bearing the signatures of 25,000 Mountainous Karabakh citizens is officially presented by Soviet Armenia to Chief Secretary of the Communist Party of USSR – Nikita Khrushchev.
- In 1977, the same type of request is presented to Leonid Brezhnev - Chief Secretary of the Communist Party of USSR, by Soviet Armenian Deputy Sero Khanzadian.
- In 1981, a new constitution – namely the Constitution of the Autonomous enclave of Mountainous Karabakh is adopted rendering the enclave more subject to Baku, thus worsening the living conditions of the Armenians living in Karabakh
- In the Summer of 1987, a survey taken in Yerevan and Stepanakert, signed by more than 250,000 citizens is sent to the then 1st Secretary of the Communist Party of USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev – demanding the unification of Mountainous Karabakh to Soviet Armenia.
- In 1988, early February, His Holiness Vazgen I, Catholicos of all Armenians reminds Mr. M. Gorbachev of the previous request.
- On February 20th, 1988, a historic decision makes the “autonomous enclave of Mountainous Karabakh” a reality. Hereby, the transcript of the decision:

## THE HISTORIC DECISION

*After hearing the candidates representing the Autonomous enclave of Mountainous Karabakh and examining the issues pertaining to separate the Mountainous Karabakh region from the Soviet Azerbaijan dominion and reunite it to the Soviet Armenia region, the delegates attending the 20th convention of the Mountainous Karabakh region issued the following statement:*

*Concurring with the wishes of the working people of the Mountainous region, soliciting Armenian people's dream to be separated from the Azerbaijani dominion and be annexed to the Soviet Armenia region be it resolved to ask the Soviet Union's mediation to reach a positive solution for this matter.*

*Stepanakert, 2/20/1988  
"Soviet Karabakh"  
February 21st, 1988*





Demonstrations  
in Yerevan supporting the  
demands of  
Karabakh Armenians







Henrik Poghosian, 1st Secretary of Autonomous enclave  
of Mountainous Karabakh

This historic decision gets ratified by the A.E.N.K Council. The voting results are as follows: 110 votes yes, 15 nays and 18 Azeri delegates undecided.

The newly elected president Henrik Pogossian who succeeded Boris Gevorgov confirms the results.

In February 23, 1988 the Soviet Doma refuses the above decision and as a result huge demonstrations take place in Yerevan where about one million Armenians participate.

The following day, February 24th, a committee called "The Karabakh Committee" takes birth in Yerevan.

Between February 29th and March 1st, a wild slaughtering takes place in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgayt where 31 innocent Armenians lose their lives and more than 100 people get wounded.

Following these tribulations, the Armenian people of Sumgayt and its environs (17,000 to 20,000) abandon their homes and flee to Armenia in great hysteria.

About five hundred families or more get established in different regions of Soviet Armenia. The fleeing continues and between March to May 1988, more and more families from Mountainous Karabakh and Hadrut district find refuge in different regions of Armenia.

On May 15, even the Armenians of Shushi abandon the area and establish themselves in Stepanakert.

On June 15, the Supreme Council of Soviet Armenia validates the historic decision of February 20th and as a consequence to that Azerbaijan impliedly imposes the blockade of Artsakh on July 23rd.

## THE DECISION OF THE ARMENIAN SSR SUPREME SOVIET

### ON THE DECISION OF USSR'S SUPREME SOVIET'S PRESIDENCY CONCERNING THE APPEALS OF MOUNTAINOUS KARABAKH, ARMENIAN SSR AND AZERBAIJANI SSR

*After examining the appeals of the Supreme Soviet Presidencies of the Russian SSFR, Ukrainian SSR, Byelorussian SSR, Uzbekistani SSR, Kazakhstani SSR, Georgian SSR, Lithuanian SSR, Moldavian SSR, Latvian SSR, Kyrgyzstani SSR, Tajikistani SSR, Turkmenistani SSR, and Estonian SSR related to the situation created between Mountainous Karabakh, Armenian and Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republics, the Presidency of the Armenian Supreme Soviet expresses its gratitude to the Presidencies of the Union's Republics on the occasion of giving their brotherly support, and appreciates it as an expression of solidarity and unity which is the basic principle of the Union's multiethnic society.*

*The USSR Supreme Soviet's Presidency has examined and debated the issue of the appeals of the involved republics' undertakings and has taken corresponding decisions.*

*The Presidency of the Supreme Soviet of USSR finds unacceptable the fact, when they try to solve the complex ethno-territorial issues by imposing pressure on the state, or by instigating passions and emotions, or in an atmosphere of self-proclaimed organizations, which try to reshape the interstate and ethno-administrative borders confirmed by the USSR Constitution. These actions could end up by unforeseen consequences. The Presidency has decisively condemned the criminal acts of isolated individuals and groups, whose actions resulted in many casualties and human sacrifices.*

*The Presidency of the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR endorses and confirms the decision taken on March 23, 1988, relating to "The measures taken by the Union on the appeals concerning the events between Mountainous Karabakh, Armenian and Azerbaijani SS Republics".*

*The masses of our republic accepted the appeal of General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of USSR M. S. Gorbachev in satisfaction and found it practical to examine in depth the reasons of the accumulated and acute inter-ethnic issues and problems in and around Mountainous Karabakh, and the proposal of presenting in detail analysis to the Secretariat of the Central Committee.*

*The Presidency of the Supreme Soviet of Armenia decided to:*

*1.- Undertake special measures based on the decisions of the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of USSR, and establish a healthier atmosphere in the collectives by restoring and guaranteeing the normal rhythm of the working collectives as well as the peaceful and normal situation in scientific and research centers through mobilizing the restructuring efforts of the working classes and the population. Take all necessary actions to amend the political education of the masses based on Lenin's firm principals of brotherhood between all nations and the Armenian and Azerbaijani nations by coordinating the efforts of the soviet deputies, the Communist party, the workers' union and the Comsomole.*

