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Ararat-73 and Caucasus derbies: football, nationalism and inter-ethnic relations in Soviet periphery

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes football spectators in the Soviet Union's national periphery, focusing on FC Ararat Yerevan's supporters during their 1973 'Golden Double' triumph. Ararat fandom transcended Yerevan to encompass all of Soviet Armenia and diaspora communities, uniting diverse social strata from workers to the head of the Armenian church. Nationwide celebrations featured massive airport crowds, folk feasts, and rituals lionizing the players. Applying Giulianotti's spectator typology, the paper views these fans as predominantly 'hot' traditional supporters while examining differences across the Soviet social hierarchy. The study highlights complex South Caucasus regional rivalries: a friendly derby with Dinamo Tbilisi contrasted with a tense Ararat-Neftchi Baku rivalry, foreshadowing the later Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. Ultimately, Ararat-73 embodied football's subversive potential in the non-Russian periphery, fostering national community amid Soviet control and creating a powerful, enduring post-Soviet legacy.

Introduction: football, Identity and nationalism in the USSR

What was it like to be a football supporter in Soviet Union? What was it like to be a football supporter in the periphery of the Soviet Union – in Soviet Armenia? This paper will deal with the case of FC Ararat Yerevan in the early 1970s, a team from the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, one of the 15 republics of the Soviet Union.¹ Early 1970s were the peak of the success of Ararat Yerevan: in 1973 Ararat won both the Soviet championship and the Cup tournament, which became its highest achievement and led to a frenzy of celebration in Soviet Armenia. Based on literature produced by the supporters of the club,² the paper will try to understand what it meant to be a football supporter in Soviet Armenia during the late Soviet period. It will also look at the football rivalries with other clubs, which reflected complicated identities and inter-ethnic relations of the South Caucasus in the Soviet period.

A large volume of research on football supporters has focused on countries with liberal-democratic political systems and market economies, such as Britain and continental Europe. But what did it mean to be a football spectator in Soviet Union? There is a significant volume of work dealing with football in the USSR,

but most of these works have focused on teams, which representing either the central regions of the USSR, e.g. Moscow and Leningrad, or its Western regions, particularly Ukraine.³ There is significantly less research dealing with the ‘national periphery’ of the Soviet Union, i.e. the federal units, which were populated by non-Russian and non-Slavic peoples.⁴ In this paper we shall deal with one of these peripheries, Soviet Armenia, and a team, which was its main representative in the Soviet football world, Ararat Yerevan.

The link between sport and nationalism is one of the most well-pronounced aspects of sports, including football.⁵ The connection between football and imperialism/colonialism is also well-known one. In various countries, football was closely associated with colonial or imperial projects. It has been described how in some countries football emerged via British, French or Spanish colonial or imperial routes: ‘Football . . . was part of systematic efforts to build colonies, both as a tool of social acculturation, identify formation and social closure among white settlers, and as a form of regulation and social control over colonised populations’.⁶ At the same time, in some cases, football, even brought by the imperial power, became a space of contestation. Moreover, in some cases football became ‘a tool for self-affirmation’ and ‘a cultural weapon to fight the Imperialist’, as in case of India, where football was appropriated for nationalist agenda, becoming ‘an instrument of reaction, resistance and subversion’.⁷

These trends can be observed in the Soviet Union as well, when it came to sports. Thus, Mertin describes the ambivalent nature of sport in the context of Soviet Union:

The sport system reflected the ambivalent nationality policy of the Soviet Union quite clearly. On the one hand, people of various nationalities and ethnic minorities were not discouraged to carry out traditional games and competitions. Moreover, these strong traditions were efficiently used, for example, by supplying the Soviet team with talented wrestlers and weightlifters from regions where similar traditions were passed down from generation to generation. On the other hand, physical culture and sport were important means of creating Soviet identity and patriotism.⁸

Football, as one of the most popular forms of sport, was an important tool of shaping Soviet identity, and ‘educating the masses’. However, when it came to football, it was not so easy to keep things entirely under control Edelman (2002) highlights how football’s subversive potential was evident even during the Stalinist era, as football supporters leveraged the sport’s liminality to create ‘enclaves of autonomy’, evading control and reclaiming agency denied elsewhere. This assessment is shared by Sugden and Tomlinson: ‘*Even during the darkest days of Stalin’s tyranny, football was one of the few public gathering points where privately held resentments could be shared and expressed simultaneously as public aspirations . . . even under conditions of extreme surveillance, football stadiums could serve as theatres for the communication of ideas which could contribute to the subversion of the state*’.⁹ As Gloriovova puts it, ‘*even if at first sight, the popularity of football could seem to be a useful tool to control the masses, in reality football crowds turned out to be unpredictable, difficult to control and hardly compatible with the objectives of discipline and order attributed to Soviet sports*’.¹⁰ This is especially true when it comes to the periphery of the Soviet Union, non-Russian republics, including the South Caucasus.

