

Amb. Arman Kirakossian: *Armenian Studies and Its Future*

The following is the text of Ambassador Arman J. Kirakossian's speech given on Saturday, October 5, at the Sheraton Commander Hotel in Cambridge.

I am delighted to welcome the participants of the conference, and I want to thank the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research for the excellent organization of the conference and for providing me with an opportunity to participate and speak before you tonight.

From both the official – as the Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia – and personal – as a historian and Armenian Studies researcher – perspective, I greatly appreciate the initiative and the purpose of the conference, which is to assess and evaluate the past of Armenian Studies, with its successes and challenges, achievements and lost opportunities, as well as to assess its future work to be done and to chart ways of cooperation between Armenian Studies experts in Armenia and the diaspora. I hope that the ideas, recommendations, theoretical analyses, and suggestions expressed by you during the conference will be of practical value and be carried out.

Frankly, it is my belief that we the researchers are at least ten years behind the times: we should have begun such deliberations immediately after Armenia regained its independence and the Armenian national life received a new meaning and purpose, and new challenges and objectives appeared for the

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Special Report on NAASR Conference on Rethinking Armenian Studies

A who's who from the Armenian Studies community, including scholars and representatives of organizations from across the United States and overseas, gathered for the conference "Rethinking Armenian Studies: Past, Present, and Future" on October 4-6 at Harvard University in Cambridge, MA, and at the Center of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) in Belmont, MA. The conference was co-sponsored by NAASR and the Harvard Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

Over the course of the conference's three days, five sessions were held in which numerous important aspects of the field of Armenian Studies were analyzed, discussed, and occasionally debated. It was the largest scholarly gathering ever to devote itself to an analysis of the discipline and was the first time in memory that all of the active chairholders in Armenian Studies in America were gathered in one place. Conference sessions were attended by the conferees as well as other members of the Armenian scholarly community and many members of the Armenian community at large, some of whom had traveled cross-country to attend the sessions.

Opening Session: The Role of the University Chairs

The opening session of the conference, "The Role of the University Chairs," was held on Friday, October 4, at the Harvard Divinity School. NAASR Board Chairman Nancy R. Kolligian offered a welcome to the assembled scholars and audience members, and longtime NAASR Board Member and Bentley College Chancellor Gregory H. Adamian gave opening remarks. NAASR "was the cata-

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From left: Dr. Lucy Der Manuelian, Dr. Richard Hovannisian, Dr. Dickran Kouymjian, Dr. Kevork Bardakjian, Dr. James Russell.

scientists and Armenian Studies researchers in particular. It is nevertheless not too late to start doing it today although the shortcomings of the last decade left a mark on the field of Armenian Studies and on the quality of the dialogue, contacts, and cooperation between the researchers in Armenia and the diaspora. In that regard, I am sure you will agree with me when I say that the initiative of NAASR is of vital importance.

The Association, in my opinion, is one of the foremost organizations devoted to Armenian studies and research, and has made an invaluable and important contribution to this field in the nearly 50 years of its existence. On behalf of the Government of Armenia, the Armenian Embassy, and Armenian Studies researchers of Armenia, I would like to thank the Association for its patriotic work and dedication to Armenian Studies, of which the organization of this conference is the latest example.

A Complex Legacy

It is common knowledge that the disappearance of Armenia's independence for several centuries, the decentralized and fractionalized existence of the Armenian people during this period, the historical tragedies, and, last but not the least, the ideological divisions and battles of the last decades have deeply affected Armenian Studies as much as they have left a complex legacy in the national life of our nation. Regrettably, to this day we refer to Soviet Armenian, Armenian proper, Armenian American, European Armenian, and Middle Eastern Armenian Armenologies, with the unfortunate lack of compatibility and collaboration in the programs, curricula, and research. I am not speaking about ethnic Armenians only, but also about foreign historians who have made and continue to make an important contribution to Armenian Studies.

There has been an enormous amount of research and work in Armenian Studies conducted outside of Armenia in the diaspora in the last 40 to 50 years. The successes of the American Armenologists in such areas of Armenian Studies as historiography, language studies, literature, and arts studies are self-evident. Without naming everyone or providing a deep profes-



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sional scrutiny, I will just say that Armenian Studies research conducted in the U.S. was not just a scientific input to the sea of knowledge in this area, but also a powerful tool and method of preserving the Armenian identity and maintaining Armenian culture here in the Diaspora.

Strong American Contributions

I want to stress the special importance of the research and publications by the American Armenian historians on what I will call Armenian political studies or political Armenology. Their work in the last decades stands out for the vast amount of research, independent thinking, skillful use of foreign sources, use of scientific foundations, and participation in international conferences. These factors, coupled with the generous support of diaspora organizations and individual benefactors, have prepared the ground for fundamental political scrutiny of the modern history of the Armenian people, the national liberation movement, the history of the Armenian Question, and the Genocide. From my personal experience I can say that the publications by the Armenian-American historians on



NAASR Board Chairman Nancy Kolligian and Amb. Arman Kirakossian.

those subjects in the 1960s through the 1980s, hard to come by as they were, were not just an essential source of materials and information, but also a profound influence in forging a new *modus operandi* for the Armenian historians who were beginning to recover in the post-Stalinist period. They also contributed to the emergence of the political Armenology in Armenia.

Unhealthy Accusations

So, it is with deep regret that I read mutual accusations and unhealthy dialogue between the historians and Armenian Studies researchers in the diaspora and Armenia that seems to be given extraordinary coverage in the Armenian media. Healthy scientific critique, at conferences or on the pages of scientific journals and magazines, can only benefit the further development of Armenian Studies but what we have witnessed degenerated into labeling and name-calling; and the resulting environment is not simply harmful and unpleasant for all of us, but it might also have negative consequences for our field of science, and for the Homeland-Diaspora relations. I will go back to the root causes of such developments and ways to overcome it later in my remarks.

The development of Armenology or Armenian Studies in Soviet Armenia was uneven. In its seventy years of existence, the government established and funded a vast network of scientific institutions with dozens of academic centers and university chairs. Armenian Studies departments at the National Academy Institutes of History, Oriental Studies, Fine Arts, Philosophy, Archeology, and Ethnography; at the Center for Study of History and Culture of the Diaspora; at the Center of Social Sciences Information; as well as at Yerevan State University, Armenian Pedagogical University, and Foreign Languages University, and the Armenian Encyclopedia created, especially in the post-Stalin years, a solid foundation and school of Armenian Studies, with many valuable publications that represent an important input in the establishment, formation, and development of Armenology in the Homeland.

