

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_sbct-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_sbct-01.php)

## The Armenian Church Under the Soviet Regime, Part 2: the Leadership of Vazgen

FELIX CORLEY

This is the second part of an article tracing the history of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Soviet Union covering the period from 1955 until the arrival of *glasnost* in the later 1980s. The first part covered the period from 1938 to 1954, when the Church was led by Kevork Chorekchyan, first as *locum tenens* when the catholicos-sal see at Echmiadzin was vacant, later as catholicos. Kevork died on 9 May 1954 and Archbishop Vahan Kostanyan took over as *locum tenens* pending the calling of a National Ecclesiastical Council to elect a successor.<sup>1</sup> The third part of this article will take the history of the Church into the independence era up to the death of Vazgen in 1994.

### Vazgen becomes Catholicos

During the 1945 church council which elected Kevork catholicos, the Soviet authorities had noted the presence from Romania of Vazgen Paljyan, then a celibate priest. Levon Karapet Paljyan was born in Bucharest, Romania, on 20 September 1908. His parents were from Redesto in the Ottoman Empire, which they left in 1898 to settle in Bucharest. His father was a shoemaker and his mother a teacher (who was also active in the moderate Armenian diaspora party, the Hunchaks). The young Levon studied pedagogy and psychology at Bucharest University, graduating in 1936. He taught from 1929 to 1943 at the Armenian parish school in Bucharest and edited a monthly magazine *Herg* (Harvest), which he had founded in 1937. On 30 September 1943 he was ordained priest in Athens by Bishop Karabed Mazlumyan – who, according to the defector Georgi Agabekov, had been recruited as an OGPU agent.<sup>2</sup> Since the 1945 church council Vazgen had gained the most senior position in the Armenian Church in Romania, being ordained bishop by Catholicos Kevork in 1951. In 1955 he was also appointed bishop of neighbouring Bulgaria. He was obviously a figure acceptable to the new communist authorities in Romania. In 1954, they awarded him the order of the Star of the Republic.<sup>3</sup>

Vazgen had made several trips to Echmiadzin in the decade before his election (in 1945, 1948, 1951, 1953 and 1954) and he had been closely observed by the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults during these trips. On 17 January 1948, the CARC chairman, Ivan Polyansky, wrote to Suren Ovanesyan at the Council for the Affairs of the Armenian Gregorian Church in Yerevan, instructing him to ensure that on his forthcoming visit, Vazgen travelled back from Echmiadzin to Romania via Moscow so that the CARC leadership could meet him.<sup>4</sup> During the 1951 visit, which coincided

with the visit of Yeghishe Terteryan, Kevork asked Vazgen if he was prepared to undertake foreign missions on behalf of the catholicos. Vazgen agreed.<sup>5</sup> (No detail escaped the gaze of the Council for the Affairs of the Armenian-Gregorian Church, the CAAGC: it had decreed that any church gifts to the two visitors must be approved in advance by the Council.) A sign of the approval of the Soviet state was a report in *Izvestiya* on 4 October 1954 which mentioned his accession to the Supreme Spiritual Council, the Church's governing body which was made up of nine members, both lay and clerical.<sup>6</sup> Vazgen returned the authorities' trust by publishing a book in Bucharest in 1954 entitled *Under the Sun of the Homeland*, describing his impressions of his visits to the USSR and praising the Soviet system. 'Armenians abroad must understand, once and for all,' he wrote, 'that only Soviet rule and only the Russian people can guarantee prosperity for our people, can guarantee the further development of our country and peaceful progress, and can guarantee the attainment of a golden future for the Armenian nation.'

At the same time as he was flattering the Soviet regime, Vazgen was behind the scenes promoting the extension of the Church's presence in the Soviet Union. In June 1954, during a visit to the offices of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults in Moscow together with Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan, the two pressed for the Holy Resurrection church in the Soviet capital to be reopened, claiming this would make a 'great impression' on foreign Armenians by allowing clerics visiting Moscow to serve the liturgy.<sup>7</sup> Since the 1930s the Armenians had had no functioning place of worship in Moscow.

In the preparation for the National Ecclesiastical Assembly, the Supreme Spiritual Council convened in Echmiadzin on 17 August 1955, chaired by the *locum tenens*, Archbishop Vahan Kostanyan. It was prescribed that there should be one delegate to the Assembly per 25,000 Armenians, with smaller jurisdictions, providing they had at least 10,000 Armenians, allowed one delegate each. The Council agreed there would be a total of 170 delegates, interpreting rather generously what actually constituted a 'diocese'. Thus they planned for one clerical and seven lay delegates from the Nagorno-Karabakh diocese, which had been defunct since the 1930s, and one clerical delegate and four lay delegates from the Kirovabad diocese, also in Azerbaijan and likewise defunct. A number of foreign centres, including London and Marseilles, were treated as dioceses, which technically they were not.

The clerical and lay delegates arrived in Armenia the following month. On 28 September, in an unexpected move, a synod of bishops and heads of dioceses was held at Echmiadzin at which many of the issues which would come up during the National Ecclesiastical Council were discussed. Vazgen's candidacy for the post of catholicos was also apparently discussed. The Council convened the following day, using the procedure for convoking such a council drawn up shortly before his death in 1930 by Catholicos Kevork V. This version was used at the 1932, 1941 and 1945 National Ecclesiastical Councils. It was amended in 1945 and ratified shortly afterwards by the new catholicos, Kevork VI.<sup>8</sup>

Because of the tensions within the Church internationally, the council was not attended by the *locum tenens* of Cilicia, nor by the *locum tenens* of Jerusalem or the Patriarch of Constantinople. Of the 18 bishops who did attend, only three were from within the Soviet Union. Because many overseas dioceses, controlled by the anti-Soviet Dashnak party, boycotted the proceedings, only 140 out of the potential 170 delegates were present. In addition there were 69 guests. The Soviet government paid the travel costs of the overseas delegates, at least those from the United States.<sup>9</sup> Of the Soviet delegates, 52 were from Armenia (30 from the Ararat diocese, 19 from the

Shirak diocese and 3 from Echmiadzin) and 56 from other parts of the USSR (20 from the diocese of Azerbaijan and Turkestan, 18 from the diocese of Nor Nakhichevan and Rostov and 18 from the diocese of Georgia). It is not clear how – if at all – the Soviet lay delegates were elected. In total, 108 of the delegates, including nine clerics, were from within the Soviet Union, with a further five delegates from communist-ruled countries (Romania and Bulgaria). With such a majority the candidate favoured by the state could hardly fail to be chosen, although all 21 of the Church's bishops were eligible for election. Vazgen himself was one of the three presidents of the Assembly, accompanied by Archbishop Mambre Sirunyan of Egypt and Archbishop Mambre Kalfayan of the Eastern Diocese of the USA. As in 1945, the head of the CARC attended from Moscow, acting chairman Gostev, together with the CAAGC chairman, by now Hratchya Girgoryan,<sup>10</sup> from Yerevan. Metropolitan Pitirim of Minsk represented the Russian Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow, Aleksii.

One duty of the National Ecclesiastical Council was to examine the state of the Church and its finances. Kostanyan's report to the Council at the first session on 29 September showed how perilous the state of the Church remained, despite the wartime concessions achieved by Kevork. The Echmiadzin congregation had just 17 members (one archbishop, two bishops and 14 archimandrites). The Church's finances were still precarious, largely relying on money from the sale of candles and the performance of rites. Targets had been set for contributions to Echmiadzin from individual churches and dioceses. The Rostov diocese had been one of the few to meet its target in 1954. The 1954 target from the Georgia diocese had been raised to 215,000 roubles, while St Sarkis church in Yerevan had been expected to raise 210,000 roubles and the Baku diocese had been expected to raise 109,000 roubles. As of 1 January 1954 Echmiadzin had had only 280,900 roubles in the bank, Kostanyan reported. At the close of the year this had risen to 972,500 roubles after income of 2,437,400 roubles and outgoings of 1,745,800 roubles. Of the income, nearly half had come from churches and dioceses in the Soviet Union, while only 32,000 had come in the form of foreign contributions. Kostanyan noted that some overseas dioceses had failed to meet the contributions agreed at the 1945 Ecclesiastical Council. Most of the 1954 spending had gone on the monastery, a total of 1,060,800 roubles, nearly half of it on salaries. Of this total, 287,000 roubles had been spent on expenses connected with the death of Catholicos Kevork. In addition to spending on the monastery, 364,000 roubles had been spent on the seminary and the rest on publications (195,000 on 11 issues of the journal *Echmiadzin* and 126,000 on the 1954 and 1955 church calendars). Kostanyan stressed in his report that the Church adopted a loyal attitude to the state wherever it was found, quoting the saying of Jesus 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's'. He noted that relations with the Soviet government were better under Kevork than they had ever been and that the Church was not a political organisation and did not get involved in politics. Perhaps to fend off criticism from Armenians abroad, Kostanyan maintained that Kevork's peace activity had followed the commands of Christ and had had nothing to do with politics. On the question of Echmiadzin cathedral, Kostanyan reported that the state had paid four million roubles on its restoration, work carried out by the Committee for Preserving Historical Monuments. He made no mention of Calouste Gulbenkian's promised contribution. (Bishop Terenig Poladyan of Antilias moved a motion of thanks to the Soviet government for the restoration of the cathedral, a motion passed unanimously.) Kostanyan expressed the hope that Soviet and diaspora Armenians would contribute to the necessary work of restoring other churches and monasteries in Armenia. He noted with disapproval that promises made by foreign delegates at the 1945 Council to support the journal and to provide a print-

ing press for Echmiadzin had not all been met. Kostanyan briefly summarised relations with other Christian churches, singling out the especially good relations with the Russian and Georgian Orthodox Churches and the Church of England. He noted the coolness of relations with the Vatican, declaring that some Catholic prelates had shown hostility to the Church (an echo of statements at the 1945 Council).

The second session of the Council on 30 September saw the election of the 130th Catholicos. As the state and all the delegates expected, Vazgen was duly elected, with 126 out of 137 votes in the secret ballot. Of the other candidates, Karekin Khachatryan received six votes, Vahan Kostanyan received two votes, and Tiran Nersoyan, Mambre Sirunyan and Mambre Kalfayan received one vote each. One of the votes had no name.

The National Ecclesiastical Council's third session was held on 5 October after Vazgen's enthronement. Just as in 1945 and again by the bishops who gathered for Kevork's funeral in 1954, the question of a new constitution for the church was discussed, but again no agreement was reached, and the matter was left to a future Council. In his inaugural address Vazgen outlined the need to strengthen the theological academy, found a printing press and restore church monuments. The financial administrator spoke about Echmiadzin's future spending. The projected income for 1956 was set at 1,294,000 roubles. The monastery would spend 1,075,000 roubles, plus a further 485,000 on the seminary, 312,000 on the journal and 28,500 roubles on the calendar. This would leave a deficit of 606,5000 roubles. Various foreign delegates promised money for specific projects and American delegates promised to supply a printing press.

On 7 October, a fourth session was held, when the commission elected to resolve the catholicosate's financial plight proposed some solutions, including an 'Echmiadzin Day', when dioceses all round the world would collect money for the Mother See. Bishop Poladyan declared that Cilicia would cover the costs of repairing the St Hripsime monastery in the town of Echmiadzin and that together with his brother in Detroit he would try to restore the St Gayane monastery, also in Echmiadzin. Bishop Shnork promised that his California diocese would send 25,000 dollars and would finance the repair of a church in Armenia. The same day a new Supreme Spiritual Council was elected unanimously from a list drawn up by Vazgen, with a completely new membership. There were four bishops – Sion Manukyan, Sahak Ter-Hovanessyan, Vartan Ter-Sahakyan and Eznik Aznavuryan – and four laymen – Professor Ararat Garibyan (professor of linguistics at the Pedagogical Institute in Yerevan), Professor Arakel Arakelyan (chief editor of *Echmiadzin*), Professor Artashes Tiratsyan (professor of foreign languages at the Pedagogical Institute in Yerevan) and Aram Agadjanyan (a former Dashnak).<sup>11</sup>

The acting head of the CARC, Gostev, wrote a full report to the Central Committee in Moscow on the election. He declared that Yeghishe Terteryan – *locum tenens* of Jerusalem – knew he had been recommended by Kevork as his successor, but had been prevented from attending the Council by the Transjordanian authorities. Nor had the Dashnaks been inactive. 'The higher clergy of the Cilician Catholicosate (Lebanon), the archbishops and bishops, being under the influence of the Dashnaks, tried to sabotage the calling of a Council in Echmiadzin to elect the head of the Church, the Catholicos of All the Armenians.'

It is clear from Gostev's report that the Soviet authorities fully expected Vazgen to gain the endorsement of the assembly. In the run-up to the election, on 28 September, a reception was held in Yerevan for the delegates, and Vazgen was one of those to address the gathering. There was a further meeting of selected foreign delegates, with

the participation of Avetik Isahakyan and the artist Martiros Saryan (two of the assembly's co-chairmen, both of whom had also been at the 1945 Council which had elected Kevork). Both meetings, Gostev reported, had 'positive results', from the CARC's point of view, and were crucial to Vazgen's eventual success. 'As a result of them there was created among all the delegates an atmosphere of unity and unanimity in support of the nominated candidate for the Catholicos of All the Armenians, Vazgen Paljyan.' In addition to this favourable outcome, the Soviet authorities can only have been pleased at the expressions of approval for the Soviet regime uttered during the Council. Gostev reported that Poladyan's motion thanking the Soviet government for restoring Echmiadzin cathedral met with 'stormy applause'. Of the new Supreme Spiritual Council, Gostev was pleased to report that only one of its members, Sion Manukyan, was from abroad.<sup>12</sup>

One of the American delegates, Dickran Boyajian, recalled the scene on 30 September as Vazgen was elected:

The bells of the Cathedral proclaimed to the world that the Illuminator's throne had found a worthy occupant. In a tense voice, quivering with emotion, the Patriarch-elect thanked the delegates for the confidence shown ... Then he spoke of the need for better relations with the Armenian government; stressed the need for harmony between various Sees of the Church and expressed the hope that responsible religious leaders of the Church would not deviate from their true path ... He expressed the hope that Armenians all over the world would lend material and moral assistance to the Holy See wholeheartedly ...

Vazgen was consecrated on 2 October at a ceremony attended by many church leaders, including a delegation from the Russian Orthodox Church, led by Metropolitan Pitirim, and a delegation from the Georgian Orthodox Church, led by Metropolitan Efrem of Batumi. The ailing Ivan Polyansky, the chairman of the CARC in Moscow, who had not attended the full Ecclesiastical Council, attended.<sup>13</sup> On 6 October Vazgen consecrated seven new bishops, two of them from the Echmiadzin brotherhood (Vartan Ter-Sahakyan, head of the Rostov diocese, and Eznik Aznavuryan, head of the Baku diocese) and five from the Jerusalem brotherhood. (These consecrations were followed by two more from the Jerusalem jurisdiction on 23 October, bringing to 30 the number of the Church's bishops, six of them within the Soviet Union.) On 8 October, assisted by twelve bishops, Vazgen conducted the supposedly seven-yearly rite of blessing of holy chrism, which had not taken place since 1926.<sup>14</sup> Boyajian attended the ceremonies of anointing the new catholicos, the ordination of bishops and the blessing of chrism.

On each of these occasions, the cathedral was filled to capacity, and many thousands crowded the grounds outside, content with the privilege of listening to the rituals as they were being broadcast. On Sunday, 2 October 1955, many thousands witnessed a ceremony unique in form, rich in tradition and majestic in setting – the anointment of the Catholicos-elect ... The Catholicos-elect, garbed in magnificent vestments ... was surrounded by princes of the Church splendidly attired and worthy of the occasion ... The Patriarch, following the custom of many of his predecessors, knelt before the Altar of Descent and prayed for the steadfastness and impregnable of the Church ... The atmosphere was electrified. a pin drop could have been heard in that human-packed cathedral ...<sup>15</sup>

Photographers and television cameras recorded the scenes. One of those shown on many photos sitting next to the new catholicos was the poet Avetik Isahakyan, a layman who had served as chairman of the Ecclesiastical Council as well as the chairman of the Armenian Writers' Union and a member of the Armenian Supreme Soviet. It was he who had sheltered the frightened Kevork Chorekchyan at the time of Khoren I's death in 1938. Also present was Professor Ashot Abrahamyan, who had been Kevork's special emissary in the Middle East in 1944.<sup>16</sup> The Armenian state's seal of approval on the election was shown on 9 October, when the newly-elected Vazgen, accompanied by other clergy, was received by Anton Kochinyan, the chairman of the Council of Ministers. Unlike in 1945, the whole process of the Council and the election was widely covered in the Soviet Armenian press.

Gostev reported happily to the Central Committee on the aftermath of the election. A total of 147 telegrams of congratulation had been sent to Vazgen, 58 from within the Soviet Union, the rest from abroad. Patriarch Aleksii of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Archbishop of Canterbury had sent telegrams, as had all the Armenian bishops 'with the exception of Bishop Khoren, who is a fanatical Dashnak'. The motion to send telegrams from the council to the Soviet and the Armenian governments had, Gostev reported, been greeted with 'stormy applause'. Marshal Nikolai Bulganin, who was on holiday, approved the despatch of a return congratulatory telegram to Vazgen, which was sent on his behalf by the CARC chairman Ivan Polyansky via Grigoryan of the CAAGC.<sup>17</sup> Gostev was also proud of the favourable image he believed had been created of Soviet Armenia. 'A great impression was created among foreign delegates and guests of the Council of the economic development and cultural growth of the Armenian SSR, its industrial and urban construction and the restoration of the cathedral in Echmiadzin.' For those not there in person, the election of the new catholicos and receptions and consecrations of new bishops had been 'widely spread by means of radio broadcasts to abroad'.

In the wake of his election as catholicos, Vazgen adopted Soviet nationality. As he told the final meeting of the National Ecclesiastical Assembly: 'I am extremely pleased to announce that, following my election as Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, I have submitted to the government of the Soviet Union a request that they grant me Soviet citizenship, which has been my dream now for years'.<sup>18</sup>

### **Vazgen's Inheritance**

The first tangible concession Vazgen received was the approval to reopen the Holy Resurrection Chapel in Moscow, so nearly achieved in 1948 and 1951. In his 28 November 1955 report to the Central Committee Polyansky reported the many requests from believers to reopen the chapel which, he noted, was a designated architectural monument then being used to store building materials. Polyansky reported that 'in personal conversations during the National Ecclesiastical Council [Vazgen] more than once appealed for the opening of the Armenian church in Moscow'. Vazgen believed it would 'satisfy the religious needs' of Armenians resident in Moscow and would allow him to pray there during 'working visits' to the Soviet capital. Again Vazgen used the tactic both he and Kevork had deployed: the reopening 'would raise his authority, as head of the Church, among the Armenian clergy and believers in foreign dioceses'. Polyansky noted that according to the 1939 census there were some 14,000 Armenians in Moscow and that Armenian believers were reckoned to number between 2000 and 3000 (an interesting official recognition of the survival of faith). He recalled that all three Armenian churches in Moscow had been

closed between 1928 and 1939. On 2 December 1955, the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee wrote to support the application to reopen the chapel. A further letter of 14 January 1956 noted their support and declared, rather ambiguously: 'Comrade Polyansky has been informed that this question must be decided according to Soviet order [*v sovet'skom poryadke*]' . The chapel was reopened, despite lingering official disapproval of Polyansky's enthusiasm for the move.<sup>19</sup>

Vazgen was doubtless pleased with his success in Moscow, but he had nevertheless inherited a Church which was in a fragile condition. The worst of the persecution was now over, but restrictions were still tight. Most seriously, there were few open churches and few priests to serve those in the population who still believed. Mary Kilbourne Matossian, who visited Armenia in October 1957, was informed that church attendance had dropped since the Second World War. She was also told that of the three sections of Armenian society – the intellectuals, the white-collar workers and the blue-collar workers – the intellectuals were the most secularised. They were usually not married in church and were more liberal in social terms, allowing their unmarried daughters greater freedom in relations with men. Significantly, they were also more likely to speak Russian at home than Armenian. While Matossian made no comment on the white-collar workers, she noted: 'The blue collar class has tended to preserve its traditional religious faith'.<sup>20</sup> These believers, however, had few opportunities to attend church.

Vazgen had shown a certain self-confidence in pushing to regain the Moscow church and in reconstituting the decimated hierarchy by his consecrations of new bishops, but that was as far as he could go. Despite the many pressing problems which the Church faced in Soviet Armenia, he almost at once set off on an extended visit to Beirut and other locations in the Middle East, rounding off his journey with visits to Italy, France and Britain. He was away from Armenia from 10 February to 13 May 1956.<sup>21</sup> The ostensible reason was to take part in the election which had finally been called for the Catholicosate of Cilicia, which had been vacant since 1952 because of rivalry between different political factions. The date of the election was eventually fixed for 14 February and the leading candidate was the bishop of Aleppo, Zareh Payaslyan. As the choice of the Dashnak party, Zareh was not acceptable to the Soviet authorities, and it seems to have been Vazgen's brief to try to prevent his election. Vazgen arrived in Beirut on 12 February at the head of a delegation from Echmiadzin, which also included Bishop Vartan Ter-Sahakyan, Professor Arakel Arakelyan, Haik Arakelyan (his private secretary) and Archdeacon Parkev Georgyan (his staff-bearer). Vazgen managed to delay the election during talks in Beirut, but was unsuccessful in persuading the factions to select another candidate. Vazgen had already left Beirut for Cairo by the time the election finally took place on 20 February, where Zareh was duly chosen as the new catholicos (although he was not consecrated until September). The Soviet authorities then joined the campaign against Zareh, with the ambassador in Lebanon sending a demarche to the Lebanese president calling on him to invalidate the election<sup>22</sup> – an intervention that was unsuccessful. Zareh's election effectively sealed the break in relations between the two church jurisdictions which persisted until the reconciliation of the late 1980s, a break caused and exacerbated by the East-West divide of the Cold War and the failure by the communist authorities in Soviet Armenia and the Armenian political parties of the diaspora to keep politics out of church affairs. (Echmiadzin received a further blow to its authority in 1956 when the dioceses of Iran and Greece and some congregations in the United States defected to the Cilicia jurisdiction.)

While in Egypt, Vazgen undertook both religious and political assignments. He was welcomed warmly by President Nasser, then being courted by the Soviet Union. He convened a meeting of the Church's hierarchs which condemned Zareh's election as 'irregular and unacceptable'. Some seventeen bishops from all four of the Church's jurisdictions attended the meeting. Among the less controversial decisions was one to translate the Bible from classical Armenian into modern Armenian.

