



THE SOVIET EXPERIENCE IN ARMENIA AND ITS LEGACY

Academic Conference

October 28-30, 2022

**Fairlane Center North
Quad E (Room 99)**

**19000 Hubbard Drive
Dearborn, MI 48126
Free visitor parking**

ARC-Conference2020@umich.edu



ARMENIAN RESEARCH CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN



ARMENIAN RESEARCH CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN

Academic Conference

**The Soviet Experience
in Armenia
and Its Legacy**

in partnership with
The Armenian Center at Columbia University

Fairlane Center North, Quad E (Room 99)
19000 Hubbard Drive, Dearborn, MI 48126
October 28-30, 2022



DEARBORN

ARMENIAN RESEARCH CENTER

THE ARMENIAN RESEARCH CENTER (ARC) at the University of Michigan-Dearborn was founded by Prof. Dennis R. Papazian in 1985 for the documentation, research, dissemination of and publications in Armenian history and culture. Its endowment was raised by the Knights of Vartan fraternal service organization. Papazian also served as the Center's first Director.

- The ARC special collection consists of books in many languages, periodical series and offprints, unpublished doctoral dissertations, microfilms and microfiche, audio-visual materials, oral histories, and archival material on Armenian and related topics.
- The ARC publishes academic and other books. In 2020 it launched the *Texts and Studies in Armenian History, Society and Culture* series in partnership with Michigan State University Press.
- The ARC invites or hosts short-term visiting or longer-term resident scholars in Armenian Studies. It also assists students and academics with resources and advice on all things Armenian.
- The ARC organizes academic conferences and exhibitions.
- The ARC has built a strong partnership with the Armenian American community in the Metro Detroit area. It responds to community needs by organizing lectures and other events, as well as by providing community members with resources and advice on all things Armenian.
- The ARC provides resources and advice to journalists, media outlets, political leaders, and other interested individuals and organizations to help them gain a better understanding of events in Armenia, the Armenian American community, and other Armenian related topics.
- The ARC offers two scholarships each year to students attending the UM-Dearborn. It also sponsors the teaching of Armenian-language courses on the UM-Dearborn Campus.
- The ARC partners with major Armenian Studies chairs, programs, centers, and institutes across the United States and worldwide. It also maintains close cooperative links with the Library of Congress, the National Library of Armenia, and other major Armenian libraries and special collections around the world.

For more information on the Armenian Research Center, please go to www.umdearborn.edu/arc.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

More than six years after the convening of its previous international academic conference, the Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan-Dearborn hosts yet another important gathering, dedicated to “The Soviet Experience in Armenia and Its Legacy.”

We began thinking of this conference around 2018 when the centenary of the proclamation of independence in Armenia in May 1918 was being marked worldwide, including a few academic conferences across the Armenian Diaspora. We reasoned that some of the factors that generated that enthusiasm, especially in the Diaspora, would be absent in time for the 100th anniversary of the Sovietization of Armenia in 1920, even though the seventy-year Soviet period is also important in Armenian history, warranting further research. We opted to take up this challenge and fill this expected gap, in line with the Center’s strategic choice which is to organize *a few* large-scale academic conferences or exhibitions, usually within three-year intervals, but focus on topics usually neglected by other Armenian Studies centers and programs in the Diaspora.

Our initiative was greeted by all friends and colleagues in Armenian Studies with whom we were in touch. In response to the call for papers, we were inundated with proposals from Armenia. However, we limited the number of invitees from Armenia to only half of the conference participants. We anticipated that other academic gatherings would be organized in Yerevan to mark the anniversary and hoped that our conference would provide a unique platform to tackle this topic for scholars outside Armenia. Time proved our assumption correct. We ended up as the only Armenian Studies center outside Armenia to organize a scholarly event to mark this centenary.

The invitations were being sent to the selected participants when the pandemic forced the closure of our campus from March 2020 to September 2021. Even during the following academic year, many restrictions for using campus facilities persisted. For Armenians worldwide, the difficulties of the pandemic were compounded by the war launched by Azerbaijan against the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh or Artsakh. Nevertheless, the invited speakers were nearly unanimous not to hold the conference online, preferring to wait for better times to convene it in person.

The Sovietization of Armenia immediately split the Diaspora. From the 1920s to mid-1960s, being accepting of or against the Soviet regime constituted the main line of political division across diasporan communities. These contrasting attitudes would persist for seven decades, until the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991. However, a noticeable mellowing of intra-Diasporan political antagonisms had occurred by the mid-1960s with demands for international recognition of the Armenian Genocide gradually bringing rival factions closer and decades-old differences as regards the legitimacy of the Soviet regime in Armenia being pushed to the back burner.

These antagonisms until the mid-1960s generated an extensive polemical literature. However, Armenian Studies was not yet visible as an inter-disciplinary area of academic research during

this period. Thereafter, issues related to the Armenian Genocide came to dominate research in the nascent domain of Armenian Studies in North American and West European universities, marginalizing popular interest in other periods and topics in Armenian history. Moreover, community leaders feared that too much academic and other public attention on the Soviet era may reignite undesirable intra-diasporan tensions as regards the system's legitimacy and jeopardize the common effort toward genocide recognition. Among the few Diasporan scholars of this epoch who pioneered mostly isolated efforts to study Soviet Armenia, mention should be made of Mary Kilbourne-Matossian, Ronald G. Suny, Claire Seda Mouradian and Manuel Sarkisyanz.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict became a primary theme for Armenian scholarly attention in the Diaspora after 1988. Rarely, however, has this interest transcended into deeper curiosity concerning Armenia's Soviet past, even though much of the roots of this conflict can be traced to the peculiarities of Soviet society and politics. After the 1970s, large-scale emigration from Soviet and then newly independent Armenia also did not alter much the picture of relative public disinterest in the Diaspora toward academic work carried out on Soviet Armenia, now also by a younger generation of scholars, most notably Taline Ter Minassian, Felix Corley and Arsène Saparov.

We are holding this conference to reassert the importance of studying the Soviet period in Armenian history, not only by scholars living in Armenia and the post-Communist world, but also by their ethnic Armenian and non-Armenian peers based outside the former Communist Bloc.

Primary sources are abundant to study Armenia's Soviet past. Our conference covers almost all epochs of Soviet history and tackles issues through the prisms of various academic disciplines. Sixteen papers will never be enough to analyze every aspect of the Soviet experience, and several domains are missing from our program. We would have also welcomed more comparative studies had we received such proposals. Moreover, this conference will also deal with the legacy of the Soviet past, including memory and memorialization, in today's Armenia and among Armenians across the world.

Finally, I should express the Center's gratitude to the Armenian Center at Columbia University and the Department of Armenian Communities at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for their support to hold this conference. Big thanks also go to the Center's staff and friends – Vahe Sahakyan, Gerald E. Ottenbreit, Jr. and Ani Kasparian – without whose devotion and enthusiasm the Armenian Research Center would have been unable to put together this ambitious gathering.

Ara Sanjian
Director, Armenian Research Center
University of Michigan-Dearborn



THE SOVIET EXPERIENCE IN ARMENIA AND ITS LEGACY

Academic Conference
Quad E (Room 99), Fairlane Center North

DAY 1
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2022

OPENING SESSION

5:00-7:15 p.m.