Non-political Armenian studies, in particular, developed especially well

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for a number of reasons, such as the national self-consciousness of and the willingness to preserve national identity, culture, and science among the common people, academic community, and some government officials. Also important in this regard was the relatively "soft" attitude of the Soviet censorship towards Armenian Studies, research, and publications that did not carry an overt political orientation. At the same time, it would be fair to say that some of the many thousands of publications of the Soviet period, and especially those published during the Stalin era, are less than valuable. Nevertheless, it is impossible to ignore the substantial amount of research and academic work. On the balance, it is now the time to evaluate the academic work conducted in those years, to give proper credit and publish new editions of the many valuable publications, preferably in foreign languages. I think your participation, as Armenian American historians, would be of great assistance in this regard.

Armenian Political Studies a Key

Armenian political studies have had a much more uneven progress, and is relatively young as a separate area of study in the Homeland. Immediately after the Sovietization of Armenia and during the Stalin era, there took place a deliberate revisionism of whole chapters in the history of the Armenian people, especially in modern history. In the publications and textbooks of that period, the history of the Armenian people was presented through the prism of the Communist ideology as an integral part of the history of other peoples of the Soviet Union. Certain chapters in our history, such as the national liberation movements, development of a national ideology, the massacres and Genocide, and the Armenian Question, were avoided altogether. The field of political Armenology emerged and made its first steps during the thaw of the Khrushchev-Zarobian period, in mid 1960s, when the first publications appeared covering such subjects as the Armenian national movements, the Genocide, the policy of great powers on the Armenian Question, the history and culture of the Diaspora, etc. These subjects, of course, had already become the foremost areas of research for Armenian Studies specialists in the Diaspora.

Again drawing from my personal experience, even in the 1970s and 1980s it was not easy to devote academic work and research to Armenian political studies in Armenia. The national-minded government officials and Armenian Studies historians who dared to present an unbiased depiction of Armenian history and to instill a national spirit in the new generation had to endure many privations and make sacrifices in their fight against the existing ideological standards, Communist censorship, the faceless party machine, and bureaucrats. So, in reading and evaluating works published in Armenia from the 1960s through 1980s, one should keep in mind the context of that reality and the fact that that research and those publications fostered strong public attitudes and positively affected the people, including intellectuals, helped develop a new mindset among the new generation, and contributed to the formation of a new national ideology.

National Reawakening

The re-establishment of Armenian independence, the reawakening of the Armenian national life and philosophy in Armenia, the fundamental changes and reforms that have been taking place in the Armenian economy and society, and the enormous political and economic challenges facing the Republic



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of Armenia today, understandably reflect on Armenian science in general, including the field of Armenian Studies. On the one hand, the social sciences were rid of the limitations and constraints imposed by Communist ideology and Cold War thinking, although the development of a new mindset and framework of reference will require more time; these developments were

highly positive for Armenian Studies and research. On the other hand, Armenian Studies centers and historians were deprived of steady government funding, and, consequently, the number of scientists and research projects in academic research centers and university departments had to be downsized. Despite the challenges and problems, with great help from the government, academic establishment, and Armenian Diaspora organizations and individual benefactors, Armenian Studies centers in Armenia successfully persisted, adapted to the new conditions, and produced new works of great value to their field. Armenian science needs to undergo fundamental structural reforms to adapt to the existing conditions; the old structure of the scientific establishment is no longer tenable for a country like Armenia. This process has already begun.

Not a Time for Complacency

We cannot afford to be satisfied with what we have and not to think about the future of Armenian Studies in Armenia and in the Diaspora. Armenian Studies should have no geographic or ideological boundaries and be free of constraints and self-imposed limitations. This does not mean we Armenian Studies specialists cannot coordinate or organize our efforts to work in the same direction or have a common scientific position. At the same time, we should bear in mind that Armenia's geopolitical situation is still precarious and complex. So, Armenian Studies researchers, especially those of us who specialize in political studies, should approach political issues responsibly, scrupulously, and seriously as the result of our activities will also affect the objectives of Armenian foreign policy.

Let me now make a few suggestions on the ways that Armenologists in the Diaspora and Homeland can cooperate with a view to implementing joint projects in the area of Armenian Studies and boosting its future development. In my opinion, the future course of Armenia-Diaspora relations greatly depends on the cooperation between professional associations and unions in various areas. Establishment and development of such professional links will strengthen the Republic of Armenia,

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Special Report (cont. from page 1)

lyst that spawned the Armenian Studies chairs and programs at the university level," he stated, "and we hope that the next half-century will be even more productive and the higher educational establishment recognizes the place of Armenian Studies."

Serving as chairman for the panel was NAASR's founding chairman and current Board Chairman Emeritus, Manoog S. Young. After commenting on the enormous strides made in Armenian Studies since the establishment of NAASR and the birth of the Armenian Studies movement in America in the mid-1950s, Young read a statement by retired Harvard Professor of Iranian Studies Richard N. Frye, who had championed the establishment of Armenian Studies at the university level in the early 1950s, but was unable to attend the conference.

Taking to task those who have attacked the Armenian Studies chairs, Prof. Frye wrote that "a permanent professorship ensures continuity," and "it should be obvious that the establishment of chairs in Armenian Studies at leading universities in the U.S. has lifted Armenians from a minority ghetto status to an honored place on the stage of world civilization" and inspired other groups, such as Ukrainians and Assyrians.

The "Role of the University Chairs" panel featured current chairholders Kevork B. Bardakjian (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), Lucy Der Manuelian (Tufts University), Richard G. Hovannisian (University of California, Los Angeles), Dickran Kouymjian (California State University, Fresno), James R. Russell (Harvard University), and past chairholder Robert W. Thomson (Oxford University).

Permanence of Chairs a Key

Prof. Bardakjian, echoing comments made by Prof. Frye, stressed the impact of the chairs, because "unlike ordinary professorships, whose fate may be uncertain in that deans may reassign such positions or abolish them altogether, chairs are permanent." Citing the proliferation of endowed chairs and programs - there are now 15 in the United States - Prof. Bardakjian stated that "this indicates the growing significance

and widening scope of Armenian Studies."

Bardakjian enumerated the responsibilities of a chairholder, which at minimum include research and teaching, but which in reality extend well beyond that. Noting that it is impossible for him to teach all of the courses in which students have shown interest, he stressed the importance of "joint ap-



Dr. Gregory Adamian.

pointments to promote interdisciplinary and comparative studies ... and the integration of Armenian into the larger field of the region, as well as the introduction of Armenian into comparatively newer fields ... where, practically speaking, there is no Armenian representation." He also suggested that in light of the ever-expanding field "the time has come to consider the founding of centers of Armenian Studies with at least three full-time faculty" to conduct and supervise research.