*2.- Appeal to the Soviet Council of Ministries of the Arm. SSR to secure the normal process of production of all enterprises, collective farms and soviet economies to fulfill all the plans of the first quarter of 1988 and to guarantee the fulfillment of state plans everywhere.*

*3.- Appeal to the soviet deputies of the republic and the law and order enforcements of the Ministry of the internal security to keep the socialist law and order and to secure and to protect the rights of all citizens and ethnic groups, uproot all actions threatening the stability of soviet brotherhood.*

*4.- Taking into consideration that the so called "Karabakh Committee" is not acting according to the Constitution of the SS Republic of Armenia and has gained a politically harmful essence and contradicts people's interests, the so called committee is henceforth*

*5.- Send proposals to the Supreme Soviet of SSR of Azerbaijan to guaranty the socialist lawfulness and the legal rights of all its citizens in securing the strengthening of the friendship and cooperation of all brotherly soviet peoples in a well coordinated direction.*

*President of the Supreme Soviet Presidency of Armenian SSR,  
H. Voskanyan*

*Secretary of the Supreme Soviet Presidency of Armenian SSR,  
N. Stepanyan*

*March 24, 1988, Yerevan*

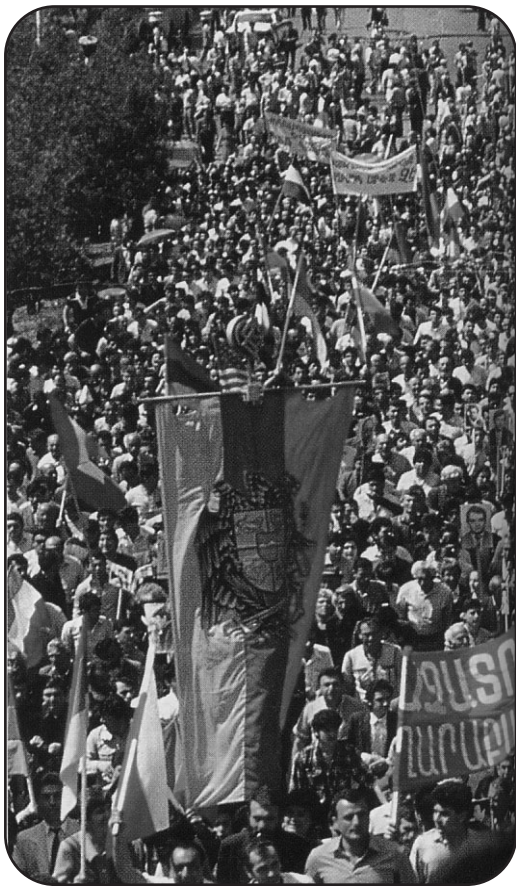
*“Avangard”  
March 27, 1988*



## ON THE FRONT







Scenes of the multitude of protesters during Karabakh  
Committee Assembly



Yerevan, a scene of the crowd demanding Artsakh lands

## ON THE STATUS OF MOUNTAINOUS KARABAKH

*On July 12, in Stepanakert, a district committee meeting regarding the status of Mountainous Karabakh took place where out of 150 candidates only 101 showed up.*

*A decision was approved for the Mountainous Karabakh Autonomous Enclave to withdraw from Soviet Azerbaijani domination.*

*The Soviet delegates agreed that the only acceptable solution for this issue was to stick to the decision taken by the Soviet Armenian conference dated June 15, 1988.*

*The candidates attending the conference suggested a mediation to change the name of Autonomous Enclave of Mountainous Karabakh into "Armenian Autonomous Artsakh Enclave". The delegates appealed to the working forces to end up the work stoppage. By July 13th, the boycotts had paralyzed the public and city transportations. All trade and essential goods selling stores were closed.*

*On the other hand, the agricultural activities were going on.*

*On the eve of July 12, in Baku, the Supreme Soviet Azerbaijani presidency was examining the decision taken by the delegates who attended the above-mentioned conference. In its analysis, it became evident that the Soviet delegates were not able to secure in its fullness the strict principles of law and order of the upper levels of lawmakers, a fact that all leaders had to abide with.*

*An obvious laxity was pervading among the Soviet and Azeri delegations vis a vis the established constitutional writs. Such an action can provoke a serious damage in the fundamentals of the established processes, a deviation among the working populace for their approach for the salvation of socio-economic problems.*

*The Presidency of the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet called the decision taken by the delegates to separate the Autonomous Enclave of Mountainous Karabakh from the Azerbaijani Union “unilateral”, “unexampled” decision and based on article 114 of the constitution of Azerbaijan and article 42 of Azerbaijan – Autonomous Enclave of M. Karabakh constitution doomed it “cancelled”.*

TASS

*“Soviet Armenia”  
July 15, 1988*



Always Ready





Artsakhian Demands, Stepanakert Square, 1988



A scene from Stepanakert, June 1988





Protesters' demands in Yerevan



A scene in Mountainous Karabakh awaiting for the final decision





Scene of a family mourning a martyred hero in Stepanakert



Angry crowds protesting in Yerevan



On July 18, the Supreme Council of the USSR sends its executive representative Arkady Volsky as governor of the Enclave.

In January 1989, the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union decides to keep the Mountainous enclave of Karabakh within the Azerbaijani borders under the immediate supervision of representative Arkady Volsky.

Within one year the number of immigrants forced to abandon the Azerbaijani districts and seeking refuge into Armenia reaches 160,000,

In August 1989 a “National Council” takes birth in Artsakh and declares the Autonomous enclave of Mountainous Karabakh to be named: “Independent National Armenian Territory”. As a consequence, the people of Artsakh give up the work stoppage. The National Council urges all Azerbaijani flags to come down from official buildings.

