Religion, State & Society, Vol. 24, No. 1, 1996

The Armenian Church Under the Soviet Regime, Part 1: the Leadership of Kevork

FELIX CORLEY

Like all religious groups in the Soviet Union, the Armenian Apostolic Church suffered greatly in the 1930s. The low point came in 1938, with the mysterious death – undoubtedly at the hands of the NKVD – of the Church's leader, Catholicos Khoren I (Muradbekyan). As for other groups, the Second World War and the rapprochement with the Soviet state came just at the right time. The Church was saved from oblivion, mainly because of its importance to overseas Armenians. Within Soviet Armenia it was kept on a very tight leash, reduced to just a remnant of its former glory.

This is the first part of an article that will cover the history of the Church from 1938 up to the death of Catholicos Vazgen in 1994.[1] This article is based on published sources[2] and research in the archives of the Council for the Affairs of the Armenian Church in Yerevan, as well as in the Armenian party archives.[3] The files of the Armenian Council available to researchers begin to thin out by the early 1960s, as all files related to the period from the mid-1960s are still in use by the present Council, housed in the old offices on Abovyan Street in Yerevan. I have also examined material in the Central Committee Archive in Moscow and in the extensive files of the Council for Religious Affairs in the State Archive of the Russian Federation. The Moscow material also begins to thin out by the 1960s, and for this reason it was in Vilnius that I examined later material from the All-Union Councils.

Rapprochement

Following the difficult years of the 1930s[4] the Armenian Church – headed by the acting Catholicos Kevork Chorekchyan – was able to use the outbreak of war with Nazi Germany on 22 June 1941 to regain its position as a vital part of Armenian society. In July Kevork called on Armenians to support the Soviet war effort and later, on 2 February 1942, to donate their savings to build a tank column to be named in honour of the Armenian hero David of Sasun. Kevork's actions thus echoed those of the surviving Russian Orthodox church leaders who moved decisively to back the war effort at a time when Stalin had all but withdrawn into silence. This patriotic activity by the Soviet Union's surviving religious leaders gained them instant respect, being extensively quoted in the Soviet media, for both the domestic and foreign audiences. The director of atheist work, Yemelyan Yaroslavsky, was forced to abandon his antireligious campaign and in an article prepared on 2 September 1941 reported favourably

0963-7494/96/01/0009-47

on the patriotic activity of Metropolitan Sergi of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Vitali of the Renovationists, Archbishop Irinarkh of the Old Believers, the Baptist chairman Mikhail Orlov and Archbishop Kevork. Yaroslavsky could not bring himself to pen such praise of religious leaders under his own name, so he used the pseudonym 'Katsi Adamiani'.[5] This public recognition of the Soviet Union's religious leaders came after many difficult years when Soviet policies had all but eradicated the churches from public life.

The Armenian Church had been particularly hard hit in the 1930s. Kevork Khachaturovich Chorekchyan had been doing his best to keep the Church together in fulfilment of the command of his predecessor, Khoren. Born in 1869, Kevork had followed secular studies at Leipzig University and at a musical conservatory, as well as religious studies at the Echmiadzin seminary. He was ordained as a celibate priest in 1913 and a bishop in 1917. He went to Tbilisi in 1921 and the following year became head of the Georgian diocese, becoming an archbishop in 1925. From 1927 he was member of the Supreme Spiritual Council, the group of nine clergy and laypeople who advise the catholicos in governing the Church. On 18 April 1936 Khoren had officially named him his deputy and head of the Supreme Spiritual Council. Khoren's letter of nomination went on:

> We instruct your Grace, after our death, to take care, by agreement with the Supreme Spiritual Council of Holy Echmiadzin, of all affairs relating to our faithful flock and the Armenian Church scattered throughout the world, treasuring and defending the purity and integrity of the traditions of the Church and conducting according to the established canons the election of the Catholicos of All the Armenians.[6]

Within two years – on 6 April 1938 – Khoren died, and the circumstances of his death were to have a profound impact on Kevork. Khoren was almost certainly killed by the NKVD[7], but whatever the circumstances Kevork had been so overcome by the climate of fear that he had taken refuge with the famous poet Avetik Isahakyan, remaining there for a month and a half. Isahakyan was himself expecting to be arrested and was thus not afraid to take in Kevork, as his wife Sofia later recalled:

> And so one night, at about three o'clock, there was a ring at our door. Avetik stayed in bed and, in my nightdress, I went to the door, full of fear, and opened it. There at the threshold stood Bishop Kevork. I let him in, and the bishop told us that he had reliable reports that they intended to arrest him and, although he had many friends in the town, could rely on no one and so had come to us.[8]

Kevork had not been with Khoren at the time of his death, nor had he attended Khoren's hasty burial in the ordinary graveyard in the Church of St Hripsime in Echmiadzin. But Kevork was not arrested and took over as *locum tenens*, the acting head of the Church. It was he, together with Arsen Glatchyan and Bishop Vrtanes, who eventually informed the diaspora Church by telegram of Khoren's death.

For the next few years the Armenian Church in the Soviet Union was almost dead.[9] Echmiadzin barely functioned – in addition to Kevork, there was just one archimandrite, Matevos Achemyan, and a few lectors to keep services going. It was Achemyan, Archbishop Artavazd Syurmeyan recalled, who 'during the four years of the war and before that, together with the *locum tenens*, has defended and cared for the cathedral, and the apartments of the catholicos, and with the aid of a poor, old local

priest has regularly, day and night, officiated at the services.'[10] Following Khoren's death, the Soviet authorities stepped up the pressure on the isolated Kevork:

> One spring day in 1940 I was sitting in the patriarchal chambers thinking about what measures to take to raise the Armenian Church and the primatial cathedral from the situation that had been created when three state officials arrived from Yerevan. Under the guise of examining the Catholicosate they came into the large hall of the Catholicosate and presented themselves to me.

They offered Kevork work as a secular teacher, either of music or of Armeniology, mentioning to him that they had set up the former Archimandrite Ervand Ter-Minasyan in a good teaching post. Kevork was firm in his refusal, telling his visitors:

> When I was consecrated bishop I signed an oath that I would faithfully serve the Armenian Church ... Serving the Church means serving the Armenian people and doing more for the nation than any professor can do. This is my path which I must tread and no one can force me to turn away from it.[11]

The Armenian Church in the Soviet Union was in a pitiful state. Even *Soviet War News*, published by the press department of the Soviet Embassy in London, revealed that in 1940 there were just nine functioning Armenian churches in the entire Soviet Union. It did not give a figure for the number of clergy. (The article, 'Religious Communities in the Soviet Union', noted that Kevork was the acting catholicos and that elections had taken place in April 1941 to the Supreme Spiritual Council. It also noted Echmiadzin's jurisdiction over Armenian dioceses overseas.)[12] A later report recalled: 'In 1941 out of the eight internal dioceses [i.e. those within the Soviet Union], in practice none remained, only individual churches, two in Yerevan, one in Leninakan, one in Tbilisi, one in Ordzhonikidze and one in Odessa.'[13]

Not only was the Church institutionally close to extinction, the Soviet era had almost wiped out popular connection with the Church and religious ritual. New, 'Soviet' culture had also changed many other social customs, especially in the field of family relations, as a history of this 'cultural revolution' later made clear:

> The changes in the way of life have been expressed also in the abolition of many old religious beliefs and superstitions. Thanks to antireligious work and propaganda of scientific atheism, a significant part of the population, especially young people, have been brought out from under the influence of the church.[14]

When Kevork summoned the church council in Echmiadzin on 10 April 1941 he had hoped it would be possible to elect a new catholicos, but poor attendance, especially from abroad, and the hostility of the Soviet authorities meant it was not possible to hold the election. Only 52 delegates (two of them from abroad) of the 92 delegates needed for a quorum turned up. However, on 12 April the church council did approve Kevork as *locum tenens*, in accordance with Khoren's wishes. The council also decided to reinstitute the dioceses in the Soviet Union which had ceased to function, although the state prevented the Church from putting this into practice.

This was the position of the Church when Kevork made his appeal for the Armenian nation to resist the Nazi invaders. The 'patriotic' activity of the Armenian Church – like that of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Muslims – had an imme-

diate effect in lightening the atmosphere. The Russian Orthodox Church was the first to benefit, with the key September 1943 meeting in the Kremlin between the surviving Orthodox hierarchs and Stalin; but the Armenian Church was soon to benefit too.

The Establishment of the Councils

At the 1943 Kremlin meeting Stalin allowed the Orthodox bishops to reestablish an institutional life for their Church and laid out a more formal setting for church–state links. A month later the Council of People's Commissars established a Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (CAROC) attached to the USSR Council of People's Commissars to ensure the Church's compliance with Soviet legislation on religion and to exercise a supervisory function.[15]

The importance the Soviet government attached to the Armenian Church and an understanding of its uniqueness were shown by the decision to set up in Yerevan a Council for the Affairs of the Armenian-Gregorian Church (CAAGC), which was attached not to the USSR Council of People's Commissars, but to the Council of People's Commissars of the Armenian SSR. The decree establishing the Council, No. 1190 of 29 October 1943, outlined the aims of this new body:

> To permit the organisation of a Council for the Affairs of the Armenian-Gregorian Church attached to the Council of People's Commissars of the Armenian SSR for the realisation of links between the government of the Armenian SSR and the Catholicos of All the Armenians on questions concerning Echmiadzin demanding the authorisation of the government of the Armenian SSR.[16]

A decree of the Armenian Council of People's Commissars followed on 10 November[17] and the formation of the Council was reported in the Yerevan party daily *Kommunist* on 14 November 1943. It is interesting that the CAAGC was set up so soon after the Russian Orthodox Council, and that the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC) attached to the USSR Council of People's Commissars (which was to control all non-Orthodox groups) was not set up until 19 May of the following year.[18]

The first chairman of the CAAGC was Suren Nersesovich Ovanesyan, a major in the Armenian NKVD who, like his counterpart at the head of the CAROC in Moscow Georgi Karpov, had been involved in church affairs before the Second World War. A priest, Ter-Mkrtich Gamagelyan, had been personally interrogated by Ovanesyan after his arrest in the 1930s.

> The investigator Suren put pressure on me and demanded that I admit to other crimes too. And each day they beat me – either he himself or his assistants. One day he called me into his office and I hadn't had time to go in when he hit me in the face.[19]

Following his appointment as CAAGC chairman, he was often to be seen at the Church's headquarters. As Pargev Georgyan, who was soon to begin his studies at Echmiadzin, recalls:

> He frequently appeared at Echmiadzin, always dressed in the green uniform of a high-ranking soldier. On his head he wore a military cap of the same colour, but without stars. A wide leather belt with a metal buckle, jodhpurs and boots polished until they shone gave him an ostentatious

> stylishness. He was short in height but thickset, and strode around the church premises as if he were out on parade.[20]

The CAAGC immediately set about gathering the material it would need to commence its work. The initial files it put together – rather curiously – begin with transcriptions of laws on the Armenian Church from the tsarist era.[21] They continue with the texts of the Armenian decrees of 1920–21 which introduced the initial restrictions on religious activity and other key reference documents since the sovietisation of Armenia in December 1920.[22] These were the *Decree of the Nationalisation of Cultural and Educational Establishments Belonging to Religious Institutions* of 17 December 1920; the *Decree on the Nationalisation of Land* of 28 December 1920; the *Decree on the Ban on Teaching Religious Subjects in School* of 31 December 1920; the *Decree on the Ban on People Belonging to the Clergy Holding Posts in Schools* of 31 December 1920; the *Decree on the Reorganisation of Holidays* of 16 January 1921; the *Decree on the Transfer to the People's Commissariat of Education of Part of the Property of Echmiadzin* of 5 February 1921; the *Constitution of the Armenian SSR* of 25 April 1922; the *Decree on the Separation of Church from State and School from Church* of 26 September 1922; the *Decree on the Registration of Civil Acts* of 23 December 1920; the *Instruction on Religious Communities and Regulations for their Registration* of 6 February 1926; and the *Decree on the Ban on Religious Demonstrations and All Kinds of Self-Torture and Self-Flagellation During the Days of Magerram* [i.e. the Shi'a Muslim Feast of Ashura] of 18 June 1928 and of 13 June 1929. Interestingly, perhaps for comparison, the CAAGC files include the 1941 constitution of the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, the second most important Armenian church centre after Echmiadzin, based in Antilias, Beirut, and the 1942 constitution of the congregation of the Cilician Catholicosate.[23]

It appears that the relationship between the Armenian Council and the CARC, which also had a responsibility to oversee Armenian church affairs, was never fully clarified. The announcement of the CARC's establishment declared that it would 'maintain contact between the Soviet Government and leaders of the following religious associations: the Armenian-Gregorian, Old Believers, Catholic, Greek-Catholic and Lutheran Churches; the Muslim, Judaic and Buddhist religions and sectarian organisations.'[24] Dual control from Yerevan and Moscow was thus instituted almost from the start and continued for the rest of the Soviet era, at times causing tension between the government in Yerevan and the CARC in Moscow.

Meanwhile, Kevork took advantage of the freer atmosphere. He sought to make amends to his predecessor for abandoning him in his hour of need. In 1943 he exhumed Khoren's body from the graveyard of St Hripsime Church and laid it to rest in the grave of the catholicoses in St Gayane Church, also in the town of Echmiadzin, with a modest memorial stone. One of the Catholicosate employees, Garush, recalled the event:

> When the grave was ready Bishop Kevork knelt down, kissed the grave and said with tears in his eyes: 'Forgive me, your holiness, that I couldn't be near you in your last moments, to receive your blessing and to conduct a worthy patriarchal funeral.'[25]

Kevork's collection of funds for the David of Sasun tank column finally came to fruition; on 29 January 1944 the column was formally handed over to the army, and was soon in action. Stalin sent Kevork a congratulatory telegram. That same month the catholicos was permitted to begin publication of a church journal, *Echmiadzin*

(initially a bi-monthly), to replace the earlier journal *Ararat*, which had been forced to cease publication in 1919.[26] The success of the tank column was described in the first issue.

The Armenian Soviet of People's Commissars responded on 27 February 1945 by giving permission to open ten new churches and four monasteries. Eight of the ten churches opened almost immediately, a tangible sign of the improving atmosphere. Kevork tried to revive the monastery at Echmiadzin, searching out possible candidates from among graduates of the long-closed Kevorkyan seminary at Echmiadzin, or the Nersesyan seminary in Tbilisi. The war also brought a reconciliation among old enemies. One of the leading figures in the schismatic and government-backed Free Church of the 1920s, former Archimandrite Benik Melyan (whom Kevork already knew from his time as bishop of Tbilisi), later to take up a government post after the failure of the Free Church, appealed to the acting catholicos to receive him back into the Church. Kevork was in favour of this, but told Benik that the question would have to be discussed at the forthcoming National Church Council.

Kremlin meeting

Although the Russian Orthodox bishops were received by Stalin in 1943, the acting catholicos had to wait nearly two years before he was received. Three Orthodox hierarchs had been called in to meet Stalin, but Kevork went alone. Although the wartime rapprochement with religious bodies also benefited the Baptists and Muslims, the leaders of neither of these two groups were received by Stalin.

In preparation for the April 1945 meeting the Soviet authorities suggested Kevork should go over the details with Politburo member Anastas Mikoyan, an Armenian who had studied at the Kevorkyan seminary. To the surprise of all, Kevork declared that he would prefer not to negotiate with him, explaining that if he were able to reach agreement with Mikoyan government officials might not be happy and if they could not reach agreement the Armenians would be unhappy. He preferred, he said, to negotiate with Lavrenti Beria. The two had already met in Tbilisi while Kevork was archbishop there.

During the first meeting Beria told Kevork that he had already mentioned him to Stalin as an old acquaintance and someone useful to the state. For this reason, Beria told Kevork, he believed the meeting with Stalin would be a success. At the second meeting, Kevork presented a written request for Armenian priests to be freed from imprisonment, as newly-reopened churches and monasteries could not function without clergy. Beria promised to look into this and asked for a list of those imprisoned and in internal exile. Kevork presented a list of 283 clergymen. A few days later Beria replied (wrongly) that only two of those were still alive, Archimandrite Ovanes and the priest Ter-Mkrtich Gamagelyan (who had been interrogated by Suren Ovanesyan in the 1930s). The two were freed.