Vazgen rounded off his journey in Europe, being received at Lambeth Palace in London by the archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher. While clearly trying to meet Soviet concerns during his travels – preventing the election of an antisoviet catholicos in Antilias, furthering Soviet foreign policy goals in the Middle East and promoting an image of religious freedom in the Soviet 'homeland' to the diaspora – Vazgen was also able to use the visit to increase his international profile and thereby to strengthen his hand in further dealings with the Soviet authorities.

The CAAGC was concerned with the most 'politically interesting' aspects of the visit. In its assessment<sup>23</sup> the Council concentrated on the Cilicia election, the meetings with President Nasser in Cairo and French President René Coty in Paris, and the meeting with Archbishop Fisher. The Cilicia election, the Council reported, reflected a 'longtime plan to split off the overseas Armenian Church, including Jerusalem, from Echmiadzin', attributed to 'Anglo-American circles' undertaking the plan via the 'counter-revolutionary' Dashnaks. The report stressed that Vazgen's visit had encouraged a 'patriotic approach' by local Armenians, highlighting the fact that 30,000 came to greet him at Beirut aerodrome. 'Thanks to his skill, great tact and oratorical ability, the catholicos was quickly able to unite the progressive forces against the Dashnaks and their machinations.' The report laid no blame at Vazgen's door for the failure to prevent Zareh's election. With Anglo-American help, the report claimed, the Dashnaks forced the Syrian authorities to proceed with the election. Of the 52 delegates (19 of them not properly elected), 16 boycotted the proceedings. The report notes that the election took place with 200 gendarmes and 300 soldiers armed with tommy guns ringing the monastery. Machine guns were installed on surrounding rooftops. The report had less to say about Vazgen's meeting with Nasser, but noted that the catholicos had invited the Egyptian President to visit Echmiadzin, which Nasser pledged to do during his next visit to Moscow.

The report ascribed the Anglican Church's desire for closer relations with Echmiadzin – evidenced by the meeting with the archbishop of Canterbury – to the question of the holy places in Jerusalem. Because of bad relations between Britain and Greece over Cyprus, the report claimed, the Anglicans had no access to the holy places, a problem they were trying to resolve via the Armenian Church.

On his return to Moscow, Vazgen was immediately received by Marshal Nikolai Bulganin. The meeting – which took place on 12 May 1956 – turned out in retrospect to be as important for the Church as the meeting between Stalin and Vazgen's predecessor, Kevork, in April 1945.<sup>24</sup> After his return to Echmiadzin in July Vazgen announced the reopening of some churches and monasteries. The fact that his long visit was noted positively in the Soviet press showed that Vazgen had gained the favour of the regime. Even visits within the Soviet Union – which were much less frequent – began to be noted positively. Visits Vazgen undertook in May 1957 to the Leninakan and Nor-Nakhichevan (Rostov-on-Don) dioceses were even publicised by Tass. In Leninakan 'a solemn liturgy had been celebrated in the cathedral of the Holy Mother', the agency reported, adding that 'after the liturgy thousands of believers came to the catholicos for his blessing'. Vazgen was given an official reception by the chairman of the city executive committee and visited the Aresha monastery and a

school, where he addressed the pupils. In Rostov, he celebrated the liturgy and had an official reception attended also by a representative the Russian Orthodox Church, Tass reported.<sup>25</sup> Vazgen also gave foreign visitors positive assessments of the life of the Church. He told Matossian in 1957 that there were 50 students at the seminary, as well as 96 parish priests, 16 archimandrites and six bishops at work in Soviet Armenia.<sup>26</sup> But as Vazgen would later acknowledge, this period in the late 1950s represented the height of his achievement of reopening churches, against resistance from the Soviet authorities.

After World War II [when Kevork was catholicos] the situation slightly improved because some churches were reopened, but that was the extent of it. Further improvement of the situation occurred a little later during the time when we were elected Catholicos and the subsequent years; even though our rights were very limited, nevertheless, 20 churches were reopened. As for building new churches, that was unthinkable.<sup>27</sup>

A note in the CAAGC files<sup>28</sup> reports that during a second meeting between Vazgen and Bulganin on 23 January 1957 Bulganin gave an 'oral instruction' about the handing back of the catholicos' residence. The two-storey Mantashyan palace had been built in 1912-15, but confiscated during the Soviet era and used as a barracks. Vazgen was able to recover it and restore it. Vazgen immediately began a building spree in Echmiadzin. Architects' plans were drawn up on 28 May 1957 for refurbishing the residence<sup>29</sup> and the work was carried out between 1958 and 1962. Vazgen was soon able to surround the entire complex at Echmiadzin by a high wall, as well as building a clock tower, premises for the printing press (which was installed in 1961) and a hostel for visitors. In October 1962, the National Church Council recognised Vazgen's achievements by granting him the title 'Builder Catholicos'.<sup>30</sup>

This 1962 Church Council, attended by 63 delegates from abroad (24 of them clergy, the rest laypeople), was called by Vazgen to discuss a number of issues affecting the Church. One of them was, inevitably, the question of the proposed new constitution, which had been discussed by the bishops when they gathered in Echmiadzin for Kevork's funeral in 1954 and at the National Ecclesiastical Councils in 1945 and 1955. However, the 1962 Council came at a time of difficulty for all the churches of the Soviet Union. In addition, the Soviet state can hardly have welcomed free discussion of church matters by delegates outside its control, especially those from the diaspora. As Sukiasyan remarks:

The progressive disappearance of the Council without a doubt reinforced the power of the catholicos during the Persian and later the tsarist occupation, just as during the Soviet period. All the occupiers who followed each other in Armenia had in common this aim: to have only one interlocutor and one person responsible at the head of the Church in order to control its activity better. This hostility to the principle of conciliarity is also explained by the fact that for these autocratic or totalitarian regimes the Council, because the election of delegates from whom it was made up conferred on it a representative character, was a highly subversive entity.<sup>31</sup>

The deliberations of the Church Council were inconclusive. The state, however, was not unhappy about the event. Sergei Gasparyan of the CAAGC was summoned to Moscow to report at the CARC meeting on 20 November about the Church Council which had, he said, been held 'by decision of the directive organs' and with the support of the Armenian government. Gasparyan – who had been appointed to succeed

Hratchya Grigoryan as CAAGC chairman on 3 August 1957 – explained to the CARC meeting how the state viewed the priorities of the event:

All participants of the Council were familiarised with the achievements of Soviet Armenia in the spheres of the economy, science, culture and art. A film was made about the Council and about the flowering of the economy and culture of the Armenian SSR. The cinema film will be ready by the beginning of December 1962 and will be sent to foreign countries. The holding of the Council helped the unmasking of the lies and slanders circulated abroad by pro-Dashnaks and other antisoviet elements.

At the CARC meeting it was decreed to speed up the production of a book on the Armenian Church for overseas distribution and to decide to which countries the film should be sent.<sup>32</sup>

If church councils did not take place as often as many in the Church would have liked, the regular visits by overseas and Soviet bishops to Echmiadzin, especially to anniversary celebrations of Vazgen's enthronement or to the holy chrism ceremonies, allowed synods of the bishops to take place to discuss matters of concern. In November 1965, for example, relations between the Echmiadzin and Antilias jurisdictions were discussed, while in September 1972 liturgical modifications formed the topic of discussion, culminating in a revised liturgy published by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 1977. Other questions considered at these synods were whether bishops must be celibate and whether cremation is acceptable.<sup>33</sup>

### **Visitors to Echmiadzin**

From the 1950s, the Soviet authorities increasingly began to put Armenia on the tourist route. Visitors to the USSR might travel to Moscow and Leningrad, then spend a few days in Armenia or one of the other southern republics. Those visiting Yerevan would often travel to Echmiadzin, where many were impressed by the apparently open attitude to religion in the republic, especially in comparison with Russia. Among those gaining a favourable image was the Italian novelist Alberto Moravia, who travelled to Echmiadzin during a tour of the Soviet Union in 1958. He had already visited the Russian Orthodox monastery at Zagorsk and the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev, but felt they were more like museums than religious centres. Echmiadzin was different.

Here, by contrast, one feels that religion is still something living, stronger than any political upheaval or rather strong enough to be, in addition to so much else, something political. The many people walking under the trees or sitting on the grass in the sun do not seem to be tourists admiring the beauty of a monument, but rather visitors at the same time respectful and familiar, attracted to this place not only by memories of the past, but by a real sentiment, living and precise.

After noting that elsewhere he had seen mainly old people at services, Moravia was impressed to see many children among those present. Quite by chance, he said, he saw Vazgen process from his residence to the cathedral. The catholicos was

a man of middle age, in priestly vestments, with a pointed brown beard and a white, thin face and blue eyes. He passed slowly in front of me and entered the church, through the tense and eager faces of the crowd, which closed up and in its turn went in after him.<sup>34</sup>

If westerners were impressed by Echmiadzin and its ancient traditions, overseas Armenians were even more overwhelmed. 'As the Soviets admit,' wrote Vahakn Dadrian, 'for the overwhelming majority of these tourists the highlight of their visit to Armenia continues to be an emotional pilgrimage to Echmiadzin, the Holy See of the Armenian Church and a symbolic bastion of religious traditions.'<sup>35</sup> The red carpet was rolled out for important visitors. When Nubar Gulbenkian arrived with his wife in 1958 to join the celebrations of the third anniversary of Vazgen's election as catholicos, he visited not only Echmiadzin. The CAAGC chairman Sergei Gasparyan even took him on a special excursion to the Khor Virab shrine, where in the third century St Gregory the Illuminator had been imprisoned for fifteen years in a cave. As the shrine is situated not far from the river Arax along the Turkish border the visit entailed going into a closed military zone.<sup>36</sup>

A number of visitors recall the air of happy domesticity surrounding Vazgen, whose mother Siranush came to live with him at Echmiadzin. She is remembered for her graciousness as a hostess. When the Gulbenkians visited Echmiadzin they were welcomed for a meal in Vazgen's residence, a modest building next to the Mantashyan palace (which had not yet been handed back). 'All the cooking was done by the mother of the Catholicos, an old lady in her late seventies with a shawl over her head. She kept house for him, with at most one other woman to help her, but she showed not the slightest sign of being fussed.'<sup>37</sup> Constantin de Grunwald visited Echmiadzin in 1960 and also met Vazgen's mother when, he reported, at lunch 'the table was presided over by a charming white-haired old lady', although the catholicos was himself away at the time on a visit to North America.<sup>38</sup>

Not all visitors were so impressed by the Christian faith of the Armenians. The Russian writer Vasili Grossman came to Armenia in the winter of 1961–62 and later wrote a lengthy memoir of his impressions. Although admitting he was himself no believer, he was devastating in his criticism, despite his admiration for the beauty of Armenian churches. 'I saw no believers either in the villages or in the towns, but I saw people performing rites ... Not once did I sense a believer. I saw many old village men and women – but I did not sense in them any faith.' Grossman felt, however, that much of Armenia's pagan faith had survived in people's consciousness and, indeed, within the Church. 'In Armenia the pagan temples have been much destroyed, not one has been preserved, not one has survived the vicissitudes of two millennia. But the spirit of paganism has survived ...' Grosman described how a priest at Echmiadzin 'secretly' took him down into the crypt below the altar to see the pre-Christian place of sacrifice. 'The symbolism was unique: a Christian cathedral which had grown up over a pagan temple.' Grossman relished the irony:

When we came back up into the cathedral a well-built priest with jet-black eyes was baptising a child at the altar. Holding the gospels in his left hand, he plunged the aspergillum into the massive silver font and with his right hand he sprinkled the water over the new-born child. The priest quickly and incomprehensibly intoned the words from the holy book, his feet standing over the black, pagan altar of sacrifice below ...

Grossman viewed the continuation of animal sacrifices as a sign of this paganism.

The spirit of paganism comes right to the very doors of god's house to where on festivals people bring lambs, cockerels and chickens, and slaughter the poor things at the doors of the church in praise of the christian god. At almost every door, whether at working churches or at those

which have been turned into museums, the ground is drenched in the blood of sacrificed animals and heads, feathers and down from the chickens lie scattered. The animals brought for sacrifice are cooked, grilled on charcoal then and there, not far from the church, and the sacrificed meat is then and there handed out to passers-by.

This description of paganism in action was not necessarily a criticism. Grossman believed the preservation of a pagan spirit had preserved the Armenians from 'religious intolerance, brutality and fanaticism'.

While at Echmiadzin Grossman was received by Vazgen in his palace, where they talked for twenty minutes over coffee, cognac and chocolates brought by a retainer. Despite his initial nervousness Grossman discovered that Vazgen was not the religious fanatic, the prophet, or the religious prince he had expected, but an ordinary human being. '... I sensed in him an intelligent, well-educated and refined person.' They discussed literature, and Vazgen revealed that he had studied Dostoyevsky and had even written about his work while he was still bishop of Romania. However, Vazgen told him, his favourite writer was Tolstoy. He also told Grossman something about Armenian literature.<sup>39</sup>

A similar impression of the Church was gained by the Russian writer Andrei Bitov, who visited Armenia in 1967. He too joined the 'hordes of people' ('a very intellectual crowd', as he recalled) in Yerevan waiting for the bus to Echmiadzin one Sunday morning. Like Grossman five years before, Bitov was struck by the almost pagan atmosphere, including the fresh blood on the walls of the monastery where the sacrificial doves had been beaten to death. (Bitov noted that while Christianity in Armenia was two thousand years old, the sacrifices were ten thousand years old.) He pushed his way into the cathedral to join the liturgy.

Suddenly it hit me that this was a scene from a bazaar. In one place they were conducting the service, in another place singing, in another place praying, in yet another just gawking. I couldn't understand the proceedings at all. What was wrong? Why, there were no believers! The church was full, jam-packed, you couldn't breathe, your neck and tiptoes ached, but there were no believers. On the right, the philharmonic. On the left, theatre. In the rear, curiosity. And only up front, the kneeling vanity of the habitué.<sup>40</sup>

### **Khrushchev's Persecutions**

Despite the image, however, the true position for the Church was less rosy. Anti-religious propaganda continued in the press, with periodic series of articles. In 1956, the party monthly *Partiakan Kiak* published an article attacking religion as the 'enemy of science, culture and progress' and complaining that religious adherence was growing, particularly among the young and collective farm workers.

In the Spitak district, at the height of work in the fields, and particularly on Sundays, hundreds of people assemble at the shrine of Saint Hovhannes. They hail from neighbouring villages, and even from Leninakan, Kirovakan, Akhuryan, Tbilisi etc.

The author, Danelyan, claimed the Party and Komsomol were completely ignoring such phenomena, despite the involvement of young people. However, he was optimistic that 'tomorrow they will rid themselves of these misconceptions'.<sup>41</sup>

Vazgen later recalled that he had 'sort of threatened to resign' when the Church came under attack.

It was 1957 or 1958, when Anton Kochinyan was premier. A philosophy instructor at the university by the name of Sevyan had an article in *Sovetakan Hayastan* where he called the church the enemy of the people. That depressed and enraged me. I didn't wish to be the enemy of the people. Kochinyan, of course, smoothed things over.<sup>42</sup>

The second time Vazgen threatened to resign was in the early 1960s, during the persecution unleashed by Khrushchev in 1959. He had been riled by Aleksei Puzin, the head of the CARC in Moscow, a man Vazgen remembered as 'thick-headed'.

He didn't know anything about the Armenian people. Once I had the opportunity to meet him face to face and he addressed me as 'Vazgen Abramovich'. At that time too I thought of resigning, but Sargis Kasparyan strongly defended me. There were such moments, but as I said, I benefited from the fact that certain government figures really understood me well and secretly encouraged me.<sup>43</sup>

In private, Vazgen's behaviour had been discussed right at the highest levels of the Party. At the meeting of the Central Committee Secretariat in Moscow on 26 June 1962 Vazgen's receipt of religious literature and 'reactionary' newspapers from abroad without permission was discussed by Leonid Il'ichev, a central committee secretary responsible for ideology, and Mikhail Suslov, a central committee and politburo member. The Secretariat resolved, firstly, that Puzin should 'tactfully' speak to the catholicos as to why this was not 'permissible' (it is not clear if this meeting is the one Vazgen subsequently referred to) and, secondly, that the protocol of the meeting should be sent to the Presidium for information.<sup>44</sup> But it was not just Vazgen who came under close Council scrutiny. At the 12-13 November 1965 session of the CARC in Moscow, Bishop Teryan was ordered to be issued with a reprimand for visiting Italy without the approval either of the catholicos or of the Council. The bishop had gained permission to visit Syria and Lebanon, but had made the unauthorised trip on the way home.<sup>45</sup>

Despite any secret encouragement there may have been from the Armenian party leadership, Khrushchev's persecutions of 1959-1964 had a serious impact on the Armenian Church. According to CARC figures there were 48 Armenian places of worship in the Soviet Union in 1958 and 32 in 1964, a loss of one third. This represents the second highest forced closure rate among Soviet religious groups in this period after the Orthodox Church, which lost some 45 per cent of its communities. Other groups with losses close to those of the Armenian Church were the Jewish,

**TABLE I. Number of registered Armenian churches in Soviet Union**

	1958	1959	1963	1964	1965
Armenia	28	17	17	17	26
Georgia	4	4	4	4	4
Azerbaijan	3	3	3	3	2
Russia	13	13	9	8	8
Total USSR	48	37	33	32	40

*Note:* Figures are as of 1 January of given year.

*Source:* CRA files, GARF, f. 6991 op. 4/2, d. 258, 259, 429, 430, 436 and 439.

**TABLE II. Number of registered religious communities in Armenia**

	1958	1959	1963	1965
Armenian	28	17	17	26
Muslim	2	2	2	2
Baptist	1	1	1	1
Molokan		1	1	1
ROC				1
Other	1	1	1	
Total	32	22	22	31

*Note:* Figures are as of 1 January of given year.

*Source:* CRA files, GARF, f. 6991 op. 4/2, d. 258, 259, 429 and 439.

Muslim, Adventist and Baptist faiths. Smaller denominations generally escaped the persecution more lightly.<sup>46</sup> The 1964 total of 32 Armenian churches included just three in the Armenian capital, Yerevan, by then a city of more than half a million people. Perhaps in view of its high visibility in the diaspora, the journal *Echmiadzin* – like the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* – continued publication throughout the Khrushchev persecutions. By contrast, the Baptist journal *Bratsky vestnik* was forced to cease publication for a few years.

In addition to cutting back on places of worship, Khrushchev's campaign of restricting religious activity was also directed through legal channels. The new criminal codes, approved in the RSFSR in 1960 and in all other republics (in Armenia on 7 March 1961), spelled out several religious offences. Article 141 of the Armenian code punished 'violation of the law on the separation of church and state and of school and church', while article 244 punished 'infringement of the person and rights of citizens under the guise of performing religious rituals'. A further article, 142, punished 'obstruction of the conducting of religious rites', an article which was scarcely used.<sup>47</sup> While in the early 1960s a figure of 640 people was recorded as having been sentenced under the religious articles of the criminal code in the RSFSR, no one was recorded as having been sentenced under these articles in Armenia (likewise no one was sentenced in Georgia and only one person in Azerbaijan).<sup>48</sup>

Tighter administrative control of religious groups was assisted in 1962 with a decree of the Presidium of the Armenian Supreme Soviet of 31 March 1962 (echoing legislation in the other Union republics) spelling out the tasks of administrative commissions attached to local executive committees. Although the decree was apparently not targeted specifically at religious communities it did spell out the duties of officials of local soviets to enforce Soviet legislation and to bring to responsibility those guilty of violations.<sup>49</sup>

There is no record of direct government attempts to change the internal government of the Armenian Church in a bid to restrict church activity, as was achieved with the Russian Orthodox and Baptist Churches in 1961, although Claire Mouradian reports that new draft statutes put forward that same year would have increased the role of the authorities.<sup>50</sup>

Despite (or perhaps because of) this renewed persecution under Khrushchev, there are reports that a certain revival took place, some of this connected with a movement called Yegpairagsutyun (Brotherhood), a lay grouping that grew up in the nineteenth century and which was influential among the Armenians of Beirut in the twentieth century. Hamlet Zakaryan, who was to head the movement in Armenia in the 1990s,

recalled that ‘the movement reached Yerevan in 1947, during the period of repatriation. The movement experienced a major revival in 1960, after the death of Stalin. At that time, there were groups consisting of 50–60–80 persons who had prayer meetings in 12 locations.’<sup>51</sup>

### **The Armenian Church and the WCC**

It was one of the paradoxes of the Khrushchev era that amid fierce persecution the Soviet authorities allowed various Christian churches to join the World Council of Churches, a measure which afforded them a small protection from persecution. Leading the way was the Russian Orthodox Church, which joined in 1961. The following year a series of Soviet churches – the Estonian Lutheran, the Latvian Lutheran, the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, the Georgian Orthodox and the Armenian Church – were accepted into membership at the Central Committee meeting, held in Paris on 11 August 1962. Vazgen had formally written to the WCC general secretary W.A. Visser 't Hooft on 26 April 1962 applying for membership. Recognising that the WCC's principles and actions were in accord with those of the Christian Church, Vazgen stressed that membership of the WCC did not ‘prejudice at all the spiritual authority and autocephaly of all the historically-founded and developed churches’.<sup>52</sup> In his attached memorandum Vazgen outlined the history of the Armenian Church and listed the patriarchates and dioceses throughout the world. Five of the dioceses were in the Soviet Union – Ararat (Yerevan), Shirak (Leninakan), Georgia and Imeretia (Tbilisi), Azerbaijan and Turkestan (Baku) and Nor-Nakhichevan and the North Caucasus (Rostov-on-Don) – and there was a spiritual pastorate in Moscow. Vazgen gave the membership of the Church as 4,500,000, including 1,400,000 in the diaspora. His figure of 3,100,000 members in the Soviet Union corresponds with the Soviet Armenian population, indicating Vazgen's belief that every Armenian was a member of the church. The memorandum was also keen to stress that the Antilias jurisdiction controlled only dioceses in Lebanon, Syria and Cyprus, and that ultimate authority over the entire Church rested with Echmiadzin.