Armenian Studies As Crusade

Prof. Lucy Der Manuelian struck the theme of bringing Armenian culture to people who might not otherwise encounter it, stating that "I consider when you are in Armenian art and architecture that you're on a crusade - a crusade to have the corpus of Armenian art and architecture receive from scholars the attention it deserves." "Too often," Prof. Der Manuelian continued, "the subject is overlooked; it is omitted from general art history books and reference texts, [and is] absent in the curriculum of art history departments of most universities." All of this, she pointed out, in spite of its importance to "the history of art, the history of the Christian Church, medieval politics, economic history, trade, the Silk Route,

and so forth."

More dangerous even than the ignoring of Armenian art and architecture is the fact that they are "sometimes misrepresented, misattributed to other cultures, their history distorted, and in some cases the monuments defaced" or destroyed. This is most particularly the case with Armenian monuments within the borders of modern Turkey. In view of this, Prof. Der Manuelian stated, "the role of the Tufts chair is not only to teach ... and to do research, but in my view to do as much outreach as possible [and] focus on working in as many different aspects of the field of art history as possible."

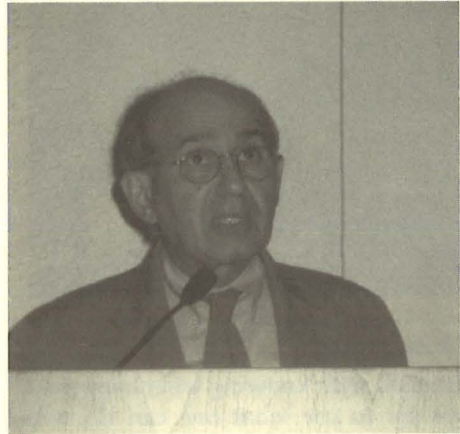
The Need to Overcome Isolation

Prof. Richard G. Hovannisian offered pointed and insightful remarks drawn from his long experience as a chairholder at UCLA. Although, as he stated, he has produced 9 Ph.D.'s in Armenian Studies since becoming a chairholder, or better than one every four years, after the "initial wave [of intense interest] in the 1970s, then the field became much smaller," and "over the last ten or fifteen years I'm dealing with one or two students at a time." Part of the problem faced by the field - and one that was frequently touched on throughout the conference - is that "Armenian Studies is very insular; we are very isolated even in the field of Middle Eastern Studies," and "Armenian Studies is not regarded as equally important." As a result, Hovannisian said, "I continuously face ... indifference and prejudice against Armenian Studies," one result of which is the difficulty in obtaining funds to support graduate students.

Hovannisian underlined the point made by Prof. Der Manuelian that "we need to do more outreach to the community" - both the Armenian community and the wider scholarly community. In an age of increased academic specialization, he emphasized that contrary to that trend Armenian Studies students should pursue a wide range of knowledge and not become "over focused" on strictly Armenian topics. This approach will not only make them better scholars but also will improve their marketability as they seek employment in academia, where purely Armenian Studies positions are few.

Chairs As Part of Diaspora

Prof. Dickran Kouymjian provided a thumbnail sketch of the history of Armenian Studies since the 19th century, noting that "Armenian language, literature, and history have been studied in areas outside the borders of Armenia for nearly two centuries; indeed, in terms of modern scientific methodology, Armenian Studies had their genesis in exile. In some respects, the post-



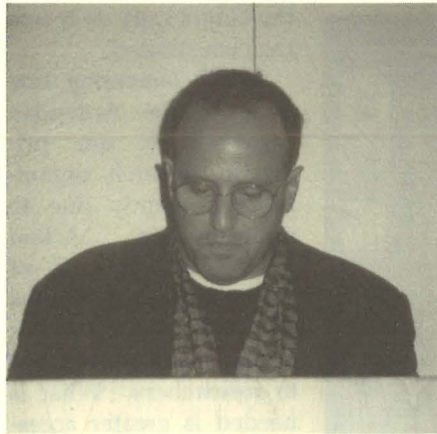
Dr. Dickran Kouymjian.

World War II interest in Armenian Studies in the diaspora is merely a continuation of this process." Yet, "only in recent decades have Armenians with a secular education devoted themselves in significant numbers to this rigorous field," particularly in the U. S.

A key element in the growth of Armenian Studies in America and the establishing of the chairs has been "the failure of Armenians as a group to receive aid or encouragement from the international community of nations in their quest for justice. Perhaps, some thought, by supporting university level studies, knowledge about the Armenian Genocide and the culture that was destroyed by it would be advanced." Although, as Prof. Kouymjian noted, full recognition has not been realized through the creation of the chairs, the "clear and documented historical record of what happened [which] is fundamental for coherent and effective political action" has been generated by them; and as such the chairs remain a focal point of the Armenian community's various concerns.

Marginalization and Community Relations

Prof. James R. Russell, who served as a co-organizer of the conference, gave



Dr. James Russell.

an account of the Harvard chair that was both optimistic and critical. "We have no separate scholarship fund in the Near East department for Armenian Studies and have to compete with bigger, more powerful sub-disciplines. It is very often I find I'm in the same sort of boat as Richard Hovannisian is." Nonetheless, he seeks to extend Armenian Studies at Harvard by teaching courses outside of the discipline per se. "The purpose of these is to serve the needs of a broad humanistic education, and also to acquaint students with the Near Eastern field as a discipline closer to the democratic Western heritage of America and more accessible than they might have thought."

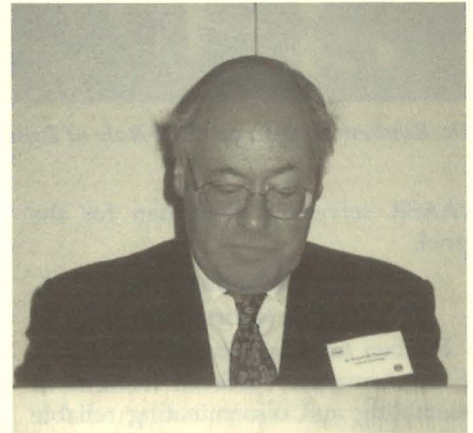
Russell cautioned the audience against the "conspiracy theories, xenophobia, and ultra-nationalist pseudo-science [which] have come increasingly into the mainstream of Armenology in the Armenian Republic" and which have found sympathetic outlets in some of the diasporic press, where paranoia and anti-Semitism have been notably present. "It is a task of the community to set its house in order because these trends are in the end suicidal," he warned. Although Prof. Russell declines to debate such issues, he stated that "I will help with my pen what I still believe to be the great majority of Armenians to expose and destroy the sort of people who are not only dragging our field, but possibly the community itself" into dangerous territory.