At the end of the discussions Beria declared – apparently as a trick – that as the questions raised by Kevork had been satisfactorily resolved there was no need for Kevork to meet Stalin. However, Kevork insisted, declaring that there were questions he could discuss only with Stalin himself. 'Don't you trust us?' Beria apparently asked. 'If I didn't trust you I wouldn't have met you,' Kevork is said to have replied.[27]

Kevork addressed a letter to Stalin in April 1945 (apparently written in Moscow) at which he requested the reestablishment of the church administration at Echmiadzin.[28] He began by stressing his Church's 'historical faithfulness to the great nation

[unspecified] and the Soviet state' during the war. Writing to Stalin as the 'Great Leader of the Soviet state' (*'Velikomu Vozhdyu Sovetskogo gosudarstva'*), Kevork set out what he considered was necessary for the 'restoration' of Echmiadzin and the catholicos, which would 'ensure the wide range of their work in the interests of the Church and the Fatherland'. First on the list was the reopening of the seminary with a three-year course at secondary level for ordinary priests and a further three-year course for monks, both to be open for local and foreign candidates. He requested the return of the library of the former Theological Academy, confiscated after the Soviet takeover and transferred to the Matenadaran manuscript repository where, Kevork reported, 'it is not being used'. He called for Echmiadzin to be allowed its own printing press to produce textbooks for the seminary, church books, the journal *Echmiadzin*, church calendars and the texts of official kondaks (encyclical letters) from the catholicos. Kevork asked permission to use the journal to print general articles within the field of Armeniology, in line with the pre-Soviet journal *Ararat* and the current journals of the Cilician Catholicosate and the Jerusalem Patriarchate, otherwise 'without this the journal will not be successful abroad and will not be able to fulfil its main role – the strengthening of the links of overseas Armenians with Soviet Armenia'. He called for the whole of the Echmiadzin monastery to be given back or, if this was not possible, at least that its area be increased and some of the buildings currently housing military units or party and soviet bodies be handed back. He called for the return of St Hripsime Chapel in Echmiadzin and the Gekhard and Khor Virep Monasteries, all of them places of pilgrimage. 'Out of religious considerations,' Kevork told Stalin, 'these churches must not be used for other purposes.' He complained that the Committtee for the Preservation of Historical Monuments had completely neglected them. He called for the rebuilding of the Zvartnots Cathedral near Yerevan, which was built in the seventh century and which collapsed three centuries later. Kevork asked Stalin to allow higher clergy to enter Armenia freely for consecration and to travel abroad to lead dioceses or to take part in delegations. He outlined his plans to hold the blessing of chrism in 1946 and to invite 'leading wealthy people as pilgrims with the aim of receiving from them large sums of money for the building needs of Holy Echmiadzin and Soviet Armenia'. He asked to be allowed to open a foreign currency account at the State Bank in Yerevan and to be allowed to make transfers from it to buy necessary items abroad. Finally, he asked permission to receive cars, typewriters, paper and other necessary items from abroad, as well as parcels for the brotherhood at the monastery. Kevork stressed that it was necessary that the catholicos enjoy authority among Armenians abroad, in order to 'guide the national interests of the Armenian nation and to give it desirable direction from the point of view of Soviet Armenia'.

On 19 April – on the eve of the Soviet capture of Berlin and nine days after Stalin's second meeting with the Russian Orthodox hierarchs – Kevork was summoned to see Stalin, a meeting publicised in *Pravda* the following day. Also attending was the head of the CARC, Ivan Polyansky,[29] in an echo of Stalin's 1943 meeting with the Orthodox hierarchs at which Georgi Karpov, soon to be head of the CAROC, was present. Kevork outlined his requests (which he had already presented to Beria) to Stalin: the immediate election of a new catholicos and the holding of a church council, the reopening of parishes, religious schools, monasteries and a printing press, the return of agricultural lands belonging to Echmiadzin and the reconstruction of ancient churches. He also requested permission for overseas Armenians to visit Armenia, to make donations of money and materials to the Church and to prepare for the priesthood in Echmiadzin. Stalin promised to satisfy these requests, with

the one exception of the return of former church lands belonging to Echmiadzin (which now belonged to various collective farms). Kevork even prevailed on Stalin to sign a document to the catholicos, declaring that the Echmiadzin archives contained similar certificates from tsars, sheikhs and sultans.

At the end of the meeting Stalin raised what was for him perhaps the most important theme: his plans with regard to Turkey.

> The war will come to an end soon. Our government is preparing to take back from Turkey the western provinces of Armenia handed over in 1920. It is clear that Armenians must live on these lands. It would be desirable for them to be the same Armenians who were obliged to flee from Turkey and who now live in the diaspora. Because of this the immigration of about one hundred thousand Armenians must be organised. Soon there will be a government decree on this. You in your turn must help us with this.

Kevork later recalled:

> When I heard this I could not contain my joy. For a moment it seemed I was dreaming all this. I promised to do everything, but expressed misgivings about taking in such a quantity of people given the difficult economic situation in the republic. They will have to be given homes, provided with food ... 'Don't worry,' Stalin reassured me, 'we will do everything possible so that the repatriates won't suffer any hardships.'[30]

During the meeting Stalin wrote on the bottom of Kevork's letter: 'Agreed. Chairman of the Soviet of People's Commissars, Iosif Stalin. 19 April 1945.' He also instructed Polyansky to give all necessary help in holding a church council to elect a new catholicos. Kevork was fulsome in his praise of Stalin in the wake of the meeting:

> One must consider the reception granted us by I. V. Stalin as a sign of satisfaction and sympathy on the part of the Great Personage [*Velikogo Cheloveka*] towards the Armenian nation, and the solution of questions by means of a written resolution as a sign of trust towards Echmiadzin. This is an exceptional event.[31]

The 1945 Church Council

The CAROC had already organised a Russian Orthodox Council in February 1945 at which the Soviet state's candidate, Aleksi, was elected unopposed as patriarch. The Armenian church council was more complicated, however. Unlike the Russian Orthodox, the Armenian Church specified the involvement of clergy and lay people from Armenian colonies throughout the world in the election of a new catholicos.[32] The CARC and the Council in Yerevan had to work hard to ensure that their favoured candidate, the acting catholicos Kevork Chorekchyan, would be elected unopposed. In the event he was the only candidate and the election was assured as the majority of delegates were Soviet citizens (61 out of 111, with a further 12 from other communist countries) who, it could be safely assumed, would vote as the state directed. Just to make sure, the council was attended by Polyansky and K. Ya. Pugo from the CARC in Moscow and by Suren Ovanesyan, the chairman of the CAAGC in Yerevan. The CAAGC had not neglected the practical side of the arrangements, down to every last detail. The preparations involved the ordering of 210 paper napkins and 300 metres of curtain material.[33]

By the middle of June, delegates from all over the world began arriving in Echmiadzin. Present were the Catholicos of Cilicia, Karekin I, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Kyureg II, Bishop Mambre Sirunyan of Egypt and Bishop Artavazd Syurmeyan of the European diocese, as well as priests and lay delegates from Britain, France, the USA, India, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt and Turkey. Many of the foreign delegates had their fares paid for out of Soviet state funds and were guests of the Soviet government in Armenia. Also present from Britain was the controversial Dean of Canterbury, Hewlett Johnson. The representation from within the Soviet Union was a sign of the decimation of the Church. There were only four monks from the Echmiadzin congregation and only one of the Soviet dioceses was represented by a member of the higher clergy – the diocese of Shirak (Leninakan), which was able to send an archimandrite. Simple priests or laypeople represented the other dioceses.

The council began its work on 16 June.[34] Polyansky greeted delegates in the name of the Soviet government. 'From the very beginnings of the Armenian nation,' he told the 111 delegates, 'this people which has seen so many failures, has suffered so much and has lost so much, the Armenian Church has always stood by the people, has helped to revive its national autonomy, has reared its children in national consciousness and has contributed to the nation's cultural advancement.' The council responded to the 'kindness' of the Soviet government, addressing two messages to Stalin crediting him with the 'liberation of the Armenian people' and the rebirth of the Armenian state.[35] Among the matters discussed at the council was a long-awaited new constitution for the Church. Discussion remained inconclusive and no agreement was reached. The most important element, however, was the election. On 22 June the council duly chose Chorekchyan as Kevork VI, the 129th catholicos. He received 110 of the 111 votes, apparently declining out of modesty to cast his vote for himself.

Johnson vividly described the election and the consecration two days later on 24 June:

> When all available delegates were assembled, the election of Archbishop Chorekchyan as the new catholicos took place. His consecration followed on the next Sunday. I walked beside the canopy carried on four staves in front of the archbishop by delegates of various important countries – along the hot, sun-splashed, stone-flagged paths between the greensward we passed – devout crowds lined the route, bells clanged triumphantly, government cinema operators and cameramen darted about. Inside the cathedral the catholicos was lit up wherever he went in a blaze of light. It was obviously the government's desire to obtain and show a full record of the splendid scene.
>
> The bishops, each with his own staff in his hand, mounted the platform and took their place. The catholicos himself knelt in front of the altar, two priests held his mitre upright behind him. Clergy in yellow robes grouped themselves in front of the platform; Mr Polyansky, the government representative, and his Armenian opposite number behind them, and then the delegates.
>
> The catholicos, taking the oath in a tired, husky voice – made a striking and noble figure ... From time to time the catholicos closed his eyes; his lips moved as if in prayer. He endured without flinching. At the appropriate moment a veil was placed on his head and he became the Bridegroom of the Church.[36]

Kevork's election was welcomed by Russian Patriarch Aleksi (after he had sought permission via Georgi Karpov of the CAROC).

> I am sending you, dear Georgi Grigor'yevich, a letter addressed to V.M. [Vyacheslav Molotov] – it will arrive quicker and more safely via you. I am concerned at present about two questions: 1. Am I required to write to the English king on the occasion of his greetings to me? 2. Am I required to send a greeting to the new Armenian catholicos? I consider that both are necessary.[37]

Kevork's first public statement as catholicos was an attack on the Vatican. He referred to the contributions of the Armenian, Orthodox and Anglican Churches to help the war effort, adding: 'It is particularly painful to think that there is a Christian Church which did not join our blessed cause. More – that Church supported the Nazi enemies of the Lord.'[38] The council adopted an *Appeal to the Whole Christian World*, signed by all the religious leaders, attacking the Vatican which, it said, 'defends the destructive German force which has shown itself the source of unhappiness for the whole of humanity.'[39]

The new catholicos set about reviving the Church as far as this was permitted by the Soviet state. On 1 July he consecrated ten new bishops, four for dioceses in the Soviet Union, six for the diaspora. Kevork had already begun publication of the journal *Echmiadzin*. In September the Kevorkyan theological seminary was reopened in Echmiadzin. Of the 27 students admitted for the 1945–6 academic year, 25 were from Armenia and two from Georgia. A total of just three came from religious families, while 15 were from families of collective farmers, seven from families of office workers, and one each from families of workers and artisans. All were born between 1922 and 1930,[40] which implies that at least some were below the age of 18, perhaps as young as 16 when they joined.

One of the new students was Pargev Georgyan, who recalls that 'of the former personnel of the Echmiadzin Congregation only two were left – Catholicos Kevork and one archimandrite from the monastery at Lima by the name of Matevos.' Georgyan goes on to recall the atmosphere. '[Matevos] was a man of few words, frightened by what he had seen and heard, and therefore he preferred to remain silent. As for Catholicos Kevork, at first he too had little to do with the students of the Academy.'[41] Georgyan portrays Kevork as still a frightened man, haunted by the memory of the apparent murder of his predecessor, Khoren I, in 1938, at a time when Kevork himself had been in hiding.

> Later, when we were ordained as deacons, [Kevork] from time to time cautiously gave some information, but carefully avoided the tragedy of 1938. When we asked him to say something about these events, he got angry and said: 'Don't fill up your heads with this, when you are archimandrites you will learn more.' The only other thing was to rely on the religious and secular people serving then in primatial Echmiadzin but, unfortunately, many of them had only just returned from places of imprisonment or [internal] exile and therefore avoided dangerous conversations. Only a handful dared to tell us the truth ...[42]

Kevork's Turkish Policy and the 'Repatriation' Campaign

Hewlett Johnson's attendance at the council paid propaganda dividends for the

Soviet authorities. At a press conference in Yerevan he enthusiastically praised Soviet religious policy: 'In accordance with the freedom of conscience and equality of all faiths proclaimed by Soviet power, the Armenian Church is beginning a new life.' His presence was useful to the Soviet authorities not just in promoting an image of religious freedom and a benign attitude on the part of the state towards religion. He strongly supported Stalin's policy towards Turkey, a policy strongly supported by all Armenians:

> I completely and wholeheartedly agree that the regions seized by Turkey must be returned to Armenia as quickly as possible – with unbelievable cruelty Turkey exterminated the Armenian population. The victorious powers declared after the First World War that justice demanded the return of these territories to their rightful owners.[43]

This was one Soviet policy which the Armenian Church and nation could promote enthusiastically. Just after the close of the church council the delegates, including Kevork, addressed an embarrassingly fulsome eulogy to 'Great Stalin', awaiting the moves to reincorporate Turkish Armenia into Soviet Armenia.

> Great Stalin, in these glorious days of the victory of the heroic Red Army and the allied armies, a million and a half Armenians have their eyes turned, full of nostalgia, towards glorious Soviet Armenia and await impatiently the blessed day when Armenian lands still under the foreign yoke will be returned to the dear Soviet Armenian Republic ...
> Great Stalin, you have achieved, with the firmness of steel, the reunion of the Ukrainian, Belorussian, Moldavian and Baltic peoples, you have even delivered from foreign yoke the Poles, the Czechs, the Austrians, the Bulgarians and the Yugoslavs, in the process gaining the heart of all humanity and the title of 'Saviour of the Peoples' ...[44]

On 27 November 1945 the new catholicos followed this up by addressing an appeal to the Big Three, claiming to speak as the traditional 'protector' of the Armenian people. He outlined the sad fate of the Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman Turks and backed the campaign to attach eastern Anatolia to Soviet Armenia.[45] This campaign was to prove unsuccessful.

The second of Stalin's policies vigorously pursued by the new catholicos was the promotion of the campaign to 'repatriate' diaspora Armenians to the 'homeland'. This was designed to promote Soviet Armenia as the national home, although most of the diaspora Armenians had been born outside its borders and had never been there. The Soviet state had issued its decree on the repatriation in November 1945 (as Stalin had promised Kevork in April). The new catholicos eagerly transmitted the same message, constantly repeating his call in pastoral letters and declarations to the diaspora communities. Unlike the related campaign to regain territory from Turkey, this had a fair degree of success. Even the antisoviet Dashnak party abroad – it was banned in Soviet Armenia – supported the drive. About one hundred thousand Armenians, mainly from the Middle East, emigrated to Soviet Armenia in the second half of the 1940s.[46]

In the wake of heightened tension between the Soviet Union and Turkey during the Second World War the Soviet government began removing Turkic peoples from areas close to the Turkish border. The Meskhetian Turks of Georgia had already been deported beyond the Urals in 1944 together with other smaller Turkic groups including the Khemshins (Turkified and Islamicised Armenians). The removal of entire

Azeri-populated villages in Armenia, this time not to Central Asia but across the border into Azerbaijan, got under way after the Second World War. The removal of villages allowed the Armenian CARC commissioner to prevent the reopening of closed mosques. By 1948 there were only two registered mosques in Armenia, one in Yerevan (the headquarters of the Muslim leader, kazi Magarlamov) and one in the village of Zangibasar. The impact of these resettlements was described by the CARC commissioner Grant Grigoryan:

> In conversation with members of the executive organ of the mosque and the Muslim kazi of the Armenian SSR, the fall in attendance [at the Yerevan mosque] is seen as due to the fact that a certain number of the active members of the mosque have left the town in connection with the transfer of the Azerbaijani population from the republic, while others are occupied in tending their gardens ... The opening of a mosque in the village of Elyaz, Zangibasar district, sanctioned by the council, did not take place in view of the fact that by decision of the government the village will be resettled in the Azerbaijani SSR this autumn [1948].[47]

It is not clear what response the Armenian Church made to such resettlements (if any).

The Soviet state was happy with Kevork's work at the council and in the immediate aftermath. On 31 May 1945, within weeks of the end of the war and on the eve of the church council, Kevork had been awarded the medal 'For the Defence of the Caucasus'. Polyansky also handed over to the catholicos a ZIS-101 limousine on behalf of Stalin. Kevork was, however, dissatisfied with what he considered the lowly status of the award he had been given. During a 1948 visit to Armenia by Russian Patriarch Aleksi and Archbishop Germogen, the latter informed Ovanesyan of Kevork's dissatisfaction that Aleksi had been given the 'Order of the Red Banner of Labour' while the catholicos had received only the Defence of the Caucasus medal. According to Germogen Kevork considered he deserved the Order of Lenin. Kevork also complained to Germogen of the lack of churches and Echmiadzin's dependence on foreign Armenian money, and declared that he was planning to try to visit Lavrenti Beria in a bid to improve the Church's situation. (The catholicos 'stressed his good relations with him [Beria]', Germogen reported.)[48] Kevork apparently told the CAAGC the same thing in person.

