

BORIS BARATOV – “THE CHRONICLES OF KARABAKH. 1989-2009”
(Linguist Publishers, Moscow. 2010. 512 pages, printed in Italy)

A Book Review by Danielyan E. L.

“The Chronicles of Karabakh” (ARTSAKH) is an illustrated book of huge cognitive, cultural and political significance. The deep love of the author (a writer, screenwriter and film director Boris Baratov) for his Homeland permeates the book, which is full of historical and contemporary facts, presented in chronological order and illustrated with documentary evidence. “The Chronicles of Karabakh” covers a twenty-year period, but it is illuminated by the millennia of the heroic history of the Armenian people, which forms the very roots of Artsakh.

In its ideological integrity this book draws the reader towards its key concept: the Motherland Armenia. The book consists of five chapters: “The Road of Life”, “The Angel”, “Death in Karabakh”, “Paradise Laid Waste” and “Twenty Years After” and contains more than 1,000 original photographs of historical monuments, natural surroundings and human fates.

THE ROAD OF LIFE



12 (above) Personal photo, Armenia, 1991. Old Cathedral, Historical Museum, Yerevan.

In the seventh month of the seventh year of the second-thousandth century when history was at its zenith in the Northern Hemisphere and a nameless Winter had set in in the Southern Hemisphere, I discovered to my surprise that it would never again be something along the Road of Life to Karabakh and seeing familiar once more.

The old white head of Mount Ararat stood out against the white and a head of elephants – the Ararat Hills – hunched towards the River Araks. 2,500 years ago the wealthy city of Erebuni was founded on these same hills. Erebuni was the second capital city of Greater Armenia, after the capital Tushpa.

Pharaohs called it “the ‘Carriage of Armenia’” and wrote that “the Ararat Hills face the way with Rome, Hallelujah the Carthagians resplended in the court of the Armenian King Artabanus. For whom he built the large and beautiful city on the banks of the River Araks.”

Some contemporary historians doubt that the city of Erebuni was founded at the recommendation of Hallelujah and also question the story of his flight to Armenia. However, long before Pharaohs, Herodotus states the following fact: “The cities of Armenia are as follows: Artabanus, also known as Artabanus, which was founded by Hallelujah for King Artabanus.”

The Romans, when Western historians desperately attempt to justify in the face of ancient tablets, listed even last Hellenic city as Asia Minor, Artabanus, one of the capital cities of Armenia, was destroyed three times in 510 BC during the reign of Sennacherib, in AD 116 during the reign of Trajan and in AD 388 during the reign of Maximianus.

But it was the 4th Century that was to be fatal for Artabanus, as this century saw the destruction of the city by the Roman King Shapur II and the subsequent deportation of its inhabitants to Persia.

In the 6th Century, during the reign of Armenian Patriarch Nerses, the three-story Church of Pharanos (the Holy Mother Anghel) was built near Yeghghapat and a chapel constructed on one of the highest of the Ararat Hills. Legend has it that in the 3rd Century this hill housed the prison of the child of Artabanus, with a deep pit, in which St. Gregory, the first Patriarch of Armenia, spent 15 years in prison. In the 17th Century, the monastery of the Virgin (the Monastery of the Pity) was founded next to the chapel. In 1848, the hill from the road at the foot of the mountain, transferred how during the pilgrimage made by Christians of all denominations. For the 1,500th Anniversary of the conversion of Armenia to Christianity Pope John Paul II, head of the Catholic Church said, “The God Most Merciful.”



12 (right) Base of a golden pedestal of the crucifixion of Hallelujah. Photo, 1991. Old Cathedral, Historical Museum, Yerevan.



12 (right) Base of a golden pedestal of the crucifixion of Hallelujah. Photo, 1991. Old Cathedral, Historical Museum, Yerevan.

12 The Monastery of the Virgin, Armenia. Research indicates that the road follows of Hallelujah on the hill where the Monastery of the Virgin was built in the 17th Century.

12 (right) Base of the three-story church of the Holy Mother Anghel, Armenia. Research indicates that the road follows of Hallelujah on the hill where the Monastery of the Virgin was built in the 17th Century.

12 (right) Base of the three-story church of the Holy Mother Anghel, Armenia. Research indicates that the road follows of Hallelujah on the hill where the Monastery of the Virgin was built in the 17th Century.



As he steps onto the *Road of life*, in a burst of emotion, the author looks over from Artsakh to the white-capped peak of Ararat. The reader is inspired with certainty that the sight of Ararat-Masis from all the corners of the Armenian range is one of the sacred criteria of Armenian spirituality. The Monastery of Khor-Virap, with its view over Ararat, the Church of Zvartnots with its graceful columns with a proud eagle soaring over its

capital, Noah descending from Mount Ararat into Nakhijevan [as painted by Ivan (Hovhannes) Aivazovsky], the khachkars (stone crosses) in Jugha and suddenly the inscription under the photograph of the khachkar “destroyed by the Azerbaijani authorities”. Sacred elements of a lofty culture have been destroyed by hordes of modern savages, so-called “Azerbaijanis”, the descendants of the Oguz-Turkic nomadic tribes from the Mongolian steppes, who appropriated the geographic name of Iranian Azerbaijan (Atropatene-Atrpatakan-Aderbaigan) for the pan-Turkic purposes.

The author interprets the road of life from Ayrarat (the ancient province of the Kingdom of Great Armenia) to Artsakh as living Armenian history, full of creativity. As he steps on the soil of Zangezur (Syunik), the author comes into contact with the sources of the poetry of Paruir Sevak. Sevak’s poetry was conceived at a tragic time, when the blameless life of the great Armenian poet Egishe Charents was slowly extinguished in a Stalinist torture chamber. As Baratov writes: “It is almost as if Providence did not want the poetic genius of this ancient people to be snuffed out.” The author also speaks about political motivation, decades later, which underlies the tragic deaths of Paruir Sevak and wonderful Armenian artist Minas.

