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Sarkisian Blames Azerbaijan for Recent Ceasefire Violations



Serzh Sarkisian with Austria's visiting President Heinz Fischer

YEREVAN -- President Serzh Sarkisian on Tuesday again blamed Azerbaijan for recent ceasefire violations in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone and the lack of progress in Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks.

"The policy adopted by Azerbaijan in the past year, its belligerent statements and unfounded self-confidence are causing tension both on the [Karabakh] line of contact and the Armenian-Azerbaijani border," he told a joint news conference with Austria's visiting President Heinz Fischer. "And it was not accidental that as a result of those provocations young men were killed and the situation escalated in the last several weeks."

"The situation around Nagorno-Karabakh remains a challenge for the security of both the region and Europe. We see no alternative to a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group. But, unfortunately, the policy of Azerbaijan during the past year, its militarist statements

and unjustified arrogance causes tension both near the line of contact in the conflict zone and along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border," said the President of Armenia.

Sarkisian claimed that the peace process is deadlocked because Azerbaijan accepts only one of three internationally recognized principles that are at the heart of peace proposals made by the three mediating powers.

"While claiming to agree to these three principles, Azerbaijan in reality accepts only one of them: the principle of territorial integrity of states," he said. "It rejects peoples' right to self-determination and the principle of peaceful solutions to conflicts. So when these principles are really accepted, the conflict will be resolved. The latest flare-up in violence along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and near Nagorno-Karabakh occurred on June 4-6 amid the regional tour of United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. At least nine soldiers on both sides were killed in the border clashes.

European Court Fines Yerevan for Oppositionist's Arrest

The European Court of Human Rights has ordered the Armenian authorities to pay 4,500 euros (\$5,600) worth of compensation to an opposition figure who was arrested in 2006 for allegedly calling for a violent regime change.

Vartan Malkhasian was one of the leaders of a radical opposition group, called the Armenian Alliance of Volunteers, when he was arrested in December 2006. A Yerevan court convicted Malkhasian of publicly advocating a "violent overthrow of constitutional order" and sentenced him to two years in prison in August 2007.

The oppositionist denied the charges as baseless and politically motivated before appealing to the Strasbourg-based court. He sought 110,000 euros in moral damages.



The court ruled late on Tuesday that Malkhasian's six-month pre-trial detention violated key provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights. It said Armenian courts failed to substantiate their decisions to allow prosecutors to keep him under arrest pending trial.

"I was kept under pre-trial arrest unfairly," Malkhasian told RFE/RL's

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Turkey Angered by Genocide Conference Held in Prague

PRAGUE -- The Turkish Embassy in the Czech Republic has complained to a local non-governmental organization about an international conference on genocides and the 1915 Armenian massacres in the Ottoman Empire in particular, highlighting the resistance in Musa Dagh.

The Prague-based Research Center for Archeology of Evil held the conference in the Czech capital on June 18-20 as part of a project designed to combat racism and xenophobia through raising public awareness of crimes against humanity.

Simon Krbec, head of the center, said Turkish Embassy officials invited him and his colleagues to a meeting the day after the conference finished its work. "We were asked why we chose, as they put it, a controversial issue such as the Armenian genocide for the conference," he told RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am). "They tried to explain that they are not happy with this content of the conference, especially considering the fact that from their point of view we did not invite some Turkish researchers to that conference."

"We replied that we are not dividing historical research into some national or opposite sides, that we follow the mainstream of research on genocide studies in the world," Krbec said. "We said that, for example, the International Association of Genocide Scholars recognized the Armenian genocide as genocide. So we don't see a reason to invite some Turkish researchers."

"They provided us with books



Simon Krbec, head of the Research Center for Archeology of Evil

about their version of what happened in the Ottoman Empire and they invited us to Istanbul to study their archives," he added.

During the conference Armenia's Ambassador to the Czech Republic, Tigran Seyranyan, delivered opening remarks reflecting on Franz Werfel's novel The Forty Days of Musa Dagh, and noted that on every April 24 the Armenian community of the Czech Republic pays its respects to this great novelist.