5:00-6:15 pm: **Opening Reception**

6:15-6:45 pm: **Words of Welcome**

Domenico Grasso, Chancellor, University of Michigan-Dearborn

Khatchig Mouradian, Armenian Center, Columbia University

6:45-7:15 pm: **Conference Introduction**

Ara Sanjian, Armenian Research Center, University of Michigan-Dearborn

Looking Back at Armenia's Soviet Past from the Diaspora

PANEL 1

7:15-8:30 pm

Propaganda and State-Building in the 1920s and 1930s

Chair: Khatchig Mouradian, Columbia University

Haykuhi Muradyan

Yerevan State University

Agitprop and the Sovietization of "National Heritage" in the 1930s

Vahe Sahakyan

University of Michigan-Dearborn

The Committee to Aid Armenia and Exclusionary State-Centrism in Soviet Armenia's Diaspora Policies (1920s-1930s)



DAY 2
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2022

PANEL 2

10:00-11:15 am

Anti-Religious Propaganda and the Armenian Church in the 1920s and 1930s

Chair: R. Warren Anderson, University of Michigan-Dearborn

Jakub Osiecki

Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences, Kraków

The Church in Soviet Armenia in the 1920s and '30s: An Attempt at Assessment

Hasmik Khalapyan

American University of Armenia

Killing God: The Forging of Atheist Citizens in Early Soviet Armenia

Coffee break, 11:15-11:30 am

PANEL 3

11:30 am-1:15 pm

Tackling the Legacy of Stalinism since 1953

Chair: Anna Muller, University of Michigan-Dearborn

Pietro Shakarian (via zoom)

National Research University–Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg, Russia

Yerevan 1954: Anastas Mikoyan and De-Stalinization in Soviet Armenia

Siranush Dvovyan

American University of Armenia

The Reception History of Soviet-Armenian "Gulag Literature"

Gayane Shagoyan

Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences of Armenia

"Victims" and "Executioners" of the Stalin Era Repressions in the Public Discourse of Post-Soviet Armenia

Lunch break, 1:15-3:30 pm



PANEL 4

3:30-4:45 pm

Revisiting the “Friendship of Peoples”: Armenians and Azerbaijanis

Chair: Ronald G. Suny, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (Emeritus)

Ararat Şekeryan

Columbia University

Between Yerevan and Baku: Mirza Ibrahimov and the Making of Soviet Armenian and Azerbaijani Brotherhood

Lusine Kharatyan

Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences of Armenia

Armenian-Azerbaijani Co-existence Models and Mechanisms in Armenia under the Soviet Slogan of “Friendship of Peoples”

Coffee break, 4:45-5:00 pm

PANEL 5

5:00-6:15 pm

Soviet Modernism and Its Legacy

Chair: Gayane Shagoyan, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, Yerevan

Elizabeth Bishop

Texas State University

Soviet Modernism and Its Legacy: Spartak Kndeghtsyan and Telman Gevorgyan’s “Moscow Cinema” Hall (1966)

David Leupold

Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient Berlin

Yerevan’s Unfinished Future? The “Ancien Materiality” of Late Soviet Urbanity in Armenia’s Capital Today



DAY 3
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2022

PANEL 6

10:00-11:15 am

The “New Normal” in Soviet Armenian Society

Chair: Armen Zakarian, University of Michigan-Dearborn

Konrad Siekierski

King’s College, London, UK

A Domesticated Religion? Armenian Vernacular Christianity in the Soviet Period

Yulia Antonyan (via zoom)

Yerevan State University

The Birth and the Death of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia in Armenia

Coffee break, 11:15-11:30 am

PANEL 7

11:30 am-1:15 pm

Is Armenia’s Present Simply Past Continued?

Chair: Ara Sanjian, University of Michigan-Dearborn

Tigran Harutyunyan (via zoom)

Architect and Independent Researcher, Moscow

Perceptual Ambiguity of Soviet Architectural Legacy in Post-Soviet Armenian Reality

Suren Zolyan (via zoom)

Russian-Armenian University, Yerevan

Is the Armenian SSR Still Alive? On Political Symbolism in Modern Armenia

Ashot Voskanyan (via zoom)

American University of Armenia

“Civil Society” in Soviet Armenia and Its Post-Soviet Metamorphoses

1:15 pm:

Closing Remarks

Ara Sanjian, University of Michigan-Dearborn



PUBLIC SESSION AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Knox Hall Room 208, Columbia University
606 West 122nd St, New York, NY 10027

MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2022, 6:15 p.m.

Haykuhi Muradyan

Yerevan State University

Agitprop and the Sovietization of “National Heritage” in the 1930s

Hasmik Khalapyan

American University of Armenia

Killing God: The Forging of Atheist Citizens in Early Soviet Armenia

Ararat Şekeryan

Columbia University

Between Yerevan and Baku: Mirza Ibrahimov and the Making of Soviet Armenian and Azerbaijani Brotherhood

Knar Abrahamyan

Columbia University

Whose Arzrum?: Edgar Hovhannisyanyan’s Operatic Adaptation of Pushkin’s Travelogue



CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS (Biographies in alphabetical order)

R. WARREN ANDERSON earned his Ph.D. from George Mason University in 2011. Since then, he has taught economics at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, focusing on economic history, particularly conflicts. He has published on the inquisitions, Jewish persecution, as well as Native American conflicts. Currently he is working on analyzing the 1967 riots in Detroit. He remains interested in Armenia from his childhood years, after having spent some time in Yerevan when his father worked there in foreign development.

YULIA ANTONYAN is Associate Professor at the Department of Cultural Studies in the Faculty of History at Yerevan State University, where she has taught courses in the Anthropology of Religion, Anthropology of Social Structures, Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, as well as Cultural History of the European Renaissance and Modernity since 2008. She has been an invited lecturer or a short-time research fellow in the universities of Berkeley, Freiburg, Jena and Salzburg, as well as Ilia State University in Tbilisi, the Complutense University of Madrid and La Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris. She has also participated in dozens of local Armenian and international conferences. Her professional interests focus on the anthropology of religion and the anthropology of social structures, with a special focus on the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. She has participated in numerous Armenian local, regional, and international projects on various aspects of post-soviet religion and social developments. She was the leader of at least five of these group projects. Fieldwork has taken her not only to various regions of Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) but also to the Armenian communities in Georgia, Syria, and Lebanon. She is fluent in Armenian, Russian, English, and French. She has edited a volume on the anthropology of post-Soviet elites in Armenia and Georgia (2016) and has moreover published around 45 articles in English, Armenian and Russian in academic journals and collected volumes. Her major writings can be accessed at <https://yerevan.academia.edu/YuliaAntonyan>.

ELIZABETH BISHOP is Associate Professor of Modern Arab History at Texas State University. She holds a doctoral degree from the University of Chicago. Her research interests converge on questions of Soviet modernity outside the boundaries of the USSR. With Andreas Hilger, Jeffrey G. Karam, and Sana Tannoury-Karam, she convened the workshop “Arab-Soviet Internationalism–Socialist Internationalism, International Organizations and the Politics of Revolution in the 20th and 21st Centuries” at the *Forum Transregionale Studien*, Berlin (July 2022). As a Short-Term Visiting Fellow at the New York University Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia (2021-2022), she contributed research reports to Kristin Roth-Ey’s forthcoming anthology, *Socialist Internationalism and the Gritty Politics of the Particular: Second-Third World Spaces in the Cold War* (Bloomsbury, 2023). Her “Soviet Policy Towards Egypt: D. S. Solod in the State Archive of the Russian Federation” appeared in *Maghreb Review* (2020), and her first monograph, *Spaces of the High Dam*, is forthcoming with the American University in Cairo Press.

SIRANUSH DVOYAN is Associate Professor of Literary Studies and a lecturer in Armenian and Comparative Literature at the American University of Armenia. She received her doctoral degree in French-Armenian Diaspora Literature at Yerevan State University in 2001. She is the author of numerous scholarly articles and a monograph, *Teksti entertsum (dasakhosutyun entertsman pordz)* [*A Reading of Text*] (Yerevan: Aktual Arvest, 2013). She has also edited the works of renowned Western Armenian and Diaspora writers like Yeghia Demirjibashian, Krikor Beledian, Marc Nichanian, and Zareh Vorpuni. Her research interests focus primarily on the culture of Armenian communities in post-Soviet times, new diasporic experiences, and new articulations in literature. Her research interests also include the experience of Soviet state violence through the GULAG network and its reflection in literary texts. She is the Academic Coordinator of the Armenian Research Center in Humanities and member of the Council of the Ashot Johannissyan Research Institute in Humanities.