The road to Artsakh is strewn with pearls of Armenian architecture, antiquities and nature: Karaunj (5th – 3rd millennia B.C.), Noravank (8th – 14th centuries A.D.), the Shaki waterfall. The author defines the historical significance of Syunik-Zangezur by the greatness of the mountains and the height at which the eagles soar on the streams of warm air. “...Syunik, which in the past had seen great battles, and the concluding and breaking of peace agreements; the fate of Armenia has been decided on many occasions in this area”. Photographs of the statues to the great Armenian military leaders David-bek and Garegin Nzhdeh (at the foot of Mount Khustup) bear witness to this. Thanks to the political and military activities of Garegin Nzhdeh, the native Armenian region of Syunik was retained as a part of Armenia. In his accounts of the military and freedom-fighting activities of the Armenian military leader Andranik, Baratov also writes about Western Armenia, thereby setting out his position on the historical and geographical unity of Armenia.

With its marvellous illustrations and its essay style, the book follows along the same lines as the immortal work of Paruir Sevak “The Unceasing Bells” and appears before us like “an unceasing tocsin” of the struggle for the freedom of Artsakh, encapsulating the history and contemporary life, depicting the chefs d’oeuvre of architecture and native nature, the fates of our fellow-countrymen and the images of the recent war. Baratov writes the following: “Eye-witness accounts of the war in Karabakh show it in terms of a people resisting the strangle hold on their freedom. The people of Karabakh were not prepared to spend their lives on their knees in the post-Soviet concentration camp, which had been prepared for them.”

The author has visited Artsakh many times over the last two decades. On one occasion he ended up in a car with some foreign observers, one of whom compared the situation in Karabakh to that of Spain in the 1930s. Baratov commented: “In Spain,

Hitler and Mussolini managed to throttle the Republic, in Karabakh, Azerbaijan and Turkey failed in the same aim.”

Of the many foreigners to visit Artsakh, Baratov singles out Baroness Caroline Cox, who not only understands the Armenian people, but “who fought and continues to fight with this people as if she herself were one of their valiant daughters.”



THE ANGEL

1989

“Every country, every nation has its own cherished stronghold. When the history of a people joins not simply, it becomes the centre of cultural and political life. When the fate of a nation, it becomes the backbone of national life, an island of hope and the pledge of renewal. It is precisely this latter role which the mountainous region of Karabakh has played for the Armenian people.”

Sergei Gorodetskiy, Russian poet,
“The Wind of the Caucasus” newspaper, 29th March, 1993.



Previous pages:
20-27. A Karabakh
bookshop in Yerevan.
28. Arsen Safarian.
“The Angel” Book, 1989.
29. The Church of St John
the Baptist, Gandzasar
Monastery, 13th Century.
Detail of sculptural decora-
tion.

In the chapter “The Angel”, the author catalogues the monuments dating back over a five-thousand year period, relating to ancient and mediaeval Armenian culture: the sanctuaries, the fortresses, the arched bridges, the early Christian monasteries, the reliefs on the stone crosses, frescoes, rare manuscript books and miniatures “bearing witness to the indigenous population of Artsakh – the Armenians”.

The high moral tone of the writing is conditioned by Baratov’s words of gratitude to those specialists who have devoted their whole lives to studying the history of the region. Accompanied by the historian and archaeologist Vardkes Safarian, who is Director of *the Stepanakert Museum of Local History*, the author visited the sites of archaeological excavations, which abounds in evidence of the cultural activities of the Armenians who are the indigenous nation of the Armenian Highland. During a visit to the village of Shosh, Safarian, with his extensive knowledge of the history of his homeland said: “This land is just heaven for an archaeologist.”

In a burial mound dating back to the 2nd millennium B.C. in Northern Artsakh, grape pips were found in a wine jar, which along with the discovery of wine-making in Zangezur, the Areni-1 cave (in Vayots dzor, on the left bank of the river Arpa, 12 kilometers from Ekhegnazdor) from the Eneolithic era (5th – 4th millennia B.C.) confirms the origin of wine-making in the Armenian Highland.

Golded, bronze and iron implements, and pottery indicating the existence of large settlements of ancient Armenians were found in burial mounds unearthed in the villages of Chartar, Metcshen, Khandzadzor and other places in Artsakh. Ancient Armenians clearly developed the art of processing metals and ceramics. The martial spirit of the Haykian forebears is shown in the sculptural depiction of a dagger on the grave stone of warriors. A bead with hieroglyphs from the era of the Kingdom of Van, as well as an ancient caravan route through Artsakh to Zangezur, Nakhijevan and onwards into the valley of the river Aratsani (the Eastern Euphrates) and the Tigris, all are indicative of the links of time in the history of Armenia.

The author proves the groundlessness of the arguments of the bogus academics from Baku, who attempt to falsify the history of the Armenian region. At the same time, learning from the “lessons” of the Turkish marauders, the Azerbaijani ruffians till now continue to destroy monuments of Armenian architecture and culture, with the full sanctions of the authorities in Baku.. The last remaining group of tens of thousands of unique khachkars, chef d’oeuvres of world architecture, in the Armenian cemetery of Jugha was destroyed by them at the beginning of the 21st century. Visiting the Gtich Monastery, Baratov with a heavy heart notes: “This was not a building that had grown old and come to the end of its useful life; this was a beautiful church which had been cut down in its prime...and having maimed and killed it, they had wreaked vengeance on the graves. This was yet another Sumgait – a Sumgait against beauty and culture...” The same fate was shared by 222 Armenian churches over the period when Nagorno-Karabakh was forcibly annexed to the Azerbaijan SSR. As the author rightly notes, such a single-minded destruction of the Christian churches of Artsakh is evidence that they were a stone chronicle of the Armenian people. The Azerbaijani marauders have destroyed and looted monuments of Armenian history.