Need for a Broad Perspective

Prof. Robert W. Thomson approached the issue of the role of the chairs by first defining Armenian Studies as "the investigation of the past or present with a view to gaining a better

understanding of the meaning of that experience in as broad a perspective as possible." In America, this line of investigation generally takes place within a university, and Thomson emphasized the importance of undergraduate study.

As had Prof. Hovannisian, Prof. Thomson advocated a broad-based approach to Armenian Studies that encourages students to reach their own



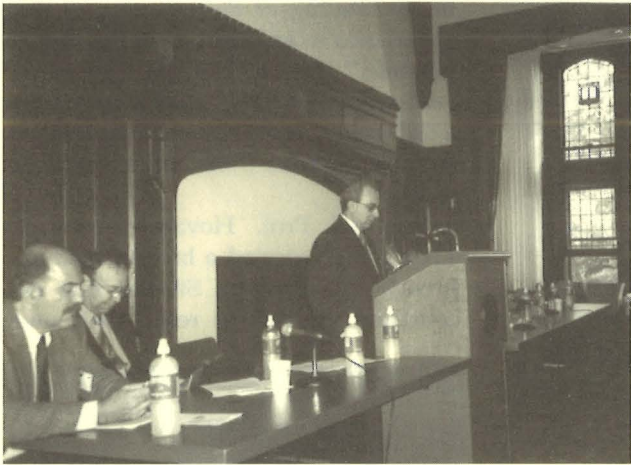
Dr. Robert Thomson.

conclusions and does not serve as "a way for politicians or other interested groups to propagate their own agendas." "What remains to be accomplished," Prof. Thomson added, "is a broader public understanding about Armenia and the place of Armenian history and culture as a component of human civilization." He concluded that "rational inquiry is our method; collaboration is the means of progress; independence of thought is our aim."

Second Panel:

The Role of Organizations

The conference continued on Saturday, October 5, at the Harvard Divinity School, with "The Role of Organizations, Institutions, and Research Centers," featuring Rouben Adalian (Armenian National Institute), Aram Arkun (Zohrab Information Center), Barlow Der Mugardehian (California State University, Fresno), Gerard J. Libaridian (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), Dennis R. Papazian (University of Michigan, Dearborn), and Ruth Thomsian (Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives). Isabel Kaprielian (California State University, Fresno) was scheduled to appear but was unable to attend. Marc A. Mamigonian of



Dr. Rouben Adalian on "The Role of Institutions."

NAASR served as chairman for the panel.

Dissemination of Reliable Information

Rouben Adalian focused on the role of the Armenian National Institute in assembling and disseminating reliable information pertaining to the Armenian Genocide. "The quantity of information about Armenia is quite considerable; and hence, how to navigate it, how to locate the knowledge [and] the scholarship that has application to the situations that arise in Washington" is the crucial issue, since "the demand for basic information about Armenia, Armenian issues, and in the case of ANI the Armenian Genocide itself, is quite staggering."

Since ANI could not exist without the scholarship provided by the chairs and other scholars, Adalian emphasized the need for cooperative relations between organizations such as ANI and scholars at universities and other research centers. Sounding a note that would be struck by all of the panel's participants, he also noted the need for collaboration among Armenian organizations and the sharing of information.

Greater Accessibility Needed

Aram Arkun pointed out the difficulty in evaluating the performance of the Armenian organizations since there is no independent and objective source of appraisal. The number of active organizations, he observed, may be seen as indicative of their strength; yet, as he pointed out, earlier in the 20th century there were even more, though smaller, organizations that served the needs of

the community as it was then constituted.

While lamenting that none of the Armenian organizations are primarily research organizations, mainly due to underfunding, Arkun praised the strength of the individual collections of the organizations which are of great value to researchers. What is needed is greater accessibility to the collections and increased communication and collaboration among the organizations

to eliminate needless duplication of labor.

Importance of Professional Organization

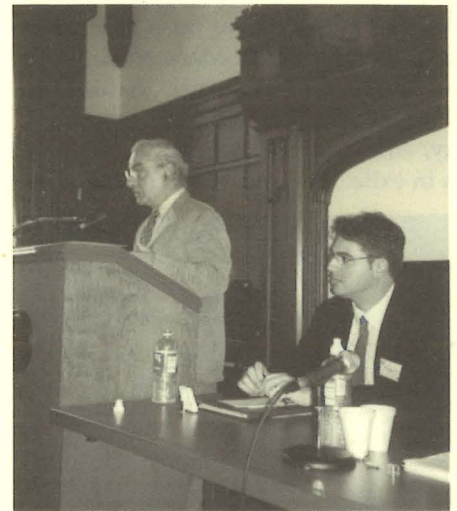
Barlow Der Mugrdchian, President of the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS), gave "a 28-year view" of the organization and its activities. "The SAS became a forum for Armenologists to share their research with each other and with scholars outside of the discipline," he explained. Also, it "has been an essential factor in the very direction that Armenian Studies has taken, whether in the area of publications or in organizing or co-sponsoring conferences and symposia."

Among the SAS's many activities and publications, one which Der Mugrdchian discussed has become increasingly important as a means of communication among those in the field: the SAS e-mail list. The list allows members to be "informed of important developments in real time" and "accelerate research by putting relevant people in contact."

Need to Address Contemporary Issues

Prof. Gerard Libaridian spoke about his experiences in establishing the Zoryan Institute, although, as he emphasized, he could not speak for its current activities because he is no longer associated with it. "The basic concept of the institute was to establish a center where you discuss contemporary issues ... in an interdisciplinary manner." After the establishment of NAASR and the early Armenian Studies chairs had legitimized the field in American universities, Libaridian explained, Zoryan sought to go beyond historical issues to

approach contemporary issues using "political science theory, social psychology, certainly anthropology, and international relations" and to "not be



Dr. Gerard Libaridian and Marc Mamigonian.

satisfied with knowing what happened, but try to see what one can do with what one knows."

One of the primary goals of the Zoryan Institute was to analyze the dynamics of the Armenian diaspora in all its many contradictions. This proved to be difficult because of the reluctance of benefactors to fund this work. Libaridian described the "silent struggle" between those who viewed Armenian Studies as merely an affirmation of Armenian civilization and those who wanted to be analytical and critical. This dichotomy is still a critical issue today, he said, and he sees "a lack of the definition of issues beyond the partisan, beyond the political, and beyond the immediate ... That discourse is yet to begin."

Importance of World Wide Web

Prof. Dennis Papazian, Director and Founder of the Armenian Research Center in Dearborn, Michigan, focused on the role of organizations in general, which "have not only played a valuable role in the production of Armenian scholarship, they have also given valuable support in the maintenance of Armenian scholarship at various universities throughout America," and specifically discussed the role of the Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan, Dearborn.