Vazgen's happiness over the Church's unanimous acceptance into the WCC in Paris was marred by a dispute with Antilias over authority. Vazgen wrote to Visser 't Hooft in September to complain that the Antilias jurisdiction had been admitted to the WCC as a separate Church, not as a single Church with Echmiadzin as he had desired. Representatives of the two jurisdictions had held a meeting in Paris on 10 August, the day before the Central Committee meeting, Vazgen wrote, and agreed the Church was ‘one and indivisible’, that Echmiadzin had a place of primacy and that individual jurisdictions had their own ‘administrative rights’. Vazgen declared the recognition of two separate Churches ‘unexpected’ and ‘contrary to the historical and legal situation’. He carried on:

Even more unexpected was not only the fact that the Cilician Church was admitted as a separate Church, but has also presented itself as having authority over the Armenian churches in the United States, Greece and Iran, which does neither correspond to the historically specified rights of the sees of the Armenian Church, nor to the prevailing situation ... we regard the separate admittance of the See of Antilias into the membership of the WCC [as] the result of a misconception, and we fear that this committed act will further widen the split that started in 1956 which is undesirable to us and undoubtedly to our brethren in Antilias.

Vazgen expressed the hope that the WCC would reconsider its decision to admit the See of Antilias as a separate member Church.<sup>53</sup>

After this initial unhappiness, Echmiadzin gradually increased its participation in the WCC. In June-July 1964, Vazgen appointed Fr Mesrob Krikorian (who was from Antilias, but had joined Echmiadzin after the 1950s split) as permanent representative to the WCC in Geneva.<sup>54</sup> He travelled to Geneva to meet Visser 't Hooft in August 1964, and his successor as WCC general secretary, Dr Eugene Carson Blake, visited Echmiadzin on 30 March 1977. A meeting of the WCC Commission on World Missions was held in Echmiadzin in September 1975.

It is noteworthy that much of the initial contact between the Armenian Church and the rest of the Christian world was undertaken by the Catholicosate of Cilicia and the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Constantinople. The representatives who attended the August 1948 inaugural assembly of the WCC in Amsterdam were Archbishop Surmeyan of Paris and Vardapet Shnork Kalustyan from Jerusalem. Archbishop Nersoyan of New York and Bishop Poladyan of Antilias attended the 1952 Lund consultation and the 1954 assembly in Evanston, Illinois as observers. (In a similar way, the first Armenian contacts with the Vatican were undertaken by Antilias.) It is perhaps for fear of losing control over such contacts that Echmiadzin came to play a greater role in ecumenical affairs.

### **After Khrushchev**

The post-Khrushchev era, as persecution eased, saw the rationalisation of the bureaucracy overseeing religion in Moscow. The Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church was merged with the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (which had overseen the Armenian Church) in 1965, to form the Council for Religious Affairs attached to the USSR Council of Ministers, headed by CAROC's old boss, Vladimir Kuroyedov. Armenian church affairs were handled by the 'Department for the affairs of the Catholic Protestant and Armenian churches, the Jewish religion and sects', one of the CRA's seven departments.<sup>55</sup> In 1963 the Council in Yerevan had seen the appointment of a new chief, Karlen Levonovich Dallakyan, who had previously been a member of the Komosol leadership. He was to head the Council in Yerevan until 1970. From 1971 to 1975 he headed the agitation and propaganda department in the Armenian Central Committee, and would later be in charge of the Diaspora committee which maintained links with overseas Armenians, as well as the Academy of Sciences' centre for the study of the diaspora.<sup>56</sup> The fact that his tenure of the CAAGC chairmanship was no obstacle to a senior party position shows the official standing the Council had in the Armenian political structure, unlike the situation in other Soviet republics where the CRA tended to be a political backwater, despite the ideological aspects of the work. (Dallakyan's place as chairman of the CAAGC was taken by Sergei Tigranovich Gasparyan, who was appointed on 24 January 1970 and who remained in office until his death on 25 August 1977.<sup>57</sup> He had served previously as chairman from 1957 to 1963.)

After the merger of the Moscow Councils and a new statute for the CRA, a similar new statute was put in place for the Council for the Affairs of the Armenian Church in Yerevan. This was confirmed in a decree of the Armenian Council of Ministers No. 490, adopted on 16 November 1966 and marked 'not for publication'.<sup>58</sup> The duties of the CAAC were defined as

to inform the government of the Armenian SSR and the Council for Religious Affairs attached to the USSR Council of Ministers of the activity of religious groups on the territory of the Armenian SSR ...

to provide a link between the government of the Armenian SSR and religious organisations in cases of questions that arise which require a decision of the government of the Armenian SSR ... .

Registration of religious communities was to be agreed with the Armenian Council of Ministers but the decree stressed that

The final decision on questions of registration and removal of registration from religious associations and of the opening and closing of prayer houses is taken by the Council for Religious Affairs attached to the USSR Council of Ministers on the recommendation of [*po predstavleniyu*] the Council of Ministers of the Armenian SSR.

The decree also laid down that the staff of the CAAC would be appointed by the Armenian Council of Ministers, a point marked – no doubt in displeasure – in the Moscow CRA's copy of the decree. This administrative fudge failed to clarify who had the upper hand in religious control in Armenia, the Moscow CRA or the Armenian government, and the ambiguous wording of the decree did not satisfy either side. Tensions persisted and there was another round of jockeying for control in 1980, when amendments to the CAAC statute again came up. In 1966 new rules governing administrative responsibility for violating legislation on religious cults were enacted, complementing the new criminal codes introduced in the Soviet republics in 1959–61. These rules specified fines of up to 50 roubles for such offences as refusing to register a religious community, violating established procedures for holding religious events and organising meetings for young people. Such rules were enacted between March and October 1966 in all the other republics and, presumably, also in Armenia.<sup>59</sup>

Between 1 January 1958 and 1 January 1959 the number of registered Armenian churches in the Armenian SSR had fallen from 28 to 17, and remained at that level as long as the antireligious campaign persisted. Following the removal from power of Khrushchev in 1964, the Armenian Church immediately took steps to make up for the lost ground. By 1 January 1965 the number had jumped again to 26 registered churches, with a further three unregistered but functioning communities.<sup>60</sup> However, according to the figures collected by the CARC, the Armenian Church was not the most active religious community in Armenia. In all, there were 31 Molokan communities (although only one of these was registered).<sup>61</sup> Other communities (Muslims, Baptists and Russian Orthodox) had a handful of congregations each, some of them registered. The 1965 report also noted that 14 per cent of new-born babies in Armenia underwent some kind of religious ceremony. It is notable that both before and after the Khrushchev assault on religion the Armenian Church had no functioning places of worship outside the three Caucasian republics and the RSFSR. The church in Kishinev, the capital of Moldavia, for example, had been closed after the wartime annexation of the republic to the USSR and the separate archdiocese of Bessarabia (which had once had 19 parishes with 13 churches) and had been abolished. The churches in Ukraine (both in Crimea and elsewhere) and Central Asia had likewise been closed. Among the eight registered communities in the RSFSR in 1965, two were in Rostov-on-Don and one each in Moscow, Dagestan, Krasnodar region and North Ossetia.

The gains in the number of registered communities made by the Armenian Church in the late 1960s were dramatically reversed in 1969, when a total of seven communities had their registration withdrawn. The 38 registered communities of 1 January 1969 fell to 31 by the end of the year, with a further two which apparently functioned without registration. The figure of just over thirty registered communities in the USSR would remain almost constant until the late 1980s.

In 1964 Vazgen made adjustments to the five internal Soviet dioceses. The patriarchal Ararat diocese, which was the biggest as it included Yerevan, had up till then been presided over by a *vardapet* (celibate priest, or 'archimandrite'). Since 1957 this had been Vahan Deryan, but he was consecrated bishop in November 1964. The seat of the diocese of Rostov and Nor-Nakhichevan, previously based in Rostov-on-Don, was transferred to Moscow and was headed by Pargev Georgyan. The dioceses based in Leninakan, Tbilisi and Baku remained unchanged. Vazgen's decision to base the only non-Caucasian diocese in Moscow, where the only Armenian church had been reopened – at Kevork's and Vazgen's urging – as recently as the mid-1950s, reflected his view that a presence in the Soviet capital was vital.

By this time the Armenian Church seemed to cause the Soviet authorities little concern, especially in comparison to other religious groups. One Soviet writer, Torkom Isayan, described what he considered the futile attempts by the Church to overcome the slide in its popularity.

But despite all these attempts to bring up to date and modernise religion, life is undermining the religious consciousness not only of believers, but of servants of cult too. In 1960-64 alone, six servants of the cult quit religious orders: four archimandrites, two of them former diocesan heads, the catholicos's crozier-bearer, a student of the Echmiadzin theological seminary and deacons. They explained their departure formally as the desire to start a family, follow a specialism etc.

Isayan claimed a similar process was affecting overseas dioceses. Despite warnings by church leaders in Armenia about the exodus, said Isayan, 'neither sermons nor appeals to the patriotic feelings of believers and clergymen can halt the inevitable [*zakonomerny*] process of their departure from religion under the influence of socialist reality'.<sup>62</sup> Atheist literature of this period contains few articles on the Armenian Church. One exception was a 1970 article in *Ateisticheskiye Chteniya*,<sup>63</sup> lamenting the fact that Echmiadzin still attracts believers to services. 'Reactionary circles of some imperialistic countries', the article declared, 'are trying to provoke a schism and to divide the Armenian Church into two parts'. In particular, it went on, the Americans are financing the Dashnak-dominated Cilicia Catholicosate. Like Isayan, the author spoke of the Church's attempts to bring itself up to date, by using attractive music in church, and of the continuation of pagan customs at 'holy sites'. In 1973, *Kommunist* launched an attack on believers which spoke of the discovery

that in certain residential blocks in the Lenin district [of Yerevan] there has been observed a rise in the activity of churchpeople and preachers from sects. In the Noragavit district, almost next to the House of Culture, stands the building of the former church which has not been working for many years. Churchpeople put up a cross here, hung up a lamp and organised the sale of candles. They go from house to house holding 'pastoral' conversations ... They have been able to attract part (even if an insignificant part) of the population to conduct religious rites. The same has been

going on in Chekhov street where in the depths of a residential block churchpeople have set up something resembling a chapel.

However, the journalist was more alarmed by the activities of such groups as the Baptists and the Adventists. The article complained of the failures of atheist work and the difficulty of getting hold of atheist literature and posters.<sup>64</sup>

Sociological surveys of the period, despite their inherent bias in trying to prove the transformation of Armenian society under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism, appear to back up the assertion that ordinary Armenians had largely abandoned attachment to the Church and to its rituals. A field study of family life in rural Armenia conducted by A. E. Ter-Sarkisyants in 1965–68 revealed that marriage customs in particular were no longer linked to religion.

Although at first sight it seems that the contemporary wedding is conducted according to all the rules of the traditional ritual, in fact this is far from being the case ... Rites of a religious and magical character have disappeared or have lost their essence ... The religious side of the rite – the wedding in church as well as the wedding before the *tonir* [oven in ground in private homes considered sacred] which, in the past, was equivalent in the view of the people to a church wedding – has completely died out.

Other rites connected with the wedding ritual had likewise died out or lost their earlier significance. Ter-Sarkisyants noted the custom in which a bull was ritually killed for the bridegroom and his guests.

In the past this was a special ritual bearing a religious and magical character ... In the past, during the killing of the bull the bridegroom, making the sign of the cross on the neck of the bull with a knife, covered and put the bloody knife in his pocket or smeared the clasp which he then covered and kept with him, opening it only on the wedding night. This magical action was supposed to guarantee the fertility of the bridegroom.

Another practice which had disappeared was the visiting of graves during the wedding ceremonies, a ritual ‘connected with the cult of ancestors’. Rituals that remained served more as ‘entertaining spectacles’.

Baptism of new-born babies had likewise all but died out, according to Ter-Sarkisyants. A celebration still took place when relatives and neighbours presented gifts a few days after the birth of a child or when the mother returned from the maternity hospital. ‘It is interesting that if in the past this celebration was connected with the baptism of the child (not for nothing is it called in Armenian *knunk* – christening), now it frequently takes place without a religious rite and has become simply a family celebration on the occasion of the birth of a child and the naming of him.’

The other main rite of passage, burial, also seemed to have lost the religious elements of the ritual associated with it. ‘The burial ritual is, as a rule, conducted without the participation of servants of the cult.’ However, other traditional practices, such as the presentation of vodka or sugar in memory of the deceased, continued. The deceased were remembered on the seventh and fortieth days after death, as well as on the anniversary and on the Church’s day of commemoration for the dead, Holy Cross (although the author noted that this last commemoration had disappeared in the Kafan and Idjevan regions). As Ter-Sarkisyants notes, ‘deep changes’ had taken place over the Soviet era in the system of family rituals. The author adds that changing such customs was a slow process as the younger generation did not wish to

offend the old, and the traumatic time of the Second World War had to a certain extent revived traditional customs.<sup>65</sup> But success in removing the religious element almost entirely from the significant moments of life added to the state's satisfaction at the way society was moving in its fight against religion.

The CRA's annual plans seemed to share this general lack of concern. The 1969 plan, for example, called for an examination by Dallakyan of 'basic tendencies of modernism and conservatism in the ideology of the Armenian Church in contemporary conditions'. Unlike the situation with other religious groups, there was no call to counter the Church's influence. The 1970 plan repeated the same task. In 1971 there was no entry for the Armenian Church. Instead there was a call to examine the activity of the Molokans in Armenia. In 1972 there was to be an examination by the CRA of the religious journals published in the Soviet Union. *Echmiadzin* was to be studied, together with the journals of the Orthodox, Baptist and Muslim faiths. In addition, CAAGC chairman Sergei Gasparian was to study the preaching of the Armenian clergy. Routine supervision in other years involved checking up on the education being offered at the Echmiadzin seminary. The 1975 CRA plan called for an examination of teaching in all religious institutions, including Echmiadzin. Likewise, the plan for 1978 called on the Armenian Council to 'raise the level of patriotic education of those attending the seminary' and to prepare seminarians for eventual foreign work.

The one area where Armenia seems to have caused concern is on the question of pilgrimages. In September 1957, the Armenian Council of Ministers issued an instruction directed as much at the commercial as the religious side of such pilgrimages:

Occasions have recently become more frequent when on religious holidays speculator elements are involved at places of pilgrimage and outside churches in the sale of home-made candles and photocards of 'saints', and also of alcoholic drinks and fruits, involving also in this work underage persons, including schoolchildren.

The Council of Ministers instructed the militia directorate of the Armenian Ministry of Internal Affairs 'categorically to ban' such commerce and to bring to criminal responsibility those 'wilfully breaking these instructions'. The Ministry of Trade was likewise banned from supplying refreshments at such sites.<sup>66</sup>

The Central Committee in Moscow passed a decree, 'On measures to halt pilgrimages to so-called holy places', on 28 November 1958, and a serious campaign was undertaken in all parts of the Soviet Union to stamp them out. The campaign was periodically renewed, backed up by CRA decrees. In 1972, Kuroyedov noted that, in the village of Nork in Myasnikiyan district of Yerevan, a prayer site had been established where the Church of the Holy Virgin had been pulled down 'several decades ago'. According to Kuroyedov 'constant pilgrimages by believers have been organised. On 15 August 1971 alone up to 10,000 pilgrims from Yerevan and other regions gathered there. Pilgrims performed prayers, sacrificed a bird and prepared and served food in unsanitary conditions'.<sup>67</sup> In a report the following year on the observance of legislation on religious cults Kuroyedov noted a total of 13 pilgrimage sites in Armenia.<sup>68</sup> While some may have related other faiths – including holy sites associated with the Muslim Azeri community – most would have been connected with the Armenian Church.

As these and other reports indicate, the uncontrolled pilgrimages often included as many pagan elements as Christian. Anahide Ter Minassian noted the resurgence of pagan customs in the wake of the dechristianisation of Armenian society.

They develop according to their own dynamic, rather than being survivals of the past. *Madaghs* – sacrifices of blessed animals (sheep, chickens), followed by ritual meals – are inseparable from the principal events in life, birth, marriage and death, but also from entry to university or return from military service. Traces of chthonic cults are visible around grottos, springs and rivers. Ancient places of cult and ruined churches are the object of a silent and persistent devotion, as the innumerable ribbons and strands of hair knotted to surrounding bushes and the blackened streaks of wax on the walls attest.<sup>69</sup>

Sheep were sacrificed near the cathedral at Echmiadzin, roasted on the spot and eaten at family meals. According to visitors, some priests were unhappy at having to bless animals for slaughter, but felt obliged to do so. ‘We don’t encourage it,’ a priest at Echmiadzin told a visiting British journalist, John Wilkins, in 1977. ‘It was the people who kept it, not the Church. But it has a biblical foundation – Abraham’s sacrifice.’<sup>70</sup>

### **Vazgen’s Dominance**

Just as the Soviet state had brought the Armenian Church to a position of loyalty and control, so Vazgen had extended his dominance over the Church, requiring loyalty from the clerics under his authority. This dominance was backed by crucial control of the Church’s finances, all but a fraction of which was channelled through Echmiadzin. There were a number of clerics who resented what they felt was Vazgen’s policy of driving out those he disapproved of. One of those who grew increasingly frustrated at his style of leadership was Pargev Georgyan, once the catholikos’ staff bearer and who had been based in Moscow since the late 1950s, since the 1960s as bishop of Nor-Nakhichevan. This conflict came to a head in 1971–72, when Georgyan had to spend eight months in hospital. As Georgyan told CRA official Aleksei Barmenkov at a meeting on 7 February 1972 (held at Georgyan’s request), Vazgen had twice complained that he was neglecting his duties and intended recalling Georgyan to Echmiadzin and sending another priest. Georgyan described the whole business as ‘an intrigue’, according to Barmenkov, and hinted at a deeper reason for Vazgen’s move: ‘Georgyan declared that at present he is the only bishop or hieromonk of the Armenian church born in Soviet Armenia. All the others consecrated by Vazgen are repatriates.’<sup>71</sup> Georgyan told the CRA he was ready to leave religious orders (although he did not do so until 1976). On the same day as the meeting, A. D. Shilkin of the Moscow KGB phoned Barmenkov to declare that Georgyan was a quiet, sensible and loyal priest. A. S. Plekhanov of the Moscow CRA also reported that he was satisfied with Georgyan.<sup>72</sup> Georgyan went to see Barmenkov again on 28 May 1972, furious about what he called the ‘extreme measures’ that Vazgen had taken in cutting off his salary. Georgyan told the CRA of his intention to resign, stressing that this was his own decision. He pledged to ‘unmask’ Vazgen and his circle. The CRA noted that ‘members of the Council will not try to talk him out of it or put pressure on him if he decides to break with the church and set himself on the path of non-belief and atheism’.<sup>73</sup> If the CRA secretly hoped Georgyan would turn and become an atheist propagandist, as with the renegade priests at the time of the revolution, they were to be disappointed. Georgyan’s battle was with Vazgen, not with the Church as a whole. His unhappiness with the catholikos’ style of leadership was shared by a number of other clerics. After

Vazgen's death the London-based Fr Nerses Nersessian – who studied at the Echmiadzin seminary from 1965 to 1968 – hinted at this dissatisfaction by stressing that 'the new catholicos must restore the collegial spirit of the church, allowing greater say to the bishops' synod, where issues of pastoral significance are debated. Under the leadership of the previous Catholicos this participatory approach was stifled.' Nersessian also attacked the priority Vazgen gave to rebuilding Echmiadzin's 'physical plant' at the expense, as he saw it, of the spiritual welfare of the wider Church.<sup>74</sup>

### **Promotion of Atheism**

Speaking on 25 April 1972 at the CRA commissioners' conference, which were held every few years in Moscow, Vladimir Kuroyedov noted the decline in the Armenian Church from 1188 churches before the revolution to the current total of 31. He went on to report the scornful words of the chairman of the Echmiadzin town executive committee, Manukyan: 'Why do we need to control the Armenian Church? ... Just listen to what the catholicos has to say about Soviet power and about our successes. Not every propagandist knows how to speak to people so directly!' This laissez-faire attitude is wrong, says Kuroyedov. Although our friends in Poland or the GDR would envy this, it would be incorrect to use this as a reason not to control the Armenian Church.<sup>75</sup>

This official lack of concern about the threat posed by the Armenian Church did not prevent periodic outbursts at the 'inadequacy' of atheist propaganda and calls for the campaign against 'religious survivals' to be stepped up. In June 1975, the party daily *Kommunist* published a front-page editorial on the subject which admitted that many atheist lectures were 'boring' and that atheist work among the young was particularly inadequate. The writer complained, not for the first time, about a chapel which had been set up in Nork on the edge of Yerevan and which had become a site of pilgrimage. The paper alleged that it had been set up solely with the aim of making money. The local authorities had done nothing about it. As before, though, attention was mainly directed at Pentecostal Christians and other 'unregistered sects', and the districts of Krasnoselsk, Kalinino, Gugark and Sevan were singled out. Although this was not mentioned, these were areas with significant Russian minorities, many of them of Molokan origin.<sup>76</sup>

Coinciding with this editorial and expanding on many of its themes, a party monthly criticised the 'bourgeois propaganda' being disseminated through foreign radio broadcasts, tourists to Armenia and religious literature. It complained of the increasing number of foreign religious stations, some of them broadcasting in Armenian, and attacked their attempts 'to equate ethnic values with religion and with the traditions of the Armenian Church' and their assertions that 'religiousness is the main warrant of Armenian ethnic survival and the hallmark of ethnic distinction'. The article complained of the low standard of atheist propaganda, which 'disregards the intellectual and cultural level of the religious audiences', and – in an echo of complaints about atheist work all over the Soviet Union – criticised those entrusted with the atheist campaign for their 'nonchalance, formality and superficiality'. Among those singled out for attack were Yerevan State University, the Komsomol, Armenian radio and television and the Knowledge Society (*Kidelik*). The article suggested directing atheist propaganda at the young, including 'children exposed to the influence of religious communities'; at women, for 'the impact of religious women upon the young is direct and eminent'; and towards 'the creation and institutionalisa-

tion of non-religious, socialist festivals and rituals as substitutes for religious rites' which can only help 'eradicate the vestiges of religion in people's minds'. Examples of such vestiges noted in the paper were the reopening of closed village churches, the reemergence of 'wandering priests', the creation of 'home churches' and 'the continuation of pilgrimages to sacred shrines'. The paper stressed the illegality of all these manifestations.<sup>77</sup>

Just three months later the communist party daily returned to the subject with an article by Professor Torkom Isayan, chairman of the Council of Scientific Atheism of the *Kidelik* Society. Isayan repeated the claims he had made back in 1966 that just as society was modernising, so was the Church in order to keep up and retain its attractiveness. He acknowledged 'the influence of religion and church upon a segment of the population which is congenial to superstitions and fetishism', as well as 'the activation and even growth of religious ritualism, especially the rites of baptism and marriage'. Citing academic research, he claimed that the real sources of such actions 'are not religious but mundane considerations involving conformity to mores and traditions, a need to be imbued with aesthetic, moral and ethnic values, and to be in communion with one's heritage'. Ordinary citizens who baptise their children, he claimed, admit that their motives are 'the preservation of tradition, relishing the colourfulness of the ritual ceremonies, and accommodating pious parents, this particularly among young parents'. Despite the recent foundation of a chair in the history and theory of atheism at Yerevan University and the imminent opening of a House of Scientific Atheism at Yerevan SSR, Isayan was pessimistic. The response to new, substitute socialist rituals had been disappointing, he admitted. In Leninakan and other cities, the response had been marked by 'timidity and carelessness'. He called for such socialist rituals to be authentically Armenian, so that they will conform to the theory 'national in form, socialist in content'. Isayan stressed the 'humanistic goals of atheism', declaring that the 'spiritual emancipation of the faithful is an integral part of 'communitistic humanism'. He condemned 'the anticommunist distortions and frauds of the clergy'.<sup>78</sup>

The Armenian atheist society *Kidelik* (Knowledge), which had started with 175 members in 1947, claimed a membership of over 14,000 in 1973, with 46 members and 51 corresponding members of the Academy of Sciences, 287 professors and 1536 candidates of science. It also claimed to have organised more than 100,000 lectures.<sup>79</sup> However, this record did not seem to be enough for many atheist writers.