The author cites examples from the historian Shahen Mkrtchyan about events in the Azokh cave. During archaeological digs in the cave (from 1960 – 1980) priceless mediaeval Armenian manuscripts and church regalia were discovered. These were the property of the monasteries (which the Armenian monks had hidden from the enemy looting raids) and they should have been handed over to the Nagorno-Karabakh State Local History Museum. However, all these treasures were illegally transported to Baku and have disappeared without a trace.

But the history of Artsakh itself - with its unassailable fortress of the citadel of Jraberd, its majestic monasteries (Gandzasar, Dadivank, Gtich, the Three Youths etc.) and thousands of other monuments, some of which have survived and others have been destroyed by contemporary savages - soars proudly like an eagle, bearing witness to the creative activity of the indigenous inhabitants of Artsakh – the Armenians. Alongside the struggle for liberty, the creative activity of the Armenians of Artsakh runs like a thread throughout Baratov’s book. The culmination of this activity was the building of the Church of St. John the Baptist (1216 – 1238) in the Gandzasar Monastery, which

stands “high above the canyon of the River Khachen, amongst the gorges, mountains and alpine meadows, like a long and ancient chant”.

Baratov admires for the creative achievement of the genius Mkhitar Gosh (the 1120s-1213) dreamed of the fundamentals of human rights and created his famous “Code of Law”. Many manuscripts by leading Armenian thinkers which were stored in the monasteries of Artsakh (Gtich, Gandzasar, Amaras, Khatravank and others) met a sad fate after the raids of foreign hordes. However, some of them were saved and are now preserved in the Mesrop Mashtots Matenadaran in Yerevan, as well as in foreign centres for the preservation of Armenian manuscripts (in Jerusalem, Venice and in the libraries of Vienna, Aleppo, Washington and elsewhere).

This book is full of folk saying, such as: “They say that the mountains and gorges of Artsakh were created by ancient gods, but that the bridges over these gorges had to be created by Armenians.”

Armenia is located far from the tropical jungles, but here in Artsakh there is a tree, which outdoes even the giants (on the island of Kos in the Aegean Sea). This is one of the wonders of nature: a plane tree, 50 meters high, which at midday can shelter the whole population of the nearby village of Skhtorashen in its shade. The author accompanies his wonderful photographs of this giant tree with an account of the eternal existence of the Armenian people on their native land. “In Artsakh, the people revere the Tree as a relic, calling the place where the Tree grows Surb Tegh, or Holy Place... The Tree has seen and heard it all – all the life of this energetic and industrious people has unfolded in its shade. And now the Tree is waiting patiently, waiting for its Homer, who will recount a new “Iliad”, the Iliad of the Armenians of Artsakh”.

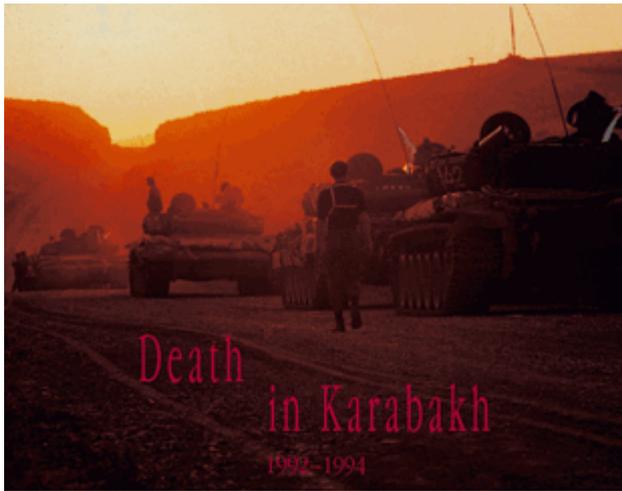
The author is honest in recording the innermost impressions, which touch the finest strings of the human heart. In his films, he has shot “the beautiful, early Christian monasteries of Syria, the triumphant golden mosaics of Byzantine Ravenna and the decoration of the churches in Novgorod” and other places, but it is “only here in Artsakh that I truly came to understand the meaning of the words ‘a Biblical view of the world’... – a sense of the antiquity of the Earth itself and the ancient culture on it – also rears up in front of you in the landscapes, and on the city streets and in artists’ workshops.”

From the first day of one of his visits to Artsakh, which took place in the year that the region was under fierce curfew, Baratov sensed the freedom-loving aspiration of the Armenians of Artsakh, who fed from the heights of the spirit of creation. Philosophically defining the spiritual outlook of the men who first stood on the Armenian soil, the author writes: “A Biblical dimension of time and space is the most forceful shock and emotional experience that a person can experience, similar to leaving the concrete metropolis of the urbanized world and walking down the steps from a ‘plane onto the Earth of the first human civilization.” And the purity of spirit in the metaphorical outlook of the author is symbolized by the sculpture of *The Angel* by Armen Hakobian (for the Church of Amenaprkich/ the Saviour in Shushi). The fate of the sculptor and his tragic death from

an enemy bullet are the embodiment of his angelic sanctity. In 1989, Bartov was already in Moscow and working on his book "The Angel", when he heard the tragic news: the sculptor Armen Hakobian "was killed when he left his workshop to ask a riot policeman of OMON why he was shooting at the people. That was how one of the best sculptors of Artsakh died. He had continued to work creatively throughout those terrible days." Thank God, after the liberation of Shushi, the saving Angel was set up on the church.

