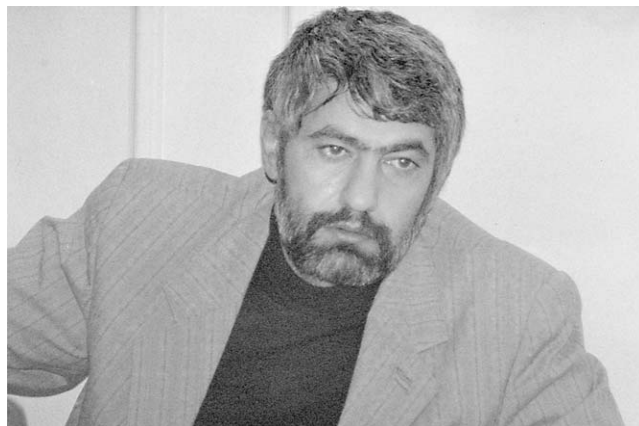

Interview: Hrant Khachatrian

Elections in Armenia signal a political shift

Virtually ignored by the international media, the population of Armenia went to the polls on May 30 to elect a new national Parliament from among the 21 parties on the ballot. The most significant feature of the election results, is that the slate “Iravunk ev Miabautiun” (Justice and Unity), an electoral alliance led by Artashes Geghamian, Hrant Khachatrian, and Haik Babookhanian, emerged as the second most powerful force. In the process, it swept past other firmly established and very well financed parties. Among them are the Communist Party, and especially the “Dashnaksutiun” (Armenian Revolutionary Federation), which was founded during Armenia’s short-lived independence, after World War I. During the Soviet hegemony, the party organized among the diaspora Armenians, and returned to the country only after the collapse of Communism.

“Iravunk” is not new to our readers (see EIR, Jan. 9, 1998, p. 79; March 22, 1996, p. 46; Aug. 4, 1995, p. 57; June 25, 1993, p. 40): The leading party within the electoral alliance is the Union of Constitutional Rights (UCR), which, founded in the second half of the 1980s, became the driving force behind Armenia’s independence. In the beginning of the 1990s, very close collaboration developed between the UCR and the Schiller Institute. Hrant Khachatrian and Haik Babookhanian, along with other representatives of the UCR, participated in numerous international conferences of the Schiller Institute, representing the true interests of Armenia, against the so-called “reform policies” of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In Armenia, Hrant Khachatrian enjoys enormous respect and prestige, as a person with “clean hands,” a man of moral stature.

In spite of enormous difficulties, the organization has succeeded over the past ten years not only in guaranteeing the regular appearance their newspaper Iravunk, but in transforming it into the biggest weekly in the country. It was through this publication, that Armenians, struck by earthquakes, war, and economic devastation, have been able to gradually rebuild confidence in themselves and in the future. And this is the only explanation for Iravunk’s stunning electoral victory. Although the election was marred by corruption and intrigue, whereby chunks of votes were stolen, nonetheless, the electoral alliance of “Iravunk ev Miabanutiun” could not be kept out of Parliament. Their results clearly signal that the era of communism, and the era of liberalism, is coming to an end.



Hrant Khachatrian, president of the Union of Constitutional Rights, who, along with Haik Babookhanian, won election to the Armenian Parliament on May 30.

Karl Michael Vitt interviewed Hrant Khachatrian, president of the Union of Constitutional Rights, who was elected to the Parliament along with Haik Babookhanian, on May 31, the day after the elections.

EIR: Could you tell us what occurred in the recent elections in Armenia?

Khachatrian: In these elections we have seen the continuation of the process that began in 1998 when President Levon Ter-Petrossian and the head of the Parliament and other people resigned, and we had Presidential elections, which were won by Robert Kocharyan. One of the slogans expressing these political changes, was that Armenia is a victim of the criminal programs that were implemented in Armenia through these people. But, unfortunately, during the recent period, over more than a year, these slogans of change, which aimed at preventing the economic thugs and criminals from consolidating power — only a very small part of the new President’s promises were kept.

Among the influences on the elections just held, were dirty money and criminal structures, which were deployed; and it is obvious now, that the results of the central election are criminal results [in the sense that votes were bought]. The representatives of these criminal structures will have a majority in the new Parliament. But, even under these circumstances, the Union of Constitutional Rights has stayed alive and succeeded in winning more than 10% in the new Parliament. We have now the preliminary results, according to which the forces that are now in power got about 40%, and we have (according to these preliminary results) 7%. We know we should have about 15%, and the computers say that we have 5%, so, we are now fighting over this, and still waiting for the final results to be declared.

EIR: Will be there a change in economic policy?

Khachatrian: I would say that one of the slogans of all of

the parties is that foreign financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and other structures that represent the world financial oligarchy, implemented a program of liberalism in Armenia, and destroyed the Armenian economy, political institutions, and also had their impact upon the cultural, educational, and moral institutions that we had before the democratization process. But, unfortunately, many of the party leaders who used these slogans to come to power, and who speak out in the political arena calling for change, most of them are using these slogans only on paper, they are only words.

We had very successful results in these elections. I think that in the future, we will have the chance to organize the Members of Parliament for these ideas, not only with words, but with our votes in the Parliament.

EIR: In the past, you supported the call for the New Bretton Woods conference to reform the world financial system, and for the construction of the Eurasian Land-Bridge, as a motor for the world economy. What do you think now about these programs, and what do you plan to do in this direction?

Khachatryan: I think that in the last month, we have seen a new expansion of oligarchical programs; I mean the war in the Balkans, I mean the new developments in Russia—new operations against the Russians—have reduced the possibilities of calling a New Bretton Woods conference. But, on the other hand, more and more people understand that the choice is between the world population and a small group of people that has only its own financial interests, and that wants to control the world from a single center. This is what creates new opportunities to organize people, to ensure that we have to organize with the idea of gaining our civil liberties, with the idea of fighting the structures of crime. Then I think we can solve our problems with the living standard.

EIR: The American economist Lyndon LaRouche has always said that we have to reestablish the full sovereignty of the nation-state in the world against the supranational institutions, such as the IMF. Do you agree with this thinking?

Khachatryan: We think highly of Mr. LaRouche's ideas for the self-determination of nation-states, for calling for the New Bretton Woods and stopping the growth of the financial bubble. We succeeded in the elections, because people in Armenia know that there are not only people from the West who have ruined our economic structures, but that there are also people in the West who are working against these negative processes, against the people who have no concern for the world population. And, our voters know that cooperation of forces, this collaboration between people in different countries, is the greatest hope for changing policies toward a successful and peaceful future.

EIR: Mr. LaRouche has announced his Presidential campaign in the United States for the year 2000. What do you

think about the significance of this for the United States?

Khachatryan: About two-thirds of the Armenian population lives outside of Armenia. A large number of Armenians live in the United States. People read about Mr. LaRouche not only in Armenia, but also in other countries. We also publish the writings of Mr. LaRouche in our newspapers here. I think that our success in these elections will have a positive influence on Lyndon LaRouche's efforts.

EIR: The Caucasus region has always been a region of destabilization by the British-American-Commonwealth group, especially in the last 10 years. Do you think now, with your position in Parliament, that you can stop the geopolitics of destabilization?

Khachatryan: One means of destabilization used by the oligarchical forces, is a policy of dividing nations. I think we have reached a new stage of development in our region. We have in our program that we will push our Parliamentary activity, for Armenia to become a center for collaboration among Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Iran, and Arab countries, that we will create a real economic partnership, and become a factor against NATO and Western pressure against our region. The aim to have Armenia as a real independent country, a united Armenia with Nagorno-Karabakh, will be important in the natural crossroads of economic integration between north and south, and between west and east.

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