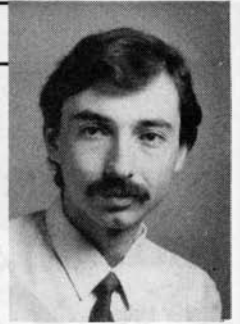


Interview: Hike Babookhanian



'Armenia must win the war so we can develop our economy'

Hike Babookhanian is editor of Hanzapetakan, the weekly newspaper of the Republican Party of Armenia. He is also politically active in Armenia, holding positions as vice president of the Union of Constitutional Rights of Armenia, which he helped to found in 1990, in the wake of Armenia's independence from the Soviet Union, and as deputy of the Yerevan City Parliament and a member of the Parliament's Commission of Human Rights. He is currently a candidate for Armenian Parliament, for which elections will be held on Oct. 15. He was interviewed by Marianna Wertz in Virginia on Sept. 11.

EIR: Why are you in America?

Babookhanian: I was invited by the Schiller Institute. My main aim is to do an interview with Lyndon LaRouche for my newspaper in Yerevan, as well as some other interviews with leaders of Armenian political organizations in the U.S.A. I want to learn about life in America because this is very important for us to know. I also want to learn the details of the LaRouche case, because in Armenia, a great part of the population cannot believe that in America there may be political prisoners, and we have written a great deal about Mr. LaRouche and his economic policy proposals in *Hanzapetakan*.

EIR: Does *Hanzapetakan* circulate throughout Armenia?

Babookhanian: Yes. We print 6,200 copies per week and, because of the difficult economic and military situation now, these go from hand to hand all over the country, with one copy being read by many people. There are 3.5 million people in Armenia.

EIR: How did you learn about Lyndon LaRouche?

Babookhanian: The first time was in 1990, when we went to the conference of the Schiller Institute in Berlin. We established good relations, and members of the Schiller Institute have since visited Yerevan three times, at the invitation of our party [Union of Constitutional Rights]. Hrant Kachatrian, a member of Parliament and president of our organization, introduced us to Mr. LaRouche's writings. Since our meetings, we have translated and printed material about Lyndon LaRouche in many issues of *Hanzapetakan*, and we have also printed excerpts from publications associated with Mr.

LaRouche, including *EIR* and *EIR Strategic Alert*.

EIR: Can you describe the situation in Armenia now?

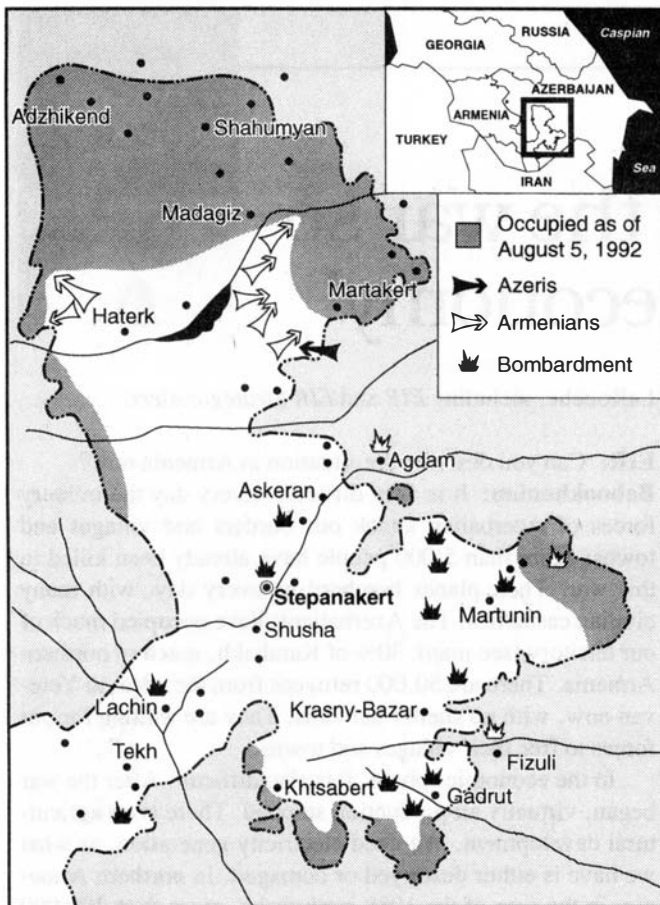
Babookhanian: It is very difficult. Every day the military forces of Azerbaijan attack our borders and villages and towns. More than 5,000 people have already been killed in this war. Their planes bombard us every day, with many civilian casualties. The Azerbaijanis have occupied much of our territory (see map): 30% of Karabakh, much of northern Armenia. There are 50,000 refugees from the north in Yerevan now, with no shelter but tents. They are waiting for our forces to free their villages and towns.