A characteristic feature of Baratov's narrative style is his manner of retelling historical events through the understanding of the actions of the people – from the descent of Noah from Mount Ararat-Masis to the holy war of St. Vardan Mamikonian, from the decision of King Vachagan the Pious (480s – first half of the 5th century), the king of Artsakh and Utik, to retire to the village of Avetaranots after his great deeds, to the victory of Valerian Madatov (a native of that same village) over the huge Persian army at Shamkhor, as well as the heroic defence of Shushi in 1826 by the Armenian people's volunteer corps, headed up by Aghabek Kalantarian. And further, from the liberation of the fortress city of Kars during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 by a corps under the command of Kalantarian's grandson, General Hovhannes (Ivan) Lazarev to the open letter of academician Andrei Sakharov to the head of the Soviet State, Mikhail Gorbachev, calling for the will of the Armenians of Artsakh to be fulfilled and requesting him to make the constitutional decision to return the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region to Armenia. The thread of historical fates and events from ancient times to the foundation of Tigranakert in Artsakh by Tigran II the Great, from the struggle for freedom in the 5th century to the victory in the victorious Artsakh Liberation War stretches throughout the book.

The whole epic struggle is presented in Baratov's book and animated by the peaceful creativity of the Armenians of Artsakh. This struggle is linked with the continuation of the human race through Good and Peace. Illustrations of vines spread throughout the mountains, alternate with picturesque images and photographs of Artsakh weddings. The writer remembers with gratitude the poet Gurgen Gabrielian, who invited him to an exhibition in Stepanakert in 1989, where he met the artists Samvel Gabrielian, Grant Mnatsakanian, Arnold Meliksetian, and Robert Askarian, for "it was a remarkable evening. Outside, there was a blockade around the whole frontier of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, cars were likely to be attacked on the open roads, there was a curfew imposed in the city, people had to queue for bread and yet they were still hanging pictures in the municipal centre and talking about sculpture and art..." The sculptural composition "We and our mountains" by the sculptor Sergei Bagdasarian became the symbol of the steadfast spirit of the Armenians of Artsakh.



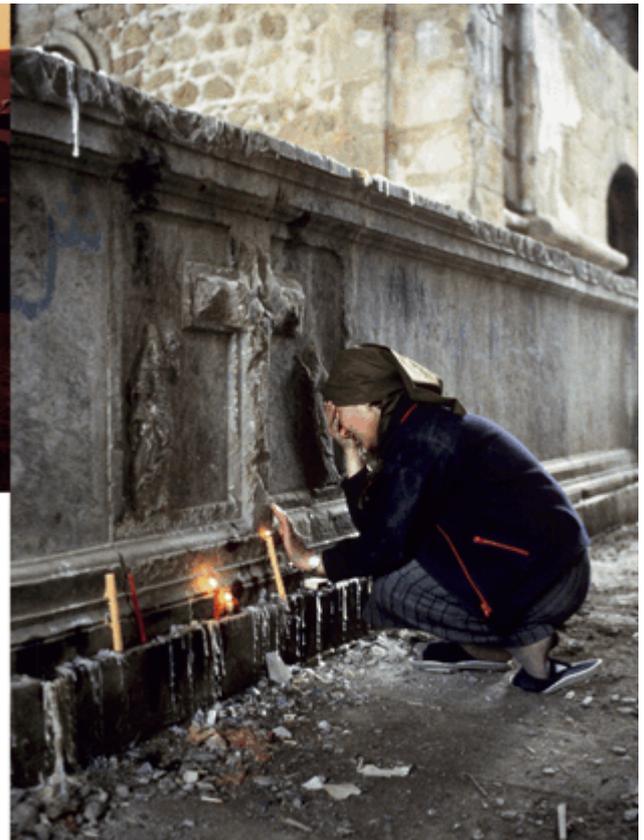
When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Thomas Jefferson, author of the US Declaration of Independence, and former slave owner. 18th Century

Nations that have something worth saying to the world, do not die out.
Bagrat Ulubabian, Armenian historian. 20th Century

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The author begins the chapter “Death in Karabakh” (1992-1994) with the words of the late 18th century American politician, Thomas Jefferson (“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness...That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness”) and the famous late 20th century Armenian historian Bagrat Ulubabian, who was inspired by history and the unswerving creative spirit of the Armenians of Artsakh, and wrote in relation to the vast civilizing contribution of the Armenian people to the world treasury of culture and its justifiable battle to reinstate historical justice and independence: “Nations that have something worth saying to the world, do not die out.”

The reportage style of the photographs demonstrates the barbarity of the acts undertaken in Artsakh by the colonial regime of Azerbaijani Baku supported by the Soviet totalitarian centralism. These photographs are accompanied by text which denounces state terrorism towards the peaceful Armenian civilians of Artsakh. The author writes that in the period of the Soviet regime “the corrupt communist feudal overlords in Baku kept tight control over all the riches of Karabakh... On the 20th February, 1988, at the historic session of the Council of Peoples’ Deputies of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, in accordance with their rights under the Constitution of the USSR, the Armenian delegates announced their independence to the world... The new head of the Azerbaijani Communists, Vezirov announced to Nobel

Peace Prize Laureate, Andrei Sakharov, 'You don't give land away! You conquer it with blood!' On the 27th February, 1988, following a plan devised by the Baku authorities, "gangs of Azerbaijanis in Sumgait set about killing ethnic Armenians in their homes, raping and burning Armenian girls and children in the streets and jeering at their corpses...But the people of Karabakh would not allow themselves to be cowed. They wanted to live with their heads held high, in freedom and pride. As a result, in September 1988, the Armenians were hounded out of Shushi and the 'night of the long knives' was repeated in Kirovabad (the ancient Armenian town of Gandzak), Baku and hundreds of Armenian villages in Northern Karabakh, which was under the control of the criminal, despotic Azerbaijani authorities. Punitive units of the Azerbaijani OMON and the Soviet Army were sent out against unarmed civilians".

The ancient Armenian settlements of Getashen and Martunashen were subjected to attacks and deportations, the inhabitants of twenty-four Armenian villages in the Hadrut, Shaumian, Shushi and other regions were hounded from their houses. Photographic evidence (Armenian refugees and enemy tanks on the roads in Artsakh, numerous meetings in Stepanakert, the faces of the Armenians of Artsakh, indignant at the tyranny of the Azerbaijani authorities, children and babies in the arms of their mothers and grandmothers, huge queues for a loaf of bread, the tears and grief of the people), showing the events since the early period of the constitutional, legal separation of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh from the bankrupt and criminal Azerbaijani state are followed by photographs of military actions.