Enthused by such a move, the Council of Shahoumian district, in its turn, declares to join the Mountainous enclave region, thereby together becoming part of the Armenian state.

In a gesture to please all sides, the Supreme Council Soviet of Soviet Armenia recognizes the omnipotent delegates of the Mountainous Karabakh’s conference and the elected National Council as the only lawful authority of the Enclave.

In the months that followed, within the Enclave region, the skirmishes between Armenians and Azeris became brutal and displacements of people (especially in Shushi area) took a vaster dimension.

On November 26, 1989, the Supreme Soviet Council Union abolishes the resolution bestowed upon Artsakh’s unique status and re-establishes the Azerbaijani supremacy all over the area.

In January 2, 1990, Azeris attack the Hadrut district and skirmishes take place in Askeran and Getashen areas.

Twelve days later, i.e. Jan 14, in Baku, Azeris brutally target the Armenians (estimated to be around 300,000). In one week, about 15,000 Armenians flee Baku.

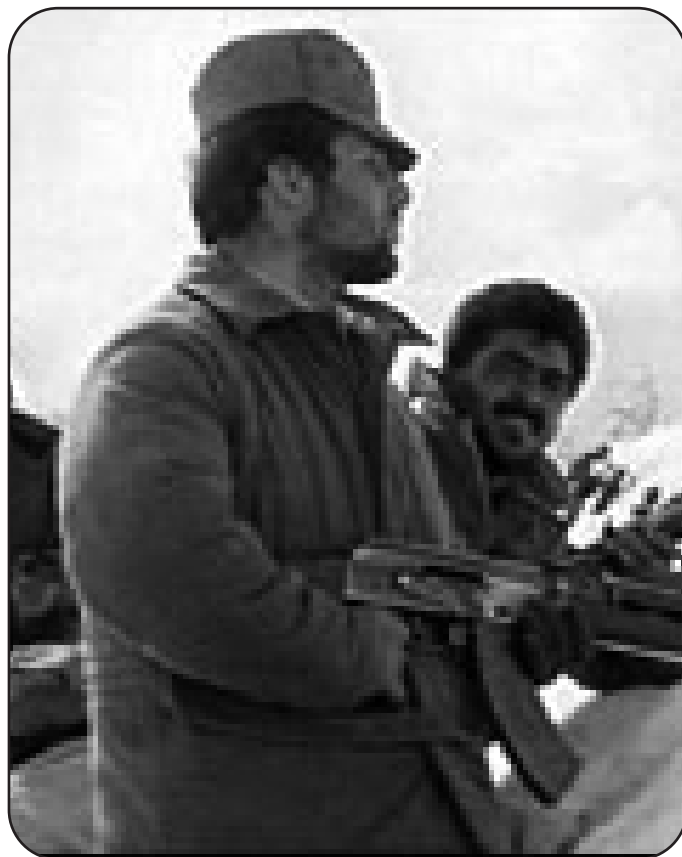




Baku, massacred Armenian citizens



The transfer of an old Armenian woman from Baku to Yerevan



Armenian forces controlling the Karabakh borders

## APPEAL TO THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE

Nowadays, our brothers and sisters in Armenia and Artsakh are living ravaging days more so dangerous since the days of the Great Genocide.

In Baku, the horrible slaughters of unarmed, defenseless Armenians by Azeris created a new wave of immigration to Armenia adding heavier burdens on the status of our homeland.

In Artsakh, our valiant citizens defend their positions with splendid bravery against the continual invasions by thousands of armed Azeris. They prove one more time that they are the priceless heirs of the legendary Artsakh heroes.

In Armenia life is almost intolerable and especially even more so since Azerbaijan re-established an economic blockade for the last eight days.

However, even with all these troubles and attacks perpetrated from Nakhijevan and Azerbaijan, thousands of people in Yerevan voluntarily devoted themselves to defend Artsakh and Armenia.

Consequently, we appeal to all of you to make your utmost financial donations to prove that the Armenians of Diaspora have had de facto participated in the process of survival and the existence of Armenia and Artsakh.

Be generous and donate as much as you can.

January 16, 1990

RAMGAVAR AZADAGAN GOUSAGTSOUTIUN (ADL)

## A TELEGRAM TO THE PRESIDENCY OF THE SUPREME SOVIET COUNCIL

For about two years, the Armenian people in the Caucasus are living unsecured days. In Soviet Armenia and especially in Azarbaijan, it exists such a perilous situation that it is extremely mind boggling for the entire Armenian population

To rectify the result of a gaffe committed by Stalin whereby the people of Mountainous Karabakh lost their well-founded and justified freedom to the Azeris for seven long decades and were subjugated to all kinds of discriminatory politics, the Armenians of Karabakh took charge to re-unite their piece of land to their motherland, but, instead they were countered by indescribable Azeri massive terroristic deeds surpassing the very limits of vandalism.

Starting from the well known Sumgayt massacres, the killings at Baku, Kirovabad and the adjacent Armenian areas, in addition to the long economic blockades, these chain reactions of well orchestrated devastating events threatened to become the modern day apocalyptic genocide.

Unfortunately, in those days, the members of the Supreme Soviet Central Committee did not want to accept or intervene out of fear that (besides racial animosities among nations) old desires of pan-turanism dreams might be resuscitated. However, let us not forget that in the history of nations, acts committed with the intend to ignore or deliberately slow down the process of human rights do energize the duplication of new genocidal provocations and today what is happening in Soviet Azerbaijan against the Armenian people cannot be named otherwise.



We can emphasize that neither Armenia nor the Armenians at any time - be it in the past or in the present days, have never had any religious or racial hatred nor discrimination problems towards the people of Soviet Azerbaijan with whom they are destined to live and co-exist and in that same geographical zone.