Postwar Improvements

Soon after the council improvements in the situation for the Church became evident. On the basis of Kevork's information the CAAGC spoke of 13 churches in Armenia, five in Georgia, three in Azerbaijan, five in the North Caucasus and three in Rostov-on-Don by early 1946.[49] This was some improvement on the nine churches legally functioning in 1940, though it still represented just a fraction of the number before the communist seizure of power and meant that the majority of Armenians were still too far away from a church, should they have wanted to attend. The CAAGC calculated in 1946 that of the 489 churches in Armenia 'before the October Revolution', seven were working before 1945, six had been reopened by the CAAGC, 55 housed cultural institutions, 380 were in industrial use and 41 were empty.[50]

The new mood was already encouraging a flow of applications from believers to reopen long-closed churches. Writing to the CARC in Moscow on 2 March 1946 the CAAGC reported: 'Starting from the beginning of 1945, up to 60 declarations have

Table 1. Number of baptisms

	Echmiadzin Cathedral	Yerevan St Sarkis	Yerevan St Hovhanes	Yerevan St Zoravar
1949	203	136	125	34
1950	1796	801	244	157
1951	1693	1061	126	144

Source: ARH, f. 823, op. 4, d. 1.

been sent to the catholicos from communities of believers in various districts of the Armenian SSR with requests to open churches.' The CAAGC complained that Kevork was ignoring the due processes and instead of channelling requests through the CAAGC was unilaterally sending priests to serve such churches. On 2 February Ovanesyan had told Sadovsky of one such priest, Ter-Geondyan, whom Kevork had unilaterally sent to Georgia. Ovanesyan tried to get Kevork to abide by the regulations and also warned him: 'Wandering priests are not allowed. Only registered servants of the cult are allowed to conduct religious rites in homes, within the bounds of their own parish.' Ovanesyan soon claimed some success at getting Kevork to follow the regulations. 'Before the [1945] council he was in the habit of naming priests to conduct religious rites and satisfy the needs of believers in places where there were no working churches, but after my warnings and bans he ceased this practice,' Ovanesyan claimed in a 4 April 1946 letter to Sadovsky. There were also cases, as Ovanesyan reported, whereby

> in villages where there are no working churches but where there live local priests who have not renounced their orders, they continue to conduct rites in homes at the invitation of believers, without the sanction of the catholicos or the head of the diocese, despite our instructions to the chairmen of district executive committees to ban such activities by local priests.[51]

These attempts to control the appointment of priests did not restrain Kevork. Armenians in Samarkand in Uzbekistan had applied to regain their church, which had been handed over for industrial use to the Red Engine factory. The Samarkand regional executive committee had turned down the application but despite this, on 20 October 1947, the diocesan council at Echmiadzin had named the Yerevan priest Hovhanes Ter-Menosyan as priest in Samarkand. Six days later the bishop of Azerbaijan and Turkestan (in whose diocese Samarkand fell) had named a priest to Uzbekistan, charged with the task of opening churches. The same day he had written to the CARC commissioner in Uzbekistan, Iskanderov, to inform him that the priest was appointed with responsibility for Armenians in Tashkent, Samarkand, Kokand, Andizhan and other towns. Polyansky wrote to Ovanesyan on 5 April 1948 instructing him to tell Kevork that naming priests to closed churches 'contradicts current legislation and, as it is wrong, must not be allowed to continue'.[52]

Kevork's attitude to reopening churches was not always straightforward, however. Back in April 1945 the CAAGC had given Kevork permission to open churches in Artik, Bashapan and Sisyan; but writing to the CARC in Moscow on 29 March 1946 the CAAGC declared that 'in view of the absence of priests, the Catholicos of All the Armenians Kevork VI left this question open'. The many applications that came into Echmiadzin often languished for a long time without any action by Kevork. It took some pressure by Ovanesyan to get the catholicos to hand them over to the CAAGC. Many of them consisted of appeals from believers or communities without all the

attached details required by Soviet legislation. Despite these irregularities, Ovanesyan was prepared to accept these appeals as applications, although the CARC in Moscow, which ultimately had to approve any such church openings, took a much more legalistic attitude. Thus, for example, Ovanesyan wrote to Polyansky on 12 October 1946 declaring that of 26 applications the CAAGC had obtained from Kevork it was prepared to accept six, despite irregularities. In his reply of 21 November Polyansky turned down all six as the applications had not been made correctly.[53]

The dioceses were still in a state of disarray. A report by Ovanesyan, sent to Polyansky in Moscow on 14 April 1947, described the status of each. The Ararat diocese (which included Yerevan) had no diocesan head nor a diocesan council, and its affairs were handled by Kevork. The Shirak diocese, based in Leninakan, had been led until 1946 by Bishop Drampyan, but he had then been transferred to Teheran. There was no diocesan council, and its affairs were handled by the Supreme Spiritual Council. The diocese of Georgia, based in Tbilisi, had a nominal diocesan council. The diocese had been led by Archpriest Sahak Ter-Sahakyan until December 1946, when he had been removed by Kevork for 'anti-Echmiadzin sentiment'. Archpriest Ter-Grigoryan had been appointed in Sahakyan's place. The Azerbaijan and Turkestan diocese had previously been run by Bishop Nerses Abramyan, but he had recently been chosen by the catholicos to head the diocese of Iraq and the diocese had been placed in the hands of one of the Baku priests. There was also a North Caucasus diocese, based in Armavir in Krasnodar *krai*. It had been headed by Bishop Suren Torosyan until February 1946, when he was transferred to Romania. In his place Archpriest V. Tavarbekyan was appointed. The diocese had a diocesan council. Finally the Nakhichevan and Bessarabia diocese, based in Rostov-on-Don, was headed by Bishop Karapet Tumanyan, who had been appointed in 1946. Thus only one of the seven dioceses was headed by a full bishop and few had functioning diocesan councils.[54] The transfer to overseas duties of three bishops (Drampyan, Abramyan and Torosyan – three of the four bishops Kevork had consecrated for Soviet dioceses in 1945) when there was such a need for them at home and Kevork's decision in 1947 that he would combine the Nakhichevan and Bessarabian diocese with the North Caucasus diocese[55] show the priority given to maintaining the Church's prestige abroad and the negative impact of this priority on the Church within the Soviet Union.

At the same time, any attempt the Church made to revive the diocesan structures was instantly attacked. The CARC deputy chairman, Sadovsky, wrote to Ovanesyan on 2 February 1946 to complain that Bishop Tumanyan had formed a diocesan council in Rostov-on-Don without permission, describing this move as 'undesirable'. Sadovsky declared that the diocese should be administered directly by the bishop who was himself directly subordinate to Echmiadzin. The CARC recommended that Kevork should write a circular letter disbanding all existing diocesan councils and forbidding the formation of any new ones. In a reply of 4 April Ovanesyan told Sadovsky of Kevork's unhappiness and that the catholicos 'did not agree with this suggestion'. Kevork insisted that such councils were part of the Church's tradition, and banning them would cause dissatisfaction. He added that in 1944–45, in the run-up to the church elections, the CAAGC had asked him to speed the formation of such councils and that now it was doing the opposite. Kevork, apparently with the tacit support of Ovanesyan, eventually prevailed and the CARC abandoned this attempt.[56]

Early in 1946 Bishop Nerses Abramyan of the Baku and Turkestan diocese asked for the return of the Amaraz monastery in the Armenian-populated autonomous

region of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, claiming that 'on feast days, many pilgrims come there from other districts'. The CARC disputed the diocese's claims, declaring that since 1927 the former monastery (which dated from the fourth century) had been used by a local collective farm as a grain store. The CARC in Moscow opposed the reopening of the monastery, considering that the Church had enough to do repairing Echmiadzin, but on 25 April 1946 Polyansky asked Ovanesyan to seek Kevork's views. In his reply the following month, Ovanesyan reported that there was discussion about the revival of the defunct Artsakh (Karabakh) diocese. If local believers were prepared to take on the costs of repairing Amaraz it could go ahead, otherwise the whole project would remain in abeyance.[57] In the event, in view of Kevork's inability to finance the venture, the diocese was not revived and the monastery was not returned to the Church. Kevork did, however, begin work in 1946 on a villa for himself in Yerevan, despite his claims of lack of money. (By 1948 he had spent 700,000 roubles on the two-storey building of 24 rooms, out of a total projected cost of three million roubles.)[58]

The Echmiadzin Seminary

One of Kevork's successes was the seminary at Echmiadzin. According to details supplied by Grant Grigoryan to Polyansky, there were 37 students in 1945, 47 in 1946–47, 49 in 1947–48, 37 in 1948–49, 30 in 1949–50 and 27 in 1950–51. (Of the nine seminary teachers listed for 1950, none were clerics or had any religious knowledge.)[59] According to the CAAGC annual report for 1946, sent to the CARC in Moscow, to the Chairman of the Armenian Council of Ministers and to the Central Committee of the Armenian Party, the subjects studied were: Old Testament, New Testament, history of the Armenian Church, history of the Armenian nation, history of the peoples of the USSR, ancient and medieval history, Grabar (classical Armenian), Armenian language and literature, Russian language and literature, English, mathematics, geography of the USSR, geography of the Armenian SSR, the USSR constitution, physics and church music. (A comment in the margin of the CARC's copy noted '56 per cent secular subjects'.)[60] In 1947 the USSR Ministry of Trade accepted the CARC's recommendation that the Echmiadzin seminary be included as a religious education establishment entitled to receive supplies from the Ministry, enough for eight staff and sixty students.[61]

The seminary at Echmiadzin figured largely in church–state relations. The catholicos had sought to receive state funds to help finance the seminary, but on 5 June 1946 Polyansky wrote to Ovanesyan asking him to tell Kevork that it could not count on receiving a state subsidy. Polyansky demanded to know why Kevork was spending an average of 1,500 roubles per student per month, while the equivalent figure for the Russian Orthodox Church was only 400 roubles.[62] On 8 January 1947 Sadovsky of the CARC in Moscow wrote to Ovanesyan that they had just discovered that 23 of the students were underage (they were supposed to have been at least 18 when they joined). Sadovsky aked for urgent clarification. In his response of 25 March, Ovanesyan shifted the blame onto Verdyan, an official of the Armenian CARC who had been handling CAAGC affairs in his absence and who had failed to check applicants' dates of birth.[63]

Kevork was not entirely happy with the work of the seminary either. During a meeting with Karapetyan on 17 June 1947, which lasted for an hour and a half, he complained that 'strange as it may seem, the students have a weak knowledge of religion, and discipline could be better'.[64] In 1947 only one of the teachers was a priest,

something even the CAAGC considered 'an abnormal situation'. The other teachers were outsiders from Yerevan, but even they had problems. In 1947, the CAAGC discovered that two teachers from local schools who had been brought in to teach at the seminary were candidate members of the party. The CAAGC told the secretary of the Echmiadzin district committee of the party 'of the unacceptability of work by members and candidate members of the ACP(b) in the theological academy and recommended him to suggest to these people that they leave their work at the academy'. Kevork wished to invite overseas dioceses to send suitably qualified young archimandrites, though, as the CARC in Moscow noted in the margin of Ovanesyan's report, this was 'hardly desirable'.[65]

In a further attempt to improve the training of seminarians, Kevork wrote to the Russian Patriarch Aleksi in early 1949 to ask if five students in their fourth year of study at Echmiadzin could study at the academy in Zagorsk, ostensibly to improve their knowledge of Russian. The CARC in Moscow got wind of this, presumably from Aleksi, and Polyansky wrote to Grigoryan on 18 July 1949 asking if the CAAGC was aware of Kevork's approach to Aleksi. Polyansky requested information on the 'academic capability and political loyalty' of the five candidates concerned.[66] Although this attempt to send students from Echmiadzin to Russian seminaries failed, Kevork finally succeeded in 1952, when the first batch of eight graduates from Echmiadzin began postgraduate studies at Zagorsk Theological Academy.[67]

It was not until the late 1940s that the first of the seminary graduates could be ordained priest. Between 1948 and 1950, seven were ordained, occasions that brought great joy to Kevork, as Georgyan remembers.[68] However, Kevork's joy must have been tempered by the early 1950s with the swift decline in the seminary. The decline in numbers from the peak year of 1947–48 was perhaps to be expected, as the backlog of candidates was reduced; but from 1951 to 1952 there were no new entrants to the seminary. In August 1952 Grigoryan reported that the seminary was close to closure and a decision must soon be taken on recruitment of new candidates.[69] In 1953 there were 20 new students. The CAAGC reported again to the Armenian Council of Ministers the threat of the seminary's closure, an event which it considered 'not desirable', especially as new Armenian seminaries were opening in the capitalist countries, including Istanbul and the United States.[70] By 1954, Kevork was requesting help from the CAAGC in commencing postgraduate studies at Echmiadzin and in sending three graduates of the seminary for postgraduate studies abroad.[71]

Besides the training and ordination of new priests, Kevork was also keen to draw back into service people whom the Soviet state described as 'former priests': those who, for a variety of reasons, had left the priesthood. Often without informing the CAAGC Kevork would quietly appoint them to parishes. In 1951, for example, Kevork appointed Fr Vahan Grigoryan, formerly priest of St George's Church in Tbilisi, to the village church in Velistsikhe in southern Georgia. This church was not officially registered and on 3 January 1952 Polyansky wrote to the CAAGC from Moscow to instruct them to warn Kevork against such a move.[72]

The Financing of the Church

Much of Kevork's initial concern focused on money. Echmiadzin was supposed to receive five per cent of the income of Armenian dioceses throughout the world as well as the income from a special collection, and would get 500 dollars for each

student of the seminary (presumably per year, and only for students from outside the USSR). In August 1945 Kevork opened a hard currency account at the State Bank, although the Bank in Moscow instructed the Yerevan branch that no more than 50 dollars was to be given out from the account at any one time. By early 1946 Ovanesyan was already pressing for greater financial freedom for the catholicos. 'There is no doubt,' Ovanesyan told the CARC in Moscow, 'that he will not use the foreign currency without our approval and the prior approval of the Council for the Affairs of the Armenian-Gregorian Church, and such a decision could lead to a great flood of foreign currency into his current account.'[73]

On 9 January 1946 the USSR Council of People's Commissars gave the catholicos the right to import goods for religious use without a licence and free of duty, although the CARC later disputed this ruling, insisting that tax must be paid on any items imported.[74]

Concerned by the deterioration of the cathedral in Echmiadzin, Kevork asked for state funds towards its restoration. The question was discussed in the CAAGC report for the second half of 1947 and again in 1948. The millionaire Armenian businessman and philanthropist Calouste Gulbenkian had written to the catholicos offering $150,000 towards the necessary repair work. Kevork had, rather cheekily, written back to him asking him to raise this to $250,000, but without success. After this, plans for the actual restoration work seem to have ground to a halt and Gulbenkian decided to suspend his offer. Kevork had nevertheless honoured Gulbenkian for his support. In the words of the CAAGC, Gulbenkian

> thanked the catholicos for the honour and praise given to him and, in a diplomatic way, announced that despite everything he would stick to his firm decision to fulfil his promise, but as a practical man he considered that a final decision on this question would have to be put off to a more favourable time.[75]

Kevork did not give up, though. In a bid to gain Gulbenkian's money, he proposed to the Armenian government that they should receive the funds and undertake the repair work on the cathedral. Grigoryan informed the chairman of the Armenian Council of Ministers, Karapetyan, on 30 March 1950 that Gulbenkian was now ready to give the $250,000. Grigoryan noted that the CAAGC had informed Kevork that 'as a Soviet citizen' he should know that the state and the church were separate and that the state would not and could not undertake this work. In order to receive Gulbenkian's money, Kevork should form a commission of architects and other specialists to begin work on the restoration project. Grigoryan had also stressed to Kevork that the state was unable to do 'deals' with private citizens.[76] The question of Gulbenkian's contribution to the repair of the cathedral had still not been resolved by the time of the oil magnate's death in July 1955. He left up to $400,000 in his will towards the eventual repair.[77]

Another source of difficulty for Kevork was the journal *Echmiadzin*. The editor, A. Arakelyan, was frequently abroad and, the CAAGC believed, was inefficient at the job of producing the journal regularly and on time. The CAAGC was pleased therefore when he was replaced in 1947 by L. Kisibekyan. While Arakelyan had been able to produce only two issues in 1946, Kisibekyan – with the help of paper and other provisions from the CAAGC – produced six issues in 1947.[78] The financial plight which affected the church establishment in Echmiadzin in 1948 also affected publication of the journal. The delay in publication of individual issues caused by inefficiency or lack of funds had even been discussed by the Armenian Communist Party

Central Committee. In 1948 Kevork cut the number of issues published per year from six to four and asked the CAAGC for state support for the journal. The CAAGC was unimpressed, reporting that in its view the journal covered its costs. It reminded Kevork – with more than a hint of disapproval – that issues of the journal frequently appeared late.

The CAAGC, mindful of the prestige accruing to Echmiadzin abroad from the publication of this journal, set great store by it. Thus the choice of editor was crucial and decisions on this post went up to the highest levels, both in the Armenian party and the CARC in Moscow. In 1948 the Armenian Central Committee Department of Agitation and Propaganda insisted to Grant Grigoryan that Patrick Selyan, a repatriate from the United States, should be appointed as editor. However, in a letter to Central Committee Secretary Aryutyunov on 23 July 1948 Polyansky declared that Selyan would not be appropriate, as the overseas Dashnaks would use the choice of Selyan to slander the catholicos.[79]

The fact that *Echmiadzin* was designed mainly for foreign goals was quite clear. During the dressing-down Grigoryan was given on his unfortunate visit to the CARC in Moscow in February 1951 the Moscow CARC employee Orleansky declared that the 'main task of the journal' was to strengthen the links of overseas Armenians to Soviet Armenia and to Echmiadzin and 'to unmask criminal activity among overseas Armenians'.[80] When in October 1952 there was a spate of articles in the overseas Armenian press attacking the catholicos for the number of vacant dioceses in the Soviet Union and in Turkey and the 'criminal reduction' in the number of dioceses, Grigoryan immediately called on Kevork to deplore such accusations in the pages of *Echmiadzin*.[81] In 1951 Kevork asked permission for the church journal *Echmiadzin* to be allowed to be distributed abroad by the *Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga* agency and to be sold in one kiosk in Yerevan.[82] In Kevork's time all applications to sell the journal in Yerevan were turned down.