The Ambassador also reflected on the Armenian Genocide's international recognition process and briefed the discussants on the Turkish government's denialist policy in this regard.

Afterward, thorough presentations were delivered on the Armenians' self-defense in Musa Dagh, the Armenian Genocide, and official Ankara's continuing policy of denial.

Also, Andrew Goldberg's documentary entitled "The Armenian Genocide" was screened.

International Crisis Group Report on Armenia: An Opportunity for Statesmanship

Executive Summary and Recommendations

After May's parliamentary elections, Armenia is preparing for a pivotal presidential vote in 2013 that will determine whether it has shed a nearly two-decade history of fraud-tainted elections and put in place a government with the legitimacy needed to implement comprehensive reform and resolve its problems with Azerbaijan. President Serzh Sarkisian has a brief opportunity to demonstrate statesmanship before he again faces the voters in what is likely to be a competitive contest. Sarkisian has demonstrated some courage to promote change, but like his pre-decessors, he has thus far failed to deal effectively with serious economic and governance problems, including the debilitating, albeit low-intensity, Nagorno-Karabakh war. Another election perceived as seriously flawed would serve as a further distraction from peace talks and severe economic problems. The likely consequences would then be ever more



citizens opting out of democratic politics, including by emigration.

The genuinely competitive parliamentary election had some positive signs. Media coverage during much of the campaign was more balanced, and free assembly, expression and movement were largely respected. The president's ruling Republican Party won a solid majority of seats, but its former coalition partner, Prosperous Armenia – associated with rich businessman and ex-president Robert Kocharian – came in a strong second.

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Armenia Accuses Azerbaijan of Human Rights Violation During Karabakh Conflict

NEW YORK -- Armenia's Permanent Representative at the UN, Ambassador Karen Nazaryan delivered a speech at the discussions on the issue of protection of the civilian population during conflicts held at the UN Security Council.

Speaking about the Karabakh conflict, Ambassador Karen Nazaryan emphasized Azerbaijan's responsibility for the crimes against humanity committed at the conflict zone. He said the Azerbaijani authorities are responsible for the violation of rights of hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees, the ethnic cleansings and aggression unleashed in response to the realization of the right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to self-determination, as well as the massacre of the Azerbaijani population in Khojalu.

Ambassador Nazaryan informed members of the Security Council that

Armenian settlements of Artsvashen, Shahumyan in the north of NKR, Getashen and another 18 villages were razed to the ground as a result of the conflict, about twenty settlements are still occupied by Azerbaijan.

The Ambassador added that "Azerbaijan continues the infringements against the frontline settlements of independent Artsakh and Armenia, turning down the calls of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the UN Security Council to implement confidence-building measures."

In that context the Ambassador noted that Armenia welcomes the Los Cabos statement of the Presidents of the Minsk Group co-chairing countries and urged the Azerbaijani side to stop all kind of provocations at the Armenian border and the line of contact with Nagorno Karabakh.

PACE President Against Karabakh Subcommittee

President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) Jean-Claude Mignon voiced his opposition to the activity of a subcommittee on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement within the PACE.

"Though I trust the OSCE Minsk Group's activity, it should intensify

efforts," he said on Monday, noting that increasing the number of institutions aimed at the conflict resolution an unreasonable step.

The PACE head further stressed intention to meet with Armenian and Azerbaijani delegations and hold discussions on a Karabakh conflict subcommittee with them.

Tumanyan's House in Tbilisi Will Become a Center of Armenian Culture

TBILISI -- The fate of Armenian great writer Hovhannes Tumanyan in Tbilisi is finally decided. Chairman of Armenian Writers' Union Levon Ananyan had a meeting with the journalists today and during the press conference officially handed the keys of Tumanyan's house to Primate of the Georgian Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Bishop Vazgen Mirzakhanyan.

"Pan-Armenian foundation of writers has bought the house and presents it to the Georgian Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church", Ananyan said.