In his report to the commissioners' meeting in 1977, Kuroyedov noted the same total of 31 Armenian churches in the Soviet Union. By the time of the 1980 conference this had risen to 33, still a tiny fraction of the number in the Russian Empire, when an official government survey from 1886 had put the number at 1261 churches (including 1170 parishes, 34 monasteries and 33 chapels).<sup>80</sup> It was only under great pressure that any churches were reopened. Campaigners in Leninakan had long fought to reopen a second church in a town with a population in the early 1970s of more than 170,000 and where, according to the CAAC's own figures, some 20,000 people attended the church over Easter 1978. The CAAC's deputy chairman Andranik Asratyan reported to Galustyan of the Moscow CRA on 16 November 1978 that the Council and the Leninakan executive committee had been considering such requests since 1969. Asratyan reported that the church the campaigners wanted to reopen was being used as a philharmonic hall and – what was worse – was located right next to a school. Asratyan reported scornfully that the reopening of the church was 'not desirable' as less than 100 metres away on the same square was the town's working church 'which fully satisfies the needs of believers'. The CAAC chairman

had been to Leninakan to hold an ‘explanatory conversation’ with the organiser of the campaign to reopen the church, Vahan Terteryan.<sup>81</sup> Terteryan had collected many signatures on numerous petitions to the authorities (more than 1 000 signatures in 1965 and again in 1975) and was clearly not impressed by the CAAC chairman’s arguments. He had written to Leonid Brezhnev and Aleksei Kosygin on 15 September 1978 and wrote again on 22 November. In what was presumably meant to be a reply on their behalf, Galustyan wrote to Terteryan from Moscow on 6 December explaining why the church could not be reopened. Terteryan persisted, with a 500-signature petition in 1981 and a letter to the CPSU Central Committee on 27 October 1981, but this resulted again only in a visit by a CAAC official in December 1981. The church remained closed.

### **Education and Publishing**

As a former teacher, Vazgen realised that the raising of educational standards in the Echmiadzin seminary was vital, and he devoted as lot of attention to this end. The seminary was one of four such institutions in the Armenian Church, the other three being in Jerusalem (dating back to the 6th century), the Holy Cross seminary in Istanbul (founded in 1950, but which was to be closed by the Turkish authorities in 1979) and the seminary of the Catholicosate of Cilicia (founded in 1930 in Antilias, to be transferred in 1977 to Bikfaya). In Kevork’s era there were about twenty students at any one time, although by 1953-54 this had risen to 34. The rector at the time of Kevork’s death was Ter Stephanyan, a repatriate from Syria, and the entire teaching staff was made up of laypeople. Vazgen was able to increase the number of students, bringing in many from the diaspora (most were from Middle Eastern Armenian communities, though in 1978 there were two American Armenians studying at Echmiadzin<sup>82</sup>). He was also able to increase the number and skills of the teaching staff. Some of the teachers simultaneously worked at Yerevan State University, an unusual arrangement at the time. By the 1970s, there were about 35 students at the Echmiadzin seminary, divided into six grades. Students were admitted from the age of 17 (that is, after completing the ten grades in Soviet schools).<sup>83</sup> They were eligible to receive their ordination as celibate or married priests at the end of six years’ study, although not all did so. Students studied classical and modern Armenian, Russian and English, Armenian church music and European music, Old and New Testament, patristics, history and geography. In advanced grades, there was also study of doctrine, church history, psychology, pastoral theology and preaching. A class to study the Constitution of the USSR was introduced by Vazgen in the wake of the adoption of the new Soviet Constitution in 1977. Postgraduate studies were pursued by some students at the Russian Orthodox academy at Zagorsk, an arrangement that had been instituted in 1952 with the despatch of the first group of eight students.<sup>84</sup> From the late 1970s Armenian-born clergy began to be allowed to travel outside the USSR for further religious studies.

The Church’s main publication was the journal *Echmiadzin* and Vazgen was proud to be able to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the monthly in 1968. An evening celebration was held, addressed by the editor Artun Atityan.<sup>85</sup> As a Soviet publication reported,

He noted that during its existence the journal has printed numerous articles devoted to questions of Armeniology, philology, the history of the Armenian nation, the history of the Armenian Church and Armenian cul-

ture. Famous Armenian scholars and cultural figures have published valuable articles on Armeniology in the pages of the journal: Catholicos Karekin Hovsepyan, St. Malkhasyan, Gr. Acharyan, G. Levonyan, E. Shakhaziz, Av. Isahakyan, Ar. Arakelyan, Ash. Abrahamyan, Sirarbi Ter-Nersisyan, Arm. Alnoyajan and others.

The report noted that the journal was printed on Echmiadzin's own press, installed in 1961, and went on to mention Vazgen's key role in the success of the journal, raising the print-run from 2000 to 3500 copies. Thanks to its 'great contribution' to 'one of the most important contemporary problems, the cause of the universal movement for peace', the journal was given an award by the Soviet peace committee.<sup>86</sup> As can be inferred from the report, the journal's contribution had been reduced to that of a cultural rather than religious publication. Significantly, Atityan made no mention of theology in his list of subjects covered. Although a wide range of leading Armenian cultural figures was able to publish in the journal – unthinkable for the Russian Orthodox or Baptist journals – the state had succeeded in neutralising any religious impact *Echmiadzin* might have had.<sup>87</sup>

Just as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, the state gradually approved the publication and importation of copies of the Bible, although in the case of the Armenian Bible, the quantities permitted were greater in comparison with the demand than with other churches. As elsewhere, the Bible was not published through normal state channels and thus was not allowed to be sold through state bookshops, nor officially could second-hand copies be sold through the state-run second-hand bookshops. The Church was able to produce a translation into modern Armenian, a project which was agreed at the synod of bishops held in Cairo in 1956 during Vazgen's visit. In 1970, the Armenian Church printed 10,000 copies of the Gospels and Acts, followed by 10,000 New Testaments in 1974-75. In January 1979, an edition of the New Testament, translated from Classical Armenian into the Western Armenian dialect (i.e. that of most of the diaspora, not that of Armenia itself) was published. This edition was produced with help from the United Bible Societies which, in the early 1970s, made available early Armenian versions of the Bible.

Whenever editions of the Bible were published, the decision had to be agreed not just by the CAAC and the CRA, but by the Armenian government too. On 27 May 1980, the Armenian Central Committee Buro adopted a decree approving the reissue of the New Testament in Armenian in 20,000 copies. Karen Demirchyan, the Armenian party first secretary, sent a copy of the decree to the Central Committee in Moscow. Pyotr Luchinsky, deputy head of the propaganda department of the Central Committee, declared that as the Armenian Central Committee had already discussed the matter there was no need for the Moscow CRA to discuss it.<sup>88</sup> The 20,000 copies of the New Testament were published the following year.

In 1982, after the publication of 15,000 copies of the New Testament by the Bible Society in Western Armenian, Asratyan of the CAAC wrote to Vladimir Fitsev of the Moscow CRA on 25 November to seek permission for Bishop Nerses Bozabalyan to travel to Paris to supervise the despatch of these copies to the foreign dioceses.<sup>89</sup> In 1983, permission was granted to import 22,000 copies of the New Testament, printed in South Korea, from the Jerusalem Patriarchate.<sup>90</sup>

Vazgen's other publishing priorities centred around glossy books on the Church and volumes on his predecessor and himself. In 1955 a commemorative biography of Kevork VI had been published at Echmiadzin, and a lengthy biography of Vazgen in 1958. In 1956 and again in 1963 commemorative volumes on Vazgen's foreign

travel were published.<sup>91</sup> More general booklets on the Church were produced to be presented on foreign travels. On his visit to the WCC in 1978, a booklet was given to journalists which observed that the ‘Sovietization of the Caucasus dealt a terrible blow to the Church’, but went on to add that an ‘explosion of faith’ occurred after the Soviet authorities allowed religious practice to reemerge after the Second World War.<sup>92</sup>

The ban on religious publishing prevented most books with a religious connection from appearing in print but, as in other republics, a certain amount of scholarly publishing which included classical religious works was permitted in Armenia. The Armenian Academy of Sciences published a number of such works in the later Soviet era, such as the Armenian *Ganonakirk hayots* (*Book of Canons*), published in an edition edited by Vazken Hakopyan in 1964 and 1971.<sup>93</sup> Among more recent works, the novels of Raffi, the leading nineteenth-century Armenian writer, had already reappeared in print in the wake of the Second World War. Many discussed or touched on religious themes, including his novel *Samvel* (*Samuel*).<sup>94</sup>

### **The Church in Armenian Society**

Vazgen was keen to use various anniversaries to promote the Church and boost his national standing. His 60th birthday in 1968 was recognised by the award of a state order, presented by the chairman of the presidium of the Armenian Supreme Soviet Nakush Arutyunyan. He praised Vazgen, describing him as a leader who ‘always served the Armenian people and our fatherland, Soviet Armenia, that ancient land, which thinks of the heroic and tragic past where the present blossoms gladly’.<sup>95</sup> The following year Vazgen linked the celebration of his birthday to the seven-yearly blessing of holy chrism. Representatives from all round the world attended, including 25 Armenian bishops – though, pointedly, not Catholicos Khoren of Cilicia nor the seven bishops under his jurisdiction – and representatives of the World Council of Churches and the Vatican. 1980 marked the 25th anniversary of Vazgen’s enthronement, celebrated in some pomp. The 1980 All-Union CRA plan had called for the Council to enact measures for ‘celebrating in Echmiadzin the 25th jubilee of the enthronement of Catholicos Vazgen I’.<sup>96</sup> On his 75th birthday, which fell on 20 September 1983, Vazgen was awarded the Scroll of Honour by the presidium of the Armenian Supreme Soviet. Fadei Sarkisyan, chairman of the Council of Ministers, described Vazgen as ‘one of the most highly recognised and authoritative figures in the Christian world’.

Vazgen’s high international profile (as well as his rights as primate of the Church) allowed him to intervene outside Armenia on behalf of what he perceived as the wider interests of the Armenian nation. The proposed sale of historic manuscripts by the Jerusalem Patriarchate in 1967 evoked a swift protest from Vazgen to Patriarch Yeghishe Terteryan. Vazgen was joined in his protests by other leading Armenians, including S.M. Petrosyan, described by the Soviet paper *Izvestiya* as ‘a representative of the working class of Soviet Armenians and a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR’.<sup>97</sup> Vazgen had previously been on good terms with Terteryan and had been more favourably disposed towards him in his dispute with Tiran Nersoyan over control of the Jerusalem Patriarchate in the late 1950s. Terteryan had gained the support of Echmiadzin, while the Catholicosate of Cilicia had lined up behind Nersoyan.<sup>98</sup>

Just as Vazgen was acquiring a kind of official status within Armenian Communist society, so the Church was being rehabilitated. Visitors to Armenia were impressed by the apparent freedom the Church enjoyed. A Georgian Orthodox delegation visit-

ing Echmiadzin in the 1960s apparently ‘commented enviously that if the Armenians were really heretics, then their brand of heresy was much more lucrative than the strictest Orthodoxy could hope to be’.<sup>99</sup> Raymond Oppenheim, Episcopalian chaplain to the United States embassy in Moscow from 1972-75, noted that

The *modus vivendi* achieved by Catholicos Vazgen I has permitted a greater degree of religious freedom to flourish in Soviet Armenia than in any other part of the Soviet Union ... . On my desk is an Armenian New Testament, printed on the presses of Holy Echmiadzin. It was purchased on a parish church bookstall in Soviet Armenia. In my more than three years’ residence in the USSR, the only Bibles I ever saw on legal, public sale were in Armenia.

Oppenheim also attended a concert in Yerevan to commemorate the twelfth-century catholicos and theologian St Nerses Shnorhali, featuring mainly church music sung by Lusine Zakaryan, a people’s artist of the Armenian SSR as well as a soloist at the cathedral in Echmiadzin.<sup>100</sup> Each artist bowed towards the catholicos’ box. Oppenheim also noted that picture postcards of Vazgen were on sale in many places and were seen on the walls of shops and homes.<sup>101</sup> When the Armenian composer Aram Khachaturyan – who was not afraid to report publicly that he went to see Vazgen every year<sup>102</sup> – died in Moscow in May 1978, a special memorial service was held at Echmiadzin attended by relatives and members of the artistic community. In December 1978, the Church initiated a series of honours (named after St Sahak, St Mesrop and St Nerses Shnorhali) to be presented to those who had provided faithful service not only to the Church, but to national culture, education and science.

In line with Bulganin’s promises to Vazgen in 1956, the Church was able to receive funds from abroad for a variety of purposes. Vazgen acquired an endowment fund in a New York bank to which contributions were made by wealthy diaspora Armenians to use as Vazgen saw fit.<sup>103</sup> Diaspora Armenians were also able to contribute to specific projects. The Gulbenkian Foundation eventually paid for the repairs to Echmiadzin cathedral. Alex Manoogian, a wealthy businessman in America and the president of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, financed the building of a patriarchal museum at Echmiadzin, the foundations of which were blessed by the catholicos in 1977 and which was completed in 1982, and the restoration of the Geghard monastery. (Vazgen awarded Manoogian the Cross of St Gregory the Illuminator, first class, in gratitude.) George and John Kurkjian of London (sons of Sarkis Kurkjian, Vazgen’s sponsor at his consecration) financed the rebuilding of St Sarkis church in Yerevan, while another London family, Hagop and Rita Cherchjian, financed extensive repairs to the Tatev monastery near Goris in southern Armenia.

While visitors may have been impressed, some Armenians believed the Church was accorded these privileges because of its fundamental weakness. Eduard Oganessyan, a cybernetician who worked for the Armenian Academy of Sciences and who defected in 1972, spelled out this view frankly:

Through their rediscovery of Armenia’s rich national heritage, its art, music, literature and architecture, today’s younger generation in Armenia have been led to search for answers to religious questions which they had not dared to ponder before ... . Apart from many young Armenians who are genuinely searching for a religious faith, the religious revival in Armenia amounts to a revival of interest in religious rituals which are seen as part

of Armenia's national tradition ... Many baptize their children, marry in church and have requiems said for the dead, not because they are believers, but because these sacraments have become for them national traditions. The Armenian Church lacks faith and does not oppose the ruling ideology. That is why it is not persecuted.<sup>104</sup>

In contrast to the high figures for church attendance and participation in rites always quoted by Vazgen, government officials gave what appears to be a more realistic picture of adherence to the Church. In 1981, the deputy chairman of the Armenian Council of Ministers with responsibility for cultural affairs, R. Kh. Svetlova, told the BBC's John Osman that most Armenians did not believe in God.<sup>105</sup>

However, in contrast to earlier dismissive references to Echmiadzin as the residence of the catholicos 'in centuries gone by' or 'before the revolution', reference books and guidebooks again referred to Echmiadzin as the spiritual centre of the Church. A 1972 publication, *Znakom'tes' Armeniya*, spoke of the introduction of Christianity to Armenia and gave a description of Echmiadzin's churches.

Echmiadzin is today not only an important industrial centre of the republic, the administrative and cultural focal point of the developed agricultural district of the Ararat valley, a town of republican significance, it also continues to remain the religious centre for all Armenian believers.<sup>106</sup>

The rehabilitation of former catholicoses also seems to have been achieved by the time of the publication of the *Haikakan sovetakan hanrakitaran (Soviet Armenian Encyclopedia)*, issued in 12 volumes from 1974. Khoren I and Kevork VI were both given favourable entries.<sup>107</sup> The description of the Church in Soviet reference works had undergone several metamorphoses over the communist period. The first edition of the *Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya (Great Soviet Encyclopedia)* of 1926 had given a fairly neutral entry for the 'Armenian Church', describing objectively its history and doctrine. The only negative comment was a characterisation of the Church as a promoter of the policies of the nineteenth-century Armenian bourgeoisie, but with the corresponding plus side (from the Soviet point of view) that the Church had begun to make reforms on a similar line to those of the 'Living Church' movement in Russian Orthodoxy, albeit on a limited scale. By 1950 the entry on the 'Armenian-Gregorian Church' in the second edition of the encyclopedia had given a more ideological (and negative) assessment of the Church. It dwelt on the Church's 'feudal' past and reminded readers that it had 'supported the bourgeois-kulak dictatorship of the Dashnaks [in the independent Armenian republic] and fought against the revolutionary movement of workers and peasants of Armenia, led by the Communist Party'. It stressed the hostility of the Church leadership to the establishment of Soviet power in Armenia. However, 'under the influence of the masses' the Armenian Church 'was obliged to adopt a loyal position in relation to Soviet power'. By 1970, in the third edition of the encyclopedia, an expanded entry on the 'Armenian Apostolic Church' – interestingly, written by the former head of the CAAGC Suren Ovanesyan – stressed the loyal position of the Church towards the Soviet system and its involvement in the fight for peace. Vazgen was mentioned as the current catholicos.

However, the rehabilitation of the Church's heritage was mainly directed into cultural channels. The Armenian Central Committee and the Council of Ministers approved the celebration in May 1962 of the 1600th anniversary of the Armenian alphabet, but with public recognition of two church figures – St Mesrop Mashtots

and St Sahak – as cultural not religious personalities. On 27 May 1962 the Soviet post office issued a stamp depicting Mashtots to commemorate the anniversary, although the stamp itself featured only his contribution to devising the alphabet. A book about Mashtots published that year echoed the official view:

In the past, when Armenia was deprived of state independence, the day of commemoration of Mashtots was conducted by the Church, which had canonised him as a saint, but today, in our Leninist century, statehood has been achieved and the resurrected Armenian nation crowns its genius-son with laurels, expressing the great civic recognition of the nation.<sup>108</sup>

The Soviet authorities had long been prepared to accept Mashtots as a cultural figure. The republic's main manuscript repository, the Matenadaran (whose collection was based on the confiscated manuscript library at Echmiadzin), was named after Mashtots. When the new building was built in 1957 an imposing statue of Mashtots holding up the letters of the Armenian alphabet was placed below the entrance. Other church figures were remembered – though only in a cultural capacity – in sculptures around the building. Likewise official recognition of Vardan (who led the Armenians against the Zoroastrian Persians at the battle of Avarair in 451, later recognised as a saint by the Church) and Komitas (the clergyman and composer who was eventually driven mad after witnessing the 1915 Turkish massacres) neglected their religious roles.<sup>109</sup> As in the case of Mashtots the stamp issued on 18 September 1969 to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Komitas failed to show any religious connection, featuring him only as an 'Armenian composer'. Mashtots and Komitas were thus some of the very few figures with a religious connection ever to appear on Soviet stamps.<sup>110</sup>

Church buildings too were to be treasured – if at all – only from an architectural point of view. In 1969 the atheist monthly *Nauka i religiya* had published a complaint about the neglect of the Armenian church in Yalta, built at the beginning of the twentieth century as a copy of the St Hripsime church in Echmiadzin and closed in 1921. The building – which housed a museum – had been defaced with graffiti and rain came in through the broken windows.<sup>111</sup> There was no suggestion that it should be restored as a church.

A 1975 article in *Kommunist* contrasted the inaction and 'disrespectful attitude' of the Armenian Administration for the Preservation and Restoration of Monuments with the unauthorised restoration of the church in the village of Arinj by a local pensioner, Gurgen Arutyunyan. He had called on the Administration to restore the church but to no avail, deciding eventually to restore it himself. By the end of the 1960s he had turned the church into a place of pilgrimage and built two chapels nearby.

Gurgen Arutyunyan hung icons in the church, displayed candlesticks, and put up crosses. He declared it his 'holy' place. And in fact gullible people found their way to it: they believed him. Every day here one can meet some of the 'people hungering after divine grace' ...

He acted openly, hiding nothing. In plain view of the public organisations in the village. But this did not disturb anyone.

The paper reported that the church had functioned some 40 years before, but failed to mention the 1930s persecution of religion which would have caused its closure. 'Gradually believers gave up attending it,' *Kommunist* writes. 'The building became deserted and dilapidated here and there.' The article obliquely criticises a 'strictly scientific attitude' which causes the neglect of such monuments because of their reli-

gious connection, while at the same time criticising the unauthorised reopening of a place of worship by what it terms ‘the latter-day preacher’.<sup>112</sup>

A 1980 article in *Kommunist* proudly described the restoration of a number of Armenian churches in the Soviet Union. The church on the Nevsky Prospekt in Leningrad was to be repaired and handed over as a venue for fine arts exhibitions. A museum of Russo-Armenian friendship had opened in the restored Holy Cross cathedral in Rostov-on-Don. In Feodosiya in Crimea five of the seven Armenian churches had been restored in the past few years. Work had already begun on restoring the Armenian cathedral in Kishinev in Moldavia, which had been built as a replica of Echmiadzin cathedral. None of the churches mentioned was to function as a place of worship.<sup>113</sup> In Armenia itself, restoration was proceeding. The thirteenth-century church complex at Khuchan near Stepanavan, the thirteenth-century monastery at Makaravan and the seventh-century church at Zoravar near Egvard were restored in the early 1980s, though also as museums. A museum of ancient musical instruments was to be created in the restored monastery at Kecharis (Tsakhkadzor). The Tatev Monastery in the mountains of Zangezur was also to be rebuilt by 1985.<sup>114</sup> Other churches were put to less glamorous uses or even left abandoned. The Chernovtsy church, for example, located in the city centre, was used in the late 1970s as a warehouse for embroidered goods.