TIGRAN HARUTYUNYAN is an architect and independent researcher based in Moscow. He graduated from the Faculty of Architecture at Yerevan State University of Architecture and Construction in 2005. Thereafter, he pursued his research activities at the Institute of Art at the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, where he defended a dissertation devoted to the stylistic features of post-Soviet Armenian architecture, receiving a Candidate's degree in 2008. In 2019, he received an additional, Master's degree in the sphere of Heritage at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow. His research interests are focused primarily on post-Soviet architecture within the context of modern and past trends in architecture, the problems of architecture in the transitional period from Communism to the present, and issues of memory policy related to new architecture and urban space. He is the author of *Architectural Guide of Yerevan* (Berlin, DOM Publishers, 2017), as well as a number of articles in academic journals, volumes of collected works, and on professional websites.

HASMIK KHALAPYAN is Assistant Professor at the American University of Armenia. She has an M.A. in English Literature from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and a Ph.D. in History from Central European University in Budapest. Her original research was on the Armenian women's movement in the Ottoman Empire in 1876-1914 based on primary sources housed at libraries and archives in Armenia, Austria, France, and Turkey. Her current research interests include concepts and histories of social change in local/global perspective, Ottoman history, women's movements worldwide in comparative perspective, theories and histories of empires and colonialism, gender and international law, and ideologies and education policies in the early Soviet period. She has also conducted extensive research in e-learning methodologies especially for teaching language and history. She has publications in international academic journals and edited volumes on topics related to history, nineteenth century theater, Diaspora, and e-learning. Some of her work has also been translated to Turkish.

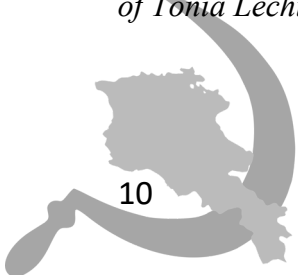
LUSINE KHARATYAN is a researcher at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography at the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia and the Director of the Center for Continuing Education at Yerevan State University. She holds a master's degree from the University of Minnesota (2004), General Diploma from the Cairo Demographic Center (2000), and a Diploma with distinction from Yerevan State University (1999). She headed the Armenia Country Office of DVV International (Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education

Association) between 2012 and 2018. She has worked for different Armenian, bilateral and international development agencies and NGOs, including the World Bank, GIZ, Millennium Challenge Account-Armenia, and World Learning. She represents Armenia in the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe since November 2018. Her research, publications and practical work focus on memory, oral history, national minorities, reconciliation and conflict resolution, social/cultural impact of policy reforms, and civil society formation. She has also taught in different universities in Armenia.

DAVID LEUPOLD is a research fellow at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient Berlin and principal investigator of the Deutsche Forschungsgesellschaft-funded project *Relicts of (Another) Future? Life and Afterlife of the Socialist City in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus*. He was a 2018-2019 Manooogian postdoctoral fellow in the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor Department of Sociology and holds a doctoral degree from the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. His research interests comprise contested geographies and the collective imaginations of past, present, and future in the post-Ottoman and post-Soviet space. His first monograph *Embattled Dreamlands: At the Nexus of Armenian, Kurdish and Turkish Memory Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2020) was awarded the 2021 annual book prize of the *Central Eurasian Studies Society* (CESS).

KHATCHIG MOURADIAN is a lecturer in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (MESAAS) at Columbia University, and the Armenian and Georgian Area Specialist in the African and Middle Eastern Division at the Library of Congress. He serves as Co-Principal Investigator of the project on Armenian Genocide Denial at the Global Institute for Advanced Studies, New York University. He is the author of *The Resistance Network: The Armenian Genocide and Humanitarianism in Ottoman Syria, 1915-1918* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2021). He is the co-editor of two forthcoming volumes to be published by I.B. Tauris in London: *After the Ottomans: Genocide's Long Shadow and Armenian Resilience* and *The I.B. Tauris Handbook of the Late Ottoman Empire: History and Legacy*. In 2020, he was awarded a Humanities War & Peace Initiative Grant from Columbia University.

ANNA MULLER holds an M.A. from the University of Gdańsk, Poland and a Ph.D. from Indiana University. She is an Associate Professor and the Frank and Mary Padzieski Endowed Professor in Polish/Polish American/Eastern European Studies in the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. From 2010 to 2012, she worked as a curator for the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk, where she co-curated exhibitions on the Holocaust, concentration camps, forced labor, and eugenics. She is the author of *If the Walls Could Speak. Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland* (Oxford University Press, 2018) and a collection of oral histories titled *Przetrwać. Życ Dalej. Rozmowy z więźniarkami z Europy Środkowej 1945-1956* [Survive! Continue Living! Conversations with Female Prisoners from Central Europe, 1945-1956], published in 2021. Her *An Ordinary Life? The Journeys of Tonia Lechtman, 1918-1996* will appear later this year with the Ohio University Press.



HAYKUHI MURADYAN is a Candidate of Historical Sciences. Her research interests focus on cultural anthropology, applied anthropology, anthropology of politics, and heritage management. She is a lecturer at the Department of Cultural Studies, Yerevan State University. She teaches courses on Introduction to Cultural Studies, Cultural Policy, and Armenian Culture of the Modern Period. She also teaches a course on theories of Cultural Genocide at the Department of Genocide Studies at the Institute of Armenian Studies in the same university.

JAKUB OSIECKI is a Polish historian. In 2008 he graduated in Russian Studies from the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Thereafter, he was awarded a Ph.D. degree in history in January 2014 for his thesis *The Anti-Religious Policy of the Armenian Bolsheviks, 1920-1938*. He works at the Research Center for Armenian Culture in the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kraków. He has published *The Armenian Church in Soviet Armenia: The Policies of the Armenian Bolsheviks and the Armenian Church, 1920-1932* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2020). He is also a co-author of *Ormianie katolicy w Armenii i Gruzji: Historia, pamięć, tożsamość* [Catholics of the Armenian Rite in Armenia and Georgia: History, Memory, Identity] (Kraków: Academic Bookshop and the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków, 2015).

VAHE SAHAKYAN works at the Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan-Dearborn since 2016. He holds a Candidate of Sciences degree in Sociology from Yerevan State University and a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He taught at the Department of Sociology at Yerevan State University from 2001 to 2008, and at the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor between 2010 and 2017. During the past decade, he has conducted multi-sited empirical studies of the Armenian diaspora as part of his doctoral research, and later as member of the Academic Advisory Board of the Armenian Diaspora Survey. He is broadly interested in the study of diasporas, nationalism and transnationalism from both theoretical and comparative perspectives. In 2022, he compiled and edited *Spyurkagitutyun: Knnakan antologia* [Diaspora Studies: A Critical Anthology], a volume bringing together Armenian-language translations of 19 fundamental articles and book chapters in Diaspora Studies by renowned Western scholars and published by Yerevan State University Press.

GAYANE SHAGOYAN is a researcher at the Department of Contemporary Anthropological Studies at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences of Armenia. She received her Ph.D. in Anthropology from the same institute in 2010. Her research interests include daily life, urban studies, and the anthropology of memory. She is the author of about 90 publications, including the book, *“Yot or, yot gisher”*: *Hayots harsaniki hamaynapatker* [Seven Days and Seven Nights: Panorama of the Armenian Wedding] (Yerevan: “Gitutyun”, 2011), and the co-authored volume, *Stalinyan brnachshumnere Hayastanum: Patmutyun, hishoghutyun, arorya* [Stalin Era Repressions in Armenia: History, Memory, and Daily Life] (Yerevan: “Gitutyun”, 2015). She also serves on the editorial board of *Texts and Studies on Armenian History, Society and Culture*, a series published jointly by the Armenian Research Center, University of Michigan-Dearborn and Michigan State University Press.