"This is a great honor and a great responsibility," the Primate said, and informed that negotiations are underway with Tumanyan's grand-granddaughter on purchasing the other part of the house.

Chairman of the Writer's Union also thanked Gyumri Mayor Vardan



Ghukasyan who assisted to buy the house and also to restore it. "We managed to return to the nation a memory of Tumanyan. So, we will have a center of Armenian culture in Tbilisi which will become a good stimulus to make Armenian cultural life more active there."

Primate of the Georgian Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Bishop Vazgen Mirzakhanyan informed that the cultural center will be officially opened in autumn.

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Մենք առաջարկում ենք ամենալավագույն բայցովաբարիք բանես:
Գիշացան, զղի, մէշքի, յօդային և մէտաքին ցաներ:
Բարեհապահ վյօթի հետախոր պատուհան
վերականգնելու բանես:

Չեր առողջութեանը մեր մտահոգութիւնն է:

Turkey to Restore Ties With France

ANKARA -- Turkey has agreed to restore all ties with France, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said on Thursday, stating that sanctions imposed on Paris would no longer be implemented.

"Sanctions will drop from the agenda thanks to this new stance adopted by France," Davutoglu said in a televised interview, adding that he would be visiting Paris next month. New French President Francois Hollande promised to open a "new page" in relations, which hit a low in December after France's lower house of parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of a draft law to make it illegal to deny the Armenian Genocide.

Turkish-French relations deteriorated under Hollande's predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy, who angered Ankara when he pushed ahead with the bill to

criminalise denial of the Armenian genocide in 1915. After the contentious bill passed in the National Assembly Turkey retaliated by suspending military and political cooperation with Paris.

But France's top constitutional court struck down the bill in February, saying it violated freedom of expression, in a ruling welcomed by Ankara. Sarkozy vowed to launch new legislation but was defeated at the polls first.

During the interview, Davutoglu said he soon would pay an official visit to Paris for talks with French officials. "After the talks on July 5, this stagnation in bilateral ties will hopefully be over," he added. A Turkish foreign ministry diplomat told AFP that whether sanctions against France would be dropped would depend on the upcoming meeting.

Armenian Government Program Approved by Parliament



YEREVAN -- In what amounted to a vote of confidence, the Armenian parliament approved on Thursday a five-year program of government actions submitted by Prime Minister Tigran Sargsian's new cabinet and strongly criticized by the opposition.

In the next five years the government formed by the ruling Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) and its junior coalition partner Orinats Yerkir, in particular, pledges to double the official minimum wage of 32,500 drams (about \$80), create an additional 100,000 jobs, reduce the poverty rate and encourage birthrate.

In his presentation from the parliament tribune Prime Minister Sargsian defended the feasibility of the program, describing it as urgent for the nation.

The National Assembly passed it by 75 votes to 47, with one abstention, after two days of heated debates that exposed new battle lines drawn on the Armenian political scene by the May 6 parliamentary elections.

The document was backed by all deputies representing the ruling Party RPA and Orinats Yerkir Party. The four other parliament factions voted against it. The largest of them represents the Prosperous Armenia Party (PAP), which was part of the ruling coalition until this month.

Vartan Oskanian, a senior PAP lawmaker, emphasized the fact that the PAP and the three other, opposition factions won, according to official election results, more than 50 percent of the vote between them on May 6.

"So the political majority, the true

majority, is against this program," Oskanian told RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am). "I think that the ruling party and the government must take this fact into account. I think they must revise this program because there is huge resistance."

Opposition parliamentarians questioned the government's ambitious socioeconomic targets and pointed to its allegedly poor track record during the debates. Levon Zurabian, the parliamentary leader of the opposition Armenian National Congress (ANC), also gave a political reason for rejecting the program.

"Can a government that rigged 500,000 to 700,000 votes be accountable to the people? No, such a government will be accountable only to corrupt officials, crime figures and oligarchs ... that carried out that vote rigging," Zurabian charged before the parliament vote.