In addition to maintaining a large and important library, the Armenian

Research Center has also, among other things, hosted scholars-in-residence who have performed original research there, the most recent of whom was the Turkish scholar Taner Akçam. As other participants had, Papazian stressed the vital role the world wide web will play in the future development of the research centers, which "must establish web sites and make as much material available as possible."

Documentation and Illustration

Ruth Thomasian, Founder and Executive Director of Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, gave a brief history of the organization, noting that although "we exist outside of academia, we have been and continue to be heavily invested in educational efforts." Project SAVE, which was estab-



Manoog Young makes a point.

lished in 1976, is home to some 25,000 photographs and 1,500 hours of oral history tapes.

"Our mission includes using our photographs to promote knowledge of Armenian history and culture, which includes a very broad range of studies: cultural anthropology, folk-life, sociology, genealogy, women, and all kinds of history," Thomasian explained. As the multi-disciplinary approach to Armenian Studies as described by numerous scholars throughout the conference becomes more prevalent, such resources as Project SAVE will become more a part of the Armenian Studies



Dr. Dennis Papazian.

mainstream, and Thomasian expressed the hope that "we will continue to provide ways for it to be examined and studied."

The afternoon sessions at the Harvard Divinity School commenced with the panel "Relations Between Armenian Studies in the U.S. and Armenia," featuring Kevork B. Bardakjian, George Bournoutian (Iona College, NY), Robert H. Hewsen (Rowan University, NJ), Richard G. Hovannisian, Albert Stepanyan (Yerevan State University), and Robert W. Thomson. James R. Russell served as chairman of the session.

Conflict the Result of Historical Forces

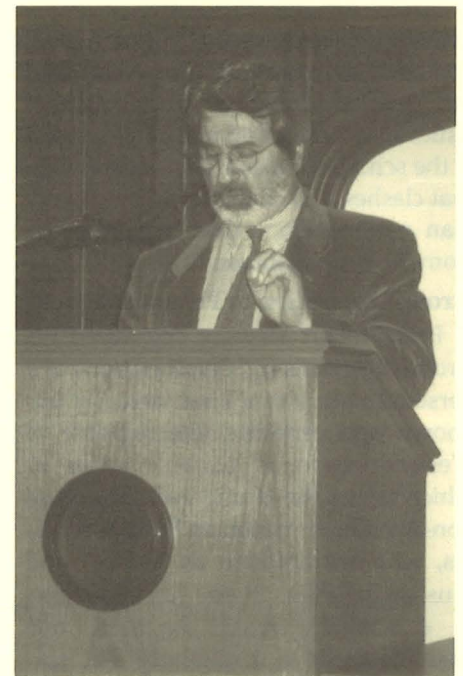
Prof. Kevork Bardakjian began by explaining some of the basic reasons why differences of approach and methodology might exist between Armenian Studies scholars in the West and those in Armenia. "We must remember that political culture was institutionalized" under Soviet rule, and "scholarship was also institutionalize; there was a state policy to follow." Therefore, "putting scholarship in the service of national policy" is common throughout the region. Such factors, combined with the inevitable "reaction to political threats" facing Armenia make the occasional conflicts with scholars in the Republic understandable, though not justifiable, Bardakjian stated.

"Most of my colleagues have been attacked in a very unprofessional and vulgar way" as "traitors" or "foreign agents," Bardakjian continued, al-

though he feels that this is nonetheless a distinctly minority view. The best way to overcome these problems is through personal contact with colleagues in Armenia – joint projects, publications exchanges, student and faculty exchanges. Greater understanding of each other's work and circumstances will in the end prevail.

Objectivity Rather Than Propaganda

Prof. George Bournoutian noted the irony of his presence on the panel since, although he has been teaching Armenian history for a quarter of a century, "I have never been invited to a conference in Armenia; I have not received an honorary degree from Armenia; I have not been elected to the Armenian Academy of Sciences ... And I have not



Dr. Kevork Bardakjian.

been published in any newspaper or academic journal in Armenia."

Nonetheless, Bournoutian delivered an eloquent rebuttal to charges against him and Armenian-American scholar-sin general made by Armen Aivazyan in Armenia. These charges are based on the belief "that Armenian-American historians ... have damaged Armenian territorial claims to Karabagh, Cilicia, Nakhichevan, Ganja, and Turkish Armenia" and "questioned culturally sensitive dates," such as that of the conversion of Armenia to Christianity.

While he finds the anger "understandable, given the denial of the Ar-



Dr. Robert Hewsen.

menian Genocide by the Turks, Azeris, and their supporters in the West" and the general disregard for Armenian issues in America and elsewhere, still it is the scholars' objectivity – even when that clashes with the interests of Armenian nationalism – that "separates us from the propagandists."

Strong Opposition to Personal Attacks

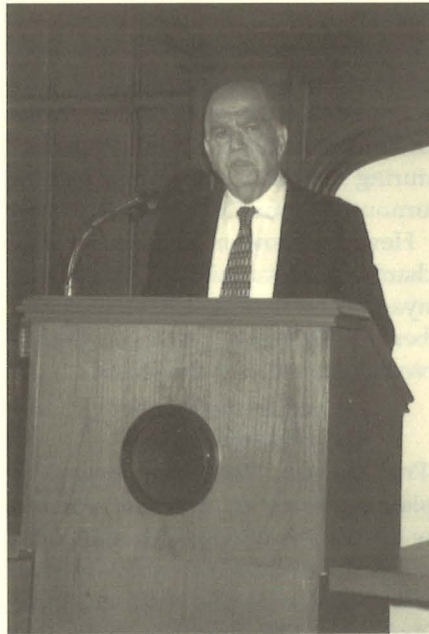
Prof. Robert Hewsen registered his strong objections to "denunciations of a personal nature of a kind virtually unknown and certainly unacceptable in Western academic circles," some of which target the ethnic background of non-Armenian Armenian Studies scholars, who are branded as "odars" and thus unqualified. If one has objections to a scholar's work, he said, one presents them in a scholarly and reasoned manner. "In too many cases" those who engage in attacks on American scholars "show themselves to be provincial and unsophisticated in their worldview, and above all unfamiliar with the norms of accepted Western scholarship," he continued, and ultimately their attacks are "foolish and self-defeating."

As Prof. Bardakjian had previously noted, these attacks have their roots in a Soviet-era mentality. While noting the important and enduring work done by some scholars in Armenian Studies under Soviet rule, Hewsen observed that what the Soviets termed "bourgeois nationalism" was suppressed and

all national histories were viewed through the same Marxist-Leninist lens. However, with the advent of independence, nationalism has reasserted itself in Armenian Studies. The problem is, Hewsen stated, it is "a nationalist interpretation of a distinctly outdated kind." He, too, voiced the opinion that those bringing attacks are a minority and the most effective weapon against them is greater exposure to each other's works and methods.