In the economic sphere, it is also difficult. After the war began, virtually all production stopped. There is no agricultural development. We need electricity generation, as what we have is either destroyed or damaged. In northern Armenia, in the area of the 1988 earthquake, more than 300,000 people live in boxes. It is very cold in the winter, which is coming, and there is no oil for heat. Before the earthquake [in 1988] we had a nuclear power station. But since the earthquake, the nuclear power station has been closed, because it is now dangerous. Gorbachov said it would be repaired in two years, but that hasn't happened.

Last month, the bread reserves in Yerevan ran out. People now stand in line for 10 hours to get a loaf of bread. Before the war we imported bread from Russia and Canada, but our railroad lines and roads run through Georgia, which has begun a civil war, and now all the roads are closed.

Before the war, we had very good industry, particularly chemicals and shoe making. We made the best shoes in the former Soviet Union. Also we produced autos, mined copper, molybdenum, and stone, and grew many types of fruit, grapes, and wheat. Today, in the whole border region, this is not possible, and Karabakh was a good agricultural region, producing fine wine, grapes, and wheat.

Now the International Monetary Fund [IMF] dictates to our government: You must develop only in this way. For example, an artificially high dollar exists in Armenia. Today one American dollar is equivalent to 210 Russian rubles. Many Armenians earn only 800 rubles per month, which equals \$3. But rubles are worth more, because you can buy more in rubles than dollars. To give you an idea of what this



means, 210 rubles will buy 2 kilos of meat. But you can't buy even that for one dollar. As a result of this policy, the living standard of many people has gone down.

Our party has proposed to stop the free circulation of foreign currency, but this is very difficult because the government is under strong pressure from the IMF to pay our share of the foreign debt [which must be paid in foreign currency]. Armenia must pay one part of the debt of the former Soviet Union [which all the members of the Community of Independent States must now repay]. Our government has sought to get more loans from the IMF, but the Union of Constitutional Rights has demanded we not do so.

EIR: Are you familiar with Mr. LaRouche's proposal for the Paris-Berlin-Vienna Productive Triangle?

Babookhanian: Yes. We discussed this. Unfortunately, however, none of the proposed spiral arms of the Triangle goes to Armenia. Despite this, the proposal is very good, because if Europe can be developed, a strong Europe with a productive economy, it will tend to equalize the political situation in the world today. Today there is only one major power. If Europe is developed, Europe can equal the influ-

ence of the United States.

EIR: What do you expect will happen now in Armenia?

Babookhanian: We must win this war in a short time, because if the war doesn't end soon, we cannot develop our economy, we cannot reconstruct our villages and towns, and many more people will die.

EIR: But the government of Azerbaijan is trying to eliminate Armenia, isn't it?

Babookhanian: Yes, and some other countries' governments are too. They say we want to violate the borders. We ask, which borders are you talking about? These are internal borders, not external borders.

In 1920 Armenia was an independent nation. Then the communist Russian troops occupied Armenia. Before the occupation, Armenia had different borders, including Karabakh. Armenia never agreed to Karabakh being part of Azerbaijan.

There is only one document in the whole world which states that Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan, and that is the Soviet Constitution, which the whole world says is anti-human, the constitution of empire, or occupiers! People who two years ago said this is a bad constitution, now say that this is the border. This border was created by the Soviets.

But the United Nations Charter and other documents of international law have a basic principle of self-determination for nations, and the Armenian population in this territory has many times asserted its right to self-determination. And yet today, international organizations and many governments pressure us, and they have forgotten these principles, including the U.S. government and other western nations.

EIR: Do you have any foreign support?

