

## EFFORTS NOT LIKE LOVE

By "Hayastan" Fund

Translated by: S. Hovhanisyan



**On the one hand the issue raised in the article concerning the drastic decrease of green spaces in Yerevan is a sensitive issue for all Yerevan residents. However on the other hand the author's not being well informed about the activities of the fund led to another series of false findings concerning the organization, which has a history of hundreds of kilometers of built and reconstructed roads, tens of built, renovated and equipped hospitals, schools, kindergartens etc.**

**HOW WE LIKE TO SCOLD THE ONE THAT CREATES!..**

where was the author when in the completely forgotten and abandoned park almost all flower beds were trampled, all the

benches were broken (the wooden details have vanished), the green plantations were not being taken care of and they were drying in front of everyone's eyes? While the project of the park reconstruction envisages both the thorough care of the trees and green plantations, as well as their enlargement. Parallel to the construction work seedlings for the lawn are being pricked out on 300 square meters of the territory of the park.

The author of the article is grieving over trees "soldered in concrete" and the soil around their trunks: these frightening accusations overstep all possible limits of journalistic ethics as they are absolutely false. All the other so called "facts" were also obtained by shameful misinterpretation of the interview with the coordinator of the project Sarhat Petrossian. The latter was wandering why none of the positive intentions mentioned by him in the interview were not reflected in the article: for example the intention to resettle in the park the Oscines and squirrels that have not been seen in the park for already more than 15 years, and that parallel to construction the trees were constantly being taken care of and accurately watered with water that had been specially brought for that purpose. The article did not mention also that prior to the realization of the project the commission on environmental issues had approved the felling of 19 trees on account of sanitary purposes, however only 16 have been eventually fallen, and one of the three remaining due to the care of the workers even blossomed. The trajectory of the channels has been measured multiple times to ensure that they don't hinder the rootage of the trees.

It should also be mentioned that the café was envisaged and approved by the reconstruction project of the abovementioned park and it takes up only 0,005% of the total territory of the park. If you remember, there used to be a café before and it occupied a much bigger area.

**AS FAR AS WE HAVE MENTIONED THE PROJECT PLAN,** we can not keep from referring to the passages of the author regarding architect Pierre Rambach, the author of the reconstruction and rehabilitation project of the park. All this was said about the person who has a huge experience in park creation and who during the last two years has been thoroughly studying the peculiarities of our landscape and no doubt has taken them into account, about the person who is trying to do everything to give the park an Armenian outlook.

Even when speaking about the students' architecture competition that took place three (and not two as mentioned by the author) years ago minor mistakes were made that have completely changed the overall sense. We officially declare that the contest was open and the winners received significant prizes.

**NOW ABOUT THE PUBLIC TOILETS OF THE PARK.** Of course we understand the concerns of the author, but here again we come across misinterpretation of facts, they say the public lavatories will be chargeable. Dear author of the article, concerned with this issue, we affirm with all responsibility- yes, of course the toilets are being built and they will be free of charge.

Quite naturally the lamentations of the author with regard to "Hayastan" fund being closed and not transparent can not be left without attention.

Clarification: according to the RA Law "On Procurement" the tenders for all types of building and contract works of the fund are being announced in mass media and on the official site of the Fund. The tenders

are open and the annual reports of the Fund are being distributed among the Ministries and NGOs of Armenia.

Now let's turn to the issue in question, i.e. the tender for building and contract works of the park reconstruction. The administration of "Hayastan" held the tender according to the RA Law "On Procurements" and was strictly following its provisions, consequently all the requirements to tender procedure prescribed by the law as well as in choosing the winner were met. Also it should be reminded that on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2007 Naira Melkumyan, who at that time was the executive director of "Hayastan" fund prior to the launching of construction works held a press-conference on the territory of the park, where she provided detailed information concerning the upcoming reconstruction and improvement of the park, and answered all the questions of the journalists. And of course the author of the article was not present at that press-conference, otherwise her long silence over the issue in question is at least strange. Naturally the question to be asked is: what underlies such strong interest of the "knowledgeable" author of the article Lia Avetisyan in the destiny of the tortured park especially now, when the works in the park are in the stage of completion?

**Unfortunately it is difficult to foresee which projects will raise the interest of mass media. However we hope that what is being done due to financial assistance of Armenians from all over the world for our nation will be decently covered by our journalists.**

***"Hayastan" Fund, Department of Public Relations***

Published with abridgements

The article by Lia Avetisyan "Love`s Labour`s Lost or seven questions to the Government concerning the Park of Lovers" published in the issue of "GA" of 28<sup>th</sup> of June prompted intense public discussions among residents of Yerevan. "Hayastan" fund also reacted to the article assessing it as a factor undermining the trust towards the fund.

The editors of "GA" have decided to present to the attention of their readers some of the letters that were received in reaction to the publication: the opinions of the authors of the letters are far from being unambiguous.