Debt to Scholars in Armenia Acknowledged

Prof. Richard Hovannisian emphasized the positive, stressing "our great indebtedness" to scholarship in Armenia, including especially that done under the Soviets. Even when factoring in the ideological limitations under which these scholars worked, he noted that his own work had been made stronger



Dr. Richard Hovannisian.

through exposure to their work and their perspective.

The current controversy – one in which Hovannisian has been involved through his willingness to publish scholars with whom the hyper-nationalists disagree – comes from their "sense of being threatened." Thus, discussions about the national origins of the Armenian people take on a political urgency to those who feel that any scholar who does not adopt the view that the Armenians are indigenous to historic Armenia is undermining Armenian claims to justice. As others had

before him, Hovannisian urged collaboration and discussion. "We should also encourage a new generation of Armenian scholars to study abroad – and not on Armenian subjects, but to study the broader issues of history," he said. "Broadening of perspective will bring us out of this seeming crisis."

Interaction and Collaboration Essential

Prof. Albert Stepanyan looked at the growth of Armenology and discussed the issue of collaboration in the future. Taking Armenian Studies to be "a scientific information system aimed firstly at the investigation of Armenian (ethnic, group, individual) identity in its active relations with the outer world," Stepanyan saw its true starting point in the 5th century, when the alphabet was invented and writing in Armenian as we know it began. As for its future, "Armenology is to be outlined as a field of collective creative activity."

Stepanyan described the potential of the internet for the future of Armenian Studies, allowing for easier and instant collaboration. He stressed the need for an "information bank ... with data about all centers of Armenology – their research themes, results, publications, fellows." Armenian scholars working in Armenia today do not interact sufficiently with their colleagues in the U.S. and Europe, he stated, because of the "protraction of transition from Marxism to other intellectual systems, insufficiency of coordination of Armenological studies, [and] poor equipment of research centers with new information technologies." He concluded that exchanges of knowledge and personnel are essential to the future of the field.

Cooperation with Armenia a Must

Prof. Robert Thomson took as his starting point the assumption that increased collaboration between Armenian Studies scholars in the West and in Armenia is necessary because "the very extent of the resources, human and material, in Armenia make it impossible for Armenian Studies to be pursued satisfactorily elsewhere without close ties to Armenia itself." He then proposed tangible ways in which these ties can be improved and strengthened.

On the undergraduate level, Thomson stressed in particular the need for total immersion in the Armenian

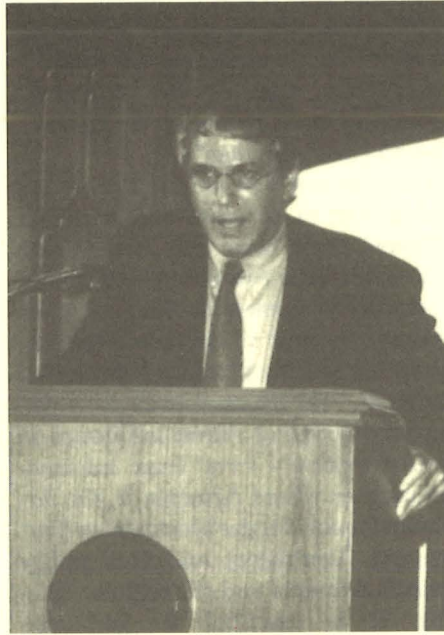
milieu – which is much more possible since independence than in Soviet times. The same is true at the graduate level, but with the added importance of forming relationships with research centers and institutions in Armenia, which are more than willing to assist. The importance of collaboration with one's colleagues in Armenia at all levels – undergraduate, graduate, and professional – was emphasized by Thomson. "Collaboration and mutual understanding between Armenians in Armenia and their colleagues abroad is a vital part" of the process of advancing Armenian Studies worldwide.

Armenia Into Mainstream or Vice-Versa?

The next panel was "Integrating Armenian Studies with Other Disciplines," with David S. Calonne (Eastern Michigan University), Levon Chorbajian (University of Massachusetts, Lowell), Moorad Mooradian (Yerevan State University), Marc Nichanian (Columbia University), Michael E. Stone (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), and Bert Vaux (Harvard University). Simon Payaslian of Clark University served as chairman of the session.

Prof. David Calonne began on a lively note by stating that the panel's emphasis on "'incorporating Armenian Studies into the mainstream of academic discourse' ... get[s] reality exactly backwards because what has undergone a sea change ... during the past twenty years is precisely American academic discourse itself." Because "the mainstream is no longer the mainstream, some of the issues preoccupying many Armenian scholars in the past which appeared to be marginal – the diaspora, genocide, multiculturalism, the question of the assimilation into American life – these concerns are now at the very center of academic life."

As Calonne pointed out, though, it still remains for Armenian-American literary works to find a place in courses where they would be relevant and important. He gave a short list of texts that "are important not only for their aesthetic fineness, but they also help students see the ways Armenian-American writers were ahead of their time in defining many of the debates concerning multiculturalism which



Dr. David Calonne.

presently preoccupy us." It is vital for Armenian Studies programs "to reach out to students [and act] not as an isolated preserve but rather as a central way towards self-knowledge."

Part of Larger Discourse

Prof. Levon Chorbajian made a similar observation to Calonne's, noting the growth of area studies in the past several decades and the general increase in interest in non-Western cultures and civilizations. He attributed these to the twin – yet seemingly opposite – factors of the Cold War and the protest movement of the 1960s and 70s. The Cold War led to an increase in attention paid to countries within the Soviet orbit while the protest movement caused differences of race and ethnicity to be valued more highly; or, as he put it, "being different was center stage."

As a sociologist, Chorbajian deals "with a lot of areas having to do with social change" and has found that there were aspects of his field that could be related to Armenian Studies because, although the Armenian experience has unique characteristics, it has many similarities to other groups' experiences. He acknowledged the important role of *Ararat* magazine and the Zoryan Institute for creating a forum for the kind of work he has pursued for some 30 years.

Not a Single Discipline

Prof. Moorad Mooradian ap-

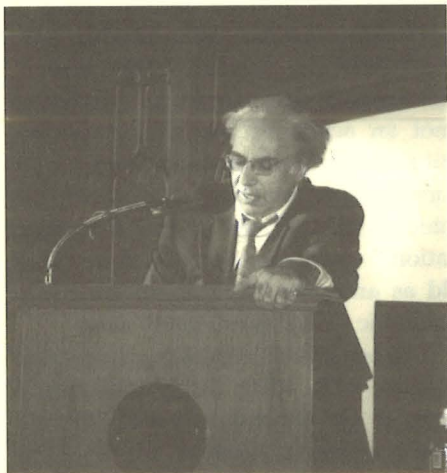
proached the question by redefining it as "Integrating Armenian Studies with the Traditional Academic Disciplines." He stressed that Armenian Studies is "not an academic discipline," per se, but rather a "field of study that broadly encompasses anything to do with the intellectual analyses of the Armenian nation." Armenian Studies, then, "is as old as antiquity," but as an American academic field it is relatively new.