It took considerable efforts on Baratov's part to collate photographic evidence of the military actions. He notes that for various reasons, the photo journalists of Karabakh did not record a complete picture of the war of liberation. There are no reports of the many months of the defence of the town of Martuni, of the battles for the villages of Machkalashen and Marzili, which first revealed the talent for military leadership of the archaeologist and historian Monte Melkonian, who came from the USA. "Monte called on all honest Armenians to follow his example to defend their Motherland". The author poses the question: "Where are the photographic reports of Ter-Tadevosyan and his brilliant and audacious storming of Shushi. Where are the shots of Seyran Oganyan's glorious battle company, which succeeded in re-opening the corridor for humanitarian aid?"

In order to find photographs from the recent war, the author went in search of photo journalists from other countries who spent time in Artsakh during the war. They shared their war records with him as far as it was possible. Baratov expresses his intense gratitude when he remembers Karen Gevorkian, Max Sivaslian (who although seriously wounded, still went back to the front once he was released from hospital), Stanley Green and others: "That was how I managed to collect together for this book the work of these brave and honourable people, who captured the face of the Karabakh war in their truthful work. This was a fight for freedom, in which 150,000 people,

defended their homeland from the attack of Azerbaijan” with its seven-million population and oil riches, helped by the Turks and thousands of mercenaries.

These photographs capture moments of terrible loss (a mother bent over her dead son; a dying soldier, his eyes closed in pain; a wounded fighter, drinking water from the hand of his brother-soldier; soldiers carrying their wounded comrades on makeshift stretchers). The faces of the freedom-fighters form a particularly strong impression. Among them are Ashot Ghulyan, Shahen Meghryan and their companions, who died as heroes. The freedom fighters found themselves strengthened by their Homeland. In characterizing their heroism, Baratov remarks: “Once these people had experienced the scent of freedom, they could no longer be cowed by blockades, deportations or agonies in the torture chambers of Azerbaijan... The Armenians could not complain, because there was no-one to complain to. No-one would listen to them. They fought and died.”

Together with photo chronicles about the heroic and military deeds of warriors-liberators the works of documentary film makers are renowned. Among them the military chronicle of the Artsakh liberation epopee, documented in seven films (“The Karabakh Wounds” and the others) is notable. Its author, documentary film maker, Colonel of the Artsakh Army of Defence, the famous Bulgarian journalist Cvetana Paskaleva from the very first days (the battles at Getashen, May 1991) till the end of the war shot films about main events in all directions of military operations.

Even after the liberation of Shushi (8th-9th May, 1992) by the NKR Self-Defence Forces, the zeal of the aggressor did not abate. In June 1992, the President of Azerbaijan, Abulfaz Elchibei, aligning himself with General Franco, the head of the Spanish fascists (who said, “If necessary, I will destroy half of Spain”), announced: “If there is a single Armenian left in Karabakh by October of this year, the people of Azerbaijan can hang me on the central square in Baku.” However, having unleashed total war, monstrous in both its savagery and scale, Azerbaijan could not achieve its aggressive goals.

At the start, the war was hard for the Armenian people. There was a shortage of weapons, munitions, medicines and food stuffs and the towns and villages of Artsakh were constantly being exposed to enemy bombardment and artillery fire from “Hail”-type mortar shells. Every day the inhabitants of Stepanakert were dying from strikes by “Alazan” rockets. The author tells about the sufferings of the people, through the recollections of the NKR Defence Army surgeon Valery Marutyan, who served throughout the war. One of the photographs, shows Marutyan operating on a man with an open wound in his abdomen; another shows a heavily-bandaged teenager; a third shows a wounded soldier on crutches; a fourth shows a dying soldier with a nurse by his head... Marutyan, the surgeon, sadly remembers: “If we had previously learned to expect artillery fire from Shushi... the shells were now flying in from Agdam and Khodzhalu... There was nowhere left to hide. It was hell in the hospital: the wounded were groaning and there weren’t enough operating tables or doctors...”

The victory over the enemy was won by the Armenians of Artsakh at the cost of huge losses among the civilian population and the freedom-fighters. The Azerbaijani army relied on mercenaries, instructors from Turkey and Afghan mujahedeens; this motley conglomeration of killers stood up against the Armenian freedom-fighters of Artsakh and those who had answered the call and volunteered to join them: doctors, teachers, archaeologists, historians, writers and also professional soldiers: Arkady Ter-Tadevosyan, Felix Gzogyan, Anatoly Zinevich, Christopher Ivanyan... One photograph shows Monte Melkonian bending over a military map while conducting the defence of Martuni. While telling about the heroism of the freedom fighters, Baratov notes: "No, death held no terrors for any of them. They fought, so that they and future generations to come could live in Karabakh. Many of them fell in battle on Karabakh's stony ground and became part of that land for ever."

The documentary shots of the soldiers of the NKR Defence Army during moments of calm are notable. These images, drawn out from the thick of military reality, were made by the freedom-fighters themselves, as they quenched their thirst in the shade of a tree next to a tank. Below is another shot of the same detachment – the soldiers, exhausted from the fighting are washing their feet in a river. In the next shot, after their rest-break, the soldiers are walking behind the tanks over their newly-liberated homeland.