Football supporters in the non-Russian periphery of the USSR

Nationalism in the field of sport, and particularly in the field of football was one of the (relatively) legitimate ways of expressing nationalist feelings and building national identities within the non-Russian republics of the USSR. Before getting into the depths of the relationship between nationalism and football in the Soviet context, it is necessary to say a couple of words about the ‘nationality politics’ of the Soviet Union – the way Soviet government managed ethnic diversity.

So-called ‘nationalities issue’ was an important aspect of the life in Soviet Union. The policies of Moscow fluctuated between ‘nativization’ (in Russian ‘korenizatsiya’), and ‘fusion’ (in Russian ‘sliyanie’) in different historical periods, leading to different reactions from local elites and societies. It is outside of the scope of this paper to debate the issue of imperialist/colonialist nature of the Soviet state. Was it an oppressive colonial empire or a voluntary association of nations pursuing a shared socialist project? The truth likely lies somewhere in between. As the successor state of the Russian Empire, the USSR had some features of imperialism/colonialism, but at the same time within the Soviet republics there was also a space for expressing local identities, while state socialist economy implied a model of resources distribution, which differed significantly from Western colonial empires.¹¹

In the heart of the Soviet nationalities policy lay the double-edged relationship with local nationalisms, which stemmed from the nature of the compromise between central power and national identities on the peripheries. On the one hand, Soviet central power sought to repress and de-legitimize those forms of nationalism, which it considered dangerous, hence the repressions against those who were considered ‘nationalists’, a term that had a strong pejorative meaning in the Soviet context. However, the Soviet ruling elite had to accept the existence of certain forms of nationalism, which were considered relatively benign or neutral, and, of course, rebranded as ‘patriotism’. In turn, local elites in Soviet republics, sought to strike a balance between local nationalism and the need to remain loyal to the central leadership.

Football obviously reflected this complicated interplay. On the one hand it was a powerful tool for forging and promoting a common Soviet identity and keeping nationalist passions at bay. At the same time, it was a space for contestation, where non-Russian national identities could assert themselves, without the risk of persecution. Some scholars believe that ultimately this contestation contributed to the collapse of the USSR. According to Sugden and Tomlinson

contrary to the official role assigned to it as a force for pan-Soviet integration, football developed as a theatre for duplicitous subversive communication, making a contribution to the working up and circulation of the multiple ideas of nationalism which hastened the breakup of the Soviet state.¹²

As Zeller shows, football clubs, representing various Union Republics, as well as individual players of certain ethno-cultural backgrounds often became the focus of nationalist or quasi-nationalist sentimental situation that led to the creation of both transnational, and, as Zeller calls it, ‘republican’ fan communities.¹³ According to Gloriovova, *‘the Soviet Union was characterised by extremely complex football rivalries, crystallizing different types of tensions ... the club Dynamo Tbilisi was regularly presented as the*

Georgian team, Pakhtakor Tashkent club represented Uzbekistan, Kairat Almaty club, Kazakhstan, or Neftchi club, Azerbaijan.¹⁴

Ukrainian clubs are often cited as ardent examples of the complicated relationship between national identity and football in the USSR. Thus, Dinamo Kyiv, the most successful and well-known non-Russian club in the USSR, became a focus of both transnational (i.e. within the USSR and abroad) and ‘republican’ (i.e. Ukrainian) support, thus becoming both the locus of Ukrainian national identity and pan-Soviet patriotism.¹⁵ Another Ukrainian team, Karpaty Lviv was closely associated with Ukrainian national particularity, which led to repressions by authorities, who even tried to disband the club by merging it with another team.¹⁶ Karpaty fans were exceptional in their defiance, when it came to expressing their national sentiments: in the 1970s they composed the song ‘Yellow-Blue is Our Flag’, with overtly pro-Ukrainian lyrics like ‘*Ukraine will be free*’ and ‘*Our motherland will be independent*’, words that were highly unusual during that period.¹⁷