The Central Committees of the three Armenian political parties extremely worried about the aforementioned barbaric actions of the Azeris - in the name of all the Armenians of the Diaspora severely condemn the ruling Azerbaijani government and its allies and demand from Central Soviet Council to formally intervene in this matter with the intent to find and punish the responsible authors of these crimes; moreover, in an effort to bring a final solution to the Karabakh conflict - urge the Baku rulers who for the last seventy years proved to be inefficient in their policy to rule the area to abide by the proposed peace initiatives.

Today, every Armenian is indeed deeply convinced that the only means not to endure the same unhappy fate of the Armenians in Nakhichevan, in the Mountainous Karabakh and its neighboring regions where they still reside, must be the immediate amalgamation with mother Armenia where they belong historically, culturally, economically, linguistically and several other similar ties.

The adoption of the policies of openness (glasnost) and reforms (perestroika) by the Soviet Union which came to establish for the first time the foundation of a new era of human decency and democracy cannot ignore the utmost belief and demands of the Armenian people who were the first welcomers of such principles. Contrary to their despairs, they welcomed with hope and are still hoping that such an enlightened page of History cannot be opened without the promulgation of justice to such usurped people, the Armenians.

Within these conditions, we can persuade you that the entire Armenian Diaspora is ready to submit its versatile capabilities-be it scientific, technological, socio-economical and/or other arenas to achieve the upliftment and prosperity of Soviet Armenia which is the

motherland of more than 2 million people living in the Diaspora and who consider themselves the legitimate citizens of that country.

ADL Central Committee

ARF Bureau

Social Democrat Hunchagian Central Committee

February, 1990



"We demand the return of Artsakh to the Motherland".



A ruined home





“My friends were buried under these ruins”, quotes a Martuni fellow.

On the orders given by a certain Barrett Safanov who on January 26, 1990 with the arrangement of the Soviet authorities was sent to Stepanakert – presumably to find a solution for the Karabakh affair, a flurry of massive imprisonments of Karabakh Armenians took place as of April of the same year.

This close association between Safanov and the Omon-Azeri groups intensely provoked the Armenians of the surrounding districts.

On August 4th, in Armenia and neighboring Artsakh the Supreme Council elections convened. Levon Ter-Petrossian becomes the president and on August 23 the Supreme Council promulgates a decree whereby Armenia is renamed the “Republic of Armenia” and the tricolor flag becomes the national Armenian flag.

Later on, during the same year, Artsakh blockade intensifies and Stepanakert finds itself on the verge of famine.

In December 1990, in Getashen, Berdadzor and other frontline villages intense skirmishes take place with the Azeris.

In the early days of 1991, the blockade of Artsakh becomes more intense severing all communication ties. In April of the same year, the Omon-Azeri forces with the help of Soviet regiments infiltrate into Artsakh lands.

Numerous Armenians are jailed and shipped to Azerbaijan – The remaining troops do not stay inert. Armenian fighters capture lots of enemy prisoners of war with the intention to exchange them with Armenian prisoners.



## THE LETTER OF THE ARMENIAN DEMOCRATIC LIBERAL PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Your Excellency Levon Ter-Petrossian, President of the Supreme Council of the Armenian Republic, Yerevan, Armenia.

Your Excellency,

The leaders of the Armenian Democratic Liberal party, its membership and its circle of sympathizers, since April 30th, are experiencing a dreadful apprehension following up the concerning situation in and around, Armenia and Artsakh.

It is obvious that the Soviet armed forces and the Azeri outlaws stepping over the nation's self independence rules and the principles of human rights are determined to subjugate Armenia to an unacceptable status against which We also, be it in our homeland or in the Diaspora will continue to defend by our own means supporting our fearless heroes of Getashen, Martounashen and surrounding areas, heroes that have vowed to shed their blood to defend the interests and the right of our nation.

Dear Mr. President, in these turbulent times, to You, to our people and especially to our defying valiants, we want one more time to manifest our total solidarity.

In a worldwide effort, our organizational structure will continue its standing sentinel role to create – a favorable public opinion to halt these new meditated crime operations.

Respectfully

Submitted by  
ADL Central Committee  
May 8, 1991

A petition submitted by Mikhail Gorbachev to annex Artsakh as an “indivisible” part of Azerbaijan and to investigate the feasibility of this political quest was doomed unacceptable by the majority votes of Armenia’s Supreme Council with the cooperation of the Armenian National Movement and the Armenian Communist Party.

Following this successful achievement, the region of Mountainous Karabakh on September 2, 1991, proclaims its independence engulfing with it the Shahumian territory.

On December 10, 99% of the Artsakh Armenians vote “yes” for the independence.

On December 25, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Red Army stationing in Artsakh beats a retreat and returns back to Soviet Russia.

It is during this episode that the Self Defense Committee of independent Mountainous Karabakh comes to existence.