The concept of integrating Armenian Studies with other disciplines would seem to be non-controversial, Mooradian continued, because the field involves scholars who exist in diverse environments, educated in philosophically different ways, and who are "not bound by rules associated with a single discipline." Furthermore, the field encompasses a relatively small number of scholars "who have wide-ranging, often opposing cultural and philosophical understandings" of the goals of Armenian Studies, "and in the instance of Armenian Studies it becomes a situation where the fewer the number of scholars the more obvious and intense will seem the controversies."

From the Diaspora, For the Diaspora

Prof. Marc Nichanian disdained the notion that Armenian Studies should or needed to embrace modern so-called "postmodern" theories. Rather, "the only interesting question is 'Can an Armenian [Studies] chair bring about the institutionalizing of modern thought and modern existence among Armenians?'" Emphasizing the diaspora, he observed that "while the chairs of Armenian Studies obviously pertain to the academic world and are answerable to it, they also pertain to a living and singular reality that bears the name of the Armenian diaspora, and they are answerable to it as well."

Discussing his work as a scholar and teacher, Nichanian emphasized the need to overcome the "crisis of reception" of Armenian literature of the 20th century outside of Armenian language readers and his own efforts to create a space within which such a reception is possible. As a scholar reading from the diaspora for the diaspora, he expressed the opinion that the way to integrate



Dr. Marc Nichanian.

Armenian Studies, as it were, was to find a "universal language beyond nationalism."

Reaching Out to Colleagues

Prof. Michael Stone, continuing the attempt to find a working definition of Armenian Studies, stated that "by its very nature - intellectual, disciplinary, geographical - Armenian Studies embraces a polarity. On the one hand, it could be seen as an independent field of study, yet on the other it can only be pursued as part of the greater context of humane studies." Because Armenian Studies encompasses - or is encompassed by - a number of other disciplines, and if "there is nothing essentially unique about Armenian history as history, then the same methods obtain for the study of Armenian history as for American history, Russian history," and so on.

For Stone, the key factor in raising the profile of and/or integrating Armenian Studies is to reach out to one's colleagues in related fields and get them to see the relevance of Armenian Studies to their work. This can be accomplished by maintaining "the highest possible standards" for one's self and students and to realize that Armenian culture was not created in a vacuum. Involving scholars whose primary focus is not Armenia will broaden the knowledge of Armenian culture, and this will trickle down to the students.

Getting Out of "the Ghetto"

Prof. Bert Vaux stated at the outset of his talk that "Armenian Studies, as it currently stands, and Armenian affairs

in general, is in a sort of ghetto." As a result of this state of affairs, the "larger question" is "what should the goals of Armenology and of the Armenian community be with regard to universities and chair activities"?

Pointing out that among the assembled group of scholars and audience members there was only one person who was neither Armenian by birth nor a scholar of Armenian Studies, Vaux stressed the need to overcome the disregard for so-called "minor cultures" in academia. The greatest priority is getting knowledge of Armenian issues to non-Armenians - even basic information such as where Armenia is, the Armenian Genocide, the blockade by Turkey and Azerbaijan, and U.S. policy towards Armenia and the region. Likewise, it is essential to get non-Armenians involved in advancing Armenian issues because of the perceived bias of Armenians. With increased knowledge, the integration of Armenian Studies will logically follow.

Saturday Night Banquet

On Saturday evening a banquet was held for the conference participants, guests, and members of the public at the Sheraton Commander Hotel in



Chairman Nancy Kolligian presents Chairman Emeritus Manoog Young with a birthday cake.

Cambridge. Following remarks by NAASR Board Chairman Nancy Kolligian and Prof. James Russell of Harvard, His Excellency Dr. Arman Kirakossian, Armenian Ambassador to the

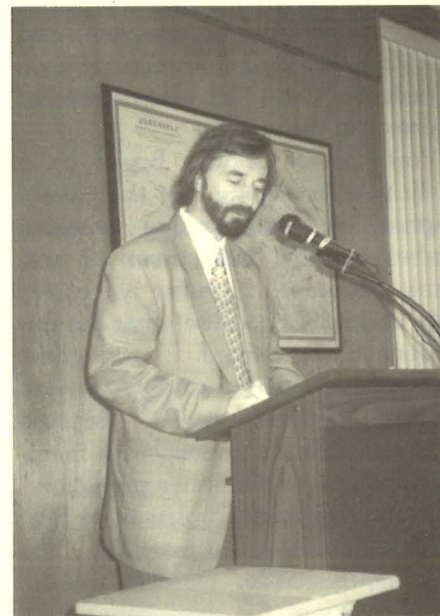
U.S., spoke on "Armenian Studies and Its Future." (See text of Ambassador Kirakossian's talk beginning on page 1.)

Near the end of the evening Chairman Kolligian took a moment to acknowledge Chairman Emeritus Young's 85th birthday, and to remark on his exceptional contributions to NAASR and to Armenian Studies through the years.

Final Session on Future of Armenian Studies

The final session was held on Sunday morning, October 6, at the NAASR Center in Belmont, MA, and dealt with "The Future of Armenian Studies." This panel featured S. Peter Cowe (University of California, Los Angeles), Dickran Kouymjian, Ina Baghdiantz McCabe (Tufts University), Simon Pasyalian, James R. Russell, and Theo M. Van Lint (Oxford University). Dennis R. Papazian chaired the session.

Prof. S. Peter Cowe offered "a number of priorities, both practical and



Dr. S. Peter Cowe.

theoretical" for the future development of Armenian Studies, stressing the Three C's - "consolidation, communication, and collaboration." Noting that "the process [of establishing chairs at universities] has largely been uncoordinated and dependent on local initiatives," he observed that "a more planned approach would be of greater advantage and be more cost-effective." The establishment of research centers at schools with chairs would allow for increased collaboration and inter-

disciplinary work and aid "sub-disciplines" like musicology, folklore, and the like.

Cowe pointed to increased communication via the internet but underlined the need to standardize the Armenian keyboard for font interface and create software to allow scanners to recognize Armenian script as text. Improved communication among Armenian organizations would eliminate the unnecessary duplication of labor. Collaboration is essential, because "Armenology is one discipline, in the final analysis, and hence it is incumbent upon us to learn from the past and shun artificial divisions or the witch-hunt for modern-day heresiarchs.