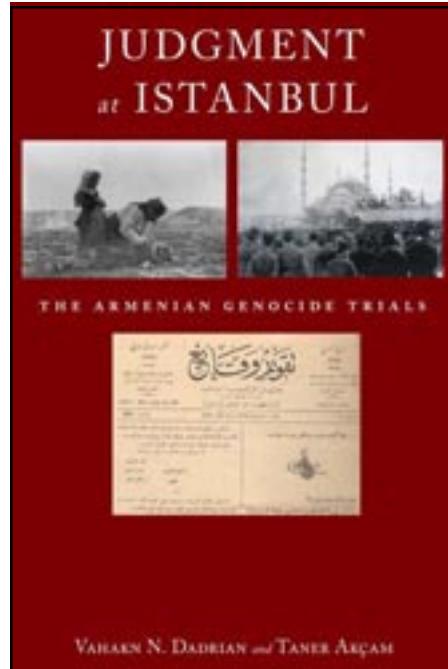
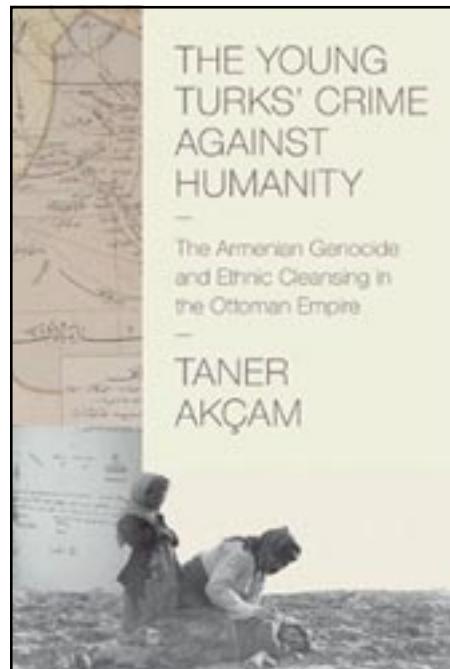
RPA deputies and government ministers hit back at the opposition and especially the PAP. They said the party led by businessman Gagik Tsarukian is also responsible for the state of affairs in Armenia because of having been in government for more than five years.

Education Minister Armen Ashotian argued that PAP representatives ran four ministries that absorb more than one third of government spending. "You must come to terms with the results of the parliamentary elections for the next five years because if we fail you will fail too," Ashotian added, referring to all government opponents in the National Assembly.

Two Book Reviews on Armenian Genocide

The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire By Taner Akçam, ISBN-13-978-0691153339, Princeton University Press, 2012, 483 pp. \$39.50, Kindle edition: ASIN:B007BP3BIU, \$21.73.

Judgment at Istanbul: The Armenian Genocide Trials By Vahakn N. Dadrian and Taner Akçam, ISBN-13-978-0857452511, Zoryan Institute (Berghahn Books), 2011, 363 pp., \$110.00



Reviews by Amb. John M. Evans

These two books are the latest, and perhaps most conclusive, of the many I have read about the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Dr. Taner Akçam's *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2012) constitutes a major breakthrough in our understanding of the social engineering that led to the near destruction of the Armenians of Anatolia, and of the dual-track mechanism for organizing it that the Young Turks employed. *Judgment at Istanbul: The Armenian Genocide Trials* (Zoryan Institute; 2011) co-authored by Akçam and veteran Armenian historian Vahakn Dadrian, gives the English-speaking world, for the first time, the full story of the courts-martial constituted by the Ottoman Government in 1919 to hold to account the perpetrators of the deportations and massacres (seven of the most important of whom had already escaped to safety on a German warship).

Both volumes are a must for serious scholars of the Armenian Genocide, but *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity* is the better value for most readers (*Judgment at Istanbul*, published first in Turkish in 2008, and now in English from Berghahn Books, lists at \$110), although university libraries will want to have both.

Dr. Akçam, a Turkish historian now at Clark, was the first scholar of Turkish origin to recognize the Armenian Genocide; he has made huge contributions to understanding it in his 2004 *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism & the Armenian Genocide and A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (2006) and in innumerable articles and lectures.

