HOT AIR FROM ISRAEL

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Category: Opinions

By Art Stepanian, Toronto, 26 September, 2020

Because he lies...because he is prone to frequent error...and because he writes as if he is a hired hand of the Azerbaijani government's propaganda arm, it's tempting to dismiss hot air balloon Arye Gut of Israel. But it would be a mistake to ignore Azerbaijan's gofer. The man wears too many hats on his shining head. His resemblance to an extra in a Hieronymus Bosch crowd scene is not confidence building. He has the face of a hungry insect magnified a thousand times. His jacket looks three sizes too small. We reluctantly mention his appearance because we are puzzled by the frequency with which he parades his seedy yokel image on top of his *The Jerusalem Post* column. Gut deserves our attention because he is an energetic member of a media cabal dedicated to denigrating Armenia and Armenians. Fellow scabrous typists include Marcia Bronstein, Matthew Bryza, Svante Cornell, Nick Danforth, Maxime Gauin, Paul Goble, Nurit Greenger, Adelle Nazarian, Paul Miller, Brenda Shaffer, Peter Tase, Irina Tsukerman...He also deserves dissection because he is prolific. In addition to writing 48 articles since 2016 in *The Jerusalem Post*, he writes for billionaire Sheldon Adelson's *Israel Hayom*, *The Times of Israel*, *Algemeiner,* and the *Jewish Press.* He is also quoted in the Azeri media.

Who is Gut and why does he write lies about Armenians? Born in Azerbaijan, he moved to Israel 20 years ago. He is a busy man. In addition to his day job, he is a board member of the Israel-Azerbaijan International Organization and official coordinator of 'Justice for Khojali' international campaign. He says he is a political analyst and an "expert on international affairs." He certainly likes the word "international". He is also "a noted expert on the former Soviet Union and the Middle East." In the *Jerusalem Post* articles, he describes himself thusly: "I am permanent commentator on Israeli public TV and radio on Azerbaijani-Israeli and Israeli-Turkish relations." Why he doesn't mention he is also an expert on the "Armenian animosity towards Jews and Israel" is a puzzle.

Gut is prolific but with a caveat. He recycles his same half-a-dozen hatred-filled falsehoods. The publications he writes for might be different but the poison pen's effusions stay on message. The mad bats fluttering inside his cranium allege Armenia is an anti-Semitic, fascist, and a terrorist state. Armenians committed genocide in Khojali. There was no Armenian Genocide. Armenians supported the Nazis. Armenia is an ally of Iran. Azerbaijan is a democratic country where tolerance is President Ilham Aliyev's byword. The friendship of Azerbaijan and Israel is the greatest thing since sliced bread.

Here are some of the headlines which have graced Gut's recent rants:
"Anti-Semitism in Armenia: A Clear and Present Danger"
"Khojali Genocide Perpetrators Rule Armenia"
"Another anti-Israel Article in the Armenian Press"
"Israeli Expert Highlights Glorification of Nazis in Armenia"
"Armenian Occupation and 'Democracy: are they Compatible?
Before dissecting Gut's fulminations, let's look at the cub reporter errors he makes although he has

been writing about Armenia for many years:
—He spells the last name of Trastamat Kanayan as "Kanoyan".
—He identifies Karekin Nzhdeh as "Nazi general". Nzhdeh was a general but not in the German army. He spells the name "Garagen".
—He says there are 30,000 Jews in Azerbaijan. In 2009, the World Jewish Congress reported there were 7,800 to 16,000. The number has dipped since.
—He says the Azeris and Jews have been friends for centuries. This is an anachronism since there was no Azerbaijan before 1918.
—In a recent article, Gut identified Serge Sargsyan as the president of Armenia although Sargsyan resigned two years ago.
—He has accused Armenians of "barbaric brutality". As opposed to what? Garden-variety brutality?

To be kind to the journalist impersonator let's put aside the above lapses and look at his falsehoods.

1. Without providing an iota of proof, he writes: "By glorifying terrorists, Armenia turned fascism into state policy."
2. He accuses Armenians of supporting Hitler. More than 400,000 Armenians fought the Nazis. About 200,000 didn't return from the war. When it seemed Germany would win the war, Turkey crawled towards Hitler and placed 20 divisions on Armenia's border. Had the Germans won at Stalingrad, Turkey would have attacked Armenia. Meanwhile, Turkish and German newspapers were publishing articles which said Armenians were Semite and thus deserved genocide. Fearing a second genocide of his people, Nzhdeh went to Germany to stave off such a calamity. He also hoped a German victory would mean an independent Armenia if Armenians fought alongside the Germans.

Armenians of the German army never saw combat. Neither Hitler nor the military trusted the Armenians. The Armenian soldiers were stationed in France, Holland, and in Poland. They rebelled in Holland and took part in the liberation of southern France.

Gut doesn't mention the Azeri legion in the German armed forces was four times larger than that of the Armenian. The Azeri Legion participated in a range of massacres of the Poles and the Jews (40,000 people were killed during the Voyn massacre). A former president of Azerbaijan (Mamed Rasul Zade, 1918-1920) who is glorified in Azerbaijan made every effort to recruit Azeris to the ranks of the Nazi army.