Babookhanian: No direct support. Argentina declared that the principle of self-determination for Armenia is very important, as did Venezuela. Also we have good relations with many Arab countries, such as Syria.

EIR: What about Russia's role?

Babookhanian: Russia's internal and external policy are such that they can't take a direct course: They go left or right depending on the situation. Yeltsin tried to intervene in the crisis, but it didn't work. Now Russian troops are in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is occupying with the help of Russian troops, Russian tanks this year. Russia gives Azerbaijan airplanes, automobiles, tanks, and all the weapons they ask for. When Russia wants Azerbaijan to win, Russia gives them many things. When Russia wants us to win, Russia gives us things. When Russia wants to pressure us, they close our oil supply lines and trading routes.

EIR: You leave here for California on Sept. 12. What will you ask Armenians in California to do?



The Armenian weekly Hanzapetakan, of which Hike Babookhian is the editor, features coverage of the program of U.S. presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

Babookhian: I will discuss what kind of help they can give us. We need good specialists as well as technological assistance. I will also suggest in the political sphere, that they make Armenia an issue in the presidential campaign. Bush changes his position all the time; not really, but he appears to do so. When Clinton sees Bush saying two good words on Armenia, he says three. There are 1 million Armenian-American voters. I appeal to Armenian-Americans, that they look in detail at what Bush is doing. Bush wants to pressure Armenia.

Bush's theory of the new world order is very dangerous. It is not right, when one country or one President or one government pressures other, small countries, and dictates economic and political policy.

For example, now Bush is pressuring Iraq, with his "no-fly zone." I ask, why doesn't Bush pressure Azerbaijan not to bombard *our* towns? Every day in Stepanakert they kill 20 civilians—including babies and women. And there's no similar situation in Iraq. Iraq's planes are not bombarding the civilian population every day.

EIR: What do you think of Mr. LaRouche's presidential campaign?

Babookhian: If you run for office in Armenia, you are untouchable by Armenian authorities. We have created a new country, and this is a clear principle. When one candidate cannot freely campaign, this is very far from democracy. After Mr. Kachatrian of our party came to America earlier this year and met with an assistant to a U.S. congressman about the LaRouche case, he came back and told us that in America human rights have been destroyed.

We think that it is not right that the American population is not demanding that LaRouche be freed.

Greece, Turkey crises may widen Balkan war

by Konstantin George

The instability in the Balkans has expanded beyond former Yugoslavia and the erstwhile communist countries of Bulgaria and Albania, to include the only relatively stable countries in the region, NATO members Greece and Turkey. Both countries are plunging into chaos through the emergence of parallel crises which threaten to topple the governments of Prime Minister Constantin Mitsotakis in Greece and Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel in Turkey.

Greece, where the state is all but financially bankrupt, has been in the throes of a series of crippling public sector strikes. Turkey, beset by economic woes, is at the brink of civil war, as the Kurdish insurrection mounts. Military coups are a real possibility in both cases. In Turkey especially, this dynamic threatens to consolidate the power of a neo-Ottoman faction which aims at restoring the empire.

As in former Yugoslavia, the disaster threatening Greece and Turkey is not simply "home grown." Turkey has been steered toward a neo-Ottoman inversion by western, primarily Anglo-American manipulation; and the upheaval in Greece is traceable to the vicious "conditionality" policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Greece plunges toward chaos

The government of Prime Minister Mitsotakis could collapse at any time and plunge Greece into its worst social-political crisis since the mid-1960s, on the eve of the April 1967 CIA-backed military takeover. Greece is bankrupt. Twisting the knife, an IMF-imposed credit embargo was imposed after Greece failed to meet IMF conditions, and the European Community refused to extend desperately needed economic aid.

The IMF vise forced Mitsotakis into the only response allowed by IMF "rules," namely, a severe austerity packet centered on drastic cuts in public workers' pensions, and the first wave of privatizations of public services, which began this summer with the Athens bus lines. The packet was submitted to parliament for approval during September, but as of Sept. 15, the crucial vote had not been held. Since May, the country has been hit by an endless strike wave in the public sector, with no vital public service left untouched. By late August, the strike wave peaked, with two general strikes in two weeks.

The strikes have been led by the communist-dominated Confederation of Trade Unions, and supported by former