A close friend of the Turkish Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, who was assassinated on an Istanbul street in January, 2007, Akçam has himself been the target of death threats, yet he has continued to mine the Ottoman archives,

which he is able to read in the pre-reform script, with jaw-dropping results.

One of his recurring themes is that the Ottoman archives, far from painting a picture at odds with that which is already familiar to scholars of American, German and Austrian documentation, actually confirm the basic facts of the 1915 atrocities. But what Akçam has managed to do, this time by scouring the archives of the Ministry of the Interior (presided over at the time by Talat Pasha), is to bring to light the steady, mechanical and precise nature of the Young Turks' obsession with reducing the Armenian population of Anatolia to 5 to 10 per cent of the population in all localities — a goal that required both forced deportations, carried out with an outward show of legality, and massacres, secretly ordered through special channels and carried out in large part by the Special Organization () and bands of Kurdish marauders.

In a way, Akçam's account is oddly reassuring, as it gets to a basic and banal, if also horrifying, truth: the Turks did not so much loathe the Armenians as view them as competitors in the impending challenge of building a new state, inspired by extreme Turkish nationalism, on the ruins of the defunct Ottoman Empire.

This is not to underestimate the crimes committed, which included rape, forced assimilation and murder, as well as wholesale expropriations of land and property: genocide, in short. But as atrocious as the Young Turks' behavior was, it is somehow more comprehensible in terms of the dark logic of Turkish ultranationalism, and not just as a result of free-floating ethnic or religious hatred. Still, as Akçam shows, the other Christian and non-Turkish populations — Greeks, Assyrians and Kurds — similarly did not fit into this state-building project, but it was the Armenians who were most savagely targeted for annihilation. They clearly were not removed for "wartime necessity," as Akçam demonstrates. In particular, it emerges that the Armenian Reform Agreement (Yeniköy Accord) of 1914, forced on

Foreign Debt is Becoming the Main Actor

By Naira Hayruman

After the parliamentary elections and Tigran Sarkisian's appointment as prime minister, the IMF announced a 500 million loan to Armenia, and the World Bank a 200 million loan. Besides, all these major financial organizations approved the economic policy of the prime minister though they notice some flaws. But loans are issued with the hope that the flaws will be attended to.

All the oppositional parties of Armenia criticized the program of Tigran Sarkisian's government, blamed him for 14% economic decline. The point is that the parties which were formerly conflicting have now united.

The government's program could have been more credible and substantiated, of course. It could have been better but looking from the other side it will look like as if all the four opposition forces have appeared on the other side of the barricade with the international financial institutes. And if we take into account that these institutions, IMF and WB, finance the Western policy, we should note that the pro-Western Heritage and other forces of Armenia are acting against the pro-West policy of the ruling party.

This is a conditional division. Nevertheless, those who intend to have their own candidate for president should realize that they will compete with not only the entire administrative machine headed by Serzh Sarkisian but also the financial policy of the West. In the end, it is not a secret that almost half of the amount of pensions and benefits of Armenia are paid from IMF loans which goes directly to the budget. Imagine what will happen if the IMF suddenly demands back the debt and does not issue the next tranche. Hardly anyone doubts that the IMF and others pursue their own goals in Armenia.

Do the alternative and opposition

the Sultan by the Allies, notably Russia, was viewed by the Young Turks as a major threat — and ultimately did a terrible disservice to the Armenians.

Akçam is very careful not to let his elucidation of the causes of the atrocities be taken as a justification for the Genocide — he does not "blame the victim," — but I expect his work will draw critics to the extent it fails to confirm long-held assumptions, assertions and denials.

Meanwhile, the earlier (and less accessible) book, *Judgment at Istanbul*, painstakingly mines the pages of the *Takvim-i-Vekâyi* (the official organ of the Ottoman Parliament), court records and the Turkish press to demonstrate the sheer scale and broad involvement of Turkish officialdom and society in carrying out the deportations and worse.