PIETRO A. SHAKARIAN is a historian of Russia and the Soviet Union and a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Historical Research at the National Research University–Higher School of Economics in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation. He earned his Ph.D. in History at the Ohio State University; his M.A. in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; his MLIS at Kent State University; and his B.A. in History at John Carroll University in Cleveland. He previously worked as a lecturer in history at the American University of Armenia in Yerevan and has collaborated with the London-based Gomidas Institute on the publication of new editions of rare historical books on the Caucasus in the Tsarist and Soviet periods. In addition, he has written several analyses on current developments in Russia and the former Soviet Union for various publications, including *The Nation* magazine and the *Russian International Affairs Council*. He has also conducted many extensive interviews with various veteran experts on Russia and the surrounding region, including former US ambassador Jack Matlock, journalist Vladimir Pozner, historians Stephen F. Cohen and Ronald Grigor Suny, and Soviet-era dissident Zhores Medvedev.

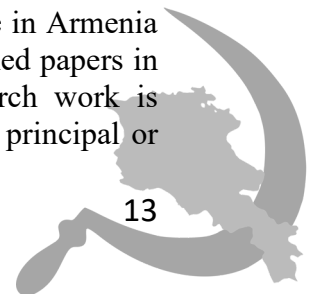
KONRAD SIEKIERSKI holds an M.A. in cultural anthropology from the University of Warsaw and is a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at King’s College, London. He is working on a dissertation on modern Armenian pilgrimages. His research interests include religion in Soviet and post-Soviet Armenia, identity formation in the Armenian diaspora, and contemporary Catholicism in Poland. He is a co-editor of *Armenia: Kultura współczesna w ujęciu antropologicznym* [Armenia: A Contemporary Culture from an Anthropological Perspective] (Warsaw: DiG, 2014), *Armenians in Post-Socialist Europe* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2016), and “Religion and Pandemic: Shifts in Interpretations, Popular Lore, and Practices” (a special issue of the journal *Entangled Religions* vol. 12, no. 3, 2021). He has also published around twenty articles and chapters in academic journals and edited volumes. One of his recent publications, “Scrips, Saints, and Scientists: The Social Life of Gospel Books in an Armenian Museum” (*Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2021) won the Arthur Maurice Hocart Prize from the Royal Anthropological Institute. At present, he is also working on a volume on the modern history of Armenian Catholicism. He has received fellowships and scholarships from Fordham University, the London Arts and Humanities Partnership, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research, the National Science Centre, and other prestigious academic institutions and foundations.

RONALD GRIGOR SUNY is William H. Sewell, Jr. Distinguished University Professor of History and Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan and Emeritus Professor of Political Science and History at the University of Chicago. He was the first holder of the Alex Manoogian Chair in Modern Armenian History at the University of Michigan, where he founded and directed the Armenian Studies Program. He is the author of *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*; *“They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else”*: *A History of the Armenian Genocide*; and *Stalin: Passage to Revolution*. He is currently working on a book on the history of the nation-form and the recent upsurge of exclusivist nationalisms and authoritarian populisms: *Forging the Nation: The Making and Faking of Nationalisms*. He also serves on the editorial board of *Texts and Studies on Armenian History, Society and Culture*, a series published jointly by the Armenian Research Center, University of Michigan-Dearborn and Michigan State University Press.

ARARAT ŞEKERYAN is a Ph.D. Candidate in Slavic Languages and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. After graduating from the Getronagan (i.e., Central) Armenian High School in Istanbul, he received his B.A. degree in Russian Literature from Istanbul University. Between 2009 and 2011, he studied Polish and Russian at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and at the Pushkin Institute in Moscow. Between 2011 and 2015, he worked as an editor at the Aras Publishing House in Istanbul and taught courses on Armenian literature at Getronagan. At the same time, he pursued an M.A. degree in Comparative Literature from Istanbul Bilgi University, focusing primarily on early twentieth century Western Armenian poetry. His doctoral dissertation looks at the representation of women and sexuality in Russian and Turkish interwar literature and visual culture. He is particularly interested in the questions of trauma and memory, theory and practice of translation, Late and Post-Soviet Armenian and Azerbaijani literature and culture, Russian émigré literature, and Turkish literature and cinema. His Turkish-language translation of Armenian satirist Hagop Baronian's *Kaghakavarutean vnasnere* (Perils of Politeness) was published by Can Yayınları in Istanbul in 2016. He is currently working on the Turkish-language translations from Armenian of Nshan Beshiktashlian's *Hay aghbrtik* (Armenian Brothers) and Siamanto's *Karmir lurer barekames* (Bloody News From my Friend), both of which are scheduled for publication in 2023.

ASHOT VOSKANYAN is a Doctor of Philosophy and an Adjunct Associate Professor at the American University of Armenia and the Russian-Armenian University, both in Yerevan. His academic and research interests cover the methodology of social sciences, hermeneutics, theories of rationality and social modernization, and the problems of national identity. He has authored more than fifty publications in Armenian, Russian, German, English and French, including the following books: *Haskatsman ankhusapeliutyune: Drvagner pilisopayakan hermenevtikayi ev kazmakandman patmutyunits* [The Inevitability of Understanding: Essays on the History of Philosophical Hermeneutics and Deconstruction] (Yerevan: Yerevan State University Press, 2015) and *Charentsi zhamanake* [The Time of Charents] (Yerevan: Print Info and Aktual Arvest, 2017). He is the Founder and President of the Armenian Research Center in Humanities since 1993 and the editor-in-chief of its periodical series, *Inknyutyun/Identity*. His General Course of Philosophy, a series of twenty video lectures, is accessible on the internet through the website of Boon TV in Yerevan. In addition to his teaching and research activities, he was a member of the Armenian Parliament from 1990 to 1997, during which time he also served on the Parliament's Presidium (1990-95) and chaired the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ethics. He was also a member of the Constitutional Commission which drafted Armenia's fundamental law in 1995 and a delegate to the National Ecclesiastical Assembly which elected the head of the Armenian Church, again in 1995. As a diplomat, he later held between 2002 and 2017 a number of positions in Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including the posts of Armenia's Ambassador to Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and later to Germany, as well as that of the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the OSCE and UN organizations based in Vienna.

ARMEN ZAKARIAN is Vice Provost for Research at the University of Michigan - Dearborn. He received his B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Yerevan Polytechnic Institute in Armenia and his Ph.D. in Industrial Engineering from the University of Iowa. He has published papers in journals and proceedings sponsored by various engineering societies. His research work is supported by grants from various federal and private sources, and he has been the principal or



co-principal investigator on over \$10 million in research expenditures. He has been the recipient of several distinctions, including the 2003 International Council on Systems Engineering Best Paper Award and a Laureate and Finalist of the Computerworld Honors Program.

