"ARARAT" BRANDY AND CHURCHILL

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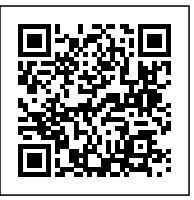

Assadour Guzelian, London UK, December 2015

Oct. 29, 2015 was a special day at Sotheby's auction house in London. To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of Winston Churchill, objects--drinks, cigars and clothes of renowned brands--favoured by the late British statesman were auctioned under the auspices and with the participation of Albert, the Crown Prince of Monaco. The proceeds were allocated to the prince's charities related to climatic changes. The main organizers of the event were the prince, the former prime minister and current ambassador of Armenia Dr. Armen Sarkissian, and the British ambassador to Monaco.

The main foci of attention were the statue of Churchill by well-known sculptor Oscar Nemon and a decades-old bottle of "Ararat" Armenian brandy with an interesting history. Years ago the bottle was sold at an auction by Christy's for more than GBP 15,000. According to documents, the bottle's source is the same barrels from which Stalin supplied Churchill with "Ararat" brandy. The exclusive bottle was donated by Dr. Sarkissian.

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Sotheby's was filled with a crowd of aristocrats who had come to make a bid or witness the expected excitement. But what happened at the auction next surpassed everyone's expectation: the 70-year old "Ararat" was sold for an amazing GBP 80,000 (USD120,000). Hopefully, the unprecedented success of the Armenian brandy in misty Albion will help to promote the fame of the "Ararat" brand.

When, where did Churchill first drink Armenian brandy?

My wife Vivienne and I had the pleasure of enjoying the friendship of Churchill's daughter Sara for many years. The first time she came over for dinner she noticed the bottle of "Ararat" on the piano in

the sitting room. She looked at the bottle with amazement and said: "From 1945 until his death, my father used to drink this brandy." Then Sara told us when and where Churchill first drank the "Ararat".

During the Yalta Conference (Feb. 1945), after dinner Stalin asked Churchill whether he wished to have a drink. "I like a brandy with my cigar," replied the British Prime Minister.

Stalin then offered Churchill "Ararat", the top Armenian brandy.

According to Sara, her father fell in love with "Ararat" and asked Stalin where he could purchase a few bottles. Stalin instructed the Soviet ambassador to Britain to present Churchill with a case (12 bottles) of "Ararat" every month.

"My father passed away, but we continued receiving every moth a case of "Ararat"," said Sara. Many years later, someone finally realized that the Soviet embassy had been sending brandy to a "dead" Churchill for the previous ten years! From that day the source of the Armenian brandy dried up. Sara added: "I used to enjoy "Ararat" as much as my father".

After that first dinner only the empty bottle of "Ararat'' remained on the dining table.