Kevork did his best to keep himself informed of life in Armenian communities around the world, despite the restrictions put on his receipt of foreign materials by the Soviet and Armenian governments. By 1947 he was able to receive 28 foreign publications. However, as Polyansky reminded Ovanesyan in a letter of 12 April:

> All correspondence addressed to the catholicos which arrives via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Armenian SSR must be handed to the catholicos by you. You must examine all this correspondence (newspapers, journals etc.) in advance and copy the articles of interest from the point of view of the Council for the Affairs of the Armenian-Gregorian Church, translating any articles of especial interest into Russian and sending them to the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults [in Moscow]. Papers and journals containing rabidly antisoviet slander against the Soviet Union and Soviet Armenia should not be handed to the catholicos under any circumstances. Papers and journals handed to the catholicos may be used only by a limited group of people agreed with you.

Polyansky added that the catholicos must inform the CAAGC about material which arrived not via the Foreign Ministry but directly by post. Ideally, Kevork should ask foreign dioceses to send material via the Foreign Ministry.[83] Ovanesyan was not happy about this extra work of translation that the CARC required. On 10 June 1947 he wrote back to Polyansky informing him that the catholicos would not translate any articles from the foreign press claiming that he did not have anyone who could translate accurately from Armenian into Russian, nor did he know what was of interest to

the CAAGC. Ovanesyan declared that his office did not have time to translate any articles as there were so many of interest.[84]

Tension between the Yerevan and Moscow Councils

Ovanesyan remarked in his 1946 annual report – a frequent complaint – that the CAAGC had only three staff, and could work more effectively only if he was given more.[85] By 1947 a period of strained relations between the CAAGC in Yerevan and the CARC in Mosdcow had set in. On 12 February 1947 Sadovsky complained to Ovanesyan that he was not giving the CARC any informatiuon and that the only time he wrote to the CARC was to gain permission for the Catholicos' representatives to travel abroad. Sadovsky insisted that he file a range of detailed reports of his work by 15 March.[86]

The tensions with the CARC in Moscow were exacerbated by Ovanesyan's June 1947 letter refusing to spend time translating articles into Russian, which did nothing to improve the worsening relations between the two Councils. On 12 August Polyansky wrote to Ovanesyan rebuking him for what he called the 'inadequacies' of the CAAGC's work. He accused him of failing to stand up to Kevork, allowing him to act outside the religious sphere. Polyansky called for more information to be published in *Echmiadzin* about the Church and for more religious subjects to be taught in the seminary, complaining that only four of the 16 subjects were religious – although at the same time he called for courses on the Soviet and the Armenian constitutions to be introduced at Echmiadzin. Polyansky told Ovanesyan bluntly that nothing should happen in the Armenian Church without the CAAGC's approval. He also told him that links between the CAAGC and the CARC must be closer.[87]

The failure to clarify the relations between the CAAGC and the CARC in Moscow had given rise to mutual dissatisfaction almost from the start. As far back as January 1946 tension had arisen over the text of letters Kevork had written to United States president Harry Truman and British prime minister Clement Attlee. These had been agreed with the Armenian government and copies had been despatched to Stalin before Polyansky knew anything about them. He wrote to Ovanesyan to complain, but the CAAGC chairman wrote back on 12 January 1946 to say that the distance between Yerevan and Moscow precluded the involvement of Moscow in everything, especially when answers were required in a matter of hours. Ovanesyan explained that he was merely fulfilling orders from the Armenian government.[88] Things seem to have been smoothed over then, as an exchange of 'private' letters just five months later shows. Polyansky wrote to Ovanesyan on 17 June complaining that the catholicos was behaving 'independently (or almost independently) of you', especially in matters related to the foreign dioceses. However, despite the complaint, the letter was couched in warm personal tones, and Ovanesyan responded equally warmly on 26 June (an uncharacteristically speedy reply), giving what seems to be his only recorded view of Kevork as a person:

> ... from his strange character and his old man's obstinacy, [Kevork] frequently approaches the resolution of tasks facing him from the wrong end ... As is well known, he is not a stupid person, but he is not entirely farsighted and does not have a precise understanding of the international situatiuon and the political situation, in addition to which he is terribly slow and plodding.[89]

However, relations between the CAAGC and the CARC in Moscow deteriorated

later. During Ovanesyan's visit to Moscow in summer 1948 he was criticised for 'deficiencies' in the Council's work.[90] Soon after this Ovanesyan was removed from his post as CAAC chairman. Hratchya G. Grigoryan (apparently no relation of Grant Arshatovich Grigoryan, the CARC commissioner and deputy chairman of the CAAGC) took over as chairman in December 1948 or January 1949. Hratchya Grigoryan had been born in Kars in 1907 and had been first secretary of the Armenian Writers' Union from 1938–39 and in 1946. From 1939–44 he had edited the Russian-language Yerevan newspaper *Kommunist* and from 1946–48 was the Armenian correspondent for *Pravda*.[91]

The CAAGC complained frequently to the Armenian leadership about lack of funding and called on it to provide greater resources. The CAAGC had been housed in the building of the Council of Ministers but on 20 March 1948 was thrown out, as Grant Grigoryan complained indignantly in a letter to Polyansky. It was only a month and a half later that the CAAGC gained new premises in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[92] Then in January 1949 the CAAGC was moved again – temporarily – to the premises of the Armenian Society for Cultural Links with Overseas Armenians (AOKS), where, Grigoryan subsequently complained, they had one room of twelve square metres which they all had to share, 'right down to the cleaning lady'. There was no place to receive visitors, so when he wanted to talk to the catholicos, Grigoryan had to travel out to Echmiadzin. 'This is of course not normal and damages the authority of the Council,' he complained.

Until 1950 the Council for the Affairs of the Armenian-Gregorian Church had been able to call on the services of Grant Grigoryan, the local commissioner of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (who, in addition to reporting to the CARC in Moscow, doubled up as deputy chairman of the CAAGC). An anonymous letter was sent from AOKS to the USSR State Commission (which handled official appointments) alleging that the commissioner had no work to do, and the post was abolished, apparently without the approval of the Armenian government. 'As a result,' Hratchya Grigoryan complained, 'the Council has not only been deprived of its deputy chairman, but it is also required to take responsibility for the affairs of all religious communities (Muslims, ECB [Baptists] etc.), which is in principle not right.' Grigoryan appealed to the State Commission in Moscow, to the USSR Council of Ministers and to Karapetyan to reinstate this post.[93] In his report of the CAAGC's work in 1949–50 Hratchya Grigoryan claimed that the Council had more or less collapsed. 'This Council needs to be reformed, made up not of honorary members, but a capable, active Council'.[94]

Grigoryan was summoned to Moscow to attend the CARC meeting of 8–9 February 1951, where he presented his review of 1949–50, based on the report already submitted. In discussion after the report, Grigoryan was subjected to a sustained attack for the inadequacy of his work. Leading the assault was CARC employee Orleansky. 'The Armenian church is one of the most complex religious organisations which comes under the jurisdiction of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults', he noted, because many of its believers are abroad. He reminded Grigoryan that the CAAGC's inadequacies had been noticed as far back as June 1947. He complained that Grigoryan constantly mentioned that difficult questions needed 'study'. 'How long is this study going to carry on and when is the real work going to begin?' he asked angrily. Religious activity 'is the result of the absence of necessary supervision on the part of local organs, and the Council for the Affairs of the Armenian-Gregorian Church is also guilty in this', Orleansky warned him. Another CARC employee, Yamanov, complained that Grigoryan had still not drawn

up a statute for the CAAGC. However, he declared that the CARC itself 'and above all Comrade Karpov' could not be excused blame for the CAAGC's shortcomings. An employee named Frolov then joined the attack, declaring that Grigoryan knew little about the Armenian Church, either within the Soviet Union or abroad. Gostev complained that the CARC had sent 22 requests for information to the CAAGC to which it was still awaiting replies, and reminded Grigoryan that no quarterly reports had been sent in 1949. In his summing up, Polyansky was a little more positive than other CARC officials, defending Grigoryan against 'unjust' attacks and declaring that there were 'some positive elements' in the CAAGC's work. Claiming that there were few in the Armenian government who understood the situation of the Armenian Church overseas, he recommended to Grigoryan that he approach the Armenian government with a request to strengthen the Council staff by reappointing Ovanesyan and Grant Grigoryan.[95]

On 31 December 1951 the chairman Hratchya Grigoryan wrote to the Armenian Central Committee secretary Grigor Aryutyunov on why the Council's work was so sluggish. Grigoryan declared that the staff originally appointed were the chairman and a linguist R. Acharyan, as well as a historian and archaeologist K. Kafadaryan who, Grigoryan declared, 'in fact had nothing to do in the Council'. Kafadaryan's presence even hindered the Council's work: 'Specific questions about the Armenian Church connected with its overseas activity, most of which were confidential, could not be discussed in the Council with such staff and from the first few months of its existence [the Council] practically ceased to function.' Grigoryan even admitted that no minutes were kept of meetings. He went on to complain that when matters were put to the Armenian Council of Ministers for decision, such as whether or not to hold the blessing of chrism ceremony or the restoration of Echmiadzin Cathedral, there was often no quick response. Even the approval of the catholicos' letters to be sent abroad 'remains without movement for a protracted time'. For months Grigoryan had been trying to arrange a meeting with Karapetyan, but in the past three months he had been received just once, and even then for only two minutes. He complained that despite the quantity of secret materials received (such as copies of correspondence and foreign Armenian publications) the Council had no employee from the special department to handle these materials. Nor was there a translator from Armenian into Russian.

The Council did receive backing from the Armenian Council of Ministers in its battle with the CARC in Moscow. Grigoryan was told that the Council 'must act completely independently' of Moscow and that the CARC's responsibility for the Armenian Church 'must be limited solely to those communities outside the bounds of the Armenian SSR and in other Union republics and regions'.[96]

Grigoryan's letter of 31 December 1951 did not go down well at the CARC in Moscow. CARC chairman Polyansky wrote to Karapetyan on 29 January 1952 complaining that Grigoryan was trying to escape his responsibility of reporting to Moscow, proof that 'Comrade Grigoryan has set out on the path of violation of state discipline'. Polyansky dubbed this 'separatist activity' and called for the Armenian Council of Ministers to make Grigoryan send reports and to issue him with an 'administrative penalty'.[97] Of particular concern to Polyansky was the new draft statute of the CAAGC in which, he believed, Grigoryan was trying to remove the responsibility of the CAAGC to report to the CARC in Moscow.

Life improved for the Council in 1952, with the move from the AOKS premises to the Council of Ministers building. In his report on the Council's work for the first half of 1952 Grigoryan expressed his pleasure at the improvement in conditions and

declared that the Council now had better access to foreign church papers and 'progressive' papers.[98]

With Grigoryan's appointment, the efficiency of the Council appeared to increase. Reports were sent more regularly to the Armenian government and to the CARC in Moscow. Much of the correspondence with Moscow, however, concerned applications for leading clerics to visit foreign countries. For any foreign trip the CAAGC had to send the required forms to the CARC in Moscow, which forwarded them to the Soviet Foreign Ministry for processing. Full personal information was required on those chosen to travel, including education qualifications, year of ordination, current religious duties, travel abroad they had already undertaken, honours they had received, record of convictions and full private addresses.[99] Only when this information had been received and the proposed trip approved would those concerned receive their overseas passports, which would have to be handed back to the CAAGC on return. Archbishop Kostanyan and Professor Abramyan were the people frequently chosen to undertake foreign visits.

At the insistence of Moscow the CAAGC paid greater attention to the 'necessity that has arisen for a more detailed and all-round study of all cadres of the Armenian Church'. By 1951 the CAAGC had assembled full files on 57 clerics, one of whom was an overseas Armenian, with a further set of files, all of them on overseas clerics, which were not yet complete. Grigoryan declared that 'this is not easy work and it will not be completed soon'.[100]

The Council also collected information about the state of the Armenian Church in other Soviet republics, although it is not clear how far this was within its brief. In June and August 1951, for example, it approached the CARC commissioners in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Rostov-on-Don region, seeking information. The Georgian commissioner, D. Shalutashvili, wrote back on 11 July to report that there were four churches, two in Tbilisi and one each in Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki, with a total of five priests. On 26 July B. Shakhbazbekov, the commissioner in Azerbaijan, reported that there were two functioning churches, one in Baku and one in Kirovabad. There was a third church in Mardakert (in Nagorno-Karabakh) which 'in practice does not function because of the absence of a priest'. The acting head of the diocese, Vardges Grigoryan, and another priest served Baku, while the Kirovabad priest was still being appointed. The commissioner for Rostov region, T. A. Baikov, replied on 17 September that there were five Armenian churches in the region, two of them in Rostov itself. The clergy consisted of the bishop, one archpriest and five priests. The bishop claimed there were 21,000 believers, but Baikov was sceptical. 'From my observation the number of believers has been exaggerated by the bishop, and in practice the number of believers is not more than six to seven thousand.'[101]

Kevork's attitude to the CAAGC was ambivalent. He frequently tried to avoid giving it full information, only later to complain that it was not giving the Armenian Church full support. It is noticeable that he rarely addressed the CARC in Moscow, almost always preferring to address the Armenian government direct on serious points which he believed were beyond the competence of the CAAGC. Thus on 17 June 1947 he had a one-and-a-half-hour conversation with Karapetyan and was able to raise a range of subjects. The catholicos demanded the full return of the patriarchal palace, still mostly occupied by a military unit. Karapetyan promised it would be handed back by the end of 1947, though he could not promise that the building of the former academy could be given back, as some one thousand pupils were studying in a school housed in it. Kevork's other demands were for at least one of the two mills formerly owned by the monastery to be returned, for the Gekhard monastery to be

allowed to run a farm of 50 sheep and beehives (for which Sarkis Kurkjian of London had promised finance) and for a lorry and a replacement engine for his Studebaker. Speaking as the 'patriarchal Armenian', Kevork asked for the bodies of famous Armenians, buried in the churchyard of the recently demolished Vank Church in Tbilisi to be brought to Armenia for reburial in a pantheon. He also sought Armenian government pressure in defence of the patriarchate in Istanbul which, Kevork said, had no rights. Karapetyan was non-committal on these last points.[102] In January 1952 Kevork was received by Polyansky at the CARC offices in Moscow. The two discussed overseas developments in the Church, as well as the question of the appointment of a deputy for Kevork (something the CARC had been insisting on and Kevork had been resisting). Kevork asked for help in reopening the Armenian church in Moscow, as well as for a Pobeda car, a large radio and a return train ticket to Yerevan.[103]

On occasion Kevork was not shy about writing directly to senior Soviet leaders in an attempt to cut through the layers of bureaucracy, especially on foreign topics. Thus in April 1948 he wrote to Stalin and the USSR Council of Ministers with a wide-ranging series of demands. Later the same year he addressed letters directly to Molotov and Voroshilov (of which the CARC in Moscow was obliged to seek copies from the CAAGC in Yerevan).[104]

Foreign Affairs

In 1946, Kevork was much exercised by foreign appointments, which took up much of his time and that of the CAAGC. Kevork had hoped to appoint Nerses Abramyan, the former bishop of Baku and Turkestan, to the vacant Iraq diocese, but the Iraqi government had opposed the appointment and refused a visa. On 10 July 1947 Polyansky had told Ovanesyan to 'recommend' to Kevork that Bishop Suren Torosyan be removed from the Bucharest diocese for failing to get on with local Armenians and that Abramyan be appointed in his place.[105] However, Kevork persisted in his desire to send Abramyan to Iraq. Polyansky had to write to Ovanesyan again on 5 September with instructions from the Soviet Foreign Ministry that the catholicos was not to apply again for an Iraqi visa for Abramyan as the answer would be negative. The CARC told Ovanesyan that Kevork should send Abramyan to Bucharest and someone else to Iraq.[106] Kevork eventually bowed to pressure and when he returned from his two-month summer holiday recalled Torosyan. Ovanesyan told Polyansky on 9 October that the Armenian community in Romania had wanted Vazgen Baldjyan to take over, but that Kevork considered he had 'too little experience' and that Abramyan was suitable.[107] Polyansky eventually wrote to Ovanesyan on 2 December allowing him to approve the appointment of Baldjyan as *locum tenens* of the Romanian diocese and the granting of the rank of higher archimandrite. There were problems too to deal with in Greece. In the same letter, Polyansky declared that the decision on Bishop Karabed Mazlumyan was in abeyance. There was an anti-Echmiadzin mood in Greece, not all Greek Armenians had been 'repatriated' yet and the Greek government would not allow a new diocesan leader, even one from the Jerusalem congregation, Polyansky wrote.[108] Following the Greek civil war, which the communists had lost, there was a bitterly antisoviet mood in the government and in the country. The CARC was sufficiently aware of this to consider an appointment from Jerusalem, which was not tarred with the same brush as Echmiadzin, but believed that the appointment of a hierarch would be seen as undermining Stalin's desire that all overseas Armenians should move to Soviet