SUREN T. ZOLYAN is Professor of Philology at the Russian-Armenian University in Yerevan and a Leading Researcher and Visiting Professor at the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University in Kaliningrad, Russian Federation. He was a member of the Armenian Parliament between 1990 and 1995 and Rector of the Yerevan Brusov State Linguistic University between 1997 and 2012. He has authored and edited more than 200 academic publications in various disciplines: Russian and General Linguistics, Semantics, Semiotics, Poetics, Language Policy, Political Science, and Higher Education. Among them, mention can be made of *Sharakan: Iz armianskoi poezii V-XV vv.* [Sharakan: From Armenian Spiritual Poetry of the 5-15th Centuries] (Yerevan: “Khorurdain Grokh,” 1990); *Nagorny Karabakh: Problema i konflikt* [Nagorno-Karabakh: the Problem and Conflict] (Yerevan: “Lingva,” 2001); *Semantika i poetika poeticheskogo perevoda: Zametki ob armianskoj poezii v zerkale russkikh perevodov* [On Semantics and Poetics of Poetical Translation: Notes on Armenian Poetry Through the Mirror of Russian Translations] (Erevan: “Lingva,” 2007); *Higher Linguistic Education from the Perspective of Reforms: New Approaches, Prospects, and Challenges* (Bucharest: UNESCO-CEPES Studies on Science and Culture, 2011); *AMN nakhagahnere hayots tseghaspanutyun masin (Khusanavogh diskursi imasta-gortsabanakan verlutsutyun)* [American Presidents on the Armenian Genocide: Semantics and Pragmatics of the Evasionist Discourse] (Yerevan: “Limush,” 2015); *Kaghakakan diskursi nshanagitutyune vergitakargayin motetsmamb* [Semiotics of Political Discourse with a Multidisciplinary Approach] (Yerevan, “Limush”, 2018), as well as the articles, “The ‘Daredevils of Sassoun’: Deep Structure of the Plot,” *Studia Metrica et Poetica* 1, (2014); “How Not To Do Things with the Word: Barack Obama on the Armenian Genocide,” *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2019); “General Sociolinguistics, Social Semiotics and Semiotics of Culture—ex pluribus unum? Forty Years after Language as Social Semiotic,” *Sign Systems Studies*, vol. 47, nos. 3/4 (2019); and “On the Soviet Post-Soviet ‘Otherness’: Caucasians, ‘Khachs,’ and ‘Khachics’ in Russian Nationalistic Internet Memes,” *Journal of Postcolonial Linguistics*, no. 4 (2021).



ABSTRACTS

PANEL 1

Propaganda and State-Building in the 1920s and 1930s

Haykuhi Muradyan

Yerevan State University

Agitprop and the Sovietization of “National Heritage” in the 1930s

Soviet ideological propaganda was implemented through various levers and mechanisms. Like other totalitarian states, the USSR turned different branches and areas of culture (radio, press, cinema, cultural institutions, etc.) into important avenues for propaganda. At the beginning, the main activities of the Communist Party were aimed at combating remnants of the “bourgeois,” e.g., capitalist system and spreading instead its own “socialist” ideology. To achieve mass support for this ideology, the Soviet authorities built a large network of political and cultural tools such as “Agitprop” and “Kultprosvet,” supported by the heavy bureaucratic apparatus, and thus turned political agitation and ideological propaganda into a “state business.”

This presentation is based on data provided by the early Soviet press and archival materials, as well as theoretical literature. It discusses the processes of shaping the modernized “Soviet national culture,” organized, implemented, and supervised by *Agitprop* (Department of Agitation and Propaganda) in the 1930s. It addresses particularly the concept of “national culture” and the process of Russification which also started in the 1930s.

In the light of Soviet ideological propaganda, this presentation pays particular attention to the formation of Soviet national intellectual and creative elites, the politics of national languages, the instrumentalization of specific themes and characters in national history(ies), the concept of “folk culture,” and the definition and development of a unified “Soviet” standard for national cultures.

This unified standard of “national culture” served as an imposed guide for shaping the new Armenian socialist culture. It required the redefinition of the previous concept of Armenian culture formulated by nineteenth century Armenian intellectuals. This redefinition was accomplished according to Stalin’s new principles for national culture. This presentation discusses in detail how this new “national culture” was inculcated into the masses through all possible mechanisms of formal and informal education, cultural agitation, and propaganda.

Vahe Sahakyan

University of Michigan-Dearborn

The Committee to Aid Armenia and Exclusionary State-Centrism in Soviet Armenia’s Diaspora Policies (1920s-1930s)

This presentation addresses the policies pursued by early leaders of Soviet Armenia towards the incipient post-genocide Armenian diaspora. By examining the politicizing mission of the Committee to Aid Armenia (*Hayastani Ognutyany Komite*, hereafter HOK), it argues that three factors—political rivalries, ideological differences *and* the HOK’s exclusive focus on the state’s

needs—became inconducive for building more constructive relations with Armenian organizations abroad.

HOK was created in 1921 with an inclusive appeal to the dispersed Armenian people to join efforts toward the reconstruction of Armenia. With little regard for what Armenian organizations in the diaspora had accomplished and the ongoing challenges the latter faced outside Armenia, HOK soon became exclusionary, exasperating existing tensions and rivalries among Armenian diasporan organizations and diaspora Armenians at large.

The antagonistic rivalry between Bolsheviks in Soviet Armenia and the former leaders of the pre-Soviet Republic of Armenia, members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), translated into an exclusionary state policy against ARF members and sympathizers, preventing them from joining HOK and participating in projects benefitting Soviet Armenia. The Communist ideology and the exclusive turn to the Armenian diasporan working class placed HOK in tension with the ARF's wealthier, liberal-minded rival, the Armenian Liberal Democratic (Ramkavar) party, while the exclusive focus on the needs of Soviet Armenia alienated the Armenian General Benevolent Union. Its leader was accused by leaders in Yerevan of mismanaging funds and failing to provide sufficient aid to Soviet Armenia.

Soviet Armenian leaders did not call these positions a diaspora policy. However, this presentation argues that in their targeting many influential Armenians abroad and active involvement in the diaspora through HOK, the leaders in Yerevan pursued state-centered, exclusivist and aggressive diaspora policies, which had a lasting impact on institutions and the lived experiences of people in the post-genocide Armenian diaspora.

PANEL 2

Anti-Religious Propaganda and the Armenian Church in the 1920s and 1930s

Jakub Osiecki

Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences, Kraków

The Church in Soviet Armenia in the 1920s and '30s: An Attempt at Assessment

This presentation concentrates predominantly on Bolshevik policies toward religion and the Armenian Church between 1920 and 1932. It argues that the Bolshevik revolutionaries succeeded eventually because their conviction that they were serving a good ideology was much stronger than that among Church representatives as defenders of old values.

Bolshevik ideology was based on the cult of the party and science. Bolsheviks were aware that Church and Christianity traditionally constituted the primary element in Armenian national identity and culture. Because they wanted to create a new society and a new communist state and culture, they felt obliged to fight the Church, its hierarchy and especially the Christian visions of both God and humanity.

After the country's Sovietization, Armenian Bolsheviks implemented step by step Moscow's model of fighting the clergy and Christian laymen. The Church took painful hits in 1923 and 1929 and of course in 1932, when Khoren I Muradbekyan was elected Catholicos of All

Armenians through intrigue and threats of persecution by the State Political Directorate (GPU). Prior to his election, Khoren agreed to cooperate with the Soviets. This controversial decision was probably founded on a desire to preserve the existence of the Armenian Church in the USSR. However, it proved to be a short-sighted tactic for in the 1930s and 1940s the Church would still be deprived of most of its clergy, and only few Armenian churches would remain open in the South Caucasus.

Through the recently declassified archives of the GPU in Armenia—the File “*Hayastani Yekeghetsiner*” (The Churches in Armenia)—this presentation will attempt to describe the place of the Church in Armenian society and its stand toward the Soviet state. It will also tackle the question whether Armenian Bolsheviks ran a political course independent of Moscow toward the Church or if they were just implementing decisions made in Moscow. The presentation also focuses on the dialog between Armenian Bolsheviks and Church leaders during the first decades of Soviet rule.