Likewise, any of the Church’s cultural activities which might have had an impact on the religious sphere – or set a precedent which other religious groups might want to follow – were not approved. In early 1981, for example, Echmiadzin wanted to send a choir of 30-35 people to perform in France. After discussion with Sil’chenkov of the Fourth Department of the KGB’s Fifth Directorate (the department that controlled religious groups) the CRA decided that such a visit was ‘not desirable’ as it would set a precedent for the Baptists and the Russian Orthodox Church, would inaugurate exchange visits and attract young people to church.<sup>115</sup>

### **Ecumenical Contacts**

Within the Soviet Union the Armenian Church was encouraged by the state to join with other Churches in pro-regime events. But bilateral ecumenical gestures were increasing. Vazgen visited Russian Orthodox Patriarch Aleksii in February 1957. Aleksii visited Echmiadzin in 1960 and 1963. In 1972, a delegation led by Patriarch Pimen visited Echmiadzin.<sup>116</sup> The Georgian Patriarch-Catholicos Melkisedek had visited Echmiadzin in October 1957, as did his successor David V in 1972. In November 1977 Vazgen attended David’s funeral and, the following month, the enthronement of his successor Ilya II.<sup>117</sup> Ilya himself later returned the visit. Representatives from other Eastern Churches also visited Echmiadzin, including the head of the Coptic Church, Pope Shenouda III, in 1972, the head of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Maksim, in 1974 and the head of the Ethiopian Church, Patriarch Tekle Haymanot, in 1978. The Armenian Church played a key role in consultations with other Oriental Churches, such as the meeting at Addis Ababa in 1965.

Many of the ecumenical visits to Echmiadzin took place at the time of the seven-yearly blessing of chrism, which Vazgen had deliberately made into a large-scale event. More than 20,000 people are reported to have attended the ceremony in October 1969. When it was next held in September 1976 (coinciding with the – slightly belated – celebration of the 20th anniversary of Vazgen’s consecration as Catholicos), the figure was put at 40,000. Among those attending on that occasion were Patriarch Pimen, Patriarch David and Cardinal Johannes Willebrands from the

Vatican. Other leading Catholics who visited Echmiadzin included the Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Franz König, in September 1980.

Contacts between the Armenian and the Catholic Churches developed in the wake of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) to which the Armenian Church sent observers, among them Karekin Sarkissian, later to become Catholicos Karekin II of Cilicia. These contacts were followed up by a visit to Echmiadzin in summer 1965 by Johannes Willebrands and Pierre Duprey of the Secretariat for Christian Unity. Willebrands again visited in June 1972 and in 1976.

The Catholicos of Cilicia, Khoren I (Baroian), became the first head of an Eastern Church to make an official visit to the Vatican when he travelled to see Pope Paul in May 1967. The two had already met briefly in November 1964 at Beirut airport while the Pope was on a stopover on the way to Bombay. In 1967, during Pope Paul VI's visit to Istanbul, the pontiff met the Armenian Patriarch Shnork (Kalustyan) twice, where the patriarch was able to act as intermediary, passing greetings between Pope Paul and Vazgen.<sup>118</sup>

Vazgen travelled to the Vatican in May 1970 for an audience with Pope Paul VI, the first meeting between a catholicos and the pope for many centuries. Vazgen was accompanied by the Armenian patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem. As a sign of Pope Paul's esteem for the catholicos, he invited him to stay in St John's Tower in the Vatican gardens, a great honour. Vazgen and the pope jointly blessed the congregation at the papal Mass in St Peter's. Pope Paul also presented Vazgen with relics of St Bartholomew who, according to tradition, was the first missionary to Armenia.<sup>119</sup> By now the Armenian Church had shed its previous virulent anti-Catholicism, which had been motivated as much by a desire to please the Soviet authorities as by any deeply-held beliefs. In the wake of the meeting cooperation between the two Churches in the field of clergy training increased. As Vazgen told Gerard Stephanesco,

graduates from our seminary in Echmiadzin are now able to complete their studies in Catholic institutions. One of them has been sent to Buenos Aires, another to Montreal. This year, several others will go to study in Catholic faculties of theology in the West. This is a first attempt at collaboration between our Churches. But I am convinced that the ecumenical ceremony in which God permitted me to take part alongside Pope Paul VI will have a historic significance and that the fruits will not fail to ripen in the near future.<sup>120</sup>

By 1978, when Cardinal Karol Wojtyła was elected Pope John Paul II, Vazgen was able to utter some suitably welcoming words on the new pope. 'It may be that in the person of the new pope we have the means to bring about the reconciliation between East and West.'<sup>121</sup> During his visit to Turkey in late 1979 Pope John Paul visited the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul.

The Armenian Catholic community at San Lazzaro in Venice, run by monks of the Mekhitarist order, received a first visit from Vazgen in 1956 and again in 1970 directly after his visit to Rome. The following year a monk from Venice spent three months in Echmiadzin teaching in the seminary. Vazgen also visited the Vienna branch of the order while in Austria. In 1965 the Armenian Catholic Patriarch Ignatius Batanyan and the Rev. Hovhannes Aharonyan, both from Beirut, visited Echmiadzin for the first time. Relations between the Armenian Church and its Catholic counterpart retained an undercurrent of tension, however, although relations were by no means as polarised as in the immediate post-war era. In 1976 the Mekhitarist order celebrated the 300th anniversary of the birth of its founder,

Mekhitar of Sebask. *Echmiadzin* gave good coverage of Mekhitar's achievements the following year, which also recognised the achievements of the Mekhitarist Order. However, some criticism was expressed, as well as the hope for the eventual return of the Uniate Armenians to the mother Church.<sup>122</sup>

Contacts were also developing with the Anglican Communion. Vazgen had visited the archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, during his first tour as catholicos in 1956. One of Fisher's successors as archbishop, Dr Donald Coggan, visited Echmiadzin in October 1977, the first head of the Anglican Church to make such a visit. A key role in establishing friendly contacts between the two Churches was played by Dr Coggan's adviser on ecumenical affairs, Dr Robert Runcie, whose close contacts with Vazgen went back to 1970. Looking back on his first visit to Armenia in 1977, Runcie recalled the informality of his discussions in Echmiadzin with Vazgen and other Armenian Church leaders, 'an informality not see elsewhere in Eastern Europe', and added: 'We might have been in a different country from the Soviet Union'. Runcie contrasted this with his meetings with, for example, leading clerics of the Russian Orthodox Church. Vazgen introduced Runcie to the CAAC commissioner (presumably the deputy chairman Andranik Asratyan), declaring 'but he's more of an Armenian than a minister!' Runcie's visit came at a time of heightened tension between the Anglican and Eastern Churches as the ordination of women to the priesthood in the Anglican Communion increasingly became an inevitability. Senior figures in the Russian Orthodox Church, especially Metropolitan Nikodim, took a strongly hostile line. By contrast, Runcie reported that 'the Armenian Church was much less troubled by what the Anglican Communion was planning to do', and he found Vazgen 'unfussed' when asked about the issue. 'It will not alter our relationship if you do it', Vazgen told Runcie, 'but the Armenians are not ready to discuss the matter'. Runcie declared that 'we were rather pleased' about Vazgen's reaction. 'When I repeated this to the metropolitan in Moscow as a kind of plus side to help in our extremely frosty relations over this subject, he said "What do you expect the Armenians to do? They're the great survivors."' Runcie's reminiscences of Vazgen were clear. 'All who met the Catholicos knew, I believe, that he was not a politician, but he was spiritual person with natural diplomatic antennae and courtesies ... . He always seemed to me to have some of the wisdom that comes out in the short sentences of the teacher.'<sup>123</sup> Vazgen repeated his opposition to women priests in a 1978 interview. 'In our culture and in our circumstances', he declared, 'it is something that cannot be considered because it is not practical.'<sup>124</sup>

Vazgen's visits to the WCC in Geneva allowed increasing contact with Protestant churches. In 1966 he was invited to celebrate the liturgy in the Protestant cathedral there, the first non-Calvinist minister allowed to celebrate since the days of Calvin. In 1977 the Armenian Church joined the Conference of European Churches.

In the 1972 interview with Stephanesco, Vazgen put the number of Armenian bishops in the Soviet Union at six, three of them in Armenia (in addition to himself). He gave the number of priests in Armenia as 120, all of them married. He said there were eight vardapets and thirty or so deacons, of which some lived either at Echmiadzin or at the Geghard monastery. He gave the number of open churches as four in Echmiadzin and three in Yerevan. Vazgen put the number of new-born children being baptised at between 60 and 65 per cent. 'This percentage has not stopped rising', he added. He reported that on feast days hundreds of baptisms took place at a time at Echmiadzin and Geghard. Vazgen was, according to Stephanesco, less happy about the situation with marriages. 'According to the rules, marriages should take place in church, but in practice, we accept the ceremony in homes.' He reported that there were three main pil-

grimage sites in Armenia: Echmiadzin, Geghard and Khor Virab. Tens of thousands of pilgrims come to Echmiadzin on 15 October, the Feast of the Virgin, he said.

Stephanesco asked Vazgen about church-state relations.

The Catholicos did not look in the slightest embarrassed by my question. I could detect no hesitation in him. He replied steadily, but lightly hammering the words: 'I have been directing the destiny of the Church for sixteen years in Soviet Armenia and throughout this period I have maintained that church-state relations have been evolving in a favourable direction.'<sup>125</sup>

These extensive travels were also the occasion for Vazgen to be quizzed over the state of religion in Armenia. He uniformly presented a glowing picture of religious faith among his people and uncritically supported Soviet rule over Armenia, with only the occasional hint of criticism passing his lips. The most common question he was asked was about the number of Armenians who were believers. His standard reply to all enquirers was that the vast majority were practising members of the Church. At a June 1978 press conference at the WCC in Geneva he even put the figure at 90 per cent, although he did remark that there were too few churches in the capital Yerevan. He noted that there were only three for a population of more than one million, adding that two others had been razed in the course of urban planning. 'However, we have received permission to open at least one new church in Yerevan', he declared.<sup>126</sup>

The rupture between the Antilias and Echmiadzin jurisdictions was gradually being healed. On 26 October 1963 Vazgen had, at his own request, met the newly-elected catholicos of Cilicia, Khoren I, in Jerusalem and together they conducted a requiem service for Khoren's predecessor, Zareh, whose election in 1956 Vazgen did so much to oppose. A synod was held in Echmiadzin from 4 to 10 October 1979 with representatives from both jurisdictions, aimed at resolving the differences. A communique affirmed the primacy of the catholicos of Echmiadzin and called for a return to the administrative position before the break in 1957. This outcome represented a victory for Vazgen.<sup>127</sup> It is perhaps significant that the growing moderation on the part of the Catholicosate of Antilias – traditionally under firm Dashnak control – reflected the growing neutralisation of the Dashnak party by KGB agents, who had deliberately targeted the organisation in an attempt to neutralise its anti-Soviet stance. Oleg Kalugin, who headed Directorate K (counter-intelligence) in the KGB's First Chief Directorate from 1973 to 1980, described the Dashnaktsyutsyun as 'the emigre organisation we most thoroughly penetrated'. Noting that the group had traditionally been fiercely hostile to the Soviet system, Kalugin reported:

Over time, we placed so many agents there that several had risen to positions of leadership. We succeeded in effectively neutralising the group and by the 1980s Dashnaktsyutsyun had stopped fighting against Soviet power in Armenia. The organisation and some of its members had been co-opted by the KGB.<sup>128</sup>

With the neutralising of the threat from the Dashnaks the Soviet regime now had the loyalty of all three of the main Armenian diaspora parties. The Ramgavar Party (Liberal Democrats), traditionally made up of the bourgeoisie, was a firm opponent of Antilias and a supporter of Echmiadzin. The Hunchak Party – traditionally of Marxist orientation – was likewise a supporter of Echmiadzin.

Vazgen's good contacts with the authorities allowed him to invite almost anyone he chose and to get them a Soviet visa, provided they were not avowedly anti-

Soviet.<sup>129</sup> Numerous influential Armenians and churchmen came to visit him. In addition to these contacts in Echmiadzin Vazgen's travels to Armenian communities around the world were extensive, taking him to most countries of Europe, North and South America, Australia, the Middle East and India. Throughout these journeys Vazgen highlighted the central role he believed the Armenian Church should play in preserving a sense of Armenianness among diaspora communities, even describing this on occasion as part of the Church's 'apostolate'. Provided this brought the diaspora communities into closer touch with Echmiadzin, the Soviet regime can only have been happy. Vazgen also made more directly political statements on these foreign travels, not hesitating to describe Soviet Armenia as the 'mother country'. He condemned as 'treason' the emigration of Armenians from Armenia, a process that was gradually getting under way in the late 1970s. 'The Armenians do not have the right to diminish the population of the mother country', he declared.<sup>130</sup> Vazgen's remarks to local Armenian communities on these travels were closely monitored by the Soviet authorities, usually via their embassy in the relevant country. Thus a report on Vazgen's visit to Argentina in July-September 1960 was sent to the CARC – at the latter's request – by the deputy head of the consular section of the Soviet Embassy in Buenos Aires, D. Gvimradze, on 13 November 1960. Gvimradze reported that Vazgen had given the 'correct' answers to questions on the position of religion in the Soviet Union at a press conference.<sup>131</sup>

CRA annual plans (which had to be approved by the Central Committee) constantly speak of the 'help' to be given to the catholicos in undertaking his overseas visits. The 1977 plan, for example, spoke of his forthcoming visits to the United States, South America and Iran. The following year it was Iraq, France, the USA and Argentina. The 1980 CRA plan outlined a visit to the United States, Argentina, Brazil and France. A decree of the Armenian Central Committee Buro of 15 February 1980, signed by Karen Demirchyan, permitted the Armenian Council to authorise the 65-day visit 'to strengthen the connection with foreign centres of the Armenian Church'. A copy was sent to the Central Committee in Moscow for information.<sup>132</sup> In 1984, it was Argentina, Brazil, France, Switzerland, Britain and Uruguay. Vazgen did not, however, emerge unscathed from these travels. On at least one occasion he had the humiliating experience of being reprimanded by the CRA for bringing back 'anti-Soviet' literature produced by Armenians abroad. (In 1979 an archimandrite from the Echmiadzin congregation, Samvel Petrosyan, had brought back from Greece 226 theological books for the monastery library, apparently on Vazgen's instructions. The books had been confiscated by the customs at Odessa and, as CAAC deputy chairman Andranik Asratyan informed Petr Makartsev of the Moscow CRA on 25 July 1979, the Church had applied to retrieve them.<sup>133</sup>)

At home, Vazgen was keen to put the ecumenical message to a new generation of Armenian priests. In the mid-1970s he introduced a special course on ecumenism at the Echmiadzin seminary.<sup>134</sup> In 1973 he also founded a department for ecumenical relations in the Catholicosate, responsible to the chancellor of Echmiadzin Bishop Arsen Berberyan. The department was headed by a layman, Shabazyan, a lecturer at the seminary.

It is noticeable how much easier it was for Vazgen to make visits even to tiny overseas communities (such as the estimated 500 Armenians in Sweden he visited in 1977) than to the much larger communities in the Soviet Union. Likewise many of the small overseas communities had their own bishops, unlike many of the Soviet diaspora communities. His difficulty in visiting communities within the Soviet Union, especially those in Tbilisi and Baku, may have been caused by the 'massive

but subdued' welcome he received at the airports and churches there<sup>135</sup>, as well as the hostility of local Communist leaderships of non-Armenian nationality.

### **The Armenians of Karabakh**

The mainly Armenian-populated Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, located within Azerbaijan, saw repeated bouts of tension between the Armenian majority and the Azerbaijani leadership in Baku. This tension was particularly acute in the 1960s, with ethnic clashes in the capital Stepanakert. The 1960s also saw a number of unsuccessful appeals to the party leadership in Moscow to have the enclave transferred from Azerbaijani to Armenian jurisdiction. Among the Armenian grievances was the prohibition on Armenian churches in the enclave, which had seen all Armenian places of worship (as well as Muslim mosques) closed by the early 1930s. The last bishop of Karabakh, Vertanes, was imprisoned in Baku, although he was later released on condition that he never return to Karabakh.<sup>136</sup> A CAAGC report from 1 April 1949 had listed the 'historic Artsakh diocese' with the note: 'The head of the diocese was the late bishop Vertanes Hakopyan. Both these dioceses [Artsakh and Syunik] existed and functioned in the days of Soviet power.'<sup>137</sup> The Armenian church in Stepanakert had been totally destroyed in the 1930s and a theatre built on the site.

Only one of the mass petitions from the Armenians of the region, however, seems to have made a point of the lack of open places of Christian worship, as distinct from a general concern over the fate of historical monuments. Alongside a complaint about the deliberate neglect of monuments, including the Gandsasar monastery, an appeal to the government of the Armenian SSR and to the CPSU Central Committee in Moscow in September 1967 included mention of the absolute ban on Christian religious practice in Karabakh.<sup>138</sup>

Tension reemerged in the region in the mid-1970s, especially in the wake of a special plenum of the Karabakh Communist Party, devoted to the theme 'the tasks of the party organisation of Nagorno-Karabakh for the further improvement of the international education of the toilers', held in Stepanakert in March 1975. The keynote and lengthy speech by the party first secretary in the enclave, Boris Kevorkov, particularly angered the Armenians. Although himself an Armenian, he launched a bitter attack on Armenia and those who wanted Karabakh to come under Armenian jurisdiction. Armenian writers were criticised. All aspects and expressions of Armenian cultural identity came in for relentless attack, including any attention given to Armenian monuments.

No small amount of expenditure has brought an uncritical attitude to religious monuments. There is no doubt that some of them are also masterpieces of popular architecture. For that reason it is imperative that what has genuine value must be completely separated from its religious covering.

Other speakers at the plenum singled out for criticism workers in the ideological sphere who 'sometimes take a temporising position with respect to ideological rubbish, do not always display the proper militancy and efficiency in the struggle against vestiges of the past, and sometimes pander to them'.<sup>139</sup>

In a long letter of April 1975 criticising Kevorkov's stance the chairman of the Karabakh Writers' Union Bagrat Ulubabyan complained about the speech to the party Central Committees in Moscow and in Yerevan. Among his criticisms was

Kevorkov's 'hatred' of Armenian monuments.

A few years ago the head of the region's directorate of culture Zhan Andryan officially raised the question of the need to save from inevitable destruction the Kazanchetsots church in Shusha, one of the few remaining buildings in the Armenian part of the town and rightfully considered one of the Armenian monuments of the nineteenth century most deserving restoration. Then Andryan was told in Kevorkov-speak: 'We can't, as religious ideas were propagated in the Kazanchetsots church'. Andryan replied: 'But given that in the next-door Azerbaijani mosque they weren't engaged in the propaganda of Marxism, yet all the same this mosque has not only been preserved, but each year large sums are devoted to its reconstruction and preservation intact'.

And these words were enough for Andryan to be removed from his post as a nationalistically-minded person.

In his speech, Kevorkov again attacks Andryan and the Kazanchetsots church, dubbing the latter 'the ruins of a church' and the words of Andryan as a complete distortion.

Ulubabyan reported that the thirteenth-century Gandsasar monastery in Mardakert region was being 'consigned to slow destruction' through neglect despite being recognised as a unique Armenian monument by French and Russian scholars. However, Ulubabyan seems most concerned to show the monastery's historical role 'in the liberation struggle of the nation' against Persian and Turkish rule and the orientation of the region's Armenians towards Russia. Guidebooks to Azerbaijan included references to historic mosques but, Ulubabyan complained, were silent about key Armenian monuments.<sup>140</sup>

The Armenians were all too aware of the fate both of the Armenian population and of Armenian monuments in the Azerbaijani region of Nakhichevan which, the Armenians believed, the Azerbaijani authorities were determined to clear of all Armenian traces. One author reported that 'in the period from 1930 to 1978 more than 30 Armenian monuments from the Middle Ages were destroyed, including 19 small churches, three large churches, two narthexes, a bell-tower and three ancient cemeteries'. An Armenian film group which visited Nakhichevan in 1975 to make a documentary film was reportedly told by the secretary of the region's Party Committee, Kazibekov: 'Why are you filming Armenian cultural monuments when we have hardly any Armenians still here and soon nothing will be left of the remains of Armenian monasteries and churches?'<sup>141</sup>

Ulubabyan's criticism of the Azerbaijani approach to historical monuments came at the start of a prolonged academic dispute over the origin of such monuments. The Azerbaijani version of history – which believed that the Karabakh Armenians were in fact Armenianised Caucasian Albanians or migrants from the Persian Empire at the beginning of the nineteenth century – was most vocally espoused by Ziya Bunyatov and other Azerbaijani historians. The Armenian version was supported not only by Armenian historians but by historians in Russia, including Anatoli Yakobson. Typical of the debates was Yakobson's reaction to the thesis put forward by one member of the 'Azerbaijani school': 'R. Geyushev's arguments are absurd, unfounded and tendentious, and for that reason antiscientific. They are not capable of changing to the slightest degree the existing views, neither about [Caucasian] Albania, nor about [the historical Karabakh region of] Khachen, nor about the Gandsasar Monastery which, contrary to the view of the hapless author, was and

remains an outstanding monument of Armenian culture, and the Armenian nation is justified in its pride in it. R. Geyushev's observation simply muddies historical science.<sup>142</sup> These historiographical disputes were conducted in the relative obscurity of Soviet academic journals, especially those published in Yerevan and Baku. It was not until the late 1980s as the conflict between the Armenians and Azerbaijanis over the Nagorno-Karabakh region intensified that the plethora of more popular works on these themes would flood from the presses. But even in the 1970s it seems clear that both the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis understood that whoever could claim the monuments on disputed territory could claim legitimate ownership of that territory. This accounts for the often ferocious debates about the true identity of the cultural heritage and for the redesignation of many monuments in Azerbaijan belonging to non-Azerbaijani cultures, such as Armenian or Lezgin, as Azerbaijani (or, in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, as Albanian or Greek).<sup>143</sup> The Armenians complained that the systematic neglect of Armenian monuments in Azerbaijan was deliberate.

Interestingly, despite the complete absence of registered religious communities in Nagorno-Karabakh – whether of the Armenian or Muslim faiths – a report by Kuroyedov on Azerbaijan dated 23 January 1974 included the suggestion: 'Request the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijani SSR to examine the question of the establishment of the duties of a commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs for the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region.'<sup>144</sup> The reason for Kuroyedov's desire to install a commissioner in Stepanakert is not clear, and it is likewise not clear if this suggestion was followed up.