Both volumes, to be fair, record also a few exculpatory episodes of Turkish officials who would not go along with the Committee of Union and Progress's murderous plans and paid dearly for their refusal to obey orders. When the Ottoman courts-martial targeted Mustafa Kemal (the future Atatürk), not for genocide, but for mutiny, he ultimately responded by tearing down the 800-year-old dynasty at the head of the nationalist movement that launched the War of Independence and created the Republic of Turkey. While Atatürk was not di-

parties think on this situation? What can they propose instead and why haven't they done it yet? Will the Heritage appear in the "anti-West" camp?

Actually, foreign debt is becoming an almost decisive factor in Armenia. "Thanks" to it Serzh Sarkisian despite pressure did not dismiss Tigran Sarkisian and announced himself a pro-West leader. What else does Armenia have? It is already in debt. Only Tigran Sarkisian seems to "enjoy" this who ensured guarantees of keeping office.

In this case, it is not so important which path should be chosen by Armenia, a pro-West or pro-Russian. It is not even important which of these ways is more progressive because by and large we are found to have no choice due to foreign debt. Just as Serzh Sarkisian does not have any choice. And we are drifting to the West not because it is closer to our civilization but because of someone's fault who pushed us into a huge debt.

What is done with the countries that have large debts? We see the example of Greece and many other countries. At some point they are forced to privatize all national property, and when they resist, they tear off their skin.

The opposition should request clarification from the prime minister and president why the "light" version of the debt was chosen instead of developing the economy. Such claims have already been heard but for now debts are treated as "shortcoming" of Tigran Sarkisian but, in fact, Sarkisian is the "product" of the external debt bondage.

Of course, it's too late to do something because the money has been borrowed and spent but if an open public debate is launched on this account, including in Parliament, you can try to determine the level of impact of this factor in the choice of RA and may neutralize it.

rectly involved in the 1915 genocide (the term "a shameful act" is his), many of his confrères in building the new Turkish state were, and the pattern of official denial was set early on. With less than two years to go until the centenary, much will yet be written, but I doubt as much light will be shed as by these two valuable volumes.

All students of the Armenian Genocide owe Taner Akçam and Vahakn Dadrian a great debt for their persistent and systematic scholarship over the years against very heavy headwinds, including the outright hostility of certain states.

John M. Evans, a career Foreign Service Officer who served as the U.S. Ambassador to Armenia from 2004 to 2006, stirred controversy in February 2005 by publicly dissenting from the policy of the Bush Administration on the 90-year-old issue of the Armenian Genocide. A native of Williamsburg, VA, educated at Yale and Columbia, Evans served in Tehran, Prague, Moscow, Brussels (NATO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, St. Petersburg and Washington, reaching the rank of Minister-Counselor. He lives in Washington, DC.

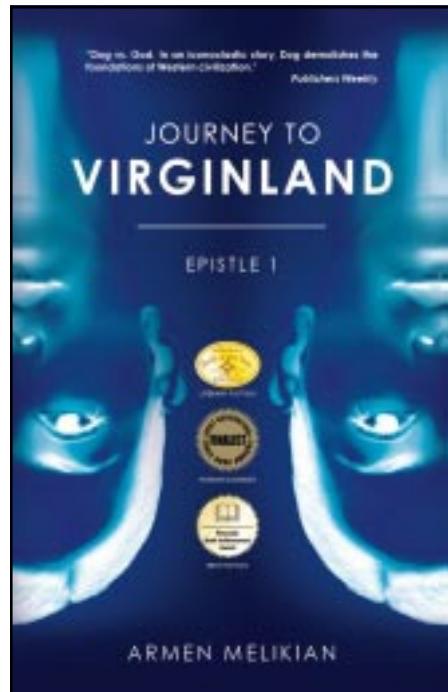
Source: American Diplomacy

Armen Melikian: Journey to Virginland

Reviewed by Author
William Michaelian

As with all books that question social, cultural, and religious mores, Armen Melikian's Journey to Virginland is certain to offend some readers. For the most part, what has been handed down in the form of beliefs and customs goes unexamined, and is embraced as a matter of convenience, identity, and survival. Therefore it takes an open-minded individual to accept the author on his own terms, and to listen without feeling the need to argue with him or change him in any way - in other words, to go ahead and enter his vision or dream. It is not necessary for the two of them to agree. Only madmen are unwilling to entertain the possibility that they do not know everything - madmen, and those whose lives have taught them to be wary, jealous, bitter, competitive, and afraid.