Monte (Avo) Melkonian,  
the Eagle of Artsakh



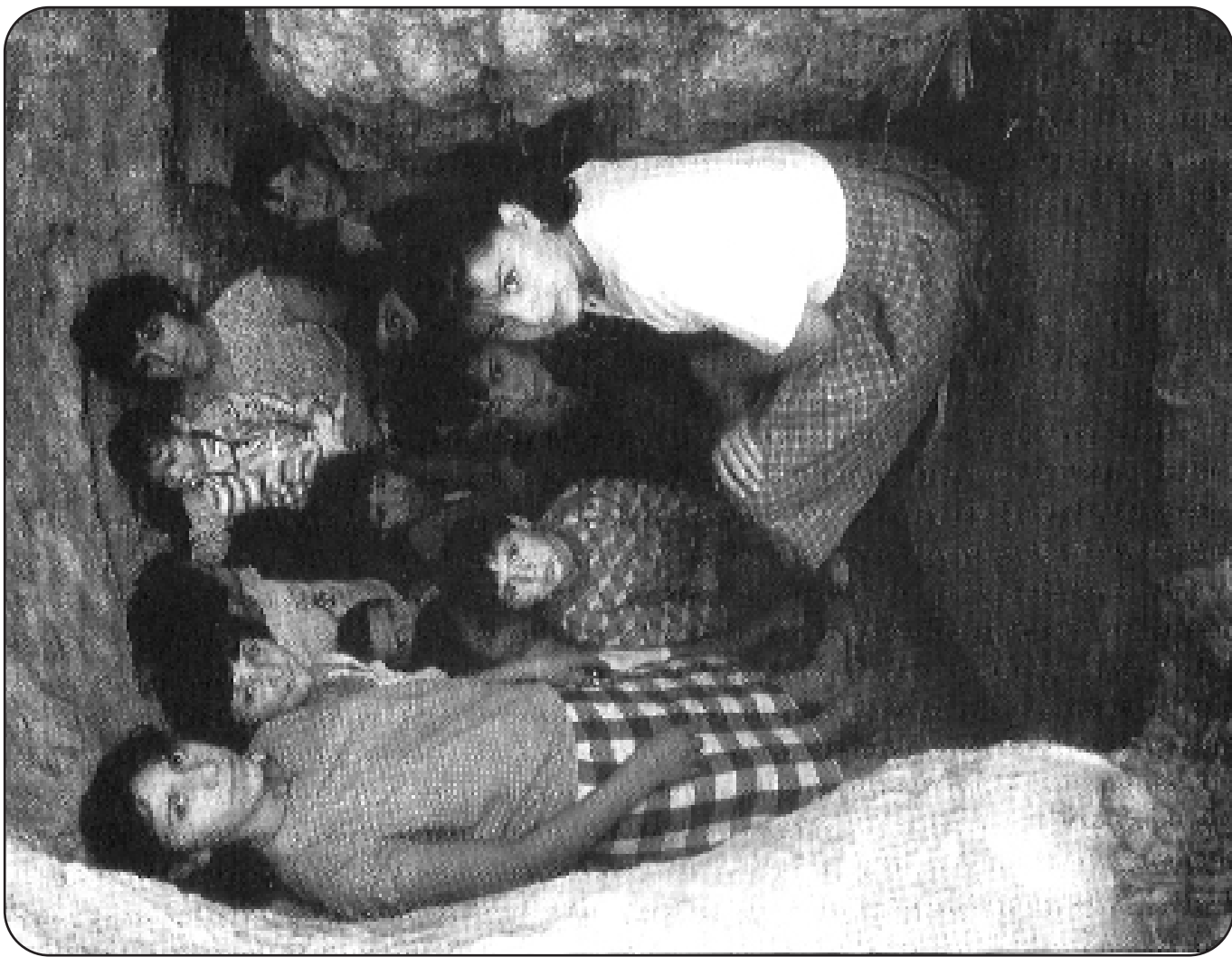
During frontier skirmishes





Moving to Lachin corridor





With our hands, we digged this shelter.

M  
A  
Y  
  
9  
  
1  
  
9  
  
9  
  
2

## Liberated Shushi



# The Liberation of Shushi (The Pearl of Artsakh)





Shushi, The Azeri Turks were here...

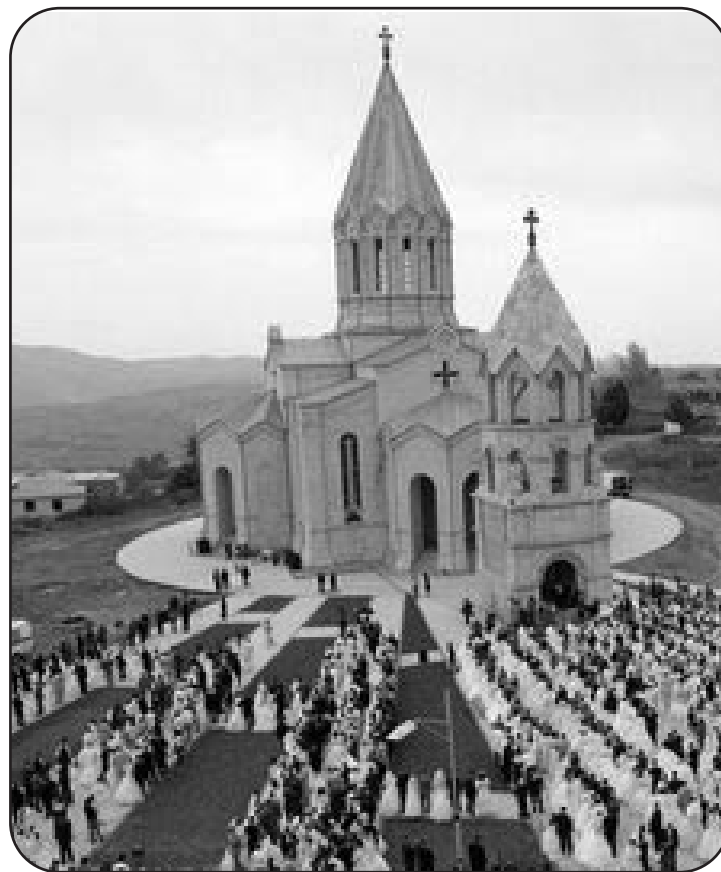




A scene of Shushi before Khosrov Sultanov's pillage, early 20th century



The All Savior Church after the liberation of Shushi from the Azeries



Mass weddings at the All Savior Church after renovations

With its glamorous architectural monuments, Shushi, a city built on an elevation has its own spot in the Artsakh world. There we find buildings and edifices which have been the real cultural and architectural treasures of our people. It is there that famous Armenians like the historian Leo, the great military icon Marshal Bagramian, the great scholar and then Catholicos of Cilician See Garegin I Hovsepyants, the writher Mouratsan, Nelson Stepanyan a WWII hero, General Daniel Peroumyan and many others were born.