Armenia by indicating that a community would remain in Greece. With the tense mood in Greece, Mazlumyan's personal safety soon became a concern in Yerevan. Ovanesyan informed Polyansky on 10 January 1948 that the Armenian Central Committee secretary Grigor Aryutyunov feared that the 'further remaining of Mazlumyan in Greece is fraught with danger for his life'. Aryutyunov was concerned to see his speedy return to Armenia.[109]

Both Kevork and the CAAGC were becoming increasingly alarmed about the activities of Bishop Tiran Nersoyan in the United States: he was one of the more dynamic bishops in the Church and a pioneer of ecumenism. On 31 October 1947 Ovanesyan informed Polyansky that Nersoyan had taken part in an (unspecified) ecumenical event. 'At our recommendation', Ovanesyan declared, Kevork had telegraphed Nersoyan expressing a negative attitude to the participation of the Armenian Church in any ecumenical events. Just four days before, Ovanesyan had told Polyansky that he had 'recommended' to Kevork that he send a circular to all overseas bishops instructing them not to participate in ecumenical events without his prior approval.[110]

It is not clear whether Kevork genuinely objected to ecumenism or whether he was bowing to pressure from the CAAGC, which was frightened that ecumenical involvement would weaken the power of Echmiadzin, and through it of the Soviet State, over the worldwide Armenian Church. It is nevertheless clear that Kevork jealously guarded his prerogatives as catholicos and objected strongly to any unilateral initiatives by other senior clerics. The CARC later spelled out more explicitly its absolute rejection of ecumenism. In a letter to Ovanesyan of 12 January 1948 Polyansky declared that 'any joining of the Armenian Church or any other Church to the ecumenical movement is politically undesirable and has correctly been described as harmful by the government of the USSR'. He instructed Ovanesyan to inform Kevork of this. Polyansky claimed that the Russian Orthodox Church and other Soviet churches did not wish to take part in the ecumenical movement.[111] On 28 February Ovanesyan wrote back to Polyansky informing him that on 27 December 1947 Bishop Artavazd Syurmeyan of the European diocese had written to Kevork about the forthcoming Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church, which was to be held on 3 July 1948. 'In accordance with your instructions,' Ovanesyan wrote, 'the Council recommended to Catholicos Kevork VI to decline participation in the ecumenical movement and in various religious congresses called for 1948.' Kevork was to write a circular letter to all dioceses, the text of which would be agreed with the CAAGC, that the Armenian Church could not participate in these events on the grounds that 'political questions are to be discussed'.[112] In a reply of 10 March Polyansky told Ovanesyan that the text of the catholicos' letter was still being considered. There were, he believed, three possible attitudes to the ecumenical movement: firstly, a passive attitude; secondly, to send observers to gain information only; and thirdly, 'one could conduct a struggle against it and begin to unmask all this reactionary enterprise of the bourgeoisie'. It is clear the CARC was trying to work out a more nuanced approach to the ecumenical movement which, it realised, would be a recurring problem for the Councils. Exactly a month later he wrote again, to tell Ovanesyan that the text of the letter should be reworked before being sent, so that the refusal to participate in ecumenical events would be based on theological, not political reasons. 'One could motivate the refusal to take part in conferences, for example, on the grounds that for canonical or some other reason the Armenian Church cannot take part in meetings with people of other faiths.' Another suggestion Polyansky gave was that Kevork would be too busy organising the ceremonies for

the blessing of holy chrism. Polyansky declared that the revised text did not need to be approved by the CARC in Moscow.[113] In fact, Kevork sent a brief telegram in May 1948 to say he was too busy to attend the Lambeth Conference.

The previous bans on ecumenical activity did not deter Bishop Tiran Nersoyan of New York. Grigoryan wrote to Polyansky on 29 April 1950 to inform him that Nersoyan had asked Kevork's permission to become a member of the National Council of the Churches of Christ, an ecumenical body which had been founded that year in the United States. He reported that Kevork 'thinks that it is possible and asks for our advice'. The CAAGC, however, Grigoryan wrote, considered the NCCC a

> most reactionary body entirely serving the interests of the imperialist circles of America. At the head of this organisation are war-mongers notorious throughout the world, like John Foster Dulles, Charles Taft etc., and the activity of this organisation is financed by the Rockefeller banking house. The National Council of Churches of Christ preaches open warfare against the Soviet Union and therefore it is undesirable for any part of the Armenian Church to enter this organisation.

Grigoryan enclosed copies of Nersoyan's letter to Kevork and Kevork's letter to the CAAGC.[114]

Nersoyan was also causing the CAAGC problems in other areas. When Nersoyan was planning the building of a new Armenian church and centre in New York, for which he had gathered more than a million dollars, he asked Kevork to send a stone to be placed into the building, for which Nersoyan would cover the cost. Grigoryan wrote to Karapetyan in May 1950 to declare that 'judging by all his activity, Nersoyan is an active agent of American imperialism' who 'actively propagandises the reactionary ideology of American imperialism–cosmopolitanism'. He told Karapetyan that the CAAGC would be informing Kevork that he must not support Nersoyan but rather do everything in his power to undermine him. It would also explain to Kevork that while the Armenians had had no homeland, it had been acceptable to build Armenian churches abroad. 'But now, when the Armenian nation has its homeland and statehood [*gosudarstvennost'*] and the basic mass of the Armenians are striving to return to the homeland, any attempt to build churches abroad must be considered an antipatriotic act.'[115]

That same year, Bishop Nersoyan of New York sought to negotiate in international bodies over Armenian rights to the holy places in Jerusalem and Bethlehem[116] without the prior approval of Echmiadzin. Kevork felt obliged to write a circular letter criticising his activity. The CAAGC sent the draft text of the letter to the CARC in Moscow for approval on 17 April 1950.[117] Nersoyan also visited Stockholm without first gaining Kevork's approval.

Polyansky replied to Grigoryan on 19 July 1950, condemning as 'separatist activity' Nersoyan's appeal to the Soviet government in the Security Council without Kevork's approval and the similarly unauthorised visit to Stockholm. However, in view of the danger of a public split between Nersoyan and Kevork, the CARC advised caution, declaring that Kevork should issue a low-key response on these issues and have the letter handed to Nersoyan privately rather than publish it. Kevork was to write to Nersoyan not forbidding him to build the New York church or join the NCCC, but rather 'recommending him to study more thoroughly the desirability of these intentions', and was then to drag out these issues 'until there is a decisive analysis of Nersoyan's political physiognomy'.[118]

Two years later Nersoyan was still a topic of discussion. Kevork told Grigoryan in

conversation that he considered him 'erudite', but noted his remark during his 1945 visit that there were 'too few Armenian churches and priests' in the Soviet Union. Grigoryan reported Kevork's recent displeasure with Nersoyan, who had shown fellow members of a delegation his American passport and declared that he was proud of it. Kevork was convinced that Nersoyan had 'fallen into a trap'.[119]

Although ecumenical participation abroad would not have been welcomed by the Soviet authorities Kevork did harbour the desire to travel abroad to visit Armenian churches, and he raised his wish in his April 1948 letter to Stalin, the USSR Council of Ministers and the Armenian government. However, the Armenian government opposed the idea, warning that

> ... given the political shortsightedness of the catholicos, interested organs and persons, by way of unofficial conversations with him and official interviews taken with him on various topics, could exploit and seriously compromise him, which would lead to the undermining of his authority and to the weakening of the influence of Echmiadzin over the Armenian colonies.

The Armenian government also opposed Kevork's plans outlined in the same letter for links between the Armenian Church and foreign churches in an anti-Vatican alliance. The Armenian government declared, correctly, that 'there are no progressive and pro-Soviet church circles abroad'. It advised that the Armenian Church should be involved in such a venture only with the Russian Orthodox Church.[120]

Despite Kevork's refusal to accept the invitation to the 1948 Lambeth Conference the Archbishop of Canterbury Geoffrey Fisher did not give up his attempts to retain some links with Kevork, building on the Anglican Church's contacts established by Hewlett Johnson when he attended Kevork's enthronement. On 21 April 1952 Grigoryan wrote to Karapetyan, with a copy to Polyansky, declaring that Fisher was using every opportunity to write to the catholicos and develop relations. Kevork had asked the CAAGC's advice on how to respond to these overtures. 'He himself holds the view that it is necessary to support these links,' wrote Grigoryan, who believed that the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be consulted.[121]

The CAAGC annual report for 1948[122] described in detail the financial plight of Echmiadzin which, it said, needed 50,000 roubles annually just to keep the Theological Academy going. In summer 1948 the catholicos dismissed the teaching staff, apparently in a bid to secure greater funding from the government by drawing public attention to the lack of funds. The CAAGC duly put pressure on Kevork and the seminary was reopened on 15 October 1948. Many young people wanted to join the seminary but of the 37 who applied in 1948 only five were accepted. Candidates of military service age were barred by the CAAGC from entering, and there were cases of candidates falsifying documents. (At about this time Echmiadzin was helped out by a gift of 500,000 roubles from Patriarch Aleksi I of the Russian Orthodox Church).[123]

The same 1948 report also noted an increase in the number of applications to register churches, applications the Council deemed 'not desirable'. The Council claimed that the catholicos' representatives had had difficulty forming the committees of 20 required to apply for registration as 'the basic working mass of peasants opposes the opening of churches in villages'. There were 23 registered religious communities in Armenia, although only 13 churches and three monasteries were functioning in practice. The Council noted the shortage of clergy. Kevork had also planned to hold the ceremony of the 'blessing of holy chrism' which, by tradition,

should take place every seven years. Since the communist takeover of Armenia it had been conducted just once – in 1926. Kevork had planned to conduct the ceremony in autumn 1947 but this was considered 'not desirable' by the Council and put off until September 1948 (although it was not permitted then either and in autumn 1950 Kevork was still trying – in vain – to gain permission to hold the ceremony).[124]

On the overseas front the report noted the activity of the Dashnaks in the overseas dioceses. Despite the possibilities the occasion might offer, however, the Moscow CARC informed the CAAGC that Echmiadzin would not be represented at the World Council of Churches conference to be held in Cambridge in autumn 1948. According to the CARC the ecumenical movement 'follows political aims'.

At home, Kevork was increasingly unhappy at his role in the repatration campaign, which had backfired on him. The Soviet Union had been unsuccessful in regaining Kars and Ardahan and Stalin appeared to have given up on this. Kevork had not, however, and attempted to revive the question in 1947, drawing in the support of the Anglican Church. He wrote three letters to the Archbishop of Canterbury, one of them calling for Anglican support for the regaining of these territories. Both this and a second letter, outlining the history of the Church, were vetoed on 3 April by the chairman of the Council of Ministers, Karapetyan, 'given the political situation abroad'. He did allow Kevork to send a third text, an innocuous document calling for peace between nations. Ovanesyan told Polyansky on 15 May that he concurred with Karapetyan's decision.[125] In April 1948 Kevork addressed a letter to Stalin and to the USSR Council of Ministers, with a copy to the Armenian government. One of Kevork's chief demands was to be allowed to address a memorandum to the United Nations general assembly, meeting in Paris, about the Armenian *vilayets* (districts) in Turkey. The Armenian government was highly critical of this plan, describing it as 'highly negative'. It was not permissible, it believed, for Kevork to speak in international fora in the name of the Armenian people. At the same time, however, the Armenian government had no objection to Kevork giving interviews which were highly critical of the way the Turkish government was treating the Church.[126] Stalin's campaign for these territories eventually fizzled out and the Soviet Union offered to drop its claims in June 1953 after Stalin's death.

The repatriates had not had an easy time either. Many complained, of discrimination, repression and poverty. An unintended side-effect of this vast immigration was a resurgence in church activism, with the repatriates being far more religious than the local population and not so afraid of voicing their demands for a freer church life. By the later 1940s many (including some priests and seminary students) had been arrested and deported to Siberia, especially to the Altai region. Those remaining were not shy at showing Kevork their feelings, as Georgyan remembers:

> In those years he lived through tragic days and especially difficult for him was walking from his residence to the church and back. The repatriates surrounded him and heaped reproaches on him ... Having heard all the words of pain and bitterness, his Holiness shut himself up in his rooms and received no one.[127]

Perhaps motivated by this growing bitterness, Kevork planned his own gesture in the campaign to regain the lost territories from Turkey. In December 1947 he drafted a letter to the United Nations general secretary Trygve Lie calling for them to be returned to Armenian jurisdiction. The catholicos presented the letter to the CAAGC for approval as required, but it was promptly vetoed 'at the indication of a higher organ' (the Armenian government) as 'not desirable'. Kevork was instructed not to

send it and to stick to the religious sphere. The 1948 report records Kevork's dissatisfaction with the CAAGC's decision which he considered as a limitation on his powers. Ovanesyan had sent both the original text and a translation of the letter to Polyansky on 9 January 1948, after the Armenian government had already vetoed it, in which he declared that Kevork had written the letter 'on his own initiative'. In a reply of 1 March, Polyansky echoed his approval of the Armenian government's decision,[128] although by this stage he was too late to affect the outcome. The matter was one more symptom of Ovanesyan's preference for resolving such questions directly with the Armenian authorities rather than with the CARC in Moscow.

The Decline of the Church

Despite the gestures made towards the Church its pitiful state was still apparent to all. In public the official attitude regarding the Church as a prerevolutionary relic still lingered. Just as in Russia the organisation *Znaniye* (Knowledge) was founded in 1947 to continue the prewar atheist work of the League of Militant Godless, so a Knowledge society (*Kidelik*) was founded in Armenia the same year, with the noted academician and astrophysicist Viktor Hambartsumyan as president. It began with some 175 members.

In its entry on 'The Armenians' the Soviet encyclopedia of 1950 noted: 'The widespread religion of the past – christianity of the Monophysite doctrine – is dying out.'[129] Echmiadzin's role was also downplayed. A 1951 travel book by one of Armenia's leading novelists, Marietta Shaginyan, could declare categorically: 'In centuries gone by Echmiadzin used to be the centre of the national and religious unity of the Armenians and the highest person of the ecclesiastical hierarchy used to live there.'[130] This view was echoed in a 1955 handbook:,

> Before the revolution Echmiadzin was famous as the residence of the Catholicos of All the Armenians. In the Echmiadzin monastery was the famous book depository with the richest collection of ancient Armenian manuscripts which, under Soviet rule, were transferred to the capital to make up part of the Matenadaran. Now the town of Echmiadzin has become one of the industrial centres of the Ararat valley.[131]

The 'cultural revolution' during the years of Soviet rule, while removing the Church from public and everyday life, did not entirely eliminate aspects of folk religion. Oleg Gordievsky, then just a boy, attended the commemoration of the dead in the Armenian-populated town of Akhaltsikhe in southern Georgia in 1952, a memory he later recalled vividly.

> In an extensive cemetery on the outskirts of town we found hundreds of people sitting on the graves of their loved ones and lighting candles for them. After spending some time in silent remembrance, they opened baskets of food and wine, and began to enjoy picnics there on the tombstones. As dusk came on, they started to sing, low, sad, haunting songs, which rose and fell from the various groups as candle flames flickered in the twilight.[132]

CAAGC reports frequently indicated the popularity of such occasions.

> In the face of signs of a decline of religiosity among the Armenian population, the Armenian Church is trying to step up its activity and make its liturgies more impressive. On religious feastdays the Church attracts a

> great number of pilgrims to so-called 'holy places'. Thus on 14 August 1949 on the religious feast day of Astvatsatin more than 10,000 people gathered in the village of Nork near Yerevan, and in addition a large collection of livestock and birds were brought for sacrifice.

On 24 July 1949 there were several thousand pilgrims at Gekhard monastery on the feast of Vardavard. The same report mentioned 'improvised altars' at ruined churches, with trade in candles at many of them.[133] However, this form of popular religion seemed not to depend on the Church: the priests who attended were nearly always described as 'former priests'. Even Kevork acknowledged this by declining to seek permission for priests to attend such events, as Ovanesyan reported of a 1947 conversation on the subject.

> It must be noted that the gathering by believers at places of pilgrimage must not be seen as fanaticism or the activisation of a purely religious movement. It is also explained by the relationship that has developed historically between the Armenians and their Church, the rites of which are tradition, rather than expressions of faith.[134]

If presenting the Church as an outdated relic was still the public line, in private the state was fully aware of the Church's organisational decline and was beginning to take measures to preserve the Church from the death it might once have desired. The CAAGC showed increasing concern, frequently lobbying the Armenian and Soviet governments on the Church's behalf – and not always even at the Church's instigation. A letter to the USSR government, passing on Kevork's requests, gives a flavour of the Council's concern.[135] Given the 21 overseas dioceses or representations of the Church, the report declares, there is a pressing need to find new church leaders within Armenia who are capable of conducting correspondence and being sent abroad: they are necessary to counter the influence of the Dashnaks. The importance of the Church in the Holy Places is stressed and the difficulties the Armenian Church has experienced at the hands of the Israeli government – including the confiscation of property until the Church recognise Israeli authority over the Holy Places – are highlighted. The report then turns to the Vatican and its alleged attempts to bring the Armenian Church into its orbit. The appointment of the Armenian Catholic Patriarch Bedros (Pierre) Agagyanyan as a cardinal in 1946 is seen as a Vatican plot to challenge Kevork's authority.