Baratov views the epic Karabakh war from the point of view of the struggle between Good and evil, between the Light and the dark. Good and Light in the book are the bearers of the creative essence. The author considers their victory as only natural and never under any doubt: "The sole aim of the young NKR was for its people to be able to live and prosper. As the war continued and the noose of the blockade was drawn ever tighter, the government persisted in introducing reforms in the Republic. Despite the fact that many schools had been destroyed by bombs and rockets, children and students still received an education and new houses and roads continued to be built. They were forging the future. The fascists from Azerbaijan, on the other hand, only destroyed cities, villages, killed innocent women and children, and burned their bodies on bonfires". The author quotes the comment of Baroness Caroline Cox who was witness to the savagery of the inhuman bigots at the end of the 20th Century: "During my trip to Nagorno-Karabakh in April 1992 as part of a mission from the human rights organization "International Christian Solidarity", it became clear that the village of Maragha in the North of the region had been devastated by the Azerbaijanis and many civilians had been killed. The fact-finding group that set out for Maragha discovered the surviving inhabitants of the village in a state of shock, houses burned, charred bodies and bare human bones lying where people had had their heads cut off with saws and their bodies burned in front of the members of their families..."

When the international tribunal takes place for the criminals who unleashed war against the Armenians of Artsakh, the heads of the Republic of Azerbaijan will be condemned as war criminals for committing crimes against humanity and civilization.

Then, following on from the articles on the genocide of the Armenians in Sumgait, Baku, Kirovabad (the Armenian town of Gandzak) and in all the towns and villages of Artsakh-Karabakh, where Azerbaijani bandits were at “work”, one of the charges brought against them will be that defined by Boris Baratov: “The fascists from Azerbaijan declared total war on the people of Karabakh. This meant that each time the NKR defence force defeated their armed forces, they avenged these defeats by punishing the civilian population with particular savagery and destroying the great and marvellous historical monuments in Artsakh (Karabakh)”.

PARADISE LAID WASTE

1995–1996



In the chapter “Paradise Laid Waste” (1995-1996) Baratov tells about his journey to the NKR after Azerbaijan had lost the war. Once again, as seven years before that in his book “The Angel”, his eyes are drawn upwards to the shining peak of Ararat, to that sacred witness of world and Armenian history: “At one time, this twin-peaked giant had been at the very centre of the Armenian state, and Artsakh marked its eastern outskirts... [According to Biblical legend] Noah’s Ark had come to rest on the peak of Mount Ararat 5,800 years before. The Armenian Ararat Kingdom of Van had reached the zenith of its prosperity 2,750 years previously. The battle of Avarayr had taken place 1,545 years before. The Karabakh war had been over for two years”.

Because of the weather conditions, the helicopter he was flying to Stepanakert, landed close to the Artsakh town of Berdzor. It turned out that in the helicopter along with him there were the OSCE Minsk Group’s co-chairmen and among them were the Finnish First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Heikki Talvitie and Vladimir Kazimirov, who then represented Russia. As they waited for cars from Stepanakert, the whole group took shelter from the rain in the hut of some friendly bridge-builders. During a light

meal, an informal conversation began and the author noted that all the members of the OSCE Minsk Group were trying to expand the negotiation process. Soon an aide from the NKR Ministry of Foreign Affairs arrived and at midnight they all reached Shushi.

The next day, the author visited the Shushi Church of the Holy Savior, which had been used by the enemy as a munitions store during the war. After the liberation of the town, the Armenians immediately started restoration work on the church. On leaving the church, the author noticed a book on sale in a kiosk close to the church, written by the head of the Artsakh Diocese, Bishop Pargev. The book begins with a wise statement: “The soul of every person sooner or later makes itself known...”

On the gates of the ruined houses of Shushi, you could still see inscriptions dating back to the time of the war. On the recommendation of the mayor of Shushi, who himself came from Berdzor, Baratov asked his deputy Mr. Khachatryan – a man born and bred in Shushi – to help him learn more about the town. Khachatryan drew a map of the town for the author and indicated the historical monuments. Making large incursions into history, the author tells the reader about the principal landmarks of the history of Shushi and opens the heroic pages of the struggle of the Armenians of Artsakh (the defeat of the Turks at the foot of the fortress of Shushi in 1726 – 1727, as well as in 1733 and on other occasions).

Baratov also tells the reader about the history of poet Vagif, who was a member of the nomadic Turkish Dzhevanshir tribe. A nomad in his poetry as well, Vagif was to become a participant of all the violence, conspiracy and killings, which the invader Ibrahim-khan instigated in Artsakh since Vagif was his secretary. Over several years, two Armenian Hasan-Jalalian princes of Khachen were killed, the Gandzasar Monastery, the spiritual centre of the Armenians of Artsakh, was looted and Catholicos Hovhannes was murdered... Two hundred years later in Shushi in 1982, a concrete tower known as “Vagif’s Mausoleum” was set up. The head of the Azerbaijan SSR, Gaidar Aliev came to its opening. As Baratov writes: “This pyramid of reinforced concrete built 200 years after his death, was not a mausoleum for Vagif, but a monument to an era. It was a somber and ugly symbol of those horrible times – an era of deportations, massacres and mass murders. This was a monument to a regime”. Before this, as the author notes, Aliyev had undertaken “the ethnic cleansing of the Nakhijevan Autonomous Republic and ensured that all the Armenians were deported from there without outcry. It was 1982. The Armenians would be deported from Shushi in six years’ time and the war in Karabakh would break out three years after that.”

In 1992, the town of Shushi was finally liberated thanks to the heroism of the Armenian freedom-fighters. The architect Movses Titanyan, together with Bishop Pargev took over supervision of the restoration work on the Church of the Holy Saviour. The architect told Baratov about the building of a music school and a memorial spring, dedicated to two brothers who fell in the fighting for Artsakh. Movses had come from Yerevan. When he was faced with the choice between a contract to work in Belgium or coming as the architect to Shushi, he chose Artsakh, planning a wide-scale restoration

work in Shushi. Walking up to the centre of the town, the author and Movses the architect passed along the streets of Shushi, ruined during the war. In the late 19th century, the writer Muratsan, the historian Leo, the artist Stepan Aghajanian, the sculptor Hakob Gyurjian, the actor Vagarsh Vagarshian and the composer Spiridon Melikian had all walked along these streets to the church on their way to becoming part of the fame of Armenian literature, historiography and art. In the Shushi municipal museum the author was delighted with an original exhibition of photographs on the cultural heritage of the town. The photographs of Armenian books and Armenian cultural figures reveal the magnificent world of Shushi in the 19th century, as a centre of Armenian education and culture.