### **The Dissident Era**

Armenia was scarcely touched by the opposition to state control that resulted in a burgeoning dissident movement in the 1970s in the Soviet Union. Although an Armenian Helsinki Monitoring Group was set up in Yerevan on 1 April 1977 on similar lines to groups in Moscow, Kiev, Vilnius, Tbilisi and elsewhere,<sup>145</sup> the dissident movement in Armenia remained relatively small. This may in part be connected with the fact that Armenians enjoyed wider freedoms than other Soviet nationalities and that the Soviet state had to a certain extent provided a protected haven for the Armenian people secure from Turkish aggression. The mass movement that led to the construction in Yerevan in 1965 of a monument to the victims of the 1915 Ottoman genocide – although not officially sanctioned by the Armenian government – deflected criticism of Soviet rule. (It is noteworthy that even Vazgen had difficulty maintaining order at a commemoration in Yerevan's Opera Square.) The only other mass demonstration with a religious element took place in July 1983, marking the 80th anniversary of the confiscations of Armenian church property by the tsarist regime, which in 1903 had united all classes of Armenian society in defence of the Church.<sup>146</sup>

The founding document of the Armenian Helsinki Group had made just one passing reference to religious freedom. One of the first attempts to draw the Church into the wider human and national rights movement was a 1976 letter from the chairman of the Helsinki group, Eduard Arutunyan, to Vazgen,<sup>147</sup> calling for him to support the call for the release of political prisoners. Arutunyan also used the occasion to remind the catholicos of how the Soviet state failed to implement its own legislation, especially the decree on the separation of church and state. 'Today to talk of the separation of the state from the church is absurd', he declared. He gave some illustrations:

According to the decree the church exists through the gifts of believers and the state has no right to interfere in the financial activities of religious

organisations. However, in practice we see that the situation is often different ...

In contradiction to the decree the state often promotes the involvement of the church in international political relations, for example in questions of the campaign for peace throughout the world, participation in the peace movement, in calling for the solution of world problems by negotiation, for disarmament and the banning of nuclear weapons.

Vazgen must have been all too aware of the constant state interference in the life of the Armenian Church to which Arutunyan was referring. But there was no response from the catholicos, a fact Arutunyan referred to in a 1978 letter calling for the release of the 'servant of God' Shahen Arutunyan, another human rights activist who had been arrested in December 1977.<sup>148</sup> It is significant that Eduard Arutunyan addressed his appeal this time to the catholicos of Cilicia, Khoren I, believing – no doubt correctly – that Vazgen would not take up the case in public.

A number of leading figures in the Helsinki Monitoring Group had church connections. Robert Nazaryan, a physicist, was also a deacon in the Church. (He had been born in Yerevan in 1948 of Romanian Armenian parents, had entered the seminary in 1971 and been ordained deacon in 1973. On 27 June 1973 Nazaryan had written to Vazgen asking to be ordained a monk-priest.<sup>149</sup> On 11 December the following year he wrote again to Vazgen, this time to ask him that he be allowed to return to join the brotherhood. In a reply on Vazgen's behalf on 24 December Bishop Arsen Berberyan informed him that Vazgen considered his scientific training made him better suited to serve the nation as a scientist than as a clergyman. He noted that at Nazaryan's age it would be difficult for him to learn all the rites which he would be required to serve.<sup>150</sup>) The chairman of the Helsinki Group, Eduard Arutyunyan, had written the letter to Vazgen calling on him to support political dissidents, and in 1979 addressed a letter to the newly-elected Pope John Paul calling on him to help the imprisoned Nazaryan.<sup>151</sup> Another dissident, who had campaigned almost single-handedly for Armenian independence from the USSR, was Paruir Airikyan. He had been imprisoned back in 1969, but soon after release in 1973 he had tried unsuccessfully to enter the Echmiadzin seminary: his application was vetoed by the state authorities. Airikyan was arrested in 1974 and given a ten-year sentence, ensuring that he was in labour camp by the time the Helsinki Monitoring Group was formed in Yerevan.<sup>152</sup> The Helsinki Group members and sympathisers, Nazaryan and Arutyunyan as well as Edmund Avetyan and Rafael Papayan, were soon themselves arrested, Nazaryan in December 1977<sup>153</sup> and the rest in November 1982. Arutunyan was to die in camp. Although religious concerns had occasionally been raised by the Group, all of these prisoners were convicted for political activity.

The 1970s onwards saw a mushrooming in the quantity of unofficially-produced religious literature throughout the Soviet Union. Bibles, religious books and tracts, complaints, petitions, reports and leaked official documents entered what became known as *samizdat*. Most religious groups were represented by this growing flood of literature, especially the Russian Orthodox and the Baptists of the Council of Churches (the so-called *Initsiativniki*). The Armenian Church was one of the few denominations (among them also the Muslims and Buddhists) from which almost no such religious *samizdat* literature reached the West. The Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in the USSR, founded by three Russian Orthodox Christians in Moscow in 1976, passed on more than 400 *samizdat* documents to the West over the next four years. It is interesting that although there were Russian Orthodox, Baptist, Adventist, Pentecostal, Catholic, Georgian Orthodox and even

Jewish texts, there were none from the Armenian Church.<sup>154</sup> This lack of *samizdat* letters and complaints partly reflected the generally freer political atmosphere in Armenia, partly the isolation of the republic and partly the inherent weakness of the Armenian Church.

Likewise, as hundreds of religious prisoners were dispatched to labour camps during the clampdown introduced by KGB chief Yuri Andropov from the late 1970s, there were just a few Armenian Christians who ended up in labour camp or psychiatric hospital, mostly for political activity. One of the early appeals by the Helsinki Group, the June 1977 announcement to the Belgrade Conference, mentioned Gerasim Stepanyan, who had been sent to a psychiatric hospital 'for a religious gathering in his apartment'.<sup>155</sup> Stepanyan does not appear to have been mentioned again, and it is not clear what his subsequent fate was, nor what religious group he belonged to. The only member of the Church known to have been imprisoned for his faith in the 1970s and 1980s was Archdeacon Garnik Tsarukyan. Born in 1934 in Athens into a family of Armenians which had fled the Turkish massacres, Tsarukyan and his family had immigrated in 1948 and settled in Echmiadzin. Garnik later entered the seminary and was ordained an archdeacon in 1954. The following year he refused his call-up into the Soviet army and was imprisoned for three years. On release he worked in parishes in Rostov-on-Don and Tbilisi, but was dismissed from both posts after preaching sermons criticising what he saw as corruption and immorality in the Church. In 1962, Tsarukyan wrote an open letter to Vazgen urging him to canonise Armenian priests who had died in Soviet labour camps. When he received no reply he staged a hunger strike at the grave of St Mesrop Mashtots (in the crypt of the church in Oshakan, not far from Echmiadzin) to draw attention to his campaign. He was arrested and briefly detained in a psychiatric hospital. On release in 1963 he repeatedly applied to emigrate. He is said to have had an invitation from Patriarch Yeghishe Terteryan to serve the Church in Jerusalem. He tried to drum up support by visiting foreign journalists in Moscow, but his internal passport was confiscated and he was sentenced to a year in a labour camp on charges of 'vagrancy'.

Tsarukyan used his time after his release to travel through the Caucasus cataloguing threatened Armenian church monuments and made a further unsuccessful appeal to Vazgen to begin restoration work on them. He grew close to the Helsinki Group through his friendship with deacon Nazaryan (he had baptised and was godfather to both Nazaryan's nephews) but it seems he did not sign any of the Group's documents. Tsarukyan apparently addressed an appeal to the WCC General Assembly, held in Nairobi in November-December 1975, an echo of the famous letter from Russian Orthodox Christians Fr Gleb Yakunin and Lev Regel'son. In the appeal Tsarukyan described the difficult position of believers in Armenia and outlined his own difficulties. Unlike the Yakunin-Regel'son letter, which caused great controversy at the Assembly, Tsarukyan's appeal appears never to have reached Nairobi; it may have been confiscated in transit by the Soviet post office.

Vazgen finally appointed Tsarukyan as an unpaid deacon in the church of St Gayane in Echmiadzin, but he was sacked by the parish priest Fr Gurgen Ashuryan in April 1983. It was during the feast of St Sarkis, 18 February 1984, that Tsarukyan again got into trouble. He preached a sermon in Echmiadzin cathedral accusing church leaders of collaborating with the KGB. He was arrested and transferred to enforced confinement in Yerevan psychiatric hospital. He was held there until his release in mid-1987.<sup>156</sup> Tsarukyan's case is interesting for two reasons: the boldness of his protests was unique in Armenia; and like many of the clergy in post-war Armenia he was from a family of 'repatriates'.

The almost total absence of religious prisoners from Armenia contrasts sharply with the position in almost every other republic of the Soviet Union at this time. Even members of other religious groups in Armenia seem to have been spared punishment for their religious activities. It was, it seems, only in the 1980s that the religious articles of the Armenian Criminal Code were deployed widely. In November 1982 a group of four Pentecostal Christians were sentenced in Hrazdan for 'infringement of the person and rights of citizens under the guise of performing religious rituals' (Article 244). One of them, Suren Sedrakyan, received a one-year labour camp sentence, another a one-year term of forced labour, and the other two had part of their wages deducted for a one-year period. In 1986 a Pentecostal from Oktembryan, Samvel Aleksanyan, was sentenced under article 244. In 1985 a Hare Krishna devotee from Yerevan, Ara Akopyan, was sentenced under the same article, while another devotee from Yerevan, Sergei Kasyan, was forcibly detained in a psychiatric hospital suffering from 'Krishna mania'. A group of four leading devotees were arrested in November 1985 and charged under article 244 after attempting to register the Hare Krishna movement as a legal religious group. Other arrests of Krishna devotees followed. There is no recorded use in the 1970s and 1980s of the second 'religious' article of the Armenian Criminal Code, 'Violation of the laws on the separation of church from state and school from church' (Article 141).<sup>157</sup>

### **Genocide Recognition**

The Church in Armenia had played an important role in keeping alive the memory of the 1915 genocide, with the tacit blessing of the Soviet authorities. The first memorial in Soviet Armenia to commemorate the victims of the genocide was put up in Echmiadzin. In April 1965, to mark the 50th anniversary of the rounding up of the leaders of Constantinople's Armenian community which inaugurated the final and most brutal assault on the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, Vazgen issued an encyclical letter to commemorate the victims. A special issue of *Echmiadzin* devoted to the genocide was published.

At the official commemoration in Yerevan on 24 April at Opera Square Vazgen was granted a special box by the Armenian communist leadership. When the crowds got out of hand it was Vazgen who tried to calm the people and restore order after the communist leaders had reportedly fled. Quoting eyewitness sources, Dadrian reports that 'the audience wildly cheered the Catholicos and eventually heeded his advice to disperse'.<sup>158</sup> The crowd had been angry at what it saw as the only half-hearted official condemnation of Turkey.

On 31 October 1965 Echmiadzin hosted a number of overseas church visitors for its own commemoration. Catholicos Efrem of Georgia and Metropolitan Ioasaf of Kiev led delegations from the two Soviet-based Orthodox Churches, while from abroad there were numerous Armenian churchmen, including the Catholic patriarch from Beirut, Ignace-Pierre Batanyan, and Rev. Hovhannes Aharonyan, president of the Union of Evangelical Churches of the Middle East. The pastor of the Baptist church in Yerevan, Sarkis Konsulyan, was also present.<sup>159</sup>

One event at the time, however, had not been predicted by the Soviet authorities. A group of Armenian students in Moscow held an unscheduled demonstration on 24 April 1965. Several hundred marched on the Turkish embassy and forced officials there to lower the Turkish flag in memory of the victims, as Vahakn Dadrian reports:

This daring venture was legitimised by the reading of an encyclical issued on the occasion by the Catholicos; its evocative message was utilised to

justify the commemorative intent of the enterprise. The Armenian chapel in Moscow was overcrowded that day with the demonstrators participating in memorial services; and that chapel was both the departure and rallying point where it was collectively decided to ignore the injunctions and threats and to march – accompanied by Soviet agents in civilian clothing and uniformed police.<sup>160</sup>

In 1980 the visit to Echmiadzin by Veronika Lepsius, the daughter of Dr Johannes Lepsius, the chairman of the German-Armenian Society from 1914 to 1925 who wrote several books made up of eyewitness accounts of the genocide, was moving for both parties. A memorial service was held in the cathedral.<sup>161</sup>

It is interesting to note that officially published materials on the genocide did not shy away from mentioning the religious component to the Ottoman assault on the Armenians. Thus a 1966 collection of documents published by the Academy of Sciences included many that mentioned the attacks on and murders of priests, the destruction of Armenian churches or their transfer into mosques, the desecration of sacred objects and the enforced conversion of both priests and laypeople to Islam.<sup>162</sup>

### **Loyalty to the Soviet State**

The Armenian Church was expected by the Soviet state to play its role in producing a favourable image of the country and of religious freedom to the outside world. As far back as 1959 – during the Khrushchev persecution – the Church had been called upon to play its part in Soviet propaganda to overseas Armenians. In the CARC ‘basic tasks and plan of work’ for 1959, the section on international work included the resolution: ‘Work out measures having as their aim the use of the Armenian Church of the USSR to strengthen Soviet influence among Armenians living in foreign countries.’ This task was to be fulfilled by the CAAC in Yerevan.<sup>163</sup> In addition to statements by clerics on travels abroad the CRA included Armenia on the itinerary of numerous foreign religious delegations and the activity of the Armenian Church was designed to impress such visitors. For those who could not visit Armenia the CRA was keen to use the Church for similar purposes through the media. On 10 September 1979, for example, Petr Makartsev wrote from the Moscow CRA to the newly-appointed CAAC chairman Ruben Parsamyan to inform him that ‘as part of the work for propaganda abroad of freedom of conscience in our country’ the CRA would arrange to send two or three foreign television crews to Armenia in October 1979 to make films about the Armenian Church. Makartsev stressed that ‘the given television crews have positive experience of cooperation with the Council’.<sup>164</sup>

In general, like all Soviet religious leaders, Vazgen could be relied on by the state to back its policies in public. He signed numerous statements, especially in support of the Soviet government’s ‘peace’ policies. As early as 1962, the state was coopting Vazgen, together with other religious leaders, to back its foreign policy interests. On 10 October 1962, for example, KGB chairman Vladimir Semichastny wrote a note to the Central Committee ‘on measures to create a public movement in defence of Cuba’ in response to United States’ attempts to ‘strangle’ Cuba by means of a blockade. Six measures were proposed, including statements by the writer Il’ya Erenburg and the composer Dmitri Shostakovich. In point three, Semichastny proposed:

To organise an appeal by Patriarch Aleksii and Catholicos of All the Armenians Vazgen to all Christian believers of capitalist countries with a call to raise their voice against the possible aggression of the Americans

and the declaration by them of an economic blockade of Cuba.<sup>165</sup>

It is interesting that the Soviet state viewed Aleksii and Vazgen as the two most reliable and suitable clerics for this task – particularly Vazgen, as the issue had no Armenian connection. In the event, the appeal was signed not just by Aleksii and Vazgen but by five other clerics as well, and was issued on 25 October 1962.<sup>166</sup> Later on these organised responses by Soviet clerics became more systematic, embracing a wider range of religious leaders. In 1972, together with four other clerics, Vazgen signed a letter prepared by the Soviet Committee for the Defence of Peace attacking the writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn for his Lenten letter to Patriarch Pimen. ‘We believe deeply’, the letter declared, ‘that all supporters of peace will condemn the slanderous calumnies of A. Solzhenitsyn towards the Russian Orthodox Church and its leader, Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and All Russia.’<sup>167</sup> In 1977 Vazgen joined the Soviet campaign against the American neutron bomb.<sup>168</sup> In 1979 he issued a statement to the press condemning China’s aggression against Vietnam. ‘The Peking leaders have unleashed military actions against the heroic Vietnamese people,’ declared Vazgen. ‘All the peoples of the world are alarmed and deeply angered by this act.’<sup>169</sup> In 1973 Vazgen had been elected to the board of the Peace Fund. Vazgen was obliged to ensure that the Armenian Church played a full part in the Christian Peace Conference, the Prague-based mouthpiece for Soviet bloc propaganda initially founded in 1958. In 1983 Vazgen hosted a meeting at Echmiadzin with representatives from more than twenty countries. The meeting called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from occupied Arab territory.<sup>170</sup>

On 25 July 1977, during nationwide ‘discussion’ of the draft of the new USSR Constitution (which was eventually adopted by the USSR Supreme Soviet on 7 October 1977), Sergei Gasparyan, chairman of the CAAC, reported to Makartsev of the Moscow CRA on how religious leaders were responding. Vazgen expressed his ‘satisfaction’ about the text of the draft to a correspondent of Armenpress. Bishop Komitas Ter-Stepanyan of the Ararat diocese, which included Yerevan, held meetings for clergy and layleaders of the community, where ‘complete approval’ of Article 52 (which covered religion) and of the draft as a whole was expressed. These views were in sharp contrast to that of an unnamed Pentecostal pastor in Armenia, who objected that the draft allowed atheist propaganda but restricted religious propaganda. Vazgen agreed to a suggestion from the CAAC to introduce a course on the Constitution into the curriculum of the Echmiadzin seminary.<sup>171</sup>

The Fourth Department of the KGB’s Fifth Directorate watched closely the Church’s contacts with the outside world. In May 1980, for example, the KGB headquarters, in Moscow, liaising closely with the KGB in Yerevan, interfered in Vazgen’s plans to visit the Americas:

With the aim of frustrating the plans of the secret services of the USA to exploit the visit of the head of the Armenian Church Vazgen I to the USA and the countries of Latin America, in cooperation with the KGB of Armenia his visit was postponed. A study of the attitude of the Armenian colony in the USA to this step showed that the measures taken allowed the strengthening of Vazgen’s authority in the Armenian diaspora.<sup>172</sup>

The delay to the visit enforced by the KGB was probably connected with the worldwide condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 and the boycott by a number of countries (including the United States) of the Olympic Games held in Moscow in summer 1980. Although state control over the Church was

tight, the Armenian Church was in a slightly anomalous position compared to other Soviet Churches. Although Vazgen had to work closely with the KGB no evidence has been published showing that he was recruited as a KGB agent. Oleg Gordievsky, who worked in the KGB's First Chief Directorate, maintains that Vazgen was not a recruited agent, although he believes Vazgen worked out his own *modus vivendi* with the Armenian KGB which, Gordievsky declares, followed Armenian national goals just as much as Soviet goals. Gordievsky explains, though, that once senior clergymen attained leadership positions in Soviet Churches, they were no longer handled as agents as they had been up till then. Because Vazgen became a Soviet citizen only in the wake of his election in 1955 as catholicos it is possible he bypassed the normal recruitment process that other Soviet religious leaders, such as successive Russian and Georgian Orthodox patriarchs, were obliged to go through.<sup>173</sup> Gordievsky reports that of the ten or so clergymen who visited Britain in 1983 at the invitation of the British Council of Churches only the Baltic representatives and Bishop Nerses Bozabalyan of the Armenian Church were not recruited agents. For all the others, in accordance with normal procedure, telegrams were sent by the Moscow KGB to the London KGB residency with their details.<sup>174</sup>

The KGB showed some satisfaction at its control over the Armenian Church. The annual report on the results of the organisational and agent-operational activity of the Fourth Department of the Fifth Directorate for 1982 declared:

Through leading agents, the ROC [Russian Orthodox Church], the Georgian and Armenian Churches hold firmly to positions of loyalty towards and active support for the peace-loving policy of the Soviet State.<sup>175</sup>

The KGB, though, remained suspicious of the Armenian Church's ecumenical contacts, fearing that these might lead it to a greater spirit of independence from the Soviet State. Of particular concern was the Catholic Church, especially after the 1978 election of Pope John Paul II. In 1984, the First Chief Directorate sent a circular to KGB *rezidenty* in a number of countries with a list of 'measures to counter the subversive activity of the Vatican'.

Many statements of heads of the Roman Curia contain appeals to various religions and churches to 'forget past feuds and achieve mutual understanding and cooperation in the fight against atheism'. In this respect particular attention should be paid to the Vatican's efforts to achieve an alliance with the Russian Orthodox Church and to establish contacts with the Georgian Orthodox, the Armenian-Gregorian and other Churches, including Protestant ones, operating in socialist countries. The Vatican has proclaimed the idea of creating a so-called 'religious international' ... to combat communist ideology.

Among the 'active measures' proposed were efforts to counter the 'expansion of contacts' between the Vatican and these churches.<sup>176</sup>

### **Bureaucratic Manoeuvres**

Following the death of Sergei Gasparyan in August 1977 the CAAC was without a chairman until the appointment in September 1979 of Ruben Hovsepovich Parsamyan, who was to remain in this office until the Gorbachev era. In the interregnum, the CAAC was run by the deputy chairman, Andranik Aramovich Asratyan.

There was a renewed bout of tinkering with the bureaucratic control of religion in 1980, with the adoption by the USSR Council of Ministers on 25 February of a new decree on the status and structure of the All-Union CRA. This new statute updated the 1966 statute. Soon after – no doubt on instruction from Moscow – the CAAC drew up draft amendments to its own statute, which had been approved in November 1966. The draft, according to a letter of 5 May 1980 from Parsamyan to Galustyan at the Moscow CRA, added the description of the CAAC as a ‘union-republican organ’ and specified that the Council could take action ‘approving these questions in advance with the Council for Religious Affairs attached to the USSR Council of Ministers’. The draft spelled out that the CAAC chairman could be appointed and removed by the Moscow CRA ‘on the representation of’ the Armenian Council of Ministers. The CAAC’s coat of arms was to be changed to use the Soviet emblem, not that of the Armenian SSR.<sup>177</sup> In a reply to this letter from the Moscow CRA on 26 May, Makhmud Rakhankulov told Parsamyan that the CRA accepted the draft new statute, but with one important change: the description of the CAAC as a ‘union-republican organ’ was to be deleted, as it was not one. He stressed that the CAAC could not decide on questions of registration and removal from registration of religious communities, nor on the opening and closure of places of worship. He underlined that the status of the CAAC had not changed, and that the USSR Council of Ministers decree of 25 February had not given the Armenian Council of Ministers any instructions to do anything.<sup>178</sup> The final text was adopted by decree (marked ‘not for publication’) of the Armenian Council of Ministers, No. 390 of 15 July 1980, ‘On the introduction of changes and additions to the Statute of the Council for the Affairs of the Armenian Church attached to the Council of Ministers of the Armenian SSR’, with a list of the changes attached. This final version specified that the CAAC chairman should be named by the Moscow CRA ‘on the representation of’ the Armenian Council of Ministers, while the deputy chairman and other officials should be appointed and removed by the Armenian Council of Ministers.<sup>179</sup> Marks on the CRA copies of all the various texts of the CAAC statute show that it saw the question of who should appoint and remove CAAC staff as a key factor in the struggle for control. The net effect of these arcane changes was, at least on paper, to shift the balance of power away from the Armenian government and towards the Moscow apparatus, although it is by no means clear that the Moscow CRA was able to extend its day-to-day control in any practical way at the expense of the Armenian government.