Hasmik Khalapyan
American University of Armenia
Killing God: The Forging of Atheist Citizens in Early Soviet Armenia

The agenda of the Soviet Union to forge a new citizen was wide-ranging, stretching from brutal industrialization, education, and family relations to the eradication of religion and the emergence of an atheist society. In the early Soviet period, the struggle against religion was manifested in two main directions: destroying religions organizations and churches on one hand and estranging the religious segment of the society from the Church on the other. While the state apparatus dealt successfully with the former task, the making of an atheist citizen was placed on the shoulders of the Union of the Militant Godless (*Soyuz voinstvuyushchikh bezbozhnikov*), founded in 1925.

The Armenian branch of the Union, *Martnchogh anastvatsneri miutyun*, was established in 1928, with an organ entitled *Anastvats* (Godless), published between 1928 and 1935. Through its periodical, the Union aimed to “unmask the counter-revolutionary role” of religion and the Church. This mission was seen as possible only through raising the level of literacy of the population and emphasis on scientific education. This presentation examines the activities of the Union and its publication to argue that, even though antireligious propaganda was central to the Union’s self-identity, its operation at large aimed to complement Soviet Armenia’s vision of a new citizen that was also in the making in the 1920s and 1930s. It illustrates the complex negotiation among the Soviet authorities, society and the individual in the forging of a new sense of citizenry. By drawing parallels with the journals *Hayastani Ashkhatavoruhi* (Working Woman of Armenia) and *Pioner Kanch* (Call for Pioneers) published in the same period, this presentation argues that women were crucial to the Union’s anti-religious, yet versatile program as the educators of a “godless” younger generation just as the children who were designated as the “godless” citizens of the future.



PANEL 3

Tackling the Legacy of Stalinism since 1953

Pietro A. Shakarian

**National Research University–Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg
Yerevan 1954: Anastas Mikoyan and De-Stalinization in Soviet Armenia**

On March 10, 1954, Soviet statesman Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan traveled to the Armenian capital, Yerevan, to meet with his constituents for that year's elections for the USSR Supreme Soviet. At the start of the trip, he paid a visit to the city's monument to Joseph Stalin in Victory Park (today the location of the "Mother Armenia" monument). Although few would realize it at the time, the speech that Mikoyan was to deliver on the following day, March 11, would help set in motion the process that would lead to the eventual removal of Stalin from his Yerevan pedestal. In his address, Mikoyan articulated the essence of the post-Stalin Soviet nationality policy, calling for a more flexible attitude toward national cultures, while condemning "national nihilism," i.e., indifference to the concerns of Soviet nationalities. His speech, and specifically his exoneration of the poet Yeghishe Charents, also helped set the stage for Nikita Khrushchev's broader re-assessment of Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February 1956. Consequently, the address was historically significant, not only for Soviet Armenia, but for the USSR in general. In one speech, Mikoyan effectively foreshadowed the countrywide process of de-Stalinization while underscoring the necessity of an accommodationist policy toward Soviet nationalities. Drawing on exhaustive archival research in Russia and Armenia, this presentation examines the significance of Mikoyan's landmark 1954 address, as well as its broader historical contexts and implications.

Siranush Dvoyan

American University of Armenia

The Reception History of Soviet-Armenian "Gulag Literature"

The history of Soviet Armenian "Gulag Literature" begins in the second half of the 1950s. However, despite numerous publications in the past seven decades, this genre is still not integrated in both local and international academic or public discussions about the legacy of Stalinism. The reasons behind this lack of integration are many. This presentation challenges these reasons academically and frames the reception history of Soviet Armenian "Gulag Literature." It analyzes the methodologies used to read and publish this literature within two historical–late Soviet and post-Soviet–contexts.

The first section of this presentation deals with the 1960s when literature was imagined as taking upon itself the responsibility of normalizing public life after the anguishes of World War II and the Gulag. Nikita Khrushchev himself laid the ground for such an understanding in his speech at the Third Congress of Soviet Writers in 1959. The camp experience was deemed painful and at the same time worthy of admiration. Works by Soviet Armenian writers Mkrtych Armen, Gurgen Mahari and Vache Sargsyan were valued. Some of these were published for their moral impact on society. However, contemporary critics like Sevak Arzumanyan, Sergei Sarinyan, Hrants Tamrazyan and Suren Aghababyan remained skeptical about the "literary values" of this genre. This section of the presentation discusses different understandings of concepts like the

“transformative capacity of literature,” “literary canon,” “fiction” and their connections to post-Stalin Soviet ideology.

The second section covers the post-Soviet period, when the publication and republication of Gulag literature has mainly been representative. Publishers and editors depart from the conviction that authors like Ler Kamsar and Gurgun and Antonina Mahari who risked writing about their prison or camp experiences are worthy of remembrance. Very few attempts have been made during this period to re-think the historical past. This concluding part of the presentation discusses different aspects of the politics of remembrance and memorialization.

Gayane Shagoyan
Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography
“Victims” and “Executioners” of the Stalin Era Repressions
in the Public Discourse of Post-Soviet Armenia

In post-Soviet Armenia, the issues of Soviet history started to be discussed relatively late since the space of public memory had been filled after 1991 with discussions on the silenced Armenian Genocide during World War I. At the same time, initially, it was mainly the problem of Karabakh, incorporated into Azerbaijan, that was foremost in the mindset of both historians and laypeople among the various topics related to the Soviet past.

The initiative of the family of the Soviet statesman Anastas Mikoyan in 2014 to erect a statue in Yerevan depicting their renowned ancestor triggered such a strong protest movement that they eventually had to cancel the project. However, due to this very vocal public debate and long political career of Mikoyan, a wide spectrum of Soviet historical topics attracted the public’s attention: from the Sovietization of Armenia (1920) to the Hungarian Uprising (1956) and the Cuban Missile Crisis (1961).

This presentation focuses on the issue of the memory of repressions. It is divided into two parts, presenting the position of both the authorities (memory policy) and descendants of the victims. These two perspectives have been reflected differently on the memorial landscape. Mapping local initiatives in Armenia memorializing the victims of the Soviet regime reveal a wide spectrum of subjects and interpretations of these repressions, distinct from the unambiguous message of the main memorial in Yerevan. This presentation discusses how strongly the practices of public commemorations of the Armenian Genocide have influenced the defining of the main agents of the new discourse on the Soviet-era repressions. It also presents how memory concerning the victims of Soviet repressions can “act out” the trauma and in which way the local practices of memorialization can create a new conceptual language of working out this memory, where the borderline between the “victims” and “executioners” becomes more elusive.



PANEL 4

Revisiting the “Friendship of Peoples”: Armenians and Azerbaijanis

Ararat Şekeryan

Columbia University

Between Yerevan and Baku: Mirza Ibrahimov and the Making of Soviet Armenian and Azerbaijani Brotherhood

Deeply moved by his two-week visit to Yerevan in 1953, with the intention to celebrate the publication of the translation of his most recent novel *Galacək gün* (*The Day Will Come*, Baku, 1951) into Armenian, Mirza Ibrahimov (1911-1993), one of the most outstanding writers of Soviet Azerbaijan, penned an article titled “Long Live, Brother Armenia!”: “In Yerevan, I saw a series of panoramas, reminding me of the centuries-old friendship of the Armenian and Azerbaijani nations. Those pictures are still vivid in my mind as immortal memories. For centuries, we shared the same fate, same desires, same tablecloth, and same house; we enjoyed the same friends and the same enemies.”

Through the 1950s and 1960s Ibrahimov established closer contacts with the Armenian intelligentsia in Yerevan and Baku, supporting the publication of newspapers and literary journals, as well as theaters, and thus became one of the symbolic names promoting Armenian culture and literature in Azerbaijan. Ibrahimov also translated five different works by Western and Eastern Armenian writers into the Azerbaijani language.