Nor are the Dashnak attempts to 'weaken the Echmiadzin Catholicosate' neglected. The report claims they are trying to create an alternative church centre in Antilias, Jerusalem or Istanbul. 'In recent years the reactionary forces hostile to the Armenian Church have engaged in especially violent, aggressive activity which has considerably complicated the state of affairs in foreign centres of the Armenian Church.' Following an 'aggressive American policy' the Dashnaks are trying to 'discredit the catholicos in the eyes of the overseas Armenians'. Patriarch Kyureg I of Jerusalem, who had died the previous year, is remembered unfavourably: 'according to some sources an agent of English imperialism'. By contrast, it is mentioned that the Catholicos of Cilicia, Karekin I (Hovsepyan), was a Soviet citizen, having been born in Nagorno-Karabakh. Threats of a church split are helping the Vatican and Cardinal Agagyanyan, the report claims. The response is clear:

> In the given situation, Kevork VI must also increase his overseas activity and more actively intervene in all the affairs of the overseas Armenian religious centres, group around these centres all the progressive forces of

> the Armenian emigration, and organise and direct their activity against the reactionary forces.

The report then turns to the problems involved in bringing this about. It stresses the severe lack of personnel: Echmiadzin has only three old men – the catholicos, who is 83, and two archbishops, both over 70. There is no deputy catholicos. Three bishops have died in the past two years and these have not been replaced. 'The existing theological academy will in the next six to seven years be unable to produce cadres of the higher clergy as the products of the academy are young, inexperienced people who cannot at present be used for foreign activity.' Echmiadzin's economic plight too will hamper the plans. There are few churches within the Soviet Union (a handwritten comment on the draft records that there were 22, compared with a prerevolution total of 900). There is not enough income to cover the costs of the congregations, the academy and the journal *Echmiadzin*. Foreign exchange controls have cut the income in hard currency. In view of this, the report says, Kevork has asked for one of three possibilities: 'a significant increase in the number of functioning Armenian churches on the territory of the Soviet Union', especially in areas with many Armenians but no churches, such as Moscow, Leningrad, Central Asia and Nagorno-Karabakh; state funds; or permission 'to import goods from abroad without payment of duties and without licences with concomitant permission to sell them through the state system at state prices'. The third problem highlighted is the lack of information Echmiadzin is receiving about what is happening among Armenian communities abroad. For the last few years it has received no foreign Armenian journals and letters from abroad have concentrated on religious rather than political events. The report adds rather wistfully: 'The Council for the Affairs of the Armenian Church cannot give comprehensive information to the catholicos as it does not possess this information either.' Kevork has suggested that he should receive foreign publications and in return would keep the Council informed of foreign developments.

The Council, the letter reports, has discussed these problems with the Chairman of the Armenian Council of Ministers, S. K. Karapetyan, who has recommended: that Echmiadzin be saved from 'collapse'; that Echmiadzin increase its overseas activity (the draft has the comment 'according to the example of the Russian Orthodox Church' deleted in pencil); that the number of 'cadres' of the priesthood be increased; that foreign publications be allowed and that more information be given to Echmiadzin by the CAAGC; and that events such as the blessing of holy chrism, the 1500th anniversary of the battle against the Persians led by Vardan in 451, and the 80th birthday and 40th jubilee in the priesthood of the catholicos be widely celebrated with the participation of foreign Armenian bishops. At the end of the letter the Council puts in its own plea to increase its staff. The current three people are 'not in a position to give the necessary help to the catholicos in the question of the leadership of the foreign dioceses'.

It is interesting that the CARC chairman Ivan Polyansky had discussed the question of state support for Echmiadzin with the deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, Marshal Voroshilov, in 1951. He had ruled that

> the implementation of the decision on strengthening Echmiadzin's leadership of the overseas dioceses of the Armenian Church must be carried out only by the government of the Armenian SSR which, knowing all the interests, can resolve the question in a better and more detailed way than a decision of the Union government.[136]

Another, more murky, side of the relationship between the CAAGC and Echmiadzin came out in the early 1950s, when a former teacher at the seminary named Gonchekulyan wrote a letter to the chairman of the Presidium of the Armenian Supreme Soviet complaining of widespread theft from Echmiadzin. Among those implicated, according to Gonchekulyan, was Hratchya Grigoryan.[137] There were also allegations of embezzlement at Gekhard monastery and one of the two Tbilisi churches. The veracity of such claims is difficult to establish, although such allegations surfaced occasionally throughout the postwar era.

Relations with other Christian Churches

Kevork was obliged to ensure that the Church played its part in the cult of Stalin. The fulsome tributes in the wake of the defeat of Nazi Germany were part of the unwritten concord with the state. On the occasion of Stalin's seventieth birthday in 1949 a solemn liturgy for the 'Great Leader' was held at Echmiadzin on 21 December in the presence of the catholicos, the Echmiadzin congregation and the seminary students. The following day a special reception was held in the seminary.[138] Kevork addressed a festive telegram to Stalin, declaring:

> Thanks to the great Lenin and to you, the Armenian people gained its freedom and political independence ... It is the dream of the best sons of the Armenian nation enjoying freedom that the Soviet sun may shine also on the Armenian lands unjustly separated from Armenia [i.e. those in Turkey], so that all Armenians scattered throughout the world will have the opportunity to return to their holy homeland – Soviet Armenia.[139]

The decisive rejection by the 1945 church council and Kevork personally of the Roman Catholic Church was doubtless inspired by political rather than theological factors. A major thorn in the side of the Armenian government was the patriarch of the Armenian Catholic Church in the diaspora, Bedros Agagyanyan, born in Georgia but by now based in Beirut. The CAAGC reported his elevation to the rank of cardinal in 1946 and his appointment to head the papal commission for Russia and noted that the Armenian Catholics were mostly affiliated to the Dashnak party, opposed the repatration campaign and were seeking to increase their influence among overseas Armenians.[140] In successive pastoral letters the cardinal attacked the communists' record and spoke of the 'bitter reality and material misery' in Soviet Armenia. He was a particular critic of the 'repatriation' campaign.[141] Both the Armenian Church and the Armenian government kept themselves fully informed of the cardinal's utterances and took great trouble to refute them. On 23 March 1951, for example, Hratchya Grigoryan wrote a memorandum to Karapetyan summarising a letter the cardinal had published in his journal *Avetik* the previous year and to which Catholicos Karekin of Cilicia had already responded critically in the December issue of his journal *Ask*. According to Grigoryan Agagyanyan had tried to prove that the Armenian Apostolic Church had deviated from 'orthodoxy' and that only the Armenian Catholic Church preserved the 'holy faith and rites of our ancestors including Gregory the Illuminator'. After reading Karekin's response Kevork approached the CAAGC to see if they could help him gain the full text of Agagyanyan's letter in order to condemn it in the pages of *Echmiadzin*. The CAAGC recommended that the Armenian Foreign Ministry allow Kevork to acquire the full text.[142]

Kevork realised that a closer alignment with the Orthodox Church, especially with the Moscow Patriarchate, was necessary. The Russian Orthodox Church's close links with the Soviet government and the fact that it was the largest church in the Soviet Union gave it the status of 'elder brother' to other Soviet religious groups, despite the fact that only the Georgian Orthodox Church was of the same religious tradition. Thus the government required the Russian Orthodox Church to inaugurate and lead ecumenical and 'peace' initiatives and to coordinate such activities.

Like all Soviet religious leaders, therefore, Kevork was obliged to play his part in these various 'peace' activities. He promoted the 1948 Stockholm Appeal, a controversial call by the embryonic pro-Soviet World Peace Council to ban atomic weapons. This appeal in particular was regarded with such suspicion outside the Soviet Union that Echmiadzin's leading cleric in the United States, Archimandrite Torkom Manoogian, felt moved to declare in 1951:

> Our diocese has never received the slightest instruction requiring us to support the text entitled the Stockholm Appeal. The catholicos has never sent instructions seeking to implicate the diocese in one political movement or another, of whatever nature ... [Using religion for political ends] is contrary to the traditions of the Mother-Church which, despite all the attacks levelled against it, continues to maintain a purely non-political attitude and to serve the cause of Christianity.[143]

In August 1950 Kevork signed a joint peace manifesto in Tbilisi with the Russian patriarch Aleksi and the Georgian patriarch Kallistrat.[144] The same year he joined the Committee for the Defence of Peace and took part in a conference the committee organised in Moscow. He attended peace conferences in both the following two years.

Exchange visits between the Armenian and Russian Orthodox Churches had by now become well established. In July 1948 Kevork had attended celebrations for the fifth centenary of the Russian Church's autocephaly and the conference that took place at the same time, where, according to the Moscow Patriarchate, 'he concurred in the conference's decisions on "The Vatican and the Orthodox Church" and "The Oecumenical Movement and the Orthodox Church".'[145] In August 1950 Patriarch Aleksi visited Echmiadzin. In 1950 Kevork was also obliged to make a radio broadcast for overseas Armenians condemning the war in Korea and supporting peace. Polyansky instructed Grigoryan in a letter of 26 September 1950 that the text of Kevork's address must be approved in advance by the CARC in Moscow and by the 'local governing organs', and only then should Kevork be invited to the studio to record the statement.[146]

There is some dispute as to how far the Soviet State expected or desired to integrate the Armenian Church into the Orthodox Church. This move – effectively overturning centuries of tradition by moving the Church from its Oriental tradition into the Orthodox tradition – would have been highly controversial, especially in the diaspora, where it would doubtless have been seen as the subjugation of the Church's proud independence to the dominance of the Moscow Patriarchate. Such an idea seems to have been occasionally mooted in the immediate postwar era (and Kevork's presence in 1948 at the Moscow Patriarchate's autocephaly celebrations points towards this), but nothing seems to have come of it and the idea was not pursued by the Soviet authorities.

The relationship with other Soviet churches was almost non-existent, mainly confined to meetings under the auspices of official 'peace' gatherings. For example, the

Conference in Defence of Peace of all Churches and Organisations in the USSR was held at Zagorsk in May 1952, bringing together representatives of many religious groups, including the Orthodox, Armenians, Lutherans, Catholics, Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Old Believers, Molokans, Calvinists, Methodists, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists.[147]

One interesting event deserves to be noted. In October 1951 the head of the Latvian Lutheran Church, Archbishop Gustavs Turs, visited Echmiadzin unannounced and had a long conversation with Kevork. According to Hratchya Grigoryan's subsequent report on the visit (which – to his distress – he did not find out about until after it had taken place) it appears Turs was sounding Kevork out on the possibility that in future the Catholicos might carry out the rite of consecrating bishops for the Lutheran Church not only in Latvia but in Estonia and Lithuania as well. At that time contact between the Baltic Lutheran Churches and fellow Lutherans in Scandinavia and Germany was almost nil, and the attraction of the Armenian Church as a church with apostolic succession (in addition to its non-association with the predatory Russian Orthodox Church, which had already taken over the Baltic and Moldavian Orthodox Churches and the Ukrainian Catholic Church) may have led the Lutheran leadership in the Baltic republics to seek this desperate solution. As far as Grigoryan could discover, Turs arrived in Echmiadzin after an abortive visit the previous month by 'some bishop or other of the Estonian Church' (presumably Archbishop Jaan Kiivit), who had to leave empty-handed when he discovered that Kevork was away on holiday in Kislovodsk. On interrogation by Grigoryan about Turs' visit, Kevork was noticeably reluctant to give details, claiming that the archbishop had spoken 'fairly obscurely and non-specifically'. The catholicos asked Turs to present a written request to the Supreme Spiritual Council which, he said, was the only body empowered to consider such a request. Apparently nothing further developed from this.[148] Although the Baltic churches were by now under Soviet control, as was the Armenian Church, the Soviet authorities would doubtless have been alarmed at the creation of a 'pan-Christian front' not dominated by the Russian Orthodox Church.

There was little interreligious contact within Armenia in Kevork's time, because such activity was not encouraged, because the Church was too concerned by its own struggle for survival and because most other religious groups (found among Armenia's minority communities) were scarcely organised. On 12 October 1947, however, a group of four local Muslim leaders headed by Kazi Magarlamov visited Echmiadzin, where they were given a guided tour, attended the liturgy and had a two hour conversation with Kevork. The visit, arranged by the CARC, took place at Magarlamov's request. A return visit took place on 23 November 1947, when a bishop, an archimandrite and the rector of the seminary visited the Yerevan mosque on the feast of Demir bulag. Kevork did not take part.[149] There is no record of any meetings with leaders from the Molokans, Baptists or Adventists, the other main religious communities.

One community which was of interest to the Church was the Armenian Catholic Church, which retained traditional Armenian liturgy but accepted the authority of the pope. As well as in the Armenian diaspora, its stronghold was in the north of Armenia and in southern Georgia. Although this church was never specifically banned (unlike the Ukrainian Catholic Church) it was in practice deprived of all legal existence and its priests prevented from conducting religious activity. The remnants of the church were overseen by the Armenian commissioner of the CARC, not by the chairman of the CAAGC. Although no specific ban on the church was apparently

ever issued, there was definitely the understanding in official circles that it should be treated as a religious community which, by definition, would never be allowed to function. There was equally a strong understanding that should the acceptance of Catholic priests and believers into the Armenian Church speed the destruction of the remnants, this should be encouraged.

In his report on the religious groups in the fourth quarter of 1947 Grant Grigoryan noted that there were no Catholic churches in Armenia, but reported:

> According to information in hand, there lives in the village of Sarchapet in Kalinino district the only Catholic priest in the Armenian SSR, Ter-Martirosyan, who was received in 1946 by the Council for the Affairs of the Armenian Gregorian Church attached to the Council of Ministers of the Armenian SSR and expressed the desire to conduct appropriate preparatory work among Armenian Catholics in the republic for their unification into the Armenian-Gregorian Church.

In the report, Grigoryan noted that no follow-up steps had yet been taken and asked for advice from the CARC in Moscow.[150] Polyansky replied to Grigoryan on 23 March 1948, declaring: 'You should agree with the conducting of such work' and should 'draw up a concrete plan' together with Ovanesyan of the CAAGC. On 31 August two Catholics from the nearby village of Sarukhan came to visit Grigoryan and Ovanesyan. They said they had a priest (who had recently returned from exile, probably in Siberia) and 265 believers.

> After their declaration that they were empowered to request the opening of an Armenian church there, it was explained to the representatives of this community that before requesting it they must specify which faith they belonged to. To their reply that they and their spiritual leader [i.e. the priest] could recognise the catholicos of all Armenians and not the pope, it was explained that that was their internal affair and that their priest could appeal to the catholicos with a statement renouncing Catholicism and requesting to be accepted into the bosom of the Armenian-Gregorian Church, after which the catholicos himself would decide on naming him as pastor to that very community ... It must be noted that this is the first time in our practice that we have met such a case of the desire of an Armenian Catholic community as a whole to change its faith.[151]

While the Armenian Church doubtless welcomed Catholics changing their allegiance, it does not appear to have become involved in actively seeking their 'conversion', unlike the Russian Orthodox Church in its activity with regard to the Ukrainian Catholics.

One of the major internal questions for the Armenian Church concerned the drafting of a new church constitution, which had been inconclusively discussed at the 1945 church council. The 1836 statute [*polozheniye*], which had formalised a certain degree of control over the Church by the Russian tsar,[152] had been abrogated by Catholicos Kevork V in April 1917, not long after the February revolution in Petrograd. A constitution for the Armenians under Ottoman jurisdiction had been drawn up in Constantinople in 1862 and passed the following year. It had been confirmed by the 1923 Lausanne Conference, which looked at minority rights in the post-Ottoman countries, and accepted by the Turkish government. Kevork handed a draft text of a new constitution to the CAAGC on 25 December 1947, which Ovanesyan passed on to Polyansky at the Moscow CARC on 16 February 1948 together with his

detailed comments. Ovanesyan was not happy with the draft as, he said, it conflicted with Soviet law. In the draft the catholicos had reserved the right to speak in international bodies, such as the United Nations, 'in defence of the Armenian nation'. The Armenian Foreign Ministry alone, Ovanesyan pointed out, had this right. The draft constantly referred to the catholicos as 'the head of the Armenian nation'. Ovanesyan was scathing. 'While such a formulation is acceptable for foreign Armenian colonies, it cannot be accepted for Armenians living in the USSR.' The constitution referred to the Church as the owner of property. This conflicted with the law and the CARC instruction of 17 January 1945 banning the Church from owning property. Ovanesyan reported to Moscow that the constitution had been drawn up to help the catholicos abroad. Kevork was seeking permission to send 120 copies of the draft to representatives abroad to be discussed in preparation for a church council which would draw up the final text.[153]

Regaining Property

Kevork waged a constant battle with the CAAGC , the government in Yerevan and the government in Moscow to regain confiscated churches and to rebuild those he already had.

