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Category: Did You Know?

Born in Tbilisi in 1842, Alexander Mantashev (Mantashian) was an oil tycoon. He owned the Tiflis Central Commercial Bank and funded the Baku-Batumi oil pipeline in 1907—the world's longest at 835 kilometres. From 1899 to 1909 his company's fixed capital (by volume) was the largest industry in the Russian Empire. Along with 12 like-minded people he funded the Armenian Charitable Society in Caucasus and donated 300,000 rubles for the building of the Nersessian spiritual academy. He also donated 250,000 rubles to Echmiadzin for the residence of the Catholicos. Mantashian hand-picked 50 talented young Armenians and sent them to study at the best universities in Russia and in Europe. Among them were Gomidas and Stepan Shahumyan. He also donated the St. John the Baptist Church in Paris, on Jean Goujon St. to the Armenian community. The construction of the church cost 1,540,000 francs. He received the Legion of Honor from the president of France. Mantashian died in St. Petersburg in 1911. He was buried in the Armenian cathedral in Tbilisi. In 1933 Lavrenti Beria, a Stalin henchman, destroyed Mantashian's grave.

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