Due to its natural strategic location especially for the Armenian people of Varanda, this city was converted into a unique citadel shielding its inhabitants from barbaric invasions of enemies.

From Shushi's historical buildings, one can mention the All Savior Mother Church (built in 1868) and also three other churches bearing the St. Astvatsatsin's name: Kousanats Church (1816), Agouletsots Church (1822), Meghretsots Church (1838).

As a famous fortress thru history, Shushi is also mentioned in different history books as Shushi or Karagloukh (Black Head).

Shushi's population in the 18th century was able to face several times the Ottoman armies due to a fortress built by the Meliks (rich Armenian landlords) of the area in 1724.

In mid 18th century, the Meliks of Varanda and also of Shushi, unjustly succumbed to the sovereignty of Melik Shahnazar.

This event enrages the four other Melik Dynasties especially when Shahnazar (in Gandzak) establishes friendly relationship with Panah Khan, the leader of several nomadic Tatar groups, and, consequently in 1752, Shahnazar donates the citadel of Shushi to Panah Khan, which becomes his official settlement and the area becomes to be known as Panahabad.

Meanwhile, Panah Khan establishes friendly relations with the leaders of the Ottoman Empire who have ulterior motives to capture Artsakh.

Soon, noticing the sharp desires of occupation by the Persians, the Ottoman Leaders

recede. In fact, between 1780 to 1790 Shushi becomes one of the most important strategic centers of Transcaucasia and successfully faces all attacks perpetrated by enemy factions.

It was only in 1795, that the fortress-city succumbed to a premeditated attack by Persian Aga Mehmet Khan Ghadjari whose intention was to occupy the entire Transcaucasia and to stop the advancement of the Russian army; he was convinced that Shushi had to be in his hands.

In 1805 a Russo Persian treaty puts Artsakh under Russian protectorate and allows Russian army platoons to penetrate Shushi.

Two decades later, in the Summer of 1826, the Persian Army headed by Abbas Mirza, tries for a last time to occupy Shushi, but alas, fails.

In 1828, when the Caucasus became a Russian possession, the Armenians of Artsakh found an opportunity to focus on cultural and educational issues achieving huge successes.

It is the beginning of a renaissance period. Many schools almost twenty of them were built in the first part of the century. Then came printing shops and soon newspapers viz. Haykakan Ashkharh (Armenian World), Krounk (Crane), Paylak (Lightening), Tsiatsan (Rainbow) etc.

Along side these establishments, we see libraries in Shushi and even a theater, where artists like Perch Proshian, Vahram Papazian bring in their works.

Shushi becomes a very important trade center.

Factories, industrial buildings, commercial institutions thrive. Shoes manufactured there reach the northern cities of Russia.

At the beginning of the 20th century, because of its prolific life style and pleasant climate, Shushi becomes a wanted vacation spot for the Armenians living in the Caucasus.

Around that time, there were about 35,000 Armenians in the area. Then came Khosrov Sultanov Bey followed by the Azeri pillages and killings (around 20,000 Armenians perished).



In 1923 with Stalin's heart breaking decision, Shushi becomes Azeris possession and the number of the population dwindles between 2000 and 2400 living under Soviet regime.

In February 1988 while in Yerevan and Stepanakert the fights for the demand of freedom of Artsakh were taking place, Azeris expel the remaining 2000 Armenians from the area and use the fortress to bombard Stepanakert which was 7 miles away from Shushi.

In Jan 26, 1990 after the tragic events in Baku, the Soviet leadership decides to send General Safonov to Artsakh and he cultivates a stern relationship with the Azeris. As a result, the Omon-Azeris expatriate and give hell to Armenians residing in the Shahumian and Ganzak (Gyanja) areas.

Safonov plans to sever all communication medias between Stepanakert and the outer world and also plans for the Omon-Azeri to pile up a rich ammunition depot in Shushi; henceforward Armenians suffer oppression on all fronts.

This condition continues without change until the beginning of 1992. On January 6th, the Armenians of Artsakh come to terms with their parliament and choose the 33 years old Arthur Mkrtchian to be its president

Oleg Yessayan becomes head of minister of the Government. Between February and April, Artsakh freedom fighters liberate the Azeri occupied lands and the Omons flee without return. The last remaining task is the liberation of Shushi. Using its heights the Azeris were causing mortal blows to the Armenians. The inflexible will of the sons of Artsakh conquers that obstacle too and on May 8 1992 with a surprising attack directed to the enemy, the heroes of Artsakh liberate Shushi and on May 10 there was a final victory for Stepanakert.

His Eminence Bishop Barkev Martirosian celebrates a mass in the All Savior Church of Ghazanchetsots and little by little the expatriated Shushi people start to return back to their nests.

After the victory over Shushi, the Artsakh Armenian troops clean up the Lissakor heights from all dangers and on May 17 after securing the Lachin passage – the Armenia-

Artsakh route that extends from Goris all the way to Stepanakert, is open.

The liberation of Shushi is one of the most important cornerstones in our modern history and was realized by the total cooperation and solidarity offered by the Republic of Armenia.



Memorial tank in the heights of Shushi,  
Republic of Mountainous Karabakh

# The Republic of Mountainous Karabakh (Artsakh)





Panoramic view of Stepanakert, the capital of Artsakh, after the liberation of Mountainous Karabakh



After the liberation of Shushi and the neighboring territories in July 1992, the Azeris occupy Martakert (population 45,000).