Kevork was not averse to insisting on the rights of the Church or playing on the government's embarrassment at the desperate plight of the Church. During one of his frequent meetings with Grigoryan the catholicos 'absolutely insisted' that the Holy Resurrection chapel in the Lazarev Armenian cemetery in Moscow be reopened for worship as on his visits to the Soviet capital he had no church in which to pray. (The chapel, built in 1815 by the Lazarev family, was the only Armenian church in Moscow to survive the Stalin years. The Church of the Exaltation of the Cross in Armyansky pereulok and the Church of the Assumption of the Mother of God on the Presnya were destroyed in the 1930s.) The catholicos' clinching argument: 'this undesirable situation could be used by hostile elements abroad'. Grigoryan passed on these complaints – which echoed similar complaints from Kevork in 1948 – in a letter of 23 March 1951 to CARC chairman Polyansky in Moscow.[154] Both in 1948 and in 1951 the appeals to reopen the chapel were approved by Moscow city's executive committee and the CARC, but were vetoed by the Central Committee.[155]

Later in March 1951 the catholicos complained about lack of progress in regaining the building called the Eremiye from the local executive committee in Echmiadzin. Stalin had, he said, promised to return this in a conversation with Kevork five years before in the Kremlin. Nor had the living quarters of the Hripsime Monastery – still being used by the accommodation department of the Echmiadzin town council and the militia – been returned. The catholicos – backed up by Grigoryan – complained that officials of the accommodation department kept pigs in the cellar while officials of the militia kept chickens which spread dirt all over the monastery courtyard. Grigoryan passed on Kevork's complaints to the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars Karapetyan.[156]

The poor condition of the Church in Soviet Armenia also had an impact on the wider Armenian Church, a point Kevork was not shy about stressing to the authorities. Even sympathetic overseas Armenian clergymen, such as Bishop Terenig Poladian of Antilias, could not help but observe the real state of the Church as they travelled around Armenia. Poladian, who visited in 1945, served as a guest lecturer at the Echmiadzin seminary in 1953–54 and would return to take part in the 1955 election, observed:

> Monasteries are abandoned and in ruins everywhere, inhabited by one or two isolated monks only. Churches serve more often as depots for harvests or as clubs. Priests have disappeared and young people have lost all contact with those who a generation before constituted the soul and identity of the Armenian people.[157]

The bishop cited numerous cases of closed churches and monasteries. At the monastery of Hakhpat, for example, he was told: 'In this one holy place, there has been not a single church service, not a single mass, for about thirty years.' He found pilgrims walking for miles to reach an open church. In Tbilisi, he recorded, there were just two churches where once there were 28.

The Church Abroad

The CAAGC report for 1949–50 described Echmiadzin's difficulties in detail, focusing on the fear that a number of foreign dioceses could break away from Echmiadzin's jurisdiction. According to the CAAGC's information, nine of the thirteen overseas dioceses had no head, a fact which was being used in Dashnak agitation. Four of the five dioceses under the jurisdiction of Cilicia were in the hands of the Dashnaks. Only one of the two patriarchs, the acting patriarch Yegishe Terteryan in Jerusalem, remained loyal to Echmiadzin. The Patriarch of Constantinople, according to the CAAGC report, maintained 'formal' links with Echmiadzin, but in practice supported the Dashnaks.[158] The frightening prospect of losing the loyalty of the majority of the Armenian dioceses loomed before the CAAGC. The fear was furthered by signs of a conspiracy. According to 'unofficial sources' the Dashnaks had held a secret meeting in Beirut of representatives from all over the Middle East to discuss this question.[159] In February 1951 the CARC in Moscow discussed the CAAGC report and was sufficiently alarmed to draft a decree in support of the Armenian Church, which was presented to the Armenian Central Committee and the Armenian Council of People's Commissars.[160]

The CAAGC kept abreast of developments throughout the Armenian Church and often learned of events in the overseas dioceses before the news reached Echmiadzin. Much of the information was received through Soviet diplomatic channels, with information being sent by Soviet diplomats in the Middle East to the Foreign Ministry in Moscow before being passed on to the CARC in Moscow and eventually to the CAAGC. On 22 February 1951, for example, the Moscow CARC forwarded to the CAAGC a list of all the members of the Istanbul church administration and the spiritual council of the Patriarchate who had been elected on 2 December 1950.[161] A seventeen-page report on the Christian church communities of Istanbul, much of which related to the Armenian Church, was compiled by the Soviet vice-consul in the city, Ya. Lazarev, on 17 September 1952. The CARC in Moscow received the text, a copy of which was passed on to the CAAGC in Yerevan.[162] But CAAGC's own attempts to acquire information were not always successful. In 1951 it tried to find out about the visit to Antilias of a delegation from Echmiadzin through the Armenian Foreign Ministry, which requested via the Soviet Foreign Ministry that the Soviet Mission to Lebanon seek information on what took place during the visit. At the time of the request the CAAGC had information only from emigre Armenian newspapers and was convinced that one of the two delegates, Abramyan, had 'conducted himself very badly, giving to our enemies abundant food for slanderous fabrications'. The CAAGC was also aware of the impression created by Abramyan's poor quality

clothes. Its view of the delegation's visit was not helped by the fact that Abramyan and the second delegate, Kostanyan, 'both tried to blacken each other'.[163]

Kevork was very much preoccupied at the end of the 1940s about the situation of the Armenian community in Jerusalem. He constantly requested permission of the CAAGC to write to Jerusalem to instruct the Armenian Patriarchate to place its valuables (especially its ancient manuscripts) in the care of Echmiadzin. Such permission was finally given by the Council in September 1948. However, the Council refused to allow Kevork to write to the British government (which had governed Palestine under the Mandate) about the matter.[164] On 4 December 1948 Ovanesyan forwarded to Polyansky translations of Kevork's draft letter to the Israeli government about the transfer of the valuables (Karapetyan had considered the despatch of the letter 'undesirable at present') and a draft letter to Russian Patriarch Aleksi seeking information on what measures he intended to take. In the letter to Aleksi Kevork alleged that the Vatican was forming an international brigade to defend the Holy Places and that 'one of the leading initiators and direct organisers of the brigade is Cardinal Agagyanyan, an Armenian by nationality, a favourite of [Pope] Pius XII, the former vicar-general in Georgia and a fanatical enemy of Soviet power in general and the Armenian SSR in particular'.[165] Polyansky informed Ovanesyan on 16 December that Kevork had written to the Soviet foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, to complain that the Soviet Union had done nothing to protect the Armenians of Jerusalem. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had responded by declaring that as they were not Soviet citizens their plight was not the concern of the Soviet authorities. However, it indicated that Kevork could send his representatives to Jerusalem to lend them moral support if he wished.[166] In a follow-up letter of 27 March 1949 Polyansky informed Grigoryan at the CAAGC that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered it 'undesirable' for Kevork to address the Israeli government or the Arab missions in Moscow on the question of the Jerusalem Armenians.[167] Kevork wrote a follow-up letter to Molotov in 1950 asking him to alert the Arab and Israeli embassies in Moscow of the difficult situation of the Armenians in Jerusalem, to request the Soviet mission in Tel Aviv to arrange the transfer of the Patriarchate's archives and manuscripts to Echmiadzin, to help the hungry Armenians sheltering in St James' monastery, to support the Jerusalem Patriarchate against the Vatican's alleged designs on it and to take the Patriarchate and the monastery under the care of the Tel Aviv mission.[168]

Iran was also a source of problems for the Church on two fronts. Under Dashnak pressure, new elections were held in 1949 to the Church's governing bodies in Teheran, when pro-Dashnak candidates were elected. But there was also pressure on Echmiadzin from the Iranian government. On 25 June 1949 the Iranian Council of Ministers had decreed that all religious leaders in the country must be Iranian citizens and that visits by foreign religious leaders were forbidden. The Iranian foreign ministry followed this up with a circular on 1 August 1949. Polyansky, with information supplied by the Soviet Foreign Ministry, informed Hratchya Grigoryan of the decision on 20 August 1949, mentioning that Archbishop Vahan Kostanyan of Isfahan (a Soviet citizen) was now obliged to leave the country and was currently living in a dacha belonging to the Soviet embassy in Teheran. Polyansky reported that efforts were under way to get the Iranian authorities to revoke the decision and to allow Kostanyan to stay, but that the Foreign Ministry considered success unlikely.[169] On 18 January 1950 Polyansky wrote to Grigoryan instructing him to 'recommend' to Kevork that he issue a kondak about the withdrawal from Iran of Kostanyan and also of Bishop Drampyan, who was also required to leave. 'This

recall, in the view of the Council,' Polyansky wrote, 'is motivated by the impossibility of the further normal activity of bishops Kostanyan and Drampyan in view of the revival by the Iranian government of a policy of religious discrimination towards the Armenians.' Kevork was to declare in the kondak that he did not recognise the canonical laws of the Teheran diocese and did not accept the elections that had just taken place in Teheran for the diocesan council. Kevork was to submit the draft text of his kondak to the Council and was to be issued with strict instructions not to publish it until the text had been cleared by the Council.[170] On 19 July the CARC eventually commented on Kevork's draft text of his kondak, instructing the CAAGC to tell the catholicos that he should remove any references to the Iranian government that might cause a diplomatic protest from Teheran to the Soviet government.[171] Both 1949 Iranian texts eventually reached the CARC in Moscow, which in February 1952 passed them on to the CAAGC in Yerevan, which informed Kevork. He at once wished to address an Iranian sheikh in a bid to get him to use his influence to overturn the decision to expel Kostanyan.[172] Iran had been becoming increasingly suspicious of the Soviet Union, however, and had already expelled Kostanyan in 1951 as a suspected Soviet agent.[173]

The Death of Kevork

Kevork's health had been declining for some time. In 1954, as his conditioned worsened, a bulletin about his health, signed by seven leading Armenian doctors, was published in *Sovetakan Hayastan* and *Kommunist*. He died on 9 May 1954, and was described on his tombstone as the 'patriotic Catholicos'. In contrast to that of his predecessor Khoren, whose death went unmarked in the Soviet press, Kevork's death was widely reported, with *Pravda, Izvestiya*, the Tass news agency and Yerevan radio praising the late Catholicos for his 'patriotic activities'. *Sovetakan Hayastan* declared: 'With the Catholicos, the Armenian Church has lost one of its leading figures. His activity is directly linked with the fate of the Armenian Church.'[174] Three days later, the same paper reported Kevork's funeral, which was conducted by Archbishop Khade Adjapahyan, the *locum tenens* of Cilicia. Ivan Polyansky of the CARC in Moscow attended, as did Hratchya Grigoryan from the CAAGC. Overseas bishops visiting Armenia for the funeral were taken to meet the party first secretary, Anton Kochinyan. Some were interviewed on Yerevan radio, giving favourable impressions of their visit. Not all overseas bishops, however, attended Kevork's funeral, those declining including bishops from Cyprus and Lebanon. The following year a souvenir book on the life of the late catholicos, with texts of his addresses, was published at Echmiadzin.

Archbishop Vahan Kostanyan took over as *locum tenens* on Kevork's death. He was supposed to follow CAAGC instructions on holding the church council to elect Kevork's successor but sent out his own instructions to convene the council before he had received official permission. When brought in to explain his action to the CAAGC, Kostanyan claimed he was under 'great pressure' from members of the Church's governing body, the Supreme Spiritual Council, to convene the council soon.[175]

In the run-up to the election the CAAGC was much involved in selecting the candidates who eventually went forward. On 11 February 1955 the Council discussed the forthcoming election at a meeting in Yerevan. It considered it 'undesirable' to delay in holding the election and scheduled the meeting for autumn 1955, subject to the agreement of the Armenian Council of Ministers. Three names were under dis-

cussion.[176] On 7 April the CARC in Moscow declared that it was not against the holding of the church council in the autumn, nor was it against holding the ceremony of the blessing of holy chrism, but it needed to know the number of guests attending from abroad and needed a detailed description of arrangements for the church council. It concurred with the idea of three candidates, but proposed the removal of Bishop Sion Manukyan (a United States citizen) from the list and the substitution of Archbishop Kostanyan (a Soviet citizen and the *locum tenens*).[177] The CARC in Moscow demanded that the CAAGC send information on the foreign candidates to be passed on to the Foreign Ministry because, it said, without information the Foreign Ministry could not issue visas for them to attend. The holding of the council was discussed in the higher party echelons in Moscow in August. At its meeting of 20 August the Secretariat of the Central Committee considered the request from the CARC for the convening of the council in September. The Secretariat wanted to know how many foreign guests would attend. It resolved to pass the matter to the Presidium for a final decision.[178]

In his will Kevork had specified the acting Patriarch of Jerusalem Yegishe Terteryan as his favoured successor, but this was not to be.

Notes and references

[1] I am very grateful to those who commented on earlier drafts of this article, especially to Deacon Hratch Tchilingirian, Fr Nerses Nersessian and Claire Mouradian.

[2] The most useful sources are Malachia Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia* (second edition updated by Terenig Poladian, Mowbray, London, 1955 [curiously, the third edition, St Vartan Press, New York, 1988, excludes Poladian's chapter]); Walter Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (Macmillan, London, 1961), chapter 5; Mary Kilbourne Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies in Armenia* (E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1962); Karekin V. Sarkissian, 'The Armenian Church', in A. J. Arberry (ed.), *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict* (vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, 1969); Mesrob K. Krikorian, 'The Armenian Church in the Soviet Union, 1917–1967' in Richard H. Marshall, ed., *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union, 1917–1967* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1971); Vahakn N. Dadrian, 'Nationalism in Soviet Armenia: a case study of ethnocentrism' in George W. Simmonds (ed.), *Nationalism in the USSR & Eastern Europe in the Era of Brezhnev & Kosygin* (University of Detroit Press, Detroit, MI, 1977); Anahide Ter Minassian, 'Nation et religion: l'Eglise arménienne', *Etudes* (Paris), June 1980, pp. 809–23; Claire Seda Mouradian, 'The Armenian Apostolic Church' in Pedro Ramet (ed.), *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 1988); S. F. Jones, 'Religion and nationalism in Soviet Georgia and Armenia' in Pedro Ramet (ed.), *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and Eastern European Politics* (second edition, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 1989); Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia: the Survival of a Nation* (second edition, Routledge, London, 1990); *Holy Echmiadzin: Guidebook* (in Armenian, Russian and English) (Echmiadzin, 1990); Claire Mouradian, *De Staline à Gorbatchev, Histoire d'une république soviétique: L'Arménie* (Editions Ramsay, Paris, 1990), especially chapter 8; V. A. Alekseyev, *Illyuzii i dogmy* (Politizdat, Moscow, 1991), chapter 'The Council in Echmiadzin'; Pargev Georgyan, 'V bor'be za sushchestvovaniye', *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii* (Moscow), no. 4, 1994, pp. 45–56; Stepan Stepanyan, *Hay arakelakan yekeqetsin Stalinyan brnapetutyan orok (The Armenian Apostolic Church under Stalinist Domination)* (Apolon Press, Yerevan, 1994); Sandro Behbudyan (ed.), *Vavaregrer hay yekeqetsu patmutyan (1921–1938) (Documents on the History of the Armenian Church (1921–1938))* (Yerevan, 1994). The student should note, however, that many of the facts given about the Church in these and other publications are erroneous. Publications from the 1950s and before are

most prone to error, rendering them almost useless as reliable sources. Lack of information and the desire by some writers either to gloss over the persecution of the Church or to portray the Church as a stooge of the Soviet system have led to widespread factual errors (not to speak of interpretations). But the inability even of official church publications to get facts right is astonishing. For example, the Armenian Church joined the WCC in 1962, yet in the Echmiadzin guidebook the date is given as 1960.

[3] I am grateful for the hospitable welcome and generous help I received from the archivists of the state archive (where the Council's archives are held) and the former party archive in Yerevan. As I speak no Armenian, I was dependent on the materials in Russian. All the correspondence with Moscow was in Russian, as well as most of the local material.

[4] It was not until 1927 that Catholicos Kevork V recognised the Soviet government as the legitimate authority. His successor, Khoren I, in a letter to Archbishop Levon Turyan dated 23 August 1933, explained '... that power, today, is the true Soviet Armenian Government, of which the Church of Armenia is a friend. This is the course that has been taken and will be taken by Echmiadzin, as head of the Armenian Church, with regard to the Soviet government, in the interests of Armenia and the Armenian people, having as its general purpose the wellbeing of the Armenian government as well as the Armenian Church.' Mary Mangigian Tarzian, *The Armenian Minority Problem 1914–1934: A Nation's Struggle for Security* (Scholars Press, Atlanta, 1992 [though written in the 1930s]), p. 218.

[5] Rossiisky tsentr khraneniya i izucheniya dokumentov noveishei istorii (Russian Centre for the Preservation and Study of Documents of Recent History) (RTsKhIDNI), Moscow, f. 89, op. 4, d. 92, pp. 9-11.