There is, of course, another side of the matter: namely, how well - how inventively, imaginatively, effectively - does Journey to Virginland meet the demands of literature? And equally important, does it live up to and transcend its own demands, and ultimately surprise its author? Because if the writer is beyond surprise, and therefore unable to laugh at himself, his readers will sense it from the beginning. A book that is merely clever and cunning will appeal only to clever and



cunning readers. A book that is human, on the other hand, is apt to be treated as a worthy document, friend, and companion.

So what kind of book is this? Most assuredly, Journey to Virginland possesses the requisite humor that serious art must possess if it is also to be human. Likewise, we find in it a compelling sense of urgency: in essence, the time to think and act is now, because nothing less than our self-understanding is at stake:

The choices are literally between transcendence and self-destruction, even through revolt. And as long

as there are oppressors in the world of men, the fake currency of saviors will be in high demand.

Ethnicity, nations, religions, politics are, in effect, surface phenomena; we need to dig deeper than that, to the heart of things, and this book, at turns feverish and poetic, and always refreshingly unapologetic, leads us in that direction. Satire and wordplay flow freely in this outsider's narrative, this twenty-first century life of the artist as a young dog. To the degree that they are obstacles, they yet serve as their own kind of visual-rhythmic accompaniment. After all, as a cursory glance at old English texts reveals, language is a living, changing thing. And so to a degree, conventional meaning is both transitory and a drug. To

rely on it exclusively is to be defined by words themselves, and to be enslaved by them. The danger becomes even greater when we approach the old religious texts. Venerable, hoary institutions, beware.

Ultimately, there is no need to compare this novel, or anti-novel, to other books. To those widely read, several will suggest themselves. Melikian is obviously among that number, and cannot believe his work is without influence or predecessor. But Journey to Virginland is different enough, energetic enough, challenging enough, and informative enough to carry its own weight. In the end, Armen Melikian has not only written this book; I think it has written, and will go on writing, him.

European Court Fines Yerevan

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Armenian service (Azatutyun.am). "I could have been released pending trial because I had no criminal record, I hadn't gone on the run."

Malkhasian said he is satisfied with the amount of financial compensation set by the European court as he thinks he has scored a "moral victory" against the Armenian authorities. "These damages should be paid not by the state but the judge who sentenced me," he said.

Malkhasian added that he now expects a court ruling on his second

lawsuit lodged with the Strasbourg court. It challenges the fairness and legality of the two-year prison sentence which the politician, now affiliated with the opposition Armenian National Congress (HAK), served in full.

The authorities in Yerevan have already been fined by the European Court of Human Rights for controversially jailing other opposition members in the past. The court is expected to rule in the coming years on the equally controversial imprisonment of dozens of other oppositionists in the wake of Armenia's disputed February 2008 presidential election.

penalise abuses of the elections process by state officials.

3. Continue to make the fight against corruption a state priority by prosecuting officials involved in fraud.

4. Pass a new Criminal Procedure Code that strengthens the independence of the judiciary, increases the role of the defence and decreases the prosecutor general's powers; and improve the effectiveness of the Administrative Court to hold officials accountable.

5. Increase financial support for the office of the ombudsman, especially its activities in the regions.

6. Establish civilian control and accountability of the police; tackle corruption in the force; and consider establishing a ministry to which the police would be subordinate.

7. Redouble efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan and maintain an open approach to resuming a dialogue with Turkey.