The Supreme Council of the Republic of Armenia deeming these acts unacceptable and knowing the far fetched political urges of Azerbaijan to seize the Artsakh lands, formulates a unique plan of action.

In the following months, the Karabakh self-defense Committee starts a methodical clean up operation and the enemy forces are expelled from the Shahoumian and Martakert regions. Thus, the Armenian self-defense forces totally succeed in their endeavors. Once and for all, they repel Azeri assailants away and guarantee peace to the Armenian population of the area.

In December 1992, when Azerbaijani war planes try to bombard the Lachin pass to separate Mountainous Karabakh from the west side, the Armenian forces succeed to destroy all the enemy invading planes and restore safety to that region, too.

The year following Shushi liberation, i. e. year 1993 becomes a meaningful one for the Republic of Mountainous Karabakh.

In January and February, the Armenian forces liberate the neighboring “Azerbaijani” regions where some remnant vagabonds were residing.

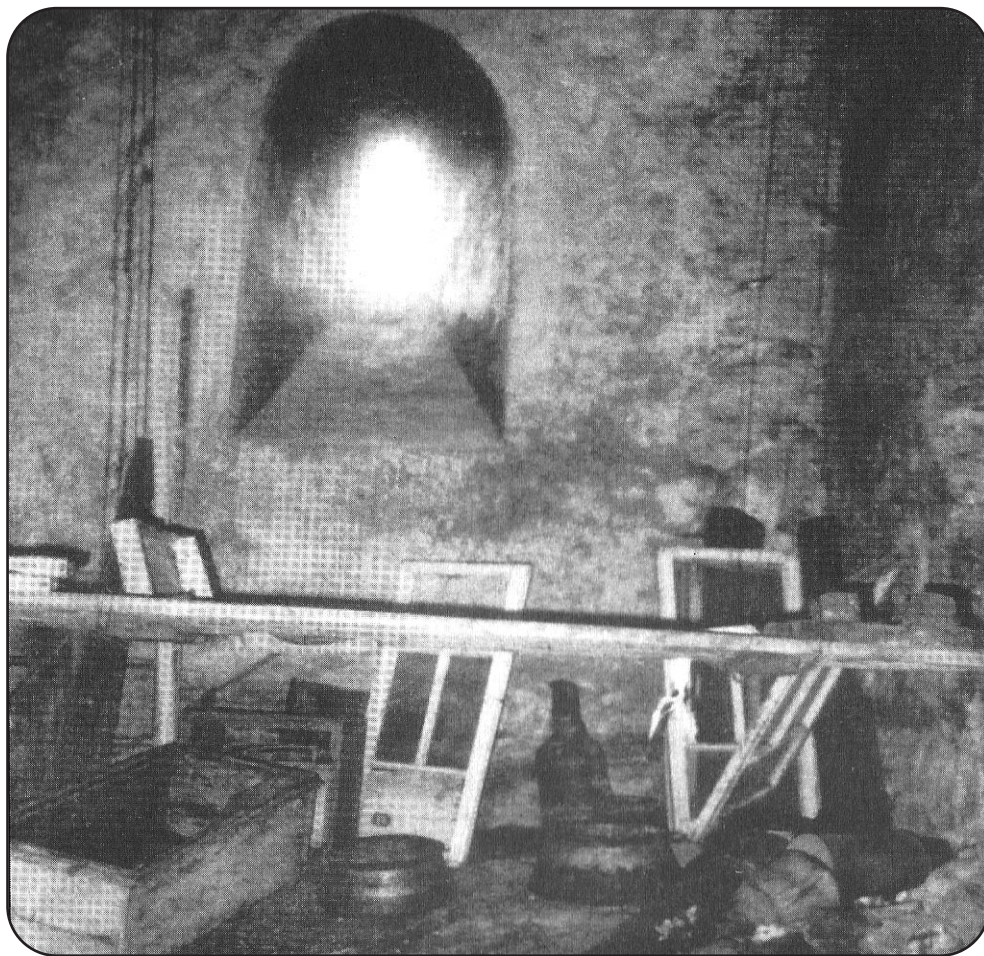
Once the clean up operation was fully executed, all the lands become under the full protection of the Mountainous Karabakh Defence Committee.

On April 1st, the enemy forces try to bombard Lachin, the only pass connecting Armenia to Artsakh. The enemy defeat was imminent with lots of perished lives. The Armenian forces reach Kelbajar and once there, all northern Azeri aggressions end up into failure.

A week later, in the south eastern part of Mountainous Karabakh, especially in the Fizouli region, the Armenian troops register a series of victories not only by stopping the advance of the enemy but by enticing them to flee the region.



Armenian fighters going to defend Mother Artsakh



Picture of a demolished church in Kelbajar



Kelbajar, now Karvachar heights



Later on in July, Mr. Mario Rafaelli, a designated senior peace negotiator was sent to Stepanakert. The Azeri side refuses the idea of a cease fire and Mr. Rafaelli, disappointed and desperate, bids farewell to Stepanakert.

During the next month (i.e. August), the Karabakh army continues its quests relentlessly. They take over Aghdam, then the southwestern Azeri districts of Jibrail and Ghoubatly.

On August 31, 1993, for the first time, Azerbaijan asks Mountainous Karabakh for a cease fire, which lasts only 10 days.

On October 28, the Armenian forces occupy Zangelan and evacuate the area of Azeri inhabitants. Zangelan was the city from which the Azeri forces used to bombard the southern areas of the Republic of Armenia, especially Ghapan. Henceforth the Armenian forces come to master a land expansion of 9,600 sq. kms and Artsakh's entire territorial size reaches 14,000 sq. kms, which represents 15% of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In April 1994, in Goris, a southern city near the Lachin corridor, Mr. Levon Ter-Petrossian, the president of the Rep. of Armenia, meets the officials of the government of Mountainous Karabakh and members of Defense ministry. During that meeting, a decision was adopted to elect – during that same year, a president for the Republic of Karabakh considering all legislative issues with the Republic of Armenia had been ironed out.

