

Union was collapsing and hostile militant forces were rising in the Caucasus, the predominantly Armenian population of Artsakh is still far from being safe and secure. Shunned by the world at large and increasingly threatened by the rise of militant Islamism in the Caucasus, the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh sets an example of perseverance and commitment to freedom and independence.

The current plight of the people of Nagorno Karabakh is a sorry situation since the Armenians of Artsakh are among the oldest distinct population groupings on earth. Armenian settlements and a distinct political entity have existed in Artsakh since the 2nd century B.C. Armenian independence prevailed there until the collapse and partition of the first Armenian state in the 5th Century A.D. At that time, between 480 and 483, Movses Khorenatsi wrote the monumental "History of Armenia" under the auspices of Prince Sahak Bagratuni—a manifestation of the centrality of Artsakh in Armenian civilization. In the late Middle Ages, the Armenian principalities retained their independence under Persia's nominal rule.

The Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh were among the first in the region to embrace Christianity back in 301 A.D. in the aftermath of the missionary activities of St. Gregory the Illuminator. In this context, the repeated destruction and rebuilding of the Monastery in Amaras symbolizes the resilience and determination of the Armenians of Artsakh. First built around 330 A.D. by St. Gregory the Illuminator, it has been repeatedly damaged and destroyed by countless invaders—such as the Arabs, the Persians, the Mongols and the Turks—only to be rebuilt again and again by the local population. The Monastery in Amaras was last damaged by the Azerbaijani forces in 1992, during Nagorno Karabakh's bitter war for independence. It has since been rebuilt and its centrality in Armenian religious life restored.

The Armenians' quest for independence has long historical roots. In the late 1980s, as the population of the then Soviet Union was awakened to rediscover nationalist roots, as well as cultural and religious heritage, so did Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh. By then, they had a history of quest for independence despite Soviet oppression. Significantly, since 1923, Nagorno Karabakh was a distinct Autonomous Region within Azerbaijan—a status that reflected the population's distinction. The Armenian population was restive since the thaw of the early 1960s, including riots in the late 1960s demanding self-determination within the confines of the USSR.

In the late 1980s, the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh were alarmed by the rise of Turkic militancy in Azerbaijan. The legacy of the 1918–1920 slaughter of Armenians by Turkish and Azerbaijani forces—especially the March 1920 destruction of Shushi, an Armenian cultural center that lost its Armenian population and character until recaptured in May 1992—was revived by pogroms in Baku and "ethnic cleansing" of Armenian population throughout the region since 1988. No less alarming was the Azerbaijani blockade aimed to starve the Armenian population into surrender and self-imposed exile. Hence, once the Armenians' quest for self-determination was rejected by the Soviet and subsequently Azerbaijani authorities, the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh embarked on their quest for independence as the sole guarantor for their self-survival.

On September 22, 1991, the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh declared their independence and vowed to defend the Armenian character of their land. They then withstood a three-year long brutal war in which the vastly superior Azerbaijani forces strove to destroy them completely. Presently, the population of the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh is a mixture of the local population and Armenian refugees from parts of Nagorno-Karabakh still held by Azerbaijani forces, as well as ethnically cleansed Armenian communities in other parts of Azerbaijan, most notably Baku. They are trying to rebuild their country. A mere 150,000–200,000 people surrounded by a sea of hate with only a corridor to Armenia as a life-line of sustenance.

Therefore, we should recognize the determination of the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh to preserve and revise their heritage and take control of their lives. In an era where the United States has stood up to the rights of endangered minorities to self-determination, stability, and betterment of life, we should not neglect the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Armenian people of Artsakh. They have already fought and sacrificed enormously in order to attain these rights. On their independence day, they deserve not only our congratulations, but our recognition and help, so that they can continue to grow and develop free of existential threats.

TRIBUTE TO ERNEST DILLON

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 1999

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a beloved and remembered man. Ernest Dillon, a long-time benefactor of Santa Cruz county passed away this last July at the age of 90.

Born July 29, 1909 in Oregon, Mr. Dillon moved with his family to Santa Cruz in 1921 when he was eleven years old. Aside from his highly decorated service as a captain in the U.S. Army during World War II, Ernie resided in Santa Cruz until his death. As a local business-owner, Mr. Dillon led improvement campaigns in downtown Santa Cruz to help protect local businesses from competing shopping centers further north.

For over three decades, Ernie Dillon contributed to the community through a lifetime of civic accomplishments in the areas of education and health care in Santa Cruz county. Ernie worked tirelessly to raise monies for Dominican Hospital and was also instrumental in acquiring the funding for constructing Cabrillo Community College.

As an avid global adventurer and for his devoted service to promoting the welfare of the people in Santa Cruz county, Ernie Dillon will be sorely missed and always remembered for his great contributions spanning an entire lifetime. My thoughts remain with his family.

TRIBUTE TO RICHARD J. LIEN

HON. DARLENE HOOLEY

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 1999

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to enter into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a few words expressing the profound gratitude and esteem I have for a very special public servant in my congressional district. Richard J. Lien has served the public as a Social Security Field Representative for the last 25 years. He has also been one of Social Security's special congressional liaisons for more than a decade. We will lose Dick to retirement on September 24.

My staff and I have worked with literally dozens of congressional liaisons, and it is no exaggeration to say that Dick is the best of the best. Dick has worked with nearly every member of my staff and helped thousands of my constituents with problems ranging from the easily fixable to the nearly impossible. Dick tackled problems big and small with his characteristic persistence and compassion for those he was trying to help.

There was the time he got a woman her lost Social Security check just in time to prevent her home from being foreclosed. The time he got a young American girl living in Jerusalem a replacement Social Security Card in a week, so she could complete important State Department paperwork. The time he forwarded a young man—on Christmas Eve—more than \$20,000 owed him in back disability pay.

I could go on and on until I had filled several volumes. My constituents have called him a savior, a godsend, and even Santa Claus. And I haven't even touched on the work he has done for the other members of Oregon's Congressional Delegation and our predecessors.

Through his years of service to the public and the Congress, Dick has been unfailingly professional, courteous, and persistent. He never gave up on a tough problem or complained, though he often bore more than his share of work. Dick will be sorely missed—by Oregon's members of Congress, by the Social Security Administration, and by the countless Oregonians he helped, many of whom probably never knew he was the one making sure they got their Social Security checks every month.

Dick, today I salute you, my staff salutes you, and Oregon salutes you. May you have a peaceful and well-deserved retirement.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2488, TAXPAYER REFUND AND RELIEF ACT OF 1999

SPEECH OF

HON. CASS BALLENGER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 5, 1999

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to offer my support for the compromise version of the Taxpayer Refund and Relief Act of 1999, a tax relief package which is a consequence of our strong economy and the successful 1997 Balanced Budget Agreement. The commitment to tax relief demonstrated by Chairman BILL ARCHER and the