The presentation asks to what extent 70 years of the “Soviet Experiment” have created a political and cultural rapprochement between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Did the policy of “friendship of the peoples” (*druzhiba narodov*), as an officially sanctioned metaphor of an imagined multinational community, contribute to mutual relations between the two nations? Who were the major intellectuals and writers involved in attempts to stimulate this rapprochement? What has been the response, in literary and cultural fields, to the making of this so-called brotherhood?

Focusing on Mirza Ibrahimov’s role in the making of Soviet brotherhood between these two nations, this presentation aims to discuss the political and cultural dynamics of a shared Soviet Armenian and Azerbaijani past, hitherto overlooked by researchers.

Lusine Kharatyan

Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, Yerevan

Armenian-Azerbaijani Co-existence Models and Mechanisms in Armenia under the Soviet Slogan of “Friendship of Peoples”

“Everything was forever until it was no more.” This self-contradictory statement of Alexei Yurchak regarding the last Soviet generation is to a certain extent applicable to the concept of the “friendship of peoples,” a propaganda slogan and policy that established some frameworks for Armenian-Azerbaijani co-existence in Soviet Armenia.

This presentation examines some models and mechanisms of Armenian-Azerbaijani co-existence under the ideological and political realities of the Soviet period. It discusses specific cases, as well as popular practices in the areas of contact. It is mostly based on the analysis of Soviet

textbooks, archival material, local newspapers of the Soviet period, and fieldwork in the Meghri region of the Syunik province of Armenia. For comparison, oral history interviews from the town of Shushi in Nagorno-Karabakh have also been used. The interviews in Meghri and Shushi were conducted in 2018, using oral history methodology with people who lived in direct contact with Azerbaijanis and had memories related to shared space and life under the Soviets.

Based on specific examples, this presentation identifies several models and mechanisms that created frameworks and narratives for co-existence, including: (a) Soviet history textbooks and other educational materials that created narratives of friendship between Armenians and Azerbaijanis; (b) Soviet language policies supporting minority languages; (c) Soviet toponyms and memorialization practices, which imposed ideological frameworks for the friendship of peoples; (d) Soviet cultural policy, which strengthened the idea of friendship among peoples and supported the introduction of narratives about class struggle as opposed to the history and memory of ethnic clashes; and (e) practices formed around pre-Soviet sacred spaces and pilgrimage sites, which survived Soviet rule and were present up to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

PANEL 5

Soviet Modernism and Its Legacy

Elizabeth Bishop

Texas State University

Soviet Modernism and Its Legacy:

Spartak Kndeghtsyan and Telman Gevorgyan’s “Moscow Cinema” Hall (1966)

In Yerevan, the “Moskva” Cinema had been built in 1936 on the site of the fifth-century Saints Peter and Paul Church. The latter had been a barrel-vaulted basilica, the oldest recorded church built in Yerevan, that served as a marker of Armenian identity between the Byzantine and Persian empires until the Arab conquests (seventh century) and after. Since 1936, an enclosed cinema occupied the site of the church demolished in the mid-1930s. To this, architects Spartak Kndeghtsyan and Telman Gevorgyan added an innovative open-air amphitheater above a foyer, with the two elements united by a wide terrace (1966). Kndeghtsyan and Gevorgyan’s additions transformed what had been a garden between two buildings into a secular gathering space, an open-air hall described as “one of the best examples of the revived functionalist approaches in post-Stalin Soviet Armenian architecture that were developing parallel to the city’s intensive urbanization.” Architecture merits discussion as a part of “national policies” in the USSR. This presentation (excerpted from a monograph on the politics of space at the Aswan High Dam, forthcoming with the American University in Cairo Press) analyzes photographs and architectural renderings of the cinema’s 1966 “summer auditorium,” as well as films screened in the “Moskva” cinema, in the context of global circulations of cinema, and developments in modernist architecture which were globalized during the 1960s.



David Leupold
Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient Berlin
Yerevan’s Unfinished Future?
The *Ancien* Materiality of Late Soviet Urban Planning in Armenia’s Capital Today

As one of the most ambitious and embattled modernist projects of the twentieth century, state socialism sought to transform societal life both fundamentally and irrevocably. Understanding the “city of the future” as the prime laboratory where the “new human” was to be created, Soviet urban planners aspired to inscribe the ethics of socialism into the material fabric of cities. They aimed at creating a novel communal infrastructure with baths, reading rooms, clubs, common living rooms and dining- and gymnastic halls. Today, three decades after the fall of the USSR, Soviet-era materiality is simultaneously a relic of a failed past and a signifier of a future-that-was-not, and all that in a rapidly changing, neo-liberal urban space.

Cross-cutting Urban Sociology, Social Anthropology, and the Modern History of Armenia, this presentation proposes the notion of “*ancien* materiality,” i.e., the totality of all material remains in an urban fabric that has outlived the *ancien regime* to which it owes its existence. It asks how this notion conditions social relations in Yerevan today. How does this materiality, originally informed by the visions of Soviet urban planners and the goal of attaining a socialist society, now apprise the perceptions of young Armenians today. Finally, what answers can this notion provide to persisting questions such as access to social and cultural infrastructure, protection of green spaces, and the crafting of an urban space conducive to social interaction and cohesion?

Drawing from participant observation and interviews with participants of the urban memory project *Visualizing Yerevan*, the presentation sheds light on how the current generation of Armenians, born after the fall of the USSR, makes sense of and relates to the material repository of the Soviet past. Engaging critically with the notion of a homogeneous “Soviet experience,” it seeks instead to bring to the forefront a myriad of competing and at times contradicting historical trajectories that have informed the multifarious experience of socialist urban planning in Armenia today.

PANEL 6
The “New Normal” in Soviet Armenian Society

Konrad Siekierski
King’s College London
A Domesticated Religion? Armenian Vernacular Christianity in the Soviet Period

This presentation addresses the fate of religion in the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic and the impact of the Communist legacy on the religious situation in post-socialist Armenia. In contrast to most research on this topic, it does not focus on official relations between the Soviet state and the Armenian Apostolic Church, which were marked by persecutions and the secularization of the latter. Instead, it sheds light on Armenian vernacular Christianity as it existed in the Communist period—outside the immediate control of both the state and the Church. The presentation defines vernacular Christianity as the religion which is experienced, understood, and practiced by the people in everyday life and local contexts. Within this focus, it pays special

attention to such phenomena as the persistent popularity of pilgrimages to sacred sites and the importance of home saints (Arm. *tan surb*) in many parts of the country.

Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Armenia, the presentation discusses these phenomena against the backdrop of Tamara Dragadze's influential concept of the "domestication of religion" under the Communist regime. Namely, it argues that beneath the official surface of the atheist state, religious practices, although often confined to private and unofficial public spaces, were an essential fabric of the social reality in the Soviet state, some of them marked by mass participation and festive celebrations. It concludes by reflecting on the religious landscape of Armenia today as vernacular Christianity is changing its shape under the growing influence of the official Church, significant social and cultural transformations to traditional village life, and mass migration from rural regions of the country.

Yulia Antonyan

Yerevan State University

The Birth and the Death of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia in Armenia

Industrial and cultural modernization brought about significant changes in the social structure of Soviet and particularly Armenian society by creating an urbanized and educated "middle class." The pace of industrialization demanded many new specialists of technical profile: engineers, constructors, technicians, physicists, and mathematicians, who were generally grouped together by Soviet officials and later by researchers under the concept of "technical intelligentsia." To attract young specialists into their republic, Soviet Armenian authorities encouraged the repatriation of educated Armenians from abroad and different parts of the USSR. They also focused strongly on the development of technical education in Armenia and generated special material and social incentives for intellectuals to be engaged in industry and technical sciences. The 1960s and early '70s were a productive era for Armenian industrial institutions and scientific centers (known as NII or *nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut* in Russian, and *gitahetazotakan institut* in Armenian), "construction bureaus" or secret agencies working for the military-industrial complex and codified as "mailboxes."