In criticizing the installation of the Nzhdeh statue in Yerevan Gut wondered: "Did Armenia have no other WWI heroes to honor?" Had Gut spent a few minutes on the Internet he would have learned about the great many Armenian military heroes of that war.

3. Gut wasn't acting as a responsible journalist when he lied there is in Armenia and in the Armenian press a "wild anti-Israel, anti-Semitic hysteria." Elsewhere he wrote: "Even in Israel, the Armenian community staged provocative rallies against the Azeri-Israelis." There is no

evidence of such an occurrence.

4. To prove Armenians are foreigners to southern Caucasus, he wrote Armenians had been resettled in Azerbaijan from Iran. He didn't mention the reason there were Armenians in Iran is because Armenians had been forcibly taken from Armenia to Iran early in the 17th century by Shah Abbas.
5. In his report on the 2018 Azerbaijan presidential elections in Azerbaijan, he said Aliyev had won 86.09 % of the votes. He didn't bother to mention whether there were other candidates. He said the election had been "transparent" and Azerbaijan is a "rapidly emerging democracy."
6. Gut waxes poetic when he talks of Azeri tolerance. He doesn't mention the persecuted Talish and Lezgin minorities. He ignores the report of Human Rights Watch which described Azerbaijan as a country with poor human rights record. The organization said: "Azerbaijan's authorities continued to maintain rigid control, severely curtailing freedoms of association, expression, and assembly." When the rights of ethnic Azeris are abused, what are the chances that the Talish, the Lezgin, and other ethnic groups would have any rights?
7. Gut doesn't mention Aliev family's corruption, money laundering, and the European Laundromat operation. That's known as a lie of omission.
8. Gut falsifies Armenia's friendship with Iran. He doesn't mention that Iranian/Azeri trade is far greater than that of Iranian/Armenian trade. He doesn't mention that Iranian investments in Azerbaijan are far greater than Iranian investments in Armenia. It's irrelevant to Gut that the Turkbeijan blockade leaves Armenia no option but to be friendly with Iran.
9. Without providing evidence, he alleges that many Jews in Armenia had been forcibly assimilated. Among them, he said, is Rimma Varzhapetyan-Feller, the director of the Jewish community of Armenia. To "prove" his allegation, he wondered why a Jewish woman would have an Armenian last name. Let's consider that the name of Gut's father is Ahmed Abdullayev but in Israel he is Amir Gut.

- After years of listening to Gut's calumnies, Mrs. Varjhapetyan-Feller appealed (May 15, 2015) in an open letter to David Harris, executive-director of American Jewish Congress' Global Jewish Advocacy and charged that Gut's articles were "inciting and propagating hatred towards Armenia and the Armenian people and to me as the leader of the Jewish community of Armenia." She said the articles are published in Israeli newspapers by a number of "so-called analysts." Gut was the first on her list. She called Gut a "shameless liar and provocateur" who spreads "false facts." She also mentioned Gut's "indecent expressions."
- Gut is not interested that Armenia recognizes the Holocaust and that there is synagogue in Yerevan, children's musical ensemble, Jewish centre, and a Holocaust memorial. Mrs. Varjhapetyan-Feller said in awareness of the Holocaust Armenians were among the best informed people in the world." Gut is not interested that Armenia is the only country in the region where school curriculum includes direct references to the Holocaust.

Gut ended a column by saying: "I think there is no need for comments." We will borrow that line and say: "There is no need for comments about the hot air of Israel."

Comments

Houry Ellezian – 2020-10-01 01:52:46
Thank you, Mr. Art Stepanian, your article is eye opening indeed, since now I see why Mr. Pashinyan was asked that very same question about Karekin Njdeh, by Russian journalists. It was bizarre, and who knew the source was Mr. Gut?

Hrayr Agnerian – 2020-09-28 12:41:31
Excellent article!

Mesrob – 2020-09-28 08:06:39
Gut calls himself a journalist. To learn how to become a journalist, he can study the life and work of Russian-Jewish journalist Alexander Lapshin. A few days ago, Mr. Lapshin wrote: "Yesterday in Israel began the so-called Judgment Day, a day on which Jews traditionally should repent and ask forgiveness from all those who were hurt and suffering...But even on Judgment Day yesterday and last night, at Uvda military airfield in southern Israel landed and took-off with a military cargo of the Azerbaijani company Silk Way which drives death to the civilians of Artsakh. This was reported on Twitter by Roman Bronfman, a famous Israeli politician and in 1996-2003 the Knesset deputy. Friends, I am ashamed and hurt for what is happening. But I also want to ask the Ambassador of Armenia to Israel, will you react somehow to this fact?

Libarid – 2020-09-28 00:07:50
It would be a good idea if someone exposed (in a Keghart article) John Batchelor for the mercenary he is.



David – 2020-09-27 19:49:23

Sadly, though we have Jewish friends here in the US and around the world who know the truth about Turkey, there is also a gang of Jewish writers who aim to do Armenia and Armenians great harm. Of course, there are plenty of such non-Jews too who go out of their way to do Armenians harm. One of them is John Batchelor of the radio show of the same name. He is sponsored by Israel and is a friend of Azeri dictator Ilham Aliyev. The most egregiously pro-Azeri Jewish American group is the American Jewish Committee, headed by the disgraceful David Harris, also a good friend of Ilham Aliyev.