However, moves by the CRA in Moscow – which were often prompted by the Ideological Department of the Central Committee – were usually echoed in similar moves by the CAAC in Yerevan. For example, in 1981 the Moscow CRA passed a decree on the commissioners for the assistance of the observance of laws on religion, who were appointed to local soviets and charged with checking up that individual congregations were doing nothing illegal. On 5 June 1981, Parsamyan sent from Yerevan to Rakhankulov of the Moscow CRA a copy of the Decree of the Armenian Council of Ministers ‘On confirmation of the statute of the commissioner for assistance on the observance of legislation on religious cults attached to executive committees of district and town soviets of people’s deputies’, which was closely modelled on the Moscow CRA decree.<sup>180</sup>

### **Church Statistics**

The CAAC and CRA constantly recorded statistics on the numbers participating in religious rites, especially at major feasts like Christmas or Easter. For example, a

report on Easter 1978 was sent by Asratyan to Tarasov of the Moscow CRA on 7 June 1978. He reported that 'many foreign and local tourists' visited Echmiadzin for the feast, putting the number at some 25,000 visitors, with 55 baptisms. Takings, mostly from candles, were 30,415 roubles. The three churches in Yerevan had some 20,000 visitors, with 17 baptisms and takings of 31,155 roubles. The one church in Leninakan had some 20,000 visitors, with 67 baptisms and takings of 11,210 roubles. Asratyan reported that these figures were slightly up on 1977.<sup>181</sup>

By the early 1980s the Armenian Church and the state had reached a stable *modus vivendi*. The Church had been granted a certain freedom to maintain contact abroad, Catholicos Vazgen was accorded a certain national standing and higher church institutions were able to function. At the same time, the number of places of worship was strictly limited. CRA figures<sup>182</sup> record no change in the number of places of worship of any denomination in Armenia or of the Armenian Church in Armenia and elsewhere in the USSR between 1980 and 1984. Likewise, no Armenian church places of worship were built or reconstructed in these years. (Later figures from the CRA showed that in the years 1985-86 no new communities were registered either.<sup>183</sup>) In Armenia there were 29 registered places of worship (of all faiths) between 1979 and 1984, with 33 unregistered places of worship, rising to 34 between 1980 and 1984. This was the second smallest total of places of worship of any Soviet republic after Turkmenistan (although Tajikistan and Azerbaijan had not many more than Armenia). The Armenian Church had a total of 33 churches in the USSR between 1979 and 1984, all of them registered (this represented an increase of just one since the ousting of Khrushchev in 1964). The CRA recorded 10 'holy sites' in Armenia between the years 1979 and 1984, most – if not all – of which would have related to the Armenian Church. In the USSR as a whole there were 42 Armenian 'holy sites' in 1979, falling to 14 in 1983-84. Many would have been in neighbouring Azerbaijan, which saw its total of 'holy sites' fall from 341 in 1979 to 26 in 1983, though this rose slightly to 30 in 1984.

The CRA listed 77 'servants of cult' for the Armenian Church in the USSR in 1980, all of them with official registration. By 1983, this had risen to 108 (3 of them without registration). In Armenia, the number of 'servants of cult' for all faiths was 69 registered clerics in 1980, 34 unregistered. By 1984 this had risen to 99 registered clerics, though the number unregistered remained the same. The number of Christian baptisms in Armenia rose from 12,889 in 1978 to 13,608 in 1984. The total for baptisms in the Armenian Church for the whole of the USSR rose from 13,900 in 1979 to 14,494 in 1984, though there was a dip in the figures in 1981-82. This rise of 4.3 per cent coincides with a fall of 6.7 per cent in the same period for the Christian Churches as a whole. Only the Mennonites, Lutherans, Methodists and the Georgian Orthodox Church saw greater increases in baptisms. In 1979, 4.7 per cent of weddings in Armenia were religious ceremonies, and this had risen to 8.4 per cent by 1984. The 1984 figure was a high percentage compared to most republics, although it lagged far behind the figures for Western Ukraine, the North Caucasus, Uzbekistan, Lithuania and especially Moldavia. By contrast, only just over one per cent of those dying had religious funeral or memorial services during these years, by far the lowest figures for the entire Soviet Union (the RSFSR, for example, registered figures approaching 50 per cent, and reached a peak of 85 per cent in Kuibyshev region in 1979).

The CRA kept detailed statistics too on the financial state of religious groups. In 1979 religious groups of all faiths in Armenia raised a recorded total of 2,526,100 roubles from contributions, rising to 3,439,900 by 1984, an increase of more than 36 per cent. The Armenian Church throughout the USSR (including Armenia) received

2,904,500 roubles from contributions in 1979, which had risen to 3,939,900 by 1984, an increase of over 35 per cent. This rise lies in the middle of the range of increase experienced by most religious groups in these years. Only the Buddhists and Molokans recorded a fall in contributions between 1979 and 1984. In addition to contributions, the Armenian Church received money from the sale of artefacts, such as candles and books, and offerings for performing rites. Including money from all sources (income and surpluses carried over), the Armenian Church in the USSR had at its disposal just over three million roubles in 1979, rising to four and a half million roubles in 1984.

The church headquarters at Echmiadzin received income from contributions of 965,700 roubles in 1979, rising to 1,473,400 roubles in 1984, a rise of more than 50 per cent. This was approximately double the amount received by the administration of the Moscow Patriarchate, and about five per cent of the amount received by all the diocesan administrations of the Russian Orthodox Church throughout the Soviet Union. Echmiadzin received approximately three quarters of the amount received by the four Muslim Boards between them.

Spending on the 77 Armenian priests averaged 1720 roubles each in 1980. As the number of priests rose to 110 in 1984, the average fell to 1420 roubles per priest in 1984. Both these figures are reasonable averages compared to other religious groups – only the Russian Orthodox Church could spend considerably more per priest. The Armenian Church spent 218,200 roubles in 1984 on church choirs, double the amount it spent in 1979. Eighteen per cent of church funds were spent on those keeping church communities functioning (i.e. priests, choir leaders and members, and members of executive organs) in 1984 which, although representing an increase from 14 per cent in 1979, was the lowest of any major religious group.

The Armenian Church as a whole contributed 54,700 roubles to the Soviet Peace Fund in 1979, rising to 72,800 roubles in 1984, an increase of a third, though still a relatively small sum compared to other religious groups. This falls in the middle of the range of increases. Only the Baptists cut their contributions between 1979 and 1984. In 1979 the Armenian Church contributed just 2000 roubles to the Fund for the Preservation of Monuments of History and Culture, increasing this to 4800 in 1984, miserly sums compared to other religious groups (the Russian Orthodox Church's contributions topped 4 million roubles and even the Georgian Orthodox contributed more than 30,000 roubles). Only the small Protestant Churches gave less. Unfortunately the statistical tables for detailed sources of income and expenditure do not separate the figures for each religious group or republic, so a more detailed study of the Armenian Church's finances over these years is as yet impossible.

Together with the Georgian Orthodox, the Buddhists and the Methodists the Armenian Church turns out to have been one of the least troublesome in the early 1980s. There were no 'violations of the legislation on cults' noted for the Armenian Church in 1983, while in 1984 the two violations recorded were dealt with on an administrative rather than a criminal level. There were just two complaints sent to the Council from Armenia in 1981, none in 1982–83 and only one in 1984. However, local commissioners received 35 letters and complaints in 1983, rising to 293 in 1984. The vast majority of these letters concerned the building or repair of places of worship, although a few related to the registration of church communities or priests and 'inner church questions'. A handful complained of violations of the law by religious groups or clergy. Other religious groups in Armenia submitted a handful of letters and complaints in 1983–84.

### Awaiting *Glasnost*'

Even into the late 1980s the Soviet State was attempting to create a favourable impression among overseas Armenians. The Central Committee was subsidising a range of 'progressive' overseas Armenian publications.<sup>184</sup> In the religious sphere the CRA was seeking to help pro-Echmiadzin groups abroad. In its 'Plan of measures to fulfil the decisions of the 27th Congress of the CPSU' of 8 April 1986 the CRA had suggested 'setting up in Geneva under the auspices and control of the Echmiadzin Catholicosate a theological seminary for training patriotically-oriented church cadres from the ranks of the overseas Armenians for overseas Armenian church communities'. Galustyan, an official in the Moscow CRA (himself of Armenian origin), was detailed to report back by August 1986 with a specific plan, drawing on the help of the CRA in Yerevan.<sup>185</sup> The Soviet government could be pleased that the overwhelming part of the Armenian diaspora either accepted Soviet Armenia as the nation's homeland or, at least, was not hostile to its claims to represent the nation. The Armenian General Benevolent Union, the largest diaspora Armenian charitable fund, gave overwhelming support to Echmiadzin. In 1985, it gave 230,000 dollars to churches under Echmiadzin's jurisdiction, compared to just 3600 to churches under Antilias.<sup>186</sup>

Despite the lack of concern in government circles about the strength of the Armenian Church within Armenia, atheist propaganda continued as part of official ritual. In 1984, a conference was organised by the Armenian Komsomol and the Scientific-Methodological Council for the Atheist Education of Youth to discuss atheist work among young people. The Armenian Komsomol secretary, G. Akopyan, addressed the gathering, outlining specific tasks that needed to be done in the republic.<sup>187</sup> In 1985 the long-delayed House of Scientific Atheism was at last created in Armenia. It had been under discussion for at least ten years. By 1986 the *Kidelik* Society, still headed nearly 40 years after its foundation by Academician Viktor Hambartsumyan, was claiming 20,000 members, including 100 academicians and several hundred researchers and teachers.<sup>188</sup>

The first secretary of the Armenian Communist Party, Karen Demirchyan, attacked 'religious survivals' in the course of a speech to the plenum of the Armenian Central Committee in early October 1986. In an echo of concerns in other Soviet republics he noted a tendency among some artists and scholars to produce works that 'exaggerated the role of the Church' in Armenian history and suggested that they undermined attempts to create an atheist worldview. He criticised local party officials for failing to monitor religious activity and called for differentiated propaganda that would take account of the existing variety of religious beliefs. Observers noted that among the districts singled out by Demirchyan for the weakness of their atheist work were ones with significant Azeri Muslim populations, such as Amasiya district.<sup>189</sup> By this stage, at the moment when Mikhail Gorbachev's newly-espoused policies of *glasnost*' (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) were about to affect the religious sphere of Soviet life, there were few serious efforts in Armenia to promote atheism. The Armenian Church had reached a *modus vivendi* with the Soviet authorities, mediated by the moderate Communist officials in Yerevan who had some reservations about attacking the Armenians' historical Church. Members of other religious communities, notably the Hare Krishnas and Pentecostal Christians, were the ones who incurred the more direct displeasure of the Soviet authorities.

### Notes and references

<sup>1</sup> The first part of this article appeared in *Religion, State & Society*, vol. 24, no. 1 March 1996,

pp. 9-53. Please refer to the first part for a detailed list of sources. I am grateful to the many people who helped me on this study. In addition to those noted in the first part, I would like to thank Dr John Anderson of St Andrews University for sharing some of his findings from the CRA archives in Moscow, especially the statistics for the number of Armenian churches. I would also like to thank Liz Fuller for verifying some information.

- <sup>2</sup> Georgi Agabekov, *G.P.U.: zapiski chekista* (Strela, Berlin, 1930), pp.238, 242 and *ChK za rabotoi* (Strela, Berlin, 1931), pp 240-41. Other Armenian clerics he claimed worked for the GPU in the 1920s included Archimandrite Klitchyan in France, Archimandrite Basmachyan in Constantinople and the bishop of Iraq.
- <sup>3</sup> Following his election as catholicos, Vazgen was accused by western cold war sources of being an agent. Thus, *Intelligence Digest* (London), January 1956, p. 8, described him as 'a well-trained Soviet agent who was formerly suspected of links with the Nazis'. The newsletter went on to speak of the Church as 'probably the most important single channel of Soviet penetration in the Middle East' and of the seminary as 'a political training centre for turning Armenian Orthodox clergy into effective soviet propagandists'.
- <sup>4</sup> Gosudarstvenny Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), Moscow, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, p. 7.
- <sup>5</sup> Hayastani Hanrapetutyun noraguin patmutyan petakan kentronakan arkhiv (HHNPPKA-Central State Archive of Recent History of the Republic of Armenia), Yerevan, f. 823, op. 3, d. 22.
- <sup>6</sup> The Supreme Spiritual Council was set up by Catholicos Kevork V by a decree of 1 January 1924 as an advisory council to replace the Holy Synod. The composition of the Council changed slightly over the years. 'This institution functioned chaotically and without great efficiency during the entire Soviet period. Its composition evolved continuously, often in the greatest secrecy. Starting from the pontificate of Kevork VI a certain number of laypeople were regularly admitted.' Philippe Sukiasyan, 'Concile dans l'Histoire de l'Église arménienne et organisation de l'Eglise autour du catholicos', *Unité Chrétienne* (Lyon), no. 121, February 1996, p. 26. Although diaspora clerics, such as Vazgen, became members, no diaspora layman became a member until the late 1980s.
- <sup>7</sup> Report by Polyansky to the Central Committee, 28 November 1955, Tsentr khраниeniya sovremennoi dokumentatsii (TsKhSD), Moscow, f. 5, op. 16, d. 743, pp. 78-79.
- <sup>8</sup> Sukiasyan, *op. cit.*, p. 20. Sukiasyan adds that Kevork V had intended to call a more wideranging Church Council to discuss reforms in the Church, including the drawing up of a new Constitution for the Church. A synod of 67 churchmen from all over the Russian Empire gathered in Echmiadzin for a 12-day meeting in June 1917 to prepare such a Council, but war and the eventual seizure of power by the Bolsheviks put paid to such plans.
- <sup>9</sup> Charles A. Vertanes, *Armenia Reborn* (Armenian National Council of America, New York, 1947), pp. 72-4. Vertanes was one of the delegates.
- <sup>10</sup> Hratchya G. Grigoryan was born in 1907 in Kars (then part of the Russian Empire). He joined the party in 1939. He was first secretary of the Armenian Writers' Union from 1938 to 1939 and in 1946, editor of *Kommunist* 1939-44 and Armenia correspondent for *Pravda* from 1946-48. He headed the CAAGC from 1948 to 1957. After leaving the CAAGC he was editor of the monthly *Sovetakan Hayastan* from 1959 to 1963. He died in Yerevan in 1969. See Claire Mouradian, thesis in the Nubarian library in Paris, p. 414.
- <sup>11</sup> Most of the detail of the National Ecclesiastical Council is from the extensive coverage in *Notes et Études Documentaires*, (Documentation Française, Paris), no. 2239, 8 December 1956, pp. 15-23.
- <sup>12</sup> The Moscow CARC file on the church council is GARF, f. 6691, op. 4, d. 42. Gostev's report to the Central Committee of 19 November 1955 is in TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 16, d. 743, pp. 58-63. For further details on the council, see also *Window View of the Armenian Church* (San Jose, CA), vol. IV, no. 2, 1994.
- <sup>13</sup> Two fictional attenders of Vazgen's consecration were Mrs Dot ffoulkes-Corbett and Rev. Hugh Chantry-Pigg in Rose Macaulay's novel *The Towers of Trebizond* (Collins, London, 1956), p. 206.
- <sup>14</sup> Krikorian, *op. cit.*, pp. 251-52.

- <sup>15</sup> Dickran H. Boyajian, *A Light Through the Iron Curtain* (Vantage Press, New York, 1957), pp. 28-46.
- <sup>16</sup> Vertanes, *op. cit.*, p. 72; Kolarz, *op. cit.*, p. 169; Georgyan, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
- <sup>17</sup> The telegrams to the Soviet and Armenian governments, dated 7 October 1955, are in TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 16, d. 743, pp. 64 and 65. The telegram from Polyansky to Vazgen, dated 17 October 1955, is p. 66.
- <sup>18</sup> Yerevan radio, 11 October 1955.
- <sup>19</sup> TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 16, d. 743, pp. 78-79, 80 and 81.
- <sup>20</sup> Matossian, *op. cit.*, pp. 195, 174-75.
- <sup>21</sup> This proved a highly controversial visit and the accounts of it reflect the differing views of it. See Kolarz, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-73 and Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 367-69. For details on the Cilicia election, see *Notes et Études Documentaires, op. cit.*, pp. 23-28.
- <sup>22</sup> See the Lebanese paper *Al-Nahar*, 22 February 1956.
- <sup>23</sup> HHNPPKA, f. 823, op. 2, d. 3.
- <sup>24</sup> The text of a letter Vazgen wrote to Bulganin in Moscow on the day before the meeting is in HHNPPKA, f. 823, op. 2, d. 3.
- <sup>25</sup> Tass, 5 and 18 May 1957. See *Caucasian Review* (Munich), no. 5, 1957, pp. 133-34.
- <sup>26</sup> Matossian, *op. cit.*, p. 208. It is probable that the figures he gave related not just to Soviet Armenia but to the Soviet Union as a whole.
- <sup>27</sup> Interview with Hratch Tchilingirian in *Window View of the Armenian Church*, vol. III, no. 1, 1992, p. 6.
- <sup>28</sup> HHNPPKA, f. 823, op. 2, d. 5.
- <sup>29</sup> The plans have been preserved in HHNPPKA, f. 823, op. 2, d. 4.
- <sup>30</sup> Kolarz, *op. cit.*, p. 174; Krikorian, *op. cit.*, p. 252 (this account glosses over the Soviet confiscations); *Holy Echmiadzin: Guidebook* (Echmiadzin, 1990).
- <sup>31</sup> Sukiasyan, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
- <sup>32</sup> Protocol 35 of CARC meeting, Moscow, in Estonian State Archives, Tallinn, f. R-1989, nim. 1, s. 69, pp. 136-38.
- <sup>33</sup> Sukiasyan, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
- <sup>34</sup> Albert Moravia, *Un Mese in U.R.S.S.* (Valentino Bompiani, Milan, 1958), pp. 85-86.
- <sup>35</sup> Dadrian, *op. cit.*, p. 240.
- <sup>36</sup> Nubar Gulbenkian, *Pantaraxia* (Hutchinson, London, 1965), pp. 320-21.
- <sup>37</sup> Gulbenkian, *ibid.*, p. 315.
- <sup>38</sup> Constantin de Grunwald, *God and the Soviets* (Hutchinson, London, 1961), p. 193. Incidentally, de Grunwald was not so impressed with Echmiadzin, reporting: 'I did not consider the people more fervent than others I had seen in various holy places throughout the Soviet Union – contrary to reports of some foreign visitors, such as the great Italian novelist Alberto Moravia', *ibid.*, p. 192.
- <sup>39</sup> Vasili Grossman, 'Dobro Vam!' (*Znamya*, (Moscow), no. 11, 1988, pp. 44-49. Although written in 1962-63 for publication in *Novy mir*, the memoir was banned by the censors, appearing only in severely truncated form in *Literaturnaya Armeniya* (Yerevan), nos. 6 and 7, 1965, and in a collected edition of stories under the title *Dobro Vam!* (Sovetsky pisatel', Moscow, 1967). However, most of the section on Echmiadzin remained intact, appearing in the Moscow edition on pp. 245-53. It was not until 1988, long after his death, that it could be published in full.
- <sup>40</sup> Andrei Bitov, 'Lessons of Armenia', in *A Captive of the Caucasus* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1992), p. 34. Like Grossman's memoir, 'Lessons of Armenia' was published in Moscow in 1969 in censored form.
- <sup>41</sup> *Partiakan Kiank*, (Yerevan), no. 11, 1956, pp. 67-70. See also *Caucasian Review*, no. 4, 1957, pp. 142-43.
- <sup>42</sup> Vazgen interview with Artem Sargsian, *Armenian International Magazine* (Glendale CA), March 1994, p. 21.
- <sup>43</sup> *ibid.* Although Vazgen's main objection to being thus addressed by Puzin was that it failed to respect his religious status, he would also have objected, as an overseas Armenian,

to the Russified form of address using the first name and patronymic, a practice not native to Armenians.

<sup>44</sup> TsKhSD, card index, protocol No. 29.

<sup>45</sup> Protocol of CARC session 24, GARF, f. 6991, op. 4, d. 7/2, ed. khr. 169.

<sup>46</sup> See John Anderson, 'The Archives of the Council for Religious Affairs', *Religion, State & Society*, nos. 3 & 4, 1992, p. 401. Anderson's figures for 1958 are from the CARC files, GARF, f. 6991, op. 4, d. 258, p. 3, and for 1964 from *ibid.*, d. 430, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> *Ugolovny kodeks Armyanskoi SSR* (Izadatel'stvo Ayastan, Yerevan, 1983) gives the text of the 1961 Armenian code with all the amendments up to March 1983. Articles 141 and 244 were amended by decree of the Armenian Supreme Soviet Presidium on 29 October 1969 and 29 December 1982. Article 142 was unaffected by any amendments. See pp. 95 and 155-56.

<sup>48</sup> GARF, f. 6691, op. 4, d. 173, p. 180.

<sup>49</sup> Its application to religious groups is clear from its inclusion (in the RSFSR variant) in Kuroyedov and Pankratov, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-96.

<sup>50</sup> Mouradian, *De Staline ...*, p. 383.

<sup>51</sup> Interview in *Window View of the Armenian Church*, vol. III, no. 1, 1992, pp. 9-11, 27-28.

<sup>52</sup> Letter (in French), 26 April 1962, in WCC archive.

<sup>53</sup> Letter (in English), 17 September 1962, in WCC archive.

<sup>54</sup> Krikorian, *op. cit.*, p. 255. He remained in this post until 1975. For a reflection on his period in office and details of Oriental Church theological consultations, see 'The Armenian Church and the WCC: a Personal View', *The Ecumenical Review* (Geneva), no. 40, 1988, pp. 411-17.

<sup>55</sup> Attachment to the decree of the USSR Council of Ministers No. 203 of 17 March 1966, in Kuroyedov and Pankratov, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>56</sup> Biographical data from Mouradian, *De Staline ...*, p. 379. See also *Kommunist*, 21 October 1976.

<sup>57</sup> Gasparyan was born in 1917 in Hatrut in Nagorno-Karabakh. As well as serving as CAAGC chairman, he headed the cinema committee of the Armenian Council of Ministers and the committee to help repatriates. See his obituary in *Kommunist*, 27 August 1977.