[6] Archive of Catholicos Kevork VI, Echmiadzin, f. 1, d. 104a.

[7] Georgyan, *op. cit.*, p. 49, quotes testimony from Khoren's servant Gegam, who was ordered to stay away from the catholicos by unknown intruders the night before he died, and who noticed marks of possible strangulation on Khoren's neck as he washed the body in preparation for burial. (Georgyan was born in 1925, studied at Echmiadzin, was ordained priest in 1954 and was consecrated bishop of Nor-Nakhichevan, based in Moscow, in 1962. In 1974 he got married and left the priesthood. However, there seems no reason to doubt his account.) See also Kolarz, *op. cit.*, p. 156, and Krikorian, *op. cit.*, pp. 245–46.

[8] Quoted in Georgyan, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

[9] The suppressed 1937 census – the only one in Soviet history to record citizens' religious adherence – had shown low attachment to the Church. Just 142,099 people recorded themselves as belonging to the Church out of a total Armenian population in the USSR of 1,968,721 (1,009,004 of them in the Armenian SSR) – although it must be borne in mind that the question was only to be answered by those 16 years and above. Just over 61 per cent of these were women and just under 37 per cent were literate. It is possible that some Armenians recorded themselves simply as 'believers', and were therefore not included in the above total. Felix Corley, 'Believers' responses to the 1937 and 1939 Soviet censuses', *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1994, pp. 403–17.

[10] Artavazd Syurmeyan, *Depi Hayastan* (Beirut, 1946), p. 34. See also Krikorian, *op. cit.*, pp. 246–47. In his report of the work of the CAAC in 1949–50 Grigoryan noted: 'It is known that on the eve of the church council of 1945 Echmiadzin had almost no religious cadres except Chorekchyan himself and one archimandrite.' Central State Archive of Recent History of the Republic of Armenia (ARH), Yerevan, f. 823, op. 3, d. 13 and Gosudarstvenny arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation) (GARF), Moscow, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 237, pp. 132–62.

[11] Quoted in Georgyan, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

[12] *Soviet War News*, 22 August 1941.

[13] *Kratky obzor* for 1949, CARC, Moscow, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 63, pp. 43–44.

[14] *Kul'turnaya Revolyutsiya v Sovetskoi Armenii 1920–40* (Izdatel'stvo AN Armyanskoi SSR, Yerevan, 1966), p. 236.

[15] *Izvestiya*, 8 October 1943.

[16] Text of decree in V. A. Kuroyedov and A. Pankratov (eds.), *Zakonodatel'stvo o religioznykh kul'takh* (reprint, Chalidze Publications, New York, 1981), p. 175. See also GARF, f. 6691, op. 2, d. 1, p. 15. The Armenians dislike the description of their Church as 'Gregorian' and in later years the Council often dropped this word from its title.

[17] Text in ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 1.

[18] The establishment of the Councils echoes the position in the tsarist Empire. The Main Administration of the Spiritual Affairs of Various Beliefs of the early 1800s (which underwent a number of changes during its existence) was a government body for controlling different faiths and consisted of four departments, one for the Orthodox, one for the Catholics, Uniates and Armenians, one for the Protestants and one for the Jews, Muslims and others.

[19] Quoted by Georgyan, *op. cit.*, p. 53. In the article the name is given as Muren, not Suren, but this is a misprint.

[20] Georgyan, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–54.

[21] ARH, f. 823, op. 1, d. 1.

[22] ARH, f. 823, op. 1, d. 2. All these texts were published at the time, mainly in the Yerevan papers *Kommunist* and *Khorurdain Hayastan*.

[23] ARH, f. 823, op. 1, d.3. The texts are in the original Armenian, with attached Russian translations.

[24] *Izvestiya*, 1 July 1944; *Soviet War News*, 4 July 1944.

[25] Quoted in Georgyan, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

[26] The Russian Orthodox Church had been able to restart publication of the monthly *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii* (closed down in 1931) in September 1943. The Evangelical Christian-Baptists were given permission to begin publishing a bi-monthly journal, *Bratsky vestnik*, in January 1945. The three remained the only religious journals permitted in the Soviet Union until 1969, when they were joined by the quarterly *Muslims of the Soviet East*. In 1978 the Georgian Orthodox Church was able to begin a twice-yearly journal, *Jvari Vazisa*. Orthodox journals promised for Estonia (*ZhMP*, no. 4, 1945, p. 4) and Moldavia (*ZhMP*, no. 8, 1947, p. 42) never appeared.

[27] Georgyan, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

[28] Letter written, according to this copy, on 3 April; ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 2. According to the CARC copy, it was dated 19 April; GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 10, pp. 27–30. (Stalin's copy is in GARF, f. 9401 s/ch, op. 2, d. 94, p. 329ff).

[29] *Pravda*, 20 April 1945. I have not been able to locate in the archives an official record of Stalin's meeting with Kevork.

[30] Quoted by Georgyan, *op. cit.*, p. 54, who apparently heard this direct from Kevork.

[31] GARF, f. 6991, op. 4, d. 13, p. 166.

[32] The complexities of the catholicos' election and role are explored by Walter Kolarz in *op. cit.*, pp. 161–62.

[33] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 4.

[34] The CARC file on the council is GARF, f. 6991, op. 4, d. 13. The CAAGC file is ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 3. GARF also holds a photo album of the council, with 105 pictures; f. 6991, op. 4, d. 447. The church council was filmed and a documentary in Armenian was completed in April 1946, although a Russian version took longer to produce.

[35] *Soviet News* (London), 26 June 1945.

[36] Hewlett Johnson, *Searching for Light* (Michael Joseph, London, 1968), pp. 219–21. I have amended the spelling of the names.

[37] GARF, f. 6991, op. 2, d. 34, p. 12.

[38] *Soviet News*, 30 June 1945.

[39] *Pravda*, 9 July 1945.

[40] List drawn up by CAAGC, 1 May 1946, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 43, p. 75.

[41] Georgyan, *op. cit.*, p. 45. The seminary, founded by Catholicos Kevork IV in 1874, had ceased to function in 1917 in the turmoil in Armenia at that time and had not been allowed to reopen once the Soviet system had been installed.

[42] *ibid.*

[43] *Pravda*, 29 June 1945. Hewlett Johnson was subsequently rewarded by being given the Church's highest honour, the Order of Gregory the Illuminator, first class. In a letter from Ovanesyan to Polyansky, 25 April 1947, noting the award, the Anglican cleric's support for the annexation of eastern Turkey is mentioned favourably. GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, pp. 152–53.

[44] Quoted in Claire Mouradian, 'L'immigration des Arméniens de la diaspora vers la RSS d'Arménie 1946–62', *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, vol. XX, no. 1, 1979, pp. 79–110.

[45] Kevork's demands were subsequently published in *Pravda*, 13 July 1946.

[46] On the repatriation and the Soviet claims to Kars and Ardahan, see Claire Mouradian, 'L'immigration ...', pp. 79–110. See also Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 360–63, and Hugh Thomas, *Armed Truce: the Beginnings of the Cold War 1945–46* (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1986), pp. 391–93.

[47] Grant Grigoryan, Informational report on the state of religious cults in the Armenian SSR for the second and third quarters of 1948, Archive of Social and Political Organisations (ASPO), Yerevan, f. 1, op. 28, d. 75, pp. 119–29.

[48] Ovanesyan, *Report* to Armenian CC chairman Grigor Aryutyunov, 2 June 1948. ASPO, f. 1, op. 28, d. 205.

[49] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, pp. 1–4.

[50] Statistical report attached to above letter, *ibid.*, p. 6.

[51] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, pp. 1–4 and d. 43, pp. 20 and 21–22.

[52] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, p. 149.

[53] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, pp. 37–39, 40–41.

[54] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, pp. 136–51.

[55] Ovanesyan, Report on CAAC activity in the second half of 1947, sent 20 January 1948 to Polyansky, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 198–230.

[56] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 43, pp. 20–22.

[57] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, pp. 20–21.

[58] Ovanesyan, Letter to Polyansky, 19 June 1948, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 189–97.

[59] Grigoryan, Letter to Polyansky, 18 October 1950. GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 237, pp. 51–3 and ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 14.

[60] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, pp. 200–36.

[61] Letter from USSR Ministry of Trade to the CARC in Moscow, 1 March 1947, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, doc. 234, p. 94.

[62] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 43, p. 78.

[63] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, pp. 76, 131–32.

[64] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, pp. 241–50.

[65] Ovanesyan, Report on the CAAC's work for the second half of 1947, sent to Polyansky 20 January 1948, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 198–230.

[66] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 236, p. 74.

[67] *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, no. 6, 1954, p. 69.

[68] Georgyan, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

[69] Report of 8 August 1952, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 239, pp. 210–16.

[70] Grigoryan, Report to the Armenian Council of Ministers, 11 December 1953, ARH, f. 823, op. 5, d. 2.

[71] Plan of work for the first half of 1954, compiled by Grigoryan for the Armenian Council of Ministers, ARH, f. 823, op. 4, d. 17. The same plan envisages CAAC help in obtaining supplies of food for Echmiadzin.

[72] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 239, p. 1.

[73] *ibid.*

[74] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 14.

[75] For a Russian translation of Gulbenkian's letter to Kevork of 30 April 1948 see GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 240–41.

[76] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 237, pp. 28–9 and ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 15.
[77] Nubar Gulbenkian, *Pantaraxia* (Hutchinson, London, 1965), p. 314.
[78] Ovanesyan, Report on CAAC activity for the second half of 1947, sent to Polyansky 20 January 1948, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 198–230.
[79] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, p. 233.
[80] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 237, pp. 195–228.
[81] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 239, pp. 278–95.
[82] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 14 and GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 237, p. 26 (Grigoryan, Letter to Karapetyan, 31 March 1950).
[83] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, p. 124.
[84] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, p. 185.
[85] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, pp. 200–36.
[86] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, p. 81.
[87] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, pp. 254–7.
[88] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 12–13.
[89] *ibid.*, d. 43, pp. 80–81, 82–83.
[90] Georgi Karpov, Report, 7 July 1948, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, p. 238.
[91] Mouradian, *De Staline* ..., p. 379, and further information in the same author's thesis (p. 414).
[92] Letter of 15 May 1948, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, p. 161.
[93] See Grigoryan, Letter to Karapetyan, 22 July 1952, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 239, pp. 225–26.
[94] Report compiled December 1950, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 237, pp. 132–62 and ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 13.
[95] Protocol of CARC meeting, Moscow, 8–9 February 1951, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 237, pp. 195–228.
[96] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 239, pp. 3–6.
[97] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 239, pp. 7–8.
[98] Report of 8 August 1952, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 239, pp. 210–16.
[99] See for example ARH, f. 823, op. 4, d. 4, p. 3.
[100] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 239, pp. 71–81.
[101] ARH, f. 823, op. 4, d. 6.
[102] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, pp. 241–50.
[103] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 239, pp. 56–67.
[104] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 270–71.
[105] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, p. 237.
[106] *ibid.*, p. 259.
[107] *ibid.*, p. 263.
[108] *ibid.*, p. 281.
[109] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 23–4.
[110] *ibid.*, pp. 270–71.
[111] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 2–3.
[112] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, p. 150.
[113] *ibid.*, p. 157.
[114] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 236, p. 241. See also ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 14.
[115] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 236, pp. 247–48.
[116] The Armenian Church – together with the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches – had been recognised as custodians of the Holy Places since the days of the Ottoman Empire, although a further four churches have rights at various shrines. See Anthony O'Mahony, 'Christianity in the Holy Land: the historical background', in *The Month* (London), December 1993, pp. 469–76, and Kevork Hintlian, *History of the Armenians in the Holy Land* (second edition, Armenian Patriarchate, Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 38–45.
[117] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 14.
[118] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 236, p. 255.

[119] Grigoryan, Letter to Polyansky, 18 October 1952, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 239, pp. 295–98.
[120] Ovanesyan, Letter to Polyansky, 18 June 1948, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 185–85.
[121] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 239, pp. 157–58.
[122] ASPO, f. 1, op. 28, doc . 75.
[123] Georgyan, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
[124] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 15.
[125] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, pp. 152–3, 174.
[126] Ovanesyan, Letter to Polyansky, 18 June 1948, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 185–88.
[127] Georgyan, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
[128] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 111 ff, 131.
[129] *Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya*, 2nd edition, vol. 3, 1950.
[130] Marietta Shaginyan, *Puteshestviye po Sovetskoi Armenii* (Moscow, 1951), p. 231. The book won a Stalin prize in 1951.
[131] *Armyanskaya SSR* (Gosudarstvennoye Izdatel'stvo Geograficheskoi Literatury, Moscow, 1955), p. 155.
[132] Oleg Gordievsky, *Next Stop Execution* (Macmillan, London, 1995), pp. 54–55.
[133] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 63, pp. 43–44.
[134] Ovanesyan, Report on CAAC activity for the second half of 1947, sent to Polyansky 20 January 1948, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 198–230.
[135] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 5. The 14-page draft is dated 1946–48 in the files, but in fact dates from 1950 or 1951. The copy sent to the Armenian Council of Ministers is in *ibid.*, d. 6. The recipient at the CM had queried in red pencil a comment in the text about the possible 'complete collapse' [*razval*] of the church establishment in Echmiadzin.
[136] Polyansky, Letter to Karapetyan, 17 October 1951, ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 22, p. 102.
[137] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 15.
[138] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 237, p. 64 and ARH, f. 823, op. 2, d. 1.
[139] ARH, f. 823, op. 2, d. 1.
[140] Ovanesyan, Report sent to Polyansky 14 April 1947, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 234, pp. 136–51.
[141] Kolarz, *op. cit.*, p. 166.
[142] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 22, pp. 41–42.
[143] Quoted in J. P. Hornus, 'Eglise et culture dans l'Arménie d'aujourd'hui' in Gérard Dedeyan (ed.), *Histoire des Arméniens* (Editions Privat, Toulouse, 1982), p. 574.
[144] For preparations for the Tbilisi meeting and Aleksi's subsequent visit to Echmiadzin from 8–10 August 1950, see Polyansky, *Letter* to Grigoryan, 21 July 1950, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 236, p. 280.
[145] *The Russian Orthodox Church: Organisation, Situation, Activity* (Moscow Patriarchate, 1959), p. 182.
[146] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 237, p. 107.
[147] Kolarz, *op. cit.*, pp. 34–35.
[148] Grigoryan, Letter to Polyansky, 25 October 1951, ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 22, pp. 99–100.
[149] Grant Grigoryan, Report on CARC activity for the fourth quarter of 1947, sent to the CARC in Moscow on 23 January 1948, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 140–46.
[150] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 235, pp. 140–46.
[151] Grant Grigoryan, Informational report on the state of religious cults in the Armenian SSR for the second and third quarters of 1948, ASPO, f. 1, op. 28, d. 75, pp. 119–29.
[152] See Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 56; Sarkissian, *op. cit.*, pp. 494–95. According to the statute, the church council chose two candidates as catholicos, from which the tsar made the final choice.
[153] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 7.
[154] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 22.

[155] Polyansky, Letter to Central Committee, 28 November 1955, Tsentr khraneniya sovremennoi dokumentatsii (Centre for the Preservation of Contemporary Documentation) (TsKhSD), Moscow, f. 5, op. 16, d. 743, pp. 78–79.

[156] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 23.

[157] Terenig Poladyan, *Yerkir Hayreni* (Imprimerie du Catholicossat, Beirut, 1956), p. 64. Poladyan, uniquely, later became rector of the national seminary in Addis Ababa of the Ethiopian Church (a fellow Oriental church). He was assassinated in Beirut on 22 November 1963 (incidentally, the same day that President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas). See David Marshall Lang, *The Armenians: a People in Exile* (second edition, Unwin, London, 1988), p. 76.

[158] Report compiled in December 1950. GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 237, pp. 132–62 and ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 13.

[159] The Moscow CARC had informed the CAAGC in a letter of 31 May 1950 of the calling of a conference by the Dashnaks to split the Church in Lebanon and Syria away from Echmiadzin. ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 14.

[160] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 23.

[161] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 24.

[162] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 239, pp. 262–78.

[163] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 23.

[164] Grigoryan, Letter to Sadovsky of the Moscow CARC, 28 September 1948, GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 236, pp. 11–12.

[165] *ibid.*, pp. 13ff.

[166] *ibid.*, p. 19.

[167] *ibid.*, p. 22.

[168] ARH, f. 23, op. 3, d. 20.

[169] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 236, p. 86.

[170] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 14, p. 5.

[171] ARH, f. 823, op. 3, d. 14.

[172] GARF, f. 6991, op. 3, d. 239, p. 47.

[173] Mouradian, *De Staline ...*, p. 374.

[174] *Sovetakan Hayastan*, 27 May 1954.

[175] ARH, f. 823, op. 4, d. 19.

[176] ARH, f. 823, op. 4, d. 21a.

[177] ARH, f. 823, op. 4, d. 20.

[178] TsKhSD, card index, protocol No. 81.