

# DID YOU KNOW ? (28)

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**Jirair Tutunjian**, 10 December 2022

Roman author and military commander Gaius Plinius Secundus aka Pliny the Elder, in his *Naturalis Historia*, described Artsakh as Armenian. Published in AD 77, the 10 books became the model for modern encyclopedias.

During the Cold War, the MacMillan Company of New York published annual books titled *Information USSR* which provided a wide-ranging data about the Soviet Union, including Armenia. See below several items from the 1962 edition:

Armenia's population: 1,552,000. Population increased by 45.4 per cent between 1926 and 1939 and 37.5 per cent between 1939 and 1959. Urban population was 725,000 and rural was 908,000. Yerevan had a population of 509,000 and Leninakan 108,000.

*Information USSR* reported: "Armenia is an industrial republic with a large-scale mechanized socialist agriculture. The total volume of industrial production in 1956 increased by 5 to 6 times compared with 1940, and by 49 times compared with 1913. The most important branches of large-scale industry are: electric power production, mining and non-ferrous metallurgy, chemical industry, machine building and metal-working and the building materials industry...During the period 1959-65, gross industrial production will rise by approximately 2.2 times.

"Armenia is a republic of total literacy. In 1956/57 there were 1,196 general educational schools with 200,000 pupils. There are 78 schools for working youth and 121 schools for rural youth with 11,600 and 5,000 students respectively." There were 3 trade school, 2 technical schools, 3 factory and workshop schools and 4 schools for agricultural mechanization. In Armenia in 1957 there were 39 secondary special educational establishments with a total of 20,400 students. The Academy of Sciences was founded in 1943 and in 1955 it embraced 23 scientific organizations."

Impresario-producer-operatic tenor Levon Sayan (Sanosyan) was the manager of Charles Aznavour from 1981 to 2014. He was born in Aix-en-Provence, France in 1934 and started his career as a barber after serving in the French army in Indochina. He later became president of the New York Association of VIP Hairdressing. In 1966 he sang in "Rigoletto", "Faust", and "Carmen". In addition to Aznavour, Sayan was the manager of Liza Minnelli and Placido Domingo. He was co-founder, along with Aznavour, of the charitable organization "Aznavour for Armenia" in 1991. He was honored thrice (Khorenatsi medal, Special Prize of the Armenian National Music Academy, and the Order of Honor) by Armenia and in 2008 granted citizenship.

During WWII, Hotel Aviz of Lisbon was the home of Calouste Gulbenkian. He settled in Portugal because the government provided him with assurances about his financial empire. He dined alone in the hotel with his secretary and valet sitting at a table close by. Later in the war, he run into trouble with the Allies over the attempted sale of a 2 per cent stake that he owned in the Reichsbank. He claimed he needed to sell those shares to meet his personal and business needs. His activities were

monitored by the British Embassy and the Treasury in London throughout his Lisbon residency.

Born in 1790, Armenian-Indian Eliza Kewark is the great-great-great great-great grandmother of the late Princess Diana of Britain. Her husband (Theodore Forbes of the East India Company) sent their daughter Katherine to England without her mother. Katherine married and gave birth to Jane, who gave birth to Ruth, who had another Ruth, who had Frances, who had Diana.

Antonio Suryan (aka Anton Suren, Anton the Armenian) was an Armenian from Syria who was instrumental in the crucial defeat of the Ottoman fleet at the Lepanto sea battle in 1571. The victory of the Venice and her allies halted the Turkish dream of conquering Italy. Upon arriving in Venice in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Suryan became a leading figure in the city's defense industry, especially at the Arsenal (the largest industrial complex in the world) which employed 6,000 shipbuilders and cannon makers. He devised a system for launching ships and invented a device to retrieve sunken ships and cannons. By improving the accuracy of the Venetian fleet's guns, he helped assure victory over the Turks. He also invented a method for treating wounds suffered in battle. In 1575, he invented an effective anti-plague potion. Suryan died in 1591, leaving six sons who worked for decades at the Arsenal. The Suryan name is still common in Venice. Alessandro Marzo Magno's *Bound in Venice* includes further detail about Suryan.

In his biography of Greta Garbo, author Robert Gottlieb wrote about Rouben Mamoulian's direction of *Queen Christina* which starred Garbo: "What accounts for *Queen Christina's* artistic success, apart from Garbo's convincing performance and despite all the plot nonsense, is mostly the excellent direction of Rouben Mamoulian, who had made a distinguished name for himself in Hollywood—the innovative *Applause* and *Love me Tonight*...and who enjoyed a distinguished stage career....Mamoulian was intelligent and low-key..."

Nobel laureate (chemistry) Emmanuelle Marie Charpentier of France didn't know that her Armenian grandfather had escaped to France during the Armenian Genocide. She said: "It's a very strange story, which my father got to know much later." Research in microbiology, genetics, and biochemistry that Charpentier and her partner undertook now contribute to new cancer therapies.

**There are no comments yet.**