<sup>58</sup> The CRA copy of the decree is in GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 1789, p. 26ff.

<sup>59</sup> See Kuroyedov and Pankratov, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-7, which gives details of the Supreme Soviets' decrees in every republic except Armenia. Presumably the Armenian equivalent was issued in October 1969 at the same time as amendments were made to Article 141 and other articles.

<sup>60</sup> Figures from the CRA archives at GARF, f. 6991, op. 4/2. 1958 figure: d. 258, p. 101; 1959 figure: d. 259, p. 98; 1965 figure: d. 439, p. 22.

<sup>61</sup> It is significant that one of the longest articles on religion in Armenia published in the atheist journal *Nauka i religiya*, no. 12, 1973, pp. 50-54, concerned the Molokans, not the Armenian Church.

<sup>62</sup> T.S. Isayan, 'Armyano-Grigoryanskaya tserkov' i sovremennost'', *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma*, vol. 2 (Mysl', Moscow, 1966), pp. 241-42. The entry for the Armenian Church in the *Ateistichesky slovar'* (Politizdat, Moscow, 1983, pp. 30-31), apparently written by the same Isayan, notes that the Armenian Church, 'like the majority of churches, greeted the Great October Socialist Revolution with hostility. At present it maintains a loyal position in relation to Soviet power and takes part in the struggle for peace'.

<sup>63</sup> A. Avtandilyan, 'Echmiadzin: istoriya i sovremennost'', *Ateisticheskiye Chteniya* (Moscow), no. 4, 1970, pp. 88-94.

<sup>64</sup> *Kommunist*, 1 July 1973.

<sup>65</sup> A. E. Ter-Sarkisyants, *Sovremennaya sem'ya u Armyan* (Nauka, Moscow, 1972), pp. 134-35, 137, 118, 135, 144-46.

<sup>66</sup> Instruction signed by deputy chairman of Armenian CM, Balabek Martirosyan, 24 September 1957, HHNPPKA, f. 823, op. 5, d. 3, p. 12.

<sup>67</sup> *O palomnichestve veruyushchikh k tak naz. 'svyatym mestam' i merakh po yego prekrashcheniyu*, 17 October 1972, p. 2, Lietuvos valstybinis archyvas (LVA – Lithuanian

State Archive), Vilnius, f. R181, ap. 3, b. 86.

<sup>68</sup> Report of 17 May 1983, LVA, f. R181, ap. 3, b. 89.

<sup>69</sup> Ter Minassian, *op. cit.*, p. 818. Kolarz noted a similar process of paganisation in mountain areas of Georgia and in Siberia in the 1930s, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-3, 83-86.

<sup>70</sup> *The Tablet* (London), 6 August 1977, p. 741. For an explanation of the background of this rite, see Deacon Michael Findikyan, 'A Sacrifice of Praise: Blessing of Madagh' in *Window View of the Armenian Church*, vol. II, no. 4, 1992, pp. 9-12. Findikyan reports that 'this ritual is very common in Armenia, where people offer a madagh sacrifice as a pious gesture on various occasions: upon the baptism or wedding of a child, on a birthday, to honour a special quest, or as a memorial to a loved one on the anniversary of his death', but he notes that 'visitors to Armenia are regularly horrified and repulsed when they witness the seemingly barbaric ritual'.

<sup>71</sup> It was not until 1983 that Vazgen consecrated any further hierarchs who had been born in Armenia itself (three of those consecrated that year – Karekin Nersessyan, Anania Arapadjyan and Grigoris Buniatyan – were born in Soviet Armenia).

<sup>72</sup> GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 461, pp. 22-23.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>74</sup> Fr V.N. Nersessian, 'Champagne Spirituality and Pontifical Dreams', *Window View of the Armenian Church*, vol. IV, no. 3, 1994, pp. 15-16.

<sup>75</sup> LVA, f. R181, ap. 3, b. 87, p. 22.

<sup>76</sup> *Kommunist*, 3 June 1975.

<sup>77</sup> *Leninyan Ughi*, June 1975. See Dadrian, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

<sup>78</sup> *Sovetakan Hayastan* (Yerevan), 17 September 1975. See Dadrian, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-40.

<sup>79</sup> Article 'Kidelik' in *Haikakan sovetakan hanrakitaran* (*Soviet Armenian Encyclopedia*) (ArmSSR Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, 1977), vol. 3, p. 80. See Mouradian, *The Armenian Apostolic Church*, p. 366.

<sup>80</sup> *Alfavitnyye spiski armyano-gregorianskikh tserkvei i magometanskikh mechetei v imperii* (Department of Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions, St Petersburg, 1886), pp. 1-75. The book listed 28 Armenian churches in Tbilisi, 8 in Yerevan and 2 in Baku. The survey calculated that for the 765,985 Armenian Gregorians in the Empire there were 2295 clergy.

<sup>81</sup> GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 1336, p. 29. See also pp. 31 and 34.

<sup>82</sup> *Armenian Weekly*, 13 January 1979, p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> Information on the seminary is mostly from Archbishop Shahe Ajemian, 'Some remarks on the Armenian Seminaries' *Orthodox Theological Education: Report on the Consultation at Basel Switzerland, July 4-8 1978* (WCC, Geneva, 1978), pp. 51-6. See also Kolarz, *op. cit.*, and Krikorian, *op. cit.* In June 1960 Michael Bourdeaux visited the seminary, where he was told by one of the seminarians (a repatriate from Lebanon) that there were 40 students; four out of the five graduands in 1959 had been ordained, he was informed, while all five graduands in 1960 had opted for ordination: Michael Bourdeaux, *Opium of the People: the Christian Religion in the USSR* (2nd edition, Mowbrays, London, 1977), pp. 200-1. The 1977-78 academic year had 26 students, half of them from abroad. The following year there were 33. *Echmiadzin*, nos. 6, 1978 and 8-9, 1978.

<sup>84</sup> *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, no. 6, 1954, p. 69.

<sup>85</sup> Atityan, a repatriate, had first been appointed to a post at Echmiadzin, as head of chancellery, at the request of Archbishop Kostanyan. As CAAGC chairman Grigoryan wrote in his October 1954 letter to the head of the Armenian KGB, G.A. Badamyán, asking for the KGB's approval of the appointment, 'the person named to this post must be absolutely reliable with access to all forms of secret work'. HHNPPKA, f. 823, op. 4, d. 10, p. 6. Atityan was obviously considered reliable enough to be given a job at Echmiadzin.

<sup>86</sup> *Literaturnaya Armeniya*, no. 8, 1969.

<sup>87</sup> A number of commentators have noted the absence of religious content in the journal. Mouradian, *op. cit.*, p. 369, noted that it 'is a good review but reads more like an ecclesiastical monitor, filled with the news of the religious world (official meetings, messages for peace, and the commemoration of important religious and civilian holidays) than a theologi-

cal journal. One looks in vain for essays about Christology, ecclesiology, or Christian morality.' The same point was made by Ter Minassian, *op. cit.*, p. 822, who however pointed out that the diaspora Armenian church reviews shared this deficiency: 'An analysis of the content of the great Armenian church reviews, *Echmiadzin, Hask* [Antilias], *Sion* [Jerusalem] ... shows that the best of them are learned reviews of Armeniology, where any discussion of spiritual life and above all any study of theology, ecclesiology or Christology is practically absent. Their erudition badly masks a spiritual emptiness.'

<sup>88</sup> TsKhSD, f. 5.

<sup>89</sup> GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 2298, p. 37.

<sup>90</sup> Kathpress (Vienna), 11 February 1983.

<sup>91</sup> Krikorian, *op. cit.*, pp. 248, 251-52.

<sup>92</sup> *Religion and Freedom*, August 1978.

<sup>93</sup> Vazken Hakopyan (ed.), *Ganonkirk Hayots* (Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, 2 vols, Yerevan, 1964 and 1971). Vazgen commissioned this edition. Hakopyan worked at the Matenadaran in Yerevan.

<sup>94</sup> See Kolarz, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-59.

<sup>95</sup> TASS in Russian, 23 September 1968. *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR*, no. 39, 25 September 1968, contains the text of the 19 September decree awarding Vazgen the Badge of Honour. Exactly ten years later he was to be granted a further award by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. *Vedomosti Verkhovnozo Soveta SSSR*, no. 39, 27 September 1978, contains the text of the 19 September decree awarding him the Friendship of Peoples honour.

<sup>96</sup> LVA, f. R181, ap. 3, b. 105.

<sup>97</sup> *Izvestiya*, 5 and 7 March 1967.

<sup>98</sup> Daphne Tsimhoni, *Christian Communities in Jerusalem and the West Bank since 1948* (Praeger, Westport, CT, 1993), pp. 68-69.

<sup>99</sup> D.M. Lang, 'Religion and nationalism: a case study – the Caucasus' in Max Hayward and William C. Fletcher (eds), *Religion and the Soviet State: A Dilemma of Power* (Pall Mall Press, London, 1969), p. 183. The Georgians spoke of the Armenians' 'heresy' because the Armenian Church is a member of the Oriental family of Churches, not the Orthodox family to which the Georgian Church belongs.

<sup>100</sup> Mouradian credits Hovhannes Chekidjyan, a diaspora Armenian who came to live in Armenia in 1961, when he became director of the State Chorus, with reintroducing liturgical music to the repertoire. *De Staline ...*, p. 215.

<sup>101</sup> *Religion in Communist Lands*, no. 4, 1979, p. 242-43.

<sup>102</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 1977, p. 16. Other leading Armenians who made courtesy visits to the Catholics while on visits to Armenia included veteran Politburo member Anastas Mikoyan and Marshal Ivan Bagramyan. Dadrian, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

<sup>103</sup> Dadrian, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

<sup>104</sup> Eduard Oganessyan, 'The Armenian Church in the USSR', *Religion in Communist Lands*, no. 4, 1979, pp. 238-42.

<sup>105</sup> 'Report on Religion', BBC World Service, 18 November 1981.

<sup>106</sup> S. Dul'yan and A. Aslanyan, *Znakom'tes' Armeniya* (Ayastan, Yerevan, 1972), p. 106.

<sup>107</sup> *Haikakan sovetakan hanrakitaran*, vol. 3, p. 19, and vol. 5, 1979, p. 89. The 1987 supplement to the encyclopedia, however, in a half-page entry on 'Religion and the Church', reports that 'the population has become massively atheised', even if 'some continue to pay tribute to religious superstitions' (p. 687).

<sup>108</sup> Gurgun Sevak, *Mesrop Mashtots: Sozdaniye armyanskikh pis'men i slovesnosti* (*Aipetrat, Yerevan, 1962*), p. 9. In discussing Mashtots' writings, many of which concerned religious subjects, Sevak writes: 'Nowadays, this literature has a historical and above all philological significance' (p. 68).

<sup>109</sup> See Dadrian, *op. cit.*, pp. 215, 227. Dadrian offers a perceptive analysis of Armenian veneration of the nation that persisted in Soviet Armenian life.

<sup>110</sup> See Stanley Gibbons *Stamp Catalogue, Part 10: Russia* (4th edition, 1991), pp. 99-100 and 143.

- <sup>111</sup> *Nauka i religiya*, no. 8, 1969, p. 33.
- <sup>112</sup> *Kommunist*, 26 October 1975.
- <sup>113</sup> *Kommunist*, 20 November 1980.
- <sup>114</sup> *Kommunist*, 24 December 1983.
- <sup>115</sup> Letter from Galustyan of the Moscow CRA to Kuroyedov, GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 2040, p. 3.
- <sup>116</sup> *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, no. 2, 1973, pp. 22-34.
- <sup>117</sup> *Zarya vostoka* (Tbilisi), 27 December 1977.
- <sup>118</sup> Stjepan Schmidt, *Augustin Bea: the Cardinal of Unity* (New City Press, New York, 1992), pp. 633-36.
- <sup>119</sup> The visit was eventually mentioned by *Izvestiya*, 24 June 1970.
- <sup>120</sup> Interview in *La Nouvelle Revue des Deux Mondes* (Paris), March 1972, pp. 582-90.
- <sup>121</sup> *Armenian Weekly*, 13 January 1979, p. 5.
- <sup>122</sup> *Echmiadzin*, no. 9/10, 1977, pp. 70ff.
- <sup>123</sup> Dr Robert Runcie, address to the Anglo-Armenian Association in London on 28 March 1995 (recorded on video). Runcie was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1980 to 1991, although he did not visit Armenia during this period, returning only in 1992.
- <sup>124</sup> Interview with Harry Dunphy, *Armenian Weekly*, 13 January 1979, p. 5.
- <sup>125</sup> Interview with Stephanesco, *op. cit.*, in note 120, p. 585.
- <sup>126</sup> *Religion and Freedom*, August 1978.
- <sup>127</sup> Ter Minassian, *op. cit.*, p. 817.
- <sup>128</sup> Oleg Kalugin, *Spymaster: My 32 Years in Intelligence and Espionage Against the West* (Smith Gryphon, London, 1994), p. 193.
- <sup>129</sup> Dadrian, *op. cit.*, p. 249.
- <sup>130</sup> All these remarks are from his 1979 visit to France. See Ter Minassian, *op. cit.*, p. 810.
- <sup>131</sup> GARF, f. 6991, op. 4, d. 114, p. 211.
- <sup>132</sup> TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 77, d. 142, p. 9.
- <sup>133</sup> GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 1557, p. 16.
- <sup>134</sup> Ajemian, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
- <sup>135</sup> Dadrian, *op. cit.*, p. 247.
- <sup>136</sup> A 1930s letter from Bishop Vertanes to Echmiadzin reporting the closure of the 18 monasteries and 105 churches in Karabakh is preserved at Echmiadzin. See interview with Vazgen in *Window View of the Armenian Church*, vol. III, no. 1, 1992, p. 6.
- <sup>137</sup> HHNPPKA, f. 823, op. 2, d. 2. Curiously, despite the fact that all churches in the region had been closed by the 1930s, a meeting of the CARC in Moscow on 22 October 1964 decreed the closure of an Armenian church in Karabakh (GARF, f. 6991, Protocol of CARC meeting no. 34). Presumably this church had not been functioning.
- <sup>138</sup> See Egbert Wesselink, *Human Rights Violations in Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Pax Christi, Brussels, updated edition, January 1992), p. 17. The abbreviated text of the petition included in Gerard Libaridian (ed.), *The Karabagh File* (Zoryan Institute, Boston MA, 1988) does not include this section.
- <sup>139</sup> Report in *Sovetakan Karabakh* (Stepanakert), 23 March 1975. Briefer report in *Bakinsky rabochy* (Baku), 1 April 1975; partial English translation in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, vol. XXVII, no. 17, 21 May 1975, pp. 1, 3.
- <sup>140</sup> Bagrat Ulubabyan *Posledniye sobytiya v Nagornom-Karabakhe (Mart-Aprel' 1975g.)*, 55 page letter, copy in author's file.
- <sup>141</sup> Ruben Arutyunyan, 'Sud'ba pamyatnikov zodchestva Nagornogo Karabakha: varvarstvo, vozvedennoye v zakon', *Pro Armenia* (Moscow), no. 1, 1991, pp. 34-42. The film makers wrote a letter of protest to Leonid Brezhnev.
- <sup>142</sup> *Vestnik obshchestvennikh nauk AN ArmSSR* (Yerevan), vol. 12, 1977, p. 76. Rashid Geyushev was later the author of *Khristianstvo v Kavkazskoi Albanii po dannym arkheologii i pis'mennykh istochnikov* (Elm, Baku, 1984), published under the auspices of the Azerbaijani Academy of Sciences, which further expounded his views.
- <sup>143</sup> The Karabakh activist Zori Balayan, citing Lezgin sources, reports that in 1980 a 'Lezgin

- mosque' in Baku was suddenly renamed simply a 'mosque of the seventh century'. Zori Balayan, *Mezhdū adom i rayem* (Academia, Moscow, 1995), p. 315.
- <sup>144</sup> LVA, f. R181, ap. 3, b. 91.
- <sup>145</sup> For details of dissent and the Helsinki Group see Ludmila Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious and Human Rights* (second edition, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown CT, 1987), pp. 121-32.
- <sup>146</sup> S. F. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
- <sup>147</sup> Extracts translated in Michael Bourdeaux and Michael Rowe (eds), *May One Believe – In Russia?: Violations of Religious Liberty in the Soviet Union* (London, Darton Longman & Todd, 1980), pp. 48-50.
- <sup>148</sup> Keston Institute *samizdat* archive, SU/1978/Arm/1.
- <sup>149</sup> *Arkhiv samizdata*, Munich, AS 3165.
- <sup>150</sup> AS 3339.
- <sup>151</sup> AS 3732. Arutyunyan reported that 'we, the 260 million Soviet citizens, observed with horror how His Holiness Paul VI shook hands with such blasphemers and heretics as Gromyko'.
- <sup>152</sup> For a Russian collection of documents on his case see *Delo Airikyana* (Khronika, New York, 1977).
- <sup>153</sup> Nazaryan had been the subject of a hostile article entitled 'Sud markare' ('The False Prophet') in *Sovetakan Hayastan* on 5 May 1977, the usual prelude to arrest.
- <sup>154</sup> See Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church: a Contemporary History* (Croom Helm, London, 1986), pp. 373ff. and 497. Keston Institute's *samizdat* archive has just 30 Armenian *samizdat* documents, including the two letters from Eduard Arutyunyan. The first is from 1970, the latest from 1984, though most are from the period 1977-79. The majority relate to the cases against Helsinki Group members, rather than to wider religious themes. I am grateful to Keston Institute's librarian Malcolm Walker for his help here.
- <sup>155</sup> Translation of announcement in *The Armenian Review* (Boston), vol. XXXI, no. 4, 124, April 1979, pp. 418-23.
- <sup>156</sup> Biographical information on Tsarukyan is from a report by Vartan Verinchorokhyan dated 22 March 1984 (AS 5253). His release was noted in *Keston News Service*, no. 284, 24 September 1987, p. 5.
- <sup>157</sup> Information on political prisoners can be gained from Cronid Lubarsky (ed.), *List of Political Prisoners in the USSR* (USSR News Brief, Munich, yearly, 1980-89) and on religious prisoners from *Christian/Religious Prisoners in the USSR* (Keston College, Keston, 1977-87).
- <sup>158</sup> Dadrian, *op. cit.*, p. 247.
- <sup>159</sup> *Echmiadzin*, no. 11/12, 1965. See also *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, no. 12, 1965, pp. 55-58.
- <sup>160</sup> Dadrian, *op. cit.*, pp. 246-57. See also the same author's article 'The Events of April 24 in Moscow', *The Armenian Review*, vol. XXI, no. 2, 78, Summer 1967, pp. 9-26.
- <sup>161</sup> *Echmiadzin*, no. 11, 1980, pp. 25ff.
- <sup>162</sup> M. G. Nersisyan (ed.), *Genotsid armyan v Osmanskoi imperii* (Izd. Akademii nauk ArmSSR, Yerevan, 1966; revised edition 1983).
- <sup>163</sup> L'vivsky Derzhavny oblasny arkhiv (State Archive of L'viv Region), f. R-1332, op. 1, Spr. 27, p. 63.
- <sup>164</sup> GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 1557, p. 21.
- <sup>165</sup> TsKhSD; reproduced in *Kuranty* (Moscow), 27 August 1993.
- <sup>166</sup> Text in *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, no. 11, 1962, p. 5. See also *Izvestiya*, 27 October 1962.
- <sup>167</sup> The letter was prepared for the Moscow paper *Literaturnaya gazeta*. For the text, see TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 64, d. 75, pp. 13-16. It appears the letter was never sent.
- <sup>168</sup> *Izvestiya*, 5 August 1977.
- <sup>169</sup> TASS in English, 20 February 1979.
- <sup>170</sup> Report in *Neues Deutschland* (East Berlin), quoted in *Keston News Service*, no. 146, 8 April 1982, p. 4.

- <sup>171</sup> GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 1132, pp. 19-21. On the 1977 constitutional changes as they affected religion, see John Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994), p. 112.
- <sup>172</sup> Report by Sil'chenkov, Central Archive of the KGB (TsAKGB), f. 5, op. 27/16, por. no. 11, d. P-175, t. 2, p. 110. It is interesting that the KGB referred to Vazgen without using a code-name. This was most unusual in such reports before the late 1980s and implies that the KGB had not recruited Vazgen as an agent.
- <sup>173</sup> The Gamsakhurdia regime released photocopies of what it claimed were the KGB agent reference cards for seven senior members of the Georgian Orthodox Church, including Catholicos Ilya II.
- <sup>174</sup> Oleg Gordievsky, address to Keston Institute Open Day, and separate interview, 21 October 1995. The members of the 1983 delegation, which was headed by Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev, were listed in the BCC's newsletter *Vision One*, May 1983, p. 2.
- <sup>175</sup> Colonel N. N. Romanov, *Otchet ob itogakh organisatsionnoi i agenturno-operativnoi deyatel'nosti 4 otdela 5 Upravleniya KGB SSSR za 1982 god*, TsAKGB, Moscow, f. 6, op. 6/16, por. No. 28, d. S-175, t. 6, p. 68.
- <sup>176</sup> Measures to counter the subversive activity of the Vatican, Attachment no. 2182/PR, 19 December 1984, in Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *More 'Instructions From the Centre': Top Secret Files on KGB Global Operations* (Frank Cass, London, 1992), pp. 47-52.
- <sup>177</sup> GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 1789, p. 14.
- <sup>178</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 24-25.
- <sup>179</sup> The CRA copy is in *ibid.*, pp. 35-38.
- <sup>180</sup> GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 2040, p. 22.
- <sup>181</sup> GARF, f. 6991, op. 6, d. 1336, pp. 13-14.
- <sup>182</sup> Figures for this entire section come from the *Statistichesky otchet Soveta po delam religii pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR za 1984 god*, TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 94, d. 147, pp. 23-100.
- <sup>183</sup> *Nauka i religiya*, no. 1, 1990.
- <sup>184</sup> Decree of the CC Secretariat, 14 August 1986, TsKhSD, f. 89, op. 13, d. 4. 60,000 foreign roubles were to be handed over yearly to certain Armenian papers in France, the USA, Lebanon and Argentina via the KGB.
- <sup>185</sup> LVA, f. R181, Ap. 3, B. 124.
- <sup>186</sup> AGBU 1985 Annual Report, quoted in Mouradian, *De Staline ...*, p. 402.
- <sup>187</sup> *Komsomolets* (Yerevan), 7 July 1984.
- <sup>188</sup> Mouradian, *De Staline ...*, p. 382.
- <sup>189</sup> Radio Liberty report, RL 406/86, 23 October 1986, pp. 3-4.