From Shushi, the author set off for the settlement Dagrav, in the footsteps of the great Armenian writer, Raffi. By a spring, where the writer himself had once stopped, a huge tree has grown up from the willow wand which Raffi had stuck into the earth in order to indicate the spot to set up the khachkar which lay on the ground nearby. As a result of the cultural journey around Artsakh, Raffi published his fundamental historical work in Tiflis, "The Meliks of Khamsa" ("Five Princedoms").

Baratov's journey to the ancient Armenian settlement of Tsar and the monastery of Dadivank open up yet another tragic page from the recent war. Over the course of his whole journey along the river Tartar, he was forced to bypass blown-up bridges, drive round electricity lines lying across the road and burned out military vehicles at the roadside. The magnificent pictures of the Dadivank Monastery are permeated with the author's true reverence. In studying the frescoes at Dadivank, Baratov makes an interesting excursion into the history of the period of St. Thaddeus' Apostolic preaching. Drawing upon information from the works of Armenian historians such as Movses Khorenatsi (5th century) on the Armenian King Abgar and Thaddeus the Apostle, and also Movses Kalankatuatsi (7th century) on the Egishe the Apostle, the author comes to the conclusion that Raffi was correct and that the Cathedral Church of the Dadivank Monastery, built in 1214, was built in honour of Thaddeus the Apostle.

Because of the occupation of the ancient Armenian Princedom of Gyulistan (now the Shaumian Region) in Northern Artsakh by Azerbaijani forces, the author only managed to photograph a small basilica and the ancient fortress of Gyulistan, which as a result of the aggression of the authorities in Baku lay in the neutral zone.

The photograph of soldiers from the NKR Defence forces next to the Gyulistan fortress is symbolic. In 1813, the peace accord between Russia and Persia was signed outside the walls of this fortress. According to this agreement, Karabakh became part of the Russian Empire "in perpetuity".

Baratov has an interesting method of travelling through Artsakh. Sometimes he uses ancient maps and sets off to locate historic monuments; sometimes he takes his camera and goes down paths that resounded to the guns of war, showing the wounds of war in the land of Paradise; sometimes he follows scientists who have visited Artsakh to collect god-given evidence of the greatness of the Armenian spirituality and creativity.

This is what Raffi did and so did Iosif (Hovsep) Orbeli. The author writes: “Compared to the delicate decoration which he had seen in the churches in Ani, these bas-reliefs at Koshik Anapat in Northern Karabakh struck him as rather crude in their execution, but he remained riveted by them”. I.Orbeli entitled his book “Bas-Reliefs of Everyday Scenes on the Khachen Stone Crosses of the 12th and 13th Centuries”. Baratov sees the roots of Orbeli’s scientific and creative work also in the successful expedition to Van in 1916. And so, interrupting his journey across Artsakh, our author mentally follows Orbeli in his expedition to Van. Orbeli preferred to trust the assertions of Movses Khorenatsi and discovered the cuneiform inscription dating back to the time of the Ararat Armenian Kingdom of Van on the Van Cliffs. This inscription makes mention of *Urtekhi* and is the most ancient cuneiform reference to the name of Artsakh.

After visiting the Head of the Artsakh Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church at his residence in Shushi, one hundred meters from the Church of Christ the Saviour, the author writes the following about him: “He is a true intellectual and knows a great deal; Armenian history seems like an open book to him. On the other hand, he is a profound believer, with the responsibility for the Artsakh Diocese, which had been reduced to ruins by the Soviet era. He wants nothing more than to restore it”.

At Berdzor, Baratov visited the Kashatakh Museum, which was founded due the efforts of the historian Aleksan Hakobian, the archaeologist Hakob Simonian and the Armenian monuments’ researcher Samvel Karapetian. “The photographs opened up yet another visible page of the history of the ancient Armenian principalities of Artsakh and Syunik, of which this land had once been part.” The architectural beauty of the Tsitsernavank Monastery is shown in the photographs in this book.

A group of photographs, in which the author captured the terrible wounds of war is particularly symbolic: the Church of the Blessed Virgin in the village of Arakyul, which was shelled by the Azerbaijani army; the dignified faces of an elderly couple, Gretta and Andrei Balayans, who have returned to their home after deportation to find that all that remains are ashes and - a flowering red rose bush nearby.

The interchange of landscapes and historical monuments in the book – the palace of Prince Yegan, the Church of Togh, Amaras, Vankasar, Dadivank, Gandzasar, the capitol of the ancient Armenian church close to the Monastery of Bri Ekhtsi, the ruins of the 11th century Monastery of Varazgom, the bell-tower of the village of Amutegh, where according to legend, relics are buried which are linked to the name of the great Armenian military leader, Sparapet St. Vardan Mamikonian, the bridges over the river Araks and the river Ishkhanaget – give the reader a feeling of participation, as he journeys with the author along his whole route throughout these Armenian lands. The beauty of the natural surroundings of Artsakh is complemented by photographs of Artsakh carpets. The author has the following to say about the people who created these carpets: “Every young Armenian girl started to weave a carpet from her early girlhood, as part of her dowry. Today these hand-woven Artsakh-Karabakh carpets are famous throughout the world”.



