

LOOKING TO NEW HORIZONS

For over a decade AGBU News has been writing about the lives and stories of Armenians around the world. During its 14-year history, the magazine has witnessed the birth of the Armenian Republic and as a result the transformation of Armenian life. Our latest edition takes a close look at Nagorno Karabakh, known commonly to Armenians as Artsakh, and the progress that has been made since its difficult early days of independence. While obstacles remain, the small republic is a success story; it has galvanized the Diaspora which has demonstrated great enthusiasm in building local infrastructure along with native Armenians eager for a better life.

Artsakh underlines the evolving and changing Armenian reality in the world today. When AGBU News began, its readers could not have dreamt that Armenia and Artsakh would be a new frontier for Armenian social, cultural and economic development. Today, AGBU projects like the Children's Centers, American University of Armenia, soup kitchens, medical centers, repopulation initiatives, housing and infrastructure projects fulfill crucial needs to secure a bright and sustainable future in Armenia and Artsakh.

While AGBU has responded to the dynamic new challenges, it continues to strengthen the fabric of the Diaspora from which it was born. New educational, cultural and humanitarian programs have been initiated in the dozens of countries AGBU reaches—this will continue. Yet all these endeavors can only develop when the distribution of resources are reassessed from era to era. It is a process that must respond to global realities, shifting Armenian demographics and socio-cultural changes.

Last month, AGBU's Central Board announced that the AGBU Melkonian Educational Institute in Cyprus would be discontinued as of June 2005. The choice was a hard but necessary decision and a bold action that all organizations must at times take to guarantee future accomplishments.

The Melkonian Brothers, as they planned to entrust the destiny of their bequest to a worldwide philanthropic organization, analyzed the demographic profile of the post-Genocide Armenian Diaspora. The historical archive contains ample proof that they agonized over their options before making a final decision. The benefactors settled on Cyprus as a proper geographic location for the era and were convinced that AGBU would prove to be the proper venue through which to channel their humanitarian deed of building an orphanage.

In ensuing decades, and a result of changing times, under AGBU's leadership the orphanage became an accredited school and the success of the Institute proved that at the time a proper decision was made.


The AGBU leadership now faces the same dilemma that the Melkonian Brothers confronted in the 1920's when they set out to find the right geographical location and the most productive project for that era's neediest population. Today, Armenian migration from East to West and Armenia's independence has brought new unexpected developments, resulting in changing perspectives—to which we must respond.

The Central Board is guided not only by the Melkonians' spirit, but also by their pragmatic logic, as it plans to reallocate the resources entrusted to AGBU by these benefactor brothers. We believe that we are fulfilling our leadership responsibilities by seeking to initiate new and different educational and youth programs in Armenia and throughout the Diaspora.

It is also natural that decisions of such magnitude would provoke a predictable reaction from some segments of the Armenian community.

Historically, AGBU has proven its ability to manage judiciously the bequests and donations of its benefactors, thereby earning their confidence. Along with millions of dollars in donations for specific projects by living donors, new benefactors continue to designate our organization as the beneficiary of their wills. Most recently, the estates of Puzant Jeryan, Leon Surmelian, Iva Shaljian, Buck Hovsepian, Katherina Ghazarian, and Marie-Louise Agabekian from the U.S., England and France yielded over \$16 million to AGBU's endowment and programs.

Armed with the valuable experiences of our predecessors, we come to face history and the Armenian world with the confidence that AGBU will continue to strive for the betterment of our people and the aim of keeping and promoting our national identity whether in Stepanakert, Nicosia, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Buenos Aires, Beirut or Yerevan.



Berge Setrakian,
President