Some Goals Reached, Others Remain

Prof. Dickran Kouymjian took a brief detour into the past before looking to the future by reading a portion of a paper he wrote 30 years ago on the future of Armenian Studies. Many of the measures he called for then have since been accomplished, but some of the important suggestions made at that time remain topics of discussion, and, indeed, formed the basis of the weekend's conference.

Kouymjian declared that "We must give up the idea of attracting masses of students to Armenian Studies courses ... As desirable as having large enrollments may seem, it would only be a possibility on the undergraduate level at institutions where there are large numbers of Armenians enrolled," and even then, as Prof. Hovannisian had earlier pointed out, that does not translate into large numbers of graduate students. Although the chairs must continue to be supported, research centers with trained scholars should be the wave of the future, along with exploiting the vast potential of the internet. The field is still in its infancy, he stressed, and great progress has been made; but future development depends on cooperation and collaboration both in the U.S. and abroad.

Importance of Interdisciplinary Work

Prof. Ina Baghdiantz McCabe stated that "it is crucial for scholars and the diaspora to have good communication about what is happening in the field and what the chairs are and what they do" and that "it should be a source of great pride to have these chairs within some excellent universities." The dias-

pora has been and will continue to be a key element in Armenian Studies, she said, citing the long tradition of support of scholarship by the Armenian diaspora – not only in America, but worldwide.

Like many of her colleagues, she said, "I see interdisciplinarity ... as one of the possible avenues" for expanding the field. In fact, since Armenian Studies has always been interdisciplinary by its nature, it "provide[s] a model for the study of history that's much closer to what every history department is now looking at." As the world becomes increasingly globalized, she added, "models that were reserved for diasporic people like the Armenians and the Jews are becoming much more interesting to other historians."

Theoretical View and a Wish List

Prof. Simon Payaslian took a two-pronged approach, first addressing the absence of a theoretical or methodo-

logical approach to Armenian history and then presenting a "wish list" for the future. He observed that Armenian historiography has tended to be narrative rather than theoretical or methodological, but "there is a great need for the application of quantitative statistical methods for aggregate data analysis in Armenian history." Furthermore, "we don't really have the tradition of scholarly research in looking at long cycles" in Armenia's long history, and to date "there is no debate in the Armenian scholarly community on such issues."

A Visionary Presentation

Prof. James Russell offered the counterpoint to a weekend of sometimes somber deliberations with a freewheeling and hilarious mystical "vision" of the next century of Armenian Studies, including "the unearthing of an enormous Zoroastrian temple complex with monumental inscriptions in the pre-Mesrobian script," "submarine excavations of the submerged city of Argisht on the north shore of Lake Van," the elevation of *krapar* (classical Armenian) to "the language of international di-



From left: Dr. Simon Payaslian, Dr. S. Peter Cowe, Dr. Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, Dr. Dickran Kouymjian, Dr. Theo van Lint, Dr. James Russell.

plomacy," and a NAASR conference in the year 2102 held on the moon. Russell's vision left the audience speechless, leaving session chairman Dennis Papazian to remark "he does have visitations from angels, so I know it must be true."

Do Not Neglect the Past

Prof. Theo van Lint emphasized the urgency of overcoming the notion of "remoteness" that some attach to Armenian Studies since "studying Armenian culture and the Armenian people gives you ... all human experience over at least 2,500 years, which is an enor-

mous richness." The situation is improving, but Armenia must be placed on the "mental map" of people who are now largely or entirely ignorant of its rich heritage.

Himself a scholar of medieval Armenian culture, van Lint said "the Arme-

Ambassador Kirakossian (continued from page 1)

contribute to the prosperity of Armenians in the Homeland, help the Diaspora preserve its national identity and further increase its profile and participation in the Homeland. There are already precedents and success stories,

such as the jewelers association, medical groups, and other professional groups. We should consider establishing an international Association for Armenian Studies, open to participation by the research institutions, centers, university departments, as well as individual researchers. The next step would be the

establishment of more specialized professional groups for the historians, political science researchers, linguists, art historians, ethnographers, and so on.

Establishment of a common scientific foundation can become another factor benefiting the further development of Armenian Studies. Also helpful in this regard are joint research projects and publications, collaboration on translations, organization of general and specialized conferences and seminars in Armenia and abroad, student and faculty exchanges, exchange of information and publications between Armenian Studies departments and libraries. This approach and implementation of joint projects will not only benefit the progress of Armenian Studies, but will also help to dissipate the unhealthy climate of mutual accusations and recriminations and will bring together Armenologists of different mentalities and cultural and philosophical background.

As the Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the United States and as an Armenian historian, I am prepared to assist – in any way I can – the efforts

to strengthen the cooperation and collaboration between the historians in Armenia and the U.S. and to resolve issues relating to the future of Armenian studies in general.

In conclusion, I would like to once again thank the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research and the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University for organizing this conference.

Coming in the Next Issue:

- a report on the 48th Annual NAASR Assembly of Members
- a report on the May 2002 course "The Near East in the Mind of America" by Prof. James R. Russell
- reports on the 2002 NAASR lecture series
- details of the March-April 2003 course "The Long 20th Century in Armenian History" by Prof. Simon Payaslian
- more news, features, and a look ahead to 2003



Group photo of conferees and NAASR staff at Saturday night banquet. Left to right in front row: Sandra Jurigian, Marc Mamigonian, Nancy Kolligian, Arman Kirakossian, Manoog Young. Second row: Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Lucy Der Manouelian, James Russell, Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, George Bournoutian, Dennis Pazian, Dickran Kouymjian. Third row: Gerard Libaridian, Kevork Bardakjian, Aram Arkun, Ruth Thomasian, Rouben Adalian, Albert Stepanyan, Michael Stone, Moorad Mooradian, Robert Thomson, Simon Payaslian. Back row: Levon Chorbajian, Theo van Lint, Bert Vaux, Peter Cowe, David Calonne.

nian community could benefit from the idea that the Armenian experience is more than post-genocide trauma." He spoke strongly of the importance of classical and middle Armenian studies, which he feels "is eminently important for the preservation of the Armenian cultural heritage. It would be an enormous mistake to forget 1,800 years of Armenian Studies."

All of the panels throughout the weekend featured lively discussions and question-and-answer periods with the audience. Many of the conference participants praised the organization of the weekend as one of the best run events they had attended and expressed the hope that it would lead to further productive meetings in the near future.

The papers from the conference will be published by NAASR in 2003, most likely as a double issue of the *Journal of Armenian Studies*.

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National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, Inc.

395 Concord Avenue
Belmont, MA 02478
Tel.: 617-489-1610
Fax: 617-484-1759
E-Mail: hq@naasr.org
Web: www.naasr.org

Marc A. Mamigonian
Director of Publications