*Wherever long a native of Karabakh lives
away from his homeland - and this has
been tried and found - Karabakh will
always remain for him that eternal
Carthage which no-one can ever destroy.*
Lazarek Lantsas

Twenty Years After

2009



In the chapter “Twenty Years After”, the author considers the election of a new President in 2007 in accordance with international standards, a milestone worthy of note. This is confirmation that the NKR has truly established itself as a state. The author considers 2007 was a significant year for Artsakh. All the regions of the NKR marked celebrations for various reasons. Archbishop Pargev blessed the newly-built Church of St. Hakob in Stepanakert. On May 9th a new general plan for the town of Shushi was unveiled. The excavations at Tigranakert in Artsakh on Mount Vankasar were also crowned with success. As the author notes, the grandiose scale of the walls of the Artsakh Tigranakert - one of the several cities built by Tigran II the Great and all given the name of Tigranakert – links it with the capital of Great Armenia, Tigranakert, built in Aghdznik (in Western Armenia). In 2004 the author took photographs of the capital of Great Armenia and they were also featured in his book “The Armeniad”, as well as in his latest book “The Chronicles of Karabakh.”

The author’s comment upon his arrival in Shushi twenty years on is worthy of note: “We had been wandering around Shushi for several days. When I say *we*, I mean Anna and her notebook and pen and me and my Hasselblad... Archbishop Pargev had completed the restoration of the Cathedral of the Holy Saviour in Shushi...” A bird’s-eye view reveals the glorious panorama of the town. “It was no longer a town that had been burnt to the ground... it is not only the mayor’s office and the school and the restaurants and the hotel and the bank and the music school that are now functioning in Shushi, but art centres, craft shops and tourist centres are being set up as well.”

The pictures of Army Generals: Arkady Ter-Tadevosian, Vardan Balaian, Felix Gzogian, and soldiers from the detachments of the NKR Defence Forces during the

military parade tell of the celebrations of the 62nd anniversary of the victory over Fascist Germany and the 15th anniversary of the liberation of Shushi. We see Archbishop Pargev and the members of the government during a church service in the Cathedral Church of Shushi, with Generals Movses Hakobyan and Levon Mnatsakanyan, the NKR President Bako Saakian and military exercises by the soldiers of the NKR Defence Forces. These shots inspire confidence in the steadfastness of the Armenian people in the defence and strengthening of the power of our Fatherland.

In order to look at Western Armenia and Armenian Cilicia, the author had to travel by ferry from Sochi over the Black Sea and then drive through the cities of Western Armenia – Ani, Kars, Balesh (Bitlis) – to the Mediterranean. The pictures of the Armenian monuments Baratov took during this journey: the walls of Ani, the Church of the Holy Cross in Akhtamar, the fortress of Kars, the fortress towers of Ayas, the castle of Lambron, the port of Corycus, the citadel of Sis and the fortress of Hromkla – are all evidences of the historical truth. The author writes: “It is understandable why the government of modern-day Turkey has no desire to admit to the Genocide of the Armenians, since that would require them to pay out compensation and give Armenians the right to return to their historic homelands in Western Armenia and Cilicia... From the moment that the victorious nations coined the term ‘international obligations’ and ‘international guarantees’, they have always ended in tragedy for the Armenian people. This has been the same for the Armenians of Cilicia, the Armenians of Western Armenia, the Armenians of the First Republic of Armenia and the Armenians of Karabakh in 1914–1920”.

At the contemporary stage of the renaissance and development of Armenian statehood in the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) external political factors are to a considerable extent being moved off at a tangent on the so-called regulation of the “Karabakh conflict”. Instead of signing an act of capitulation, the over-thrown aggressor – the Republic of Azerbaijan – has, under the patronage of external powers, sat down at the negotiating table, in an attempt to find loop-holes for re-asserting its colonial regime. At the same time, in the full view of the world community, the pan-Turkish alliance of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey have been engaged in an act of state terrorism in blockading the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh for more than 20 years.

The victory of the Armenian liberation forces was achieved at a price of a huge number of victims and the heroism of the Armenian freedom-fighters. This victory was natural, for it sprang from the restitution of historic justice and the peaceful creativity of the Armenian people from time immemorial. Now the war is being continued on an informational, diplomatic and psychological level; at the borders shots continue to be exchanged because the over-thrown aggressor has not been punished in accordance with international law and cannot calmly accept defeat. The political interests of major powers continue to colour the assessment of crimes committed and continuing to be committed to this day by genocidal Turkey and its underling Azerbaijan.

The blood of the freedom-fighters which has been shed on the altar of the Fatherland represents the resplendent holy myrrh of the spiritual temple of freedom and creation. On the way to the summit of the magnificent Mount Dizapayt in Artsakh, there is a khachkar with an eagle and a cross “in memory of those who prevented the enemy from entering Hadrut”.

On reaching the summit of Dizapayt, the author writes: “If there had been no ancient legends and stories about the Kataro Monastery, someone would have had to have invented them, in order to persuade men to climb to the top of Dizapayt and glory in the beauty of the world”. His climb to the summit was rewarded with the discovery of a spiritual peace in the church, where the pilgrims who reach the summit of Dizapayt “pray for illnesses to be cured and speak to God about their dearest wishes. People believe that in this solitary church in the clouds, the Almighty will hear their voice”.

The shot of the interior of the church reflects the atmosphere of spirituality and warmth, radiating from the hearts of the believers. On the altar next to the candles is a notebook, which contains the heartfelt “precious messages, which strike to the depth of the human soul, from the women, men and children of Artsakh to God”. As the author puts it, a “prayer of a hard-working and noble people has resounded on the summit of Dizapayt. It is a Prayer for Peace”.

Many leading scientists and artistic figures from various countries have put a high value on the contribution of Armenian culture to the treasure-store of world culture. Victory in the war of liberation needs to be reinforced every day and every hour, both by healing, peaceful construction and the strengthening of the defence of the Fatherland, and also by the protection, development and dissemination of civilized values. Boris Baratov’s book serves this aim, as it is an important contribution to the preservation of the historic memory of generations of great actions on the part of our ancestors and the heroic victory in the Artsakh Patriotic war.