To the U.S., EU and international organisations:

8. Offer technical and financial assistance to help the government address voter registration problems, especially bloated voters lists, which undermine public trust in elections.

9. Support aggressive judicial reform programs linked to the setting of benchmarks for implementation of the "strategic action plan 2012-2016" and passage of a new Criminal Procedure Code.

10. Increase funding to non-state actors to support re-form; and hold the government accountable for any backsliding from progress achieved during the 2012 parliamentary vote regarding media access and freedom of assembly and expression.

An Opportunity for Statesmanship

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The Armenian National Congress (ANC), led by the first post-independence president, Levon Ter-Petrosian, returned to parliament after a more than ten-year absence. Nevertheless, many old problems reappeared: abuse of administrative resources; inflated voters lists; vote-buying; lack of sufficient redress for election violations; and reports of multiple voting and pressure on some voters. Reforms adopted after the violence that left ten dead and 450 injured following the 2008 election that brought Sargsyan to power were spottily implemented.

It is crucial that the February 2013 election in which Sarkisian will seek a second term, becomes "the cleanest elections in Armenian history", as the president had promised, not least because polls show very low trust in nearly all government bodies and institutions, including the presidency and parliament. The president initially took some bold steps, most noteworthy attempting to normalise relations with Turkey. A new class of under-40 technocrats, less influenced by Soviet ways of decision-making, has risen through the ranks and is widely seen as favouring a new style of government. But change has been slow. Political courage is needed to overhaul a deeply entrenched system in which big business and politics are intertwined in a manner that is often at least opaque. This manifests itself most vividly through the domination of much of the economy by a small group of rich businessmen with government connections.

The political crisis after the 2008 post-election violence, as well as the 2009 world economic crisis, shook Armenia. Weak political will and the resistance of vested interests muted many of the long-overdue, if timid, reforms the administration started. The economy consequently remains undiversified, unhealthily reliant on remittances. Rates of emigration and seasonal migration abroad are alarmingly high. There have been few serious efforts to combat high-level corruption. The executive branch still enjoys overwhelming, virtually unchecked powers. The judicial system is perceived as neither independent nor competent: the prosecutor dominates procedures, and mechanisms to hold authorities accountable are largely ineffective.

Media freedom is inadequate. Outright harassment of journalists and media outlets has decreased, but there is still a glaring lack of diversity in television, from which an overwhelming majority of Armenians get their information. No nationwide broadcasters are regarded as fully independent.

Russia remains Armenia's key ally – both its main security guarantor and biggest trading and investment partner. Because of the war with Azerbaijan and frozen ties with Turkey, Yerevan has few realistic alternatives to Moscow, though it has frequently sought a "multi-vector" foreign policy and deeper ties with Euro-Atlantic partners. The EU and U.S. are trying to increase their influence, offering expertise and other aid to promote reforms, but they should do more to keep the government accountable and encourage the building of demo-

cratic institutions, especially if they want to be seen as credible, even-handed critics throughout the region with elections also due in Georgia and Azerbaijan in 2012-2013. Twenty years after the breakup of the Soviet Union, peaceful democratic transitions of power have yet to become the norm in the South Caucasus.

President Sarkisian and his government acknowledge many of the most pressing problems, but numerous reforms exist only on paper or seem deliberately designed with ineffective enforcement mechanisms. The cautious, evolutionary approach to reforms provides at best weak stability. The breakup of the Republican-Prosperous Armenia governing coalition and a more competitive parliament may now provide the stimulus the administration needs. Limping towards change, however, would neither capitalise on Armenia's strengths nor be a good presidential campaign strategy. The country needs a better future than a stunted economy and dead-end conflicts with neighbours.

Recommendations

To further democratisation, economic growth and reform and make the government better prepared to engage in difficult discussions with Azerbaijan over resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

To the Government of Armenia:

1. Make deep governance and economic reforms a top priority to build public trust in state institutions.

2. Address the shortcomings of the electoral process identified by the International Election Observation (IEO) mission; improve, in particular, voter lists and the complaints and appeals procedure; and investigate and



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