**"A Blank Shot"**

**Dear editors!**

Being one of the permanent readers of the newspaper I always read all the materials published in it that concern the life of my city with great interest and feel very concerned about the events that happen in our God-blessed country and especially in my Yerevan, the building of which I had the chance of witnessing and that is being brutally disfigured currently: the attics and additional stories on the splendid buildings of the city center are an obvious proof of the authorities being corrupt.

**HOWEVER LET'S TURN TO THE ISSUE**, that prompted me to write this letter. This time I have to express my great disappointment and annoyance with the article by Lia Avetisyan "LOVE`S LABOR`S LOST..." . this of course is not conditioned by that she has written something wrong or misinterpreted the essence of events, but because both the article and the time of its publication remind me of shaking ones fists after the fight, or serving mustard after the dinner ... BOTH THE AUTHOR AND THE NEWSPAPER ARE AUFULLY LATE!!! What is the use of this "homespun truth" if "the train has already left" and the task is completed? All this fair indignation and "7 questions" to the government (that were definitely backed by the newspaper- otherwise you would have never published it) should have been raised not now, but long ago, when the "proper people" have just started to circle around the "object" and were making up their minds on something that only they knew.

I should mention that I know the park as good as the author of the park, as being a native of Yerevan I have matured in this park and my grandchildren used to play in the shade of its age-long trees and beautiful thick bushes. But for the sake of being fair it must be mentioned that during the recent 15 years this splendid and quite place of our city was abandoned and befouled (strangely enough just in front of the residence of the presidents of independent Armenia) and no one from the local authorities cared that trees and bushes were perishing and the wrenched out of shape, broken and discolored benches, under which almost always there was stinking garbage and, pardon me, condoms, still remember the times of Khrushchev... In other words all this has not began from the times of the company "Robert Boghossian" and the alien for us Armenians idea of a "Japanese garden" of the European architect...

**THE MAIN GOAL THAT THE ARTICLE WAS TARGETTING STILL REMAINS UNCLEAR! Let's suppose that now everything will be stopped and the "Japanese garden" will at once turn into an Armenian one... Alas, this will not bring back those age-old trees and wonderful bushes, and the newly planted ones will produce a shadow only for our grandchildren. Thus, although the article is TRUE, it still is just a BLANK SHOT by unknown sparrows (or crows?).**

***Faithfully yours,  
Bert BERBEROV***

### **The Law Is Violated**

The article "Love's Labour's Lost..." published on 28.06.08 is a matter of great public concern and needs an immediate resolution. I am more than convinced that if your newspaper had known about the plans of "Hayastan" fund of turning Pushkin Park into a garden of stones, this article would have appeared much earlier and probably would have prevented the destruction of one of the last islets of animate nature in Yerevan. But the problem is that the procedure of submitting the project of the park's reconstruction for approval was violently breached both by "Hayastan" fund and the Municipality of Yerevan and was realized in violation of the environmental legislation of our country.

Thus, article 4 of the RA law "On ecological effect of urban development initiatives on the environment" stipulates the submission of all those reconstruction projects the territory of which equals 1000 square meters and more for mandatory environmental expertise. Meanwhile the territory of the park equals 1500 square meters. However this norm was not held. As a result neither the specialists of dendrology, nor NGOs, **nor Mass Media or the residents of the neighborhood knew anything about the real plans of the implementers of the project**, but had only heard promises that "everything will be alright". At the same time the legislation of RA provides for holding **thrice-repeated(!!!)** public hearings in the course of which the project must be discussed by specialists and residents of the neighborhoods. I would also like to emphasize that in the atmosphere of complete environmental permissiveness that reigns in Yerevan the law of the country was violated. Probably this is the reason why everybody were patiently waiting and hoping that representatives of respectable organizations would not lie.

As for me, I am trying to participate in the environmental control over the reconstruction of the park since September of the last year, when the felling of trees became tangible and repartition of the territory – threatening. Thus I state with all due responsibility that on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September of the last year in my presence in the course of construction of the office building for the park management the wet cement was poured into the rootage of a group of trees growing nearby. I tried to prevent that, but in vain. When I visited the park last May I noticed obvious signs of degradation and sickness of the mentioned trees. And there are numerous examples of such occurrences. It could not have been more. I find it necessary to remind the Municipality of Yerevan and "Hayastan" fund that a number of urban development norms were violently breached, according to which 70% of the territory of the park must be allocated for trees and other green plantations. In fact with all the parks of Yerevan these norms are not held, and the bodies carrying out control simply overlook it. Then who is to control the ones that realize control?

