

ararat

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ARMENIAN GENERAL BENEVOLENT UNION CENTENNIAL

<p>ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆ Armenia ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆ Armenia</p>	<p>120 2006</p>  <p>1851-1930 Պողոս Նուբար</p>	<p>120 2006</p>  <p>1901-1996 Ալեք Մանուգյան</p>
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Հայկական Բարեգործական
Ընդհանուր Միություն

AGBU

ՊԵՐՊԵՆԵՆ ԵՎ ՏԵՐՄԵՆԸ ՀԱՅ ԻՐԱՆԻՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԵ ԵՎ ՕՍՄԱՆԻՎՈՐԹՅՈՒՆԵ
ԿՐԹՈՒՄԱՆ, ՄՏՎՈՐԹՅԱՆ ԵՎ ՄՐԱՎՈՐԹՅԱՆ ՕՐԱԿՐԵՐԻՑ

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ARCHAG TCHOBANIAN (Arshag Chobanian; 1889-1954), known primarily as a critic and literary compiler, was born in Constantinople. He worked as a writer and editor of periodicals. His own first book of poetry appeared in 1891. He went to Paris after the Hamidian massacres, where he edited *Dzaghig* and was active in French literary life. He wrote on the Genocide, organized anthologies, and collected the work of Hovnatan and Koutchag, who influenced his own work. Tchobanian worked with the AGBU on a variety of issues, and also served with Boghos Nubar Pasha as a member of the Armenian National Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference after World War I.

GEORGE YACOUBIAN is a well-read student of Armenian history. He has served with distinction, as a veteran member, the AGBU (chapter chairman and treasurer); Armenian Students Association (national president and chairman of the board of trustees); and the Knights of Vartan (grand commander).



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Front cover: Top, a stamp issued by the Republic of Armenia commemorating AGBU's Centennial anniversary. Bottom, A stamp issued by the postage service of the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh marking AGBU's 100 years.

Back cover: Left, Workmen construct homes in the AGBU-funded Nubarashen settlement in Soviet Armenia in the 1930s. Right, Today, Nubarashen is an integral part of the metropolitan Yerevan.

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In Michael Stone's article "The Adam Epic by Arakel of Siwnik" (Fall 2005), excerpts of verses 1.1.5-10 & 1.2.1-8, c.350 words, were reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press from Adamgirk' (forthcoming) by Stone, M. (2007).



Introduction ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER

by Aram Arkun

This special issue of *ararat* is dedicated to the centennial of the Armenian General Benevolent Union. Naturally, all AGBU publications this year are devoting at least one issue to this anniversary, and *ararat* is not an exception.

Most Armenians are familiar with at least some of the AGBU's manifold educational, cultural, and humanitarian programs. There are over seventy-five AGBU districts and chapters, forty-eight community centers and offices, and fourteen Young Professional Groups worldwide. AGBU administers thirty-three day and Saturday schools; and supports a wide range of programs, including the American University of Armenia, the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra, the Karabakh Repopulation Project, soup kitchens, children's centers, student scholarships, summer camps, athletics and scouts, internship programs, the performing arts, and fourteen publications in six languages. The scope of the activities and accomplishments of the AGBU is too great to allow for a comprehensive examination of its one hundred years in one issue. Instead, *ararat* presents here an assortment of articles on different themes, regions, and activities.

Readers looking for a regular, comprehensive history are recommended to read Eduard Melkonian's one-volume Armenian-language history of the organization. Vartan Matiossian's review of this work is at the end of this issue. Furthermore, a new French-language survey on the AGBU by Raymond H. Kévorkian and Vahé Tachjian is being translated into English, and will hopefully soon be published.

To ensure some variety to this largely nonfiction issue, *ararat* decided to ask two of our regular contributors, Diana Der-Hovannessian and Aris Sevag, to translate, respectively, several poems and a short story by noted authors who had a connection with AGBU. Paul Sagsoorian, our prolific artist, presents images of past and present AGBU presidents.

The issue opens with the AGBU's efforts to help save Armenian women and children taken captive



during the Genocide. Vahé Tachjian and Raymond H. Kévorkian use archival sources to show how the AGBU sponsored groups liberating such captives, provided them with food and other aid, and established orphanages for the children.

In a poetic interlude, French-Armenian poet and public figure Archag Tchobanian laments the tragic fate of Armenia in his "Mother Armenia."

Vahé Tachjian then relates the story of Nubarashen, a housing project for refugees to Soviet Armenia that became an entire town in the 1930s. The AGBU funded the building of this project, as well as a number of other construction projects in Soviet Armenia. It encouraged immigration to Armenia through various philanthropic initiatives. However, relations with the Soviet authorities were rocky from the start, and ended before the close of the decade with the dissolution of AGBU representation in Soviet Armenia, followed by the hanging of the organization's local representative.

Zarmine K. Boghosian personalizes the meaning of the AGBU in a testimonial relating its effect on her family's life over the decades. Along the way, she provides some interesting insights into life in the post-Genocide Syrian-Armenian community. Next, George S. Yacoubian examines the crucial relationship between the Armenian Church and the AGBU.

The AGBU has played an important role in the diaspora in the realm of Armenian culture

and scholarship by aiding schools, publishing many books, organizing events, providing scholarships and research grants, and supporting Armenian theater and music. This issue focuses on one aspect of these activities: the publication of *ararat* as a literary and cultural journal for more than forty-five years. Short pieces by myself and our two most influential editors—Jack Antreassian and Leo Hamalian—provide some insight into the journal over the decades.

A literary interlude in the form of a translated short story by Dikran Gamsaragan, a prominent Western Armenian writer and active AGBU member, follows. A survey of the AGBU in action in Argentina is then separated from a similar article on Bulgaria by an inspirational poem by revolutionary and writer Mihran Damadian, another AGBU leader. These two countries are highlighted in order to show the variety of AGBU activity in very different cultural environments.

The last three articles of the issue take us to the Republic of Armenia, where the AGBU has recently expended so much energy and resources. Political scientist Ian Bremmer assesses the work of the AGBU in the newly independent nation, while Radik Martirosyan, until recently president of Yerevan State University and now the president of the National Academy of Sciences, and Anahit Ordyan, director of administration of the American University of Armenia, showcase AGBU's projects in these important educational institutions.

Top, His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, with AGBU delegates of the 83rd General Assembly in Armenia, 2004.

Left, Fifth anniversary celebration of AGBU in Cairo, 1911.