Public elections took place in Mountainous Karabakh region on December 22, 1994 and Mr. Robert Kocharian becomes the first president of the Republic.

In November 1996, president Kocharian was elected for the second term and Mr. Leonard Petrossian became prime minister.

In January 1997, Mr. Oleg Yessayan is elected Speaker of the House, which in turn asks for total territorial recognition and self-determination right.

In March of the same year, President R. Kocharian resigns his post and accepts to become the Prime Minister of the Rep. of Armenia. One year later, when president Levon Ter-Petrossian resigned, Mr. R. Kocharian becomes the second president of the Rep. of Armenia.

In September 1997, Mr. Arkady Ghoukassian, who was the Foreign Affairs Minister of the Rep. of M. Karabakh, becomes the next President of the Republic by the approval of the Mountainous Karabakh government. Mrs. Naira Melkounian gets the post of Foreign Affairs and Mr. Oleg Yessayan becomes the President of the Congress of M. Karabakh.

President Arkady Ghoukassian visits California in February 1999.

Eleven years after Artsakh liberation movement, this was the first official visit of Mountainous Karabakh president to the Western shores of USA.



Mr. Arkady Ghoukassian





President of Artsakh  
Mr. Bako Sahakyan



## ADDENDUM

As a reminder to our readers, we had mentioned in the “Preface” of this book that the Armenian people succeeded to found the Republic of Mountainous Karabakh on September 2, 1991.

The war of independence was ruthless and costly. Thousands gave their lives to guaranty peace and freedom to the next generations, and, History without hesitation can witness the enormous struggles we endured to realize that dream.

This year (2011), we are proudly celebrating the twentieth birthday of Free Karabakh. But, now, we have a bigger and more profound responsibility to secure our territories. We have to be alert all the time.

In 2007, as the result of a democratic election, Mr. Bako Sahakian became the 3rd President of the Karabakh Republic. A man of integrity, courage and political savvy, he is loved and respected by his country’s citizens.

His biography reveals the following achievements:

- . He is a graduate with a law degree from Artsakh (Karabakh) University.
- . In 1988, has been one of the activists of Karabakh liberation movement and joined the Mountainous Karabakh self defense forces in 1990 and soon after in 1992 , he became deputy commander of M. Karabakh Committee of Defense Forces.
- . Has served as Defense Army’s Rear Staff Commander, and, later became Deputy to the Karabakh Republic Defense Army’s Commander on foreign relations
- . In 1996, he was appointed deputy commander of the M. Karabakh Defense Army’s 10th highland infantry position.

He has the military rank of Major-General and is a member of the Russian Federation Academy of Security, Defense and Legality.

Mr. Sahakian has been awarded many orders and medals. To name a few:

“Battle Cross” of 1st Degree,

“Peter the Great” of 1st Degree,

“For Service to Fatherland” of 1st Degree,

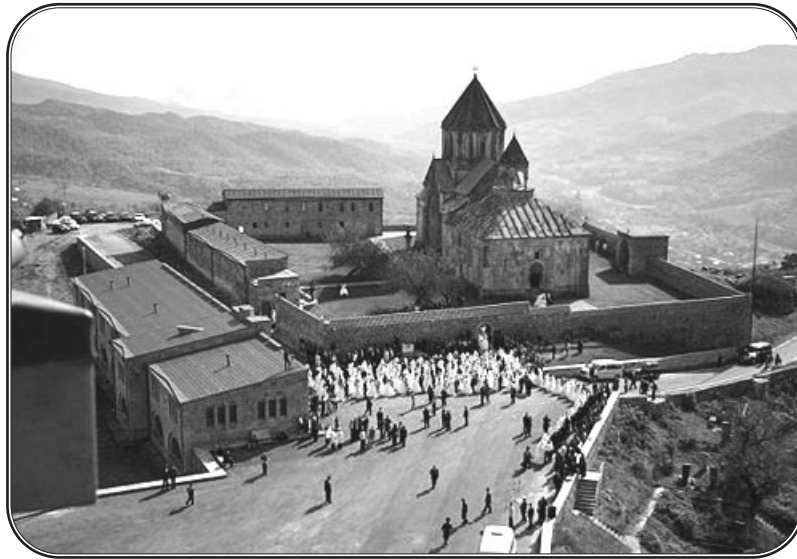
“Vazgen Sargsyan” Medals.

He is married and has two children.





Stepanakert. Independence Day Parade



Gandzasar Wedding



## C O N T E N T S

PREFACE	6
A CONCISE HISTORY OF NAKORNO KARABAKH	9
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA ABOUT KARABAKH	11
HABITATION & ADMINISTRATION	12
HISTORIC MONUMENTS AND EDIFICES	14
HISTORIC OVERVIEW UNTIL 1914	16
ARTSAKH DURING THE SOVIETIZATION PERIOD	17
ARTSAKHIAN CLAIMS OF INDEPENDENCE DURING THE SOVIET REGIME	23
THE HISTORIC DECISION	26
THE DECISION OF THE ARMENIAN SSR SUPREME SOVIET	30
ON THE STATUS OF MOUNTAINOUS KARABAKH	36
APPEAL TO THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE	48
FROM THE THREE POLITICAL PARTIES	49
THE LETTER OF THE ARMENIAN DEMOCRATIC LIBERAL PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE	55
THE LIBERATION OF SHUSHI	61
THE REPUBLIC OF MOUNTAINOUS KARABAKH	69
ADDENDUM	79