Although the fading away of the Soviet scientific and industrial complex had begun around the mid-1970s, its full disintegration and collapse occurred after the fall of the USSR. Backward Soviet industry and science, stuck in 1960s technology, could not compete with their western counterparts. Nor could they maintain their previous business and academic partnerships. This, together with a poor economic and regulatory environment, the Karabakh war, closed borders, migration, reconfiguration of the labor market and a generational gap resulted in the actual death of the Soviet Armenian technical intelligentsia as a social class (or subclass).

This presentation focuses on the narratives about the Armenian Soviet technical intelligentsia, the latter's relationships with the Soviet ideological machine and administrative controls, the systems of social privileges and material rewards, the concepts of "freedom" and "regime," cultural identities, and Soviet cultural "cosmopolitanism," exemplified by institutional and personal biographies.



PANEL 7

Is Armenia's Present Simply Past Continued?

Tigran Harutyunyan

Architect and Independent Researcher, Moscow

Perceptual Ambiguity of Soviet Architectural Legacy in Post-Soviet Armenian Reality

The independent Republic of Armenia, established in 1991, refused by and large to be the cultural assignee of its predecessor, the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (1920-1991). This posture was based on the ideology and rationale of the establishment of the independent republic and reflected in all spheres of the country's post-Soviet development. Anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism were revealed in the 1990s in the radical changes in the politics of memory, which in turn influenced the development of the urban fabric.

Yerevan, having been the capital of a union republic, now served as the capital of an independent state. Architectural activities in the city were frozen in the 1990s but restarted in the 2000s. The economic boom caused by active construction in the early 2000s produced new architecture intended to assert the track of the independent capital. The city started to obtain new content for its historical architecture during this period, and the Soviet-era architecture of the 1930-1950s was unofficially acknowledged as a renaissance era for national architecture. This would have implied the acknowledgement of Soviet-era architectural heritage as national. However, only some parts of that heritage were described as national. Such ideological inconsistency inferred that Armenia, on the one hand, ideologically rejected as a new political entity its Soviet heritage and began looking for ties with its ancient history, but, on the other hand, it attempted to rely on and revive the heritage created under the Soviets.

The presentation examines the selectivity and inconsistency of perceptions toward Soviet-era cultural and particularly architectural heritage in post-Soviet Armenian reality. It analyzes how the Soviet legacy was used during the development of Yerevan as the capital of independent Armenia, as well as differences among perceptions of the Soviet architectural legacy in the architectures of post-Soviet Armenia and other formerly Soviet countries.

Suren Zolyan

Russian-Armenian University, Yerevan

Is the Armenian SSR Still Alive? On Political Symbolism in Modern Armenia

Armenia proclaimed its independence in 1991 within a complex political and ideological context. At that time, the main political objectives and discourses in the country were concentrated on the struggle for Karabakh and fight against Communism. Meanwhile, the founding of an independent state assumes its ideological justification and symbolic representation. This process was accompanied in Armenia with intense political and ideological competition between three main discourses (doctrines, models) representing the new situation:

- a. an unprecedented, new reality of the creation of an independent nation
- b. restoration of historical justice and return to the normal state of affairs violated by the Bolsheviks in 1920, i.e., the restoration of the independent Republic of Armenia of 1918
- c. transformation from a semi-independent union republic of the USSR to an independent state. An entirely new label, "the Second Republic," entered the political discourse and

with it the dominant concept in Armenian historiography of regularly lost and then heroically restored statehood got new, unexpected evidence in the existence of the Armenian SSR. This even made it possible to find the exact arithmetic expression for the new reality, the Third Republic, implying the existence of its First *and* Second predecessors.

All three concepts were recognized by the state and society, despite their inconsistency, thus creating a new, bizarre system of state symbols. With the legitimization of the Armenian SSR as the “Second Republic”—now regarded as a transitional step to the “new” Armenia—independence became understood as a rise in the degree of state sovereignty. The situation with monuments, museums, and street and memorial names was also very characteristic—not political or cultural, but national and ethnic affiliation became crucial factors.

Ashot Voskanyan
American University of Armenia
“Civil society” of Soviet Armenia and Its Post-Soviet Metamorphoses

Soviet Armenia is a product of a forced modernization— “high modernism,” according to James C. Scott. This form of modernization requires both an authoritarian government carrying out radical reforms and a weak society unable to resist the imposed changes. This presentation aims to show that the indirect resistance that existed anyway in the Soviet Union, and in Armenia as well, led to the development of a parallel reality functioning as an informal subsystem within official state structures. Both the general population *and* the functionaries of the ruling party were involved in irregular relationships permeating Soviet society.

The following manifestations of these irregular relationships are discussed in the presentation: the illegal transformation of Soviet bureaucracy into a new social class (Leon Trotsky and Milovan Djilas), the spread throughout the country of criminal behavioral patterns crystallized in the GULAG network that entailed the supremacy of informal rules over the law (Varlam Shalamov and Alain Badiou) and the appearance of an informal “administrative market” (Simon G. Kordonsky). The presentation also shows that these mechanisms found additional reinforcement in Armenia through the traditionally strong family relations. As the presenter has argued elsewhere, the whole system functioned as a surrogate “civil society” (*kargin hasarakutyun*) that insured the “realization of private interest within the intermediate sphere between state and family.” (Georg Hegel)

The final part of the presentation focuses on a further transformation of this legacy, the “criminal-oligarchic system,” that emerged in Armenia after the Soviet collapse and took full shape about the year 2003.



CONFERENCE PARTNERS



THE ARMENIAN CENTER
AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

The Armenian Center at Columbia University, whose members raised the initial funds required to establish the Avedissian Chair of Armenian Studies at Columbia University in 1979, continues to provide, through its various endowments, funds for scholarships, library acquisitions, academic publications, the Ordjanian Visiting Professorship program, the Anahid Literary Award, lectures, conferences, and symposia.

The Center assisted by covering the air fares of some of the conference participants and will organize a parallel public session on the theme of this conference on the Columbia University campus in New York.



CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN
FOUNDATION

Founded in 1956, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is one of the largest foundations in Europe, headquartered in Lisbon, with branches in Paris and London. Through partnerships, grants, and its own programming in Portugal and abroad, it is active in four statutory fields: arts, education, science, and charity. The Armenian Communities Department gives grants and scholarships, focusing on education, research, and culture, with particular emphasis on the Diaspora and on the Western Armenian language. It awards approximately 1 million USD in university scholarships every year to Armenian and Armenian Studies students, touching close to 200 individuals. Its grants reach individuals and organizations in some 30 countries.

The Department assisted by covering the air fares of some of the conference participants from Armenia.



Senior Officers

Domenico Grasso, Chancellor

Gabriella Scarlatta, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Keisha Blevins, Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor to the Chancellor

Bryan Dadey, Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs

Kenneth C. Kettenbeil, Vice Chancellor for External Relations

Carrie Shumaker, Director of Information Technology, Strategy and Operations and Chief Information Officer

Casandra Ulbrich, Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement

Academic Deans

Raju Balakrishnan, College of Business

Ghassan Kridli, College of Engineering and Computer Science

Martin J. Hershock, College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters

Ann Lampkin-Williams, College of Education, Health, and Human Services

Regents of the University

Jordan B. Acker, Huntington Woods

Michael J. Behm, Grand Blanc

Mark J. Bernstein, Ann Arbor

Paul W. Brown, Ann Arbor

Sarah Hubbard, Okemos

Denise Ilitch, Bingham Farms

Ron Weiser, Ann Arbor

Katherine E. White, Ann Arbor

Santa J. Ono, Ann Arbor, ex officio