Celebrations, jokes and omens: how Ararat supporters expressed their support

As the main milestones of Ararat’s history and its role in the context of nation-building efforts of the political elites of late Soviet Armenia have already become a subject of research,¹⁸ this paper will focus on the spectators of Ararat during the peak of its performance – the early 1970s, particularly 1973, when Ararat won the both the USSR Cup and the Championship. Among the sources will be the memoir of a journalist and ardent supporter, Arsen Kakosyan, whose book ‘the Night after football: A Fan’s Diary’ was published in 1974, a year after Ararat made its ‘Golden Double’.¹⁹ It is indicative that this book was originally written and published in Russian, and was translated into Armenian and re-published in 2023, already in independent Armenia, to celebrate the 50 years’ anniversary of Ararat’s victories. Another important source is the collection of game reports, articles, memoirs, and other media materials, compiled and published by Suren Baghdasaryan, Armenian football commentator, who covered Ararat’s games in 1970s.²⁰ In addition, other media materials, as well as oral interviews with veteran supporters were used.

It is important to note that Yerevan’s football team was not always named ‘Ararat’. It was initially named ‘Spartak’, then it was merged with another Yerevan team called ‘Dinamo’ and the new team played under the name ‘Dinamo’ until 1954, when it became ‘Spartak’ again. The name ‘Ararat’, which is very closely linked to Armenian national identity was given to the team in 1963. Due to its nationalist connotations, the new name was in stark contrast with the names like ‘Spartak’ and ‘Dinamo’, which belonged to what can be described as Soviet ‘internationalist’ semantic field: ‘Spartak’ had connotations related to class struggle and Dinamo – to industrialization. On the contrary, ‘Ararat’ referred to the Mount Ararat, one of the most common symbols of the Armenian nation. The mount Ararat was also a symbol of Armenian national grievances, as it was lost to Turkey as a result of the Turkish-Armenian war of 1920.²¹

The renaming of the team was part of a bigger trend that characterized Armenia in the 1960–1970s, which can be described as ‘a national revival’. During this period, Armenia, like other non-Russian republics was going through a period, in which

elements of local national identity were being blended with the Soviet identity, creating a certain compromise between pan-Soviet and local national identities. This process manifested itself in various realms, from politics of memory and state-approved commemoration rituals to sports fandom. Thus, in 1965 a mass rally occurred in Yerevan with the demands to officially recognize and commemorate the 1915 Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey. Though the rally was dispersed by government forces, the memory of the genocide became incorporated into the politics of memory of Soviet Armenia: the construction of a memorial to genocide victims began soon afterwards and was completed in 1967. As other signs of 'national revival' 2750th anniversary of Armenian capital Yerevan was celebrated in 1968, and a monument was built to commemorate the 1918 battle between Armenians and Turks in Sardarapat village, close to the border with Turkey. It was also during the 1960s, that ethnic Armenian Soviet chess player Tigran Petrosyan became the world champion, which led to national jubilation in Armenia. It was within this context of 'national revival' that Ararat became one of the strongest football teams in the USSR, and also became the object of a celebration among Armenia's football supporters.²²

The golden period of Ararat coincided with the period when the first forms of organized support started developing in the Soviet Union, reflecting higher degree of openness to the outside world and more flexible forms of state control. Both these factors allowed for more freedom for football supporters. Armenians had their own terms to address football spectators. In Armenian, the common term for football supporters is 'yerkrpagu', derived from 'yerkrpagel' ('to worship'), a term suggesting quasi-religious fervour in football culture, unlike the Russian term 'bolel'shchik' (from 'bolét', 'to ache' or 'suffer'). Another commonly term used Armenian term 'futbolaser' ('football lover'), mirrored the Russian expression 'lyubiteli futbola'.²³ These terms were used rather interchangeably, even though the quasi-religious connotations of the term 'yerkrpagu' suggests a stronger emotional connection, somewhat similar to the English word 'fan' and its Russian equivalent 'fanat'.

When talking about football spectators it is useful to keep in mind the typology of football spectators, developed by sociologist Richard Giulianotti.²⁴ Giulianotti's typology of supporters, followers, fans, flaneurs has been developed with regard to the post-modern period, characterized with hypercommodification, so, it is hardly applicable to the 1970s, especially in a Soviet state socialist system. So, from this point of view, most Ararat supporters at the time would fall into the 'traditional' category. However, Giulianotti's division of spectators into 'hot' and 'cool' groups could well be applicable to Ararat supporters. Kakosyan in his 'Fan's diary' expresses a corresponding division using terms 'stadium supporters' and 'TV supporters'. 'stadium supporters' were those who regularly went to the stadium, and the 'TV supporters' were the ones who preferred to watch the games on TV. Of course, in case of most important games, even 'TV supporters' became 'stadium supporters', often under the pressure from the more dedicated supporters of the club. Kakosyan himself admits to pressuring friends to go to the stadium at times when Ararