

Yernek te ays nor tarin . . .

Votki kangner Hayastan¹

I wish that this year Armenia . . .

This New Year's resolution wishing for a strong and prosperous Armenia is as apt today as it was over 125 years ago when penned by Rafael Patkanian (a.k.a. Gamar Katipa)

What might our country and people expect during the year of our Lord 2004, 4496 of the ancient Armenian calendar, 1453 of the new Armenian calendar, and 2786th anniversary of the founding of Yerevan? (Yes, we've been at this for quite a long time.)

Will 2004 be the year that Armenians the world over embrace the opportunity to be worthy of our heritage by becoming an exemplary nation that builds an exemplary state?

I write from our new yet ancient capital, where I have made my home and my living for the past six years. Much has changed in these six years, nearly all for the better. It is truly a remarkable rebirth. **So much achieved with so few resources.** Of course it's never fast enough when it comes to our aspirations.

So much has changed so quickly that it is almost impossible to predict what the next year will bring. But we can hope and we can wish.

Here are some of my hopes and wishes for our new, ancient homeland and people in 2004.

Creating an independent country is a big job, much bigger and grander than most imagined. **Building a state is a nation's work:** it will take the efforts of the entire nation, not just the one in three that makes his or her home in Armenia today.

Building a home for ourselves is sometimes a trying task, yet it is also a sweet opportunity -- an opportunity that generations of Armenians have for centuries only dreamt of, longed for, suffered and died for. So many of our downtrodden, refugee grandparents and great grandparents would have given all they had (and often did) for a chance to rebuild our homeland. Ironically, the vast majority of their relatively secure and unimaginably affluent children and grandchildren, whose success is built on their forebears' sacrifice, values, and

¹ "If only this year Armenia were back on its feet . . ."

faith in the future, have yet to devote even 1% of their time, wealth or energy to building Armenia.

The Armenian nation is at a crossroads. When have we ever been wealthier, better educated, more secure, more connected or better positioned than today?

Building means more than kibitzing from the sidelines or acting in fits and starts in odd hours of longing or ennui. Building is creative work that will take all the ingenuity, energy, resourcefulness, and talent our nation can muster. This is the **generosity of spirit** that Patkanian evokes in his words of encouragement:

Hayer yerbek cherkmtink,

ke katarvi ayd amen,

yete i spar menk hanenk

pokrokutyun mer srten.²

We each began our lives with the baptismal anointment calling us to faith, hope and love. It will take **faith** in the future, **hope** for better, **love** for our people and country to make Armenia the land of our dreams. This call has resounded for centuries among Armenians everywhere.

It is the kind of faith that, despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles, all this will come to pass, if we approach the future with a generosity of spirit befitting our national heritage as the first Christian nation.

It is the kind of hope that moves mountains, cleanses the wounds of centuries, heals the soul and brings pride to every Armenian everywhere.

It is the kind of love that seeks to be worthy of gifts more often taken for granted than appreciated, embracing setbacks as opportunities to be more creative, more ingenious, more understanding and more persevering.

In no other part of our lives do we expect others to realize **our** dreams. We understand that accomplishments take effort, resources, time and commitment. May 2004 be the year that we

² “Armenians should never doubt that all this will come to pass if we free our hearts from the small thinking that holds our spirit back.”

embrace our national destiny to build an Armenia that is the best place for Armenians -- all Armenians -- to live, work, visit, endow, enjoy and create.

Each of us has a choice of what to build and where to build it. It is the privilege of this generation to build Armenia.

Will 2004 be the year that we resolve to make our schools into islands of virtue?

our music, art, literature and film into international trend-setters?

our church into a voice of morality that gathers and uplifts our dispersed nation? our legal system into a paragon of fairness and efficiency?

our countryside into a model of environmental stewardship?

our medical system so advanced that patients come from far and wide to be cured?

our products and services, science and know how, so coveted for quality and value around the world that we have full employment?

our homeland so enticing that all Armenians dream of calling it home?

What do you wish for Armenia in 2004? It won't happen if you don't dare to dream or dream to dare.

A native of New Jersey, Tom Samuelian is an international attorney and scholar happily at home in Armenia. He heads a public interest law firm Arlex International and chairs the Arak-29 Charitable Foundation, both based in Yerevan.

(this article appeared in *AIM Magazine* in January 2004)