**I would like to express my gratitude to the newspaper "Golos Armenii" for the publication of the article and hope that the article will find appropriate reaction with competent state bodies.**

***Srbuhi Harutunyan, President of Social-Ecological Association***

### **Aesthetics Does Have a Nationality**

**I have read the article "Love's Labour's Lost..." with pleasure and sadness. With pleasure, because the article was interesting, and full with care for our future and worthy of the highly professional edition, which I consider "Golos Armenii" to be. And with sadness, because I look around and do not recognize my beloved city.**

**FOR EXAMPLE INSTEAD OF THE MONUMENT TO TAMANYAN AND FLOWER BEDS STRETCHING BEHIND IT** once there was a beautiful garden with big pear trees with ravishingly delicious fruits. Now behind the great architect, who has designed the garden-city, there are only about twenty trees left by "Gafesjyan" foundation after the reconstruction of the territory. All the territories including Baghramyan avenue, Arabkir, Qanaqer, outskirts of the Mergelyan Institution, Norq, and the area, which is now called Vernisaj that stretches up to Kond, which itself was a garden were covered with splendid gardens. I remember the real park of Flora- nothing is left from what used to be there. I also remember the garden of Mkhitarjans, next to which writer Derenik Demirchyan used to live, the garden of Vasak, who used to treat us, the children, to marvelous fruits, that you will not see now anymore. Also there was

Mamikon who was also treating us to fruits from the gardens of Dalma. No, it is not my taste that has change: the fruits` now taste differently and rarely remind us of the lavish nature of Yerevan not a sign of which remains now.

I am a painter, and the profession itself is such that without love towards nature and the contact with it it is not realizable and completely loses any sense. As an object for painting Yerevan has already perished, Pushkin park was one of the last remaining islets, and to make sketches I need to go outside the city- to the countryside. And what do you think? The nature turned out to be taken to pieces by different establishments fenced and guarded by bulls, who claim charge for entering the territory. Now all the shore of the river Azatan in Garni, the forests in Tsakhkadzor, the coast of Sevan are a prohibited area for us painters, and other citizens of Armenia, and are now the private property of various nouveau riches, who claim money for contact with our national property and subject of our pride!

Coming back to the theme of "Love`s Labour`s Lost..." I would like to emphasize that I agree with the finding of the author, that aesthetic has nationality. Yes, beauty is an absolute value, but then why are the national costumes specific for each nation? Why a Ukrainian will never change his national shirt with the burnous of the Bedouin, and the Bedouine his callote with the Tyrolean hat? Why when leaving, all Armenians miss Ararat, and the Eskimos even if placed in heavenly conditions of any country, will still miss his plain tundra? **Motherland is a multi-parametric notion, and a mandatory constituent of this sacred for every nation value is the aesthetic of the native nature given by God. Let`s preserve our native nature in its primeval, but well-groomed shape.** There is no need to transform it and imagine oneself wiser than God. Why do we need Lisenkos and Michurins of landscaping? And let our brothers from Diaspora help us in preserving the parks and forests, if they really care for our people. As for the Japanese garden of stones- let it rejoice the people and visitors of Japan. They know better what to admire at on their own territory. And us for us, we know better what is good for us.

**If you are interested in my opinion, I think that the stones should be immediately removed from the Pushkin park, and trees and bushes planted instead.**

**Armen ATAYAN, Honored painter of Armenia**

**FROM EDITORS. How does an article concerning a burning topic begin? From calls and letters of concerned readers. And then our journalists get down to the thorough, detailed study of the problem. In doing this they first of all get use of available sources of information, including publications in mass media and web sites of organizations that are involved in the problem. Thus was the case this time, too.**

**WHILE WORKING ON THE MATERIAL ABOUT THE PARK OF PUSHKIN,** Lia Avetisyan first of all visited the site of "Hayastan" fund, where she has found the following document and downloaded it into her computer:

*Project Title: reconstruction of the Park after Pushkin in Yerevan*

*Location of Project Realization: Yerevan*

*Project Category: Urban Development*

*Project Status: In realization*

*Project Description:*

*... Hayastan All -Armenian Fund in cooperation with the fund "Robert Boghossian and Sons" has launched the realization of the project for park reconstruction. After the reconstruction the park will again serve as a recreation zone for Yerevan residents. There will not be attractions and cafes in the park.*

*Donor: Fund "Robert Bogossyan and Sons"*

*Beginning: July 2005*

*Completion: expected by April 2008.*

It is strange that the document of "Hayastan" fund, which is accessible for our journalist, and which includes the correct name of the park and absence of any intentions to build a café on the territory, is inaccessible for the department of public relations of the same Hayastan fund.

Also, in a publication of ArmeniaNow of 16<sup>th</sup> of may 2008 "Architect Rambach promises to turn the abandoned park into a green paradise" reporter V.Ishkhanyan in particular writes: " Next year ever-green and fruit trees will be planted here in addition to the existing 300 trees". As the information was not refuted by HAYASTAN fund, and there are only 200 trees in the park currently, does that mean that the remaining hundred were fallen?

**Turning to the main problem of perished green plantations in the Pushkin Park, the editorship was not intending to blacken the activities of the Fund, which really has accomplished hundreds of**

kilometers of built and rehabilitated roads, tens of renovated and built hospitals etc. But even the most sophisticated dish can be ruined by one single fly that falls into it. However the opening of the reconstructed Pushkin Park is not far away. We want to believe that despite the lack of bushes oscines will come back to the park. And although the trees have thinned out the squirrels will agree to settle there. Who knows? After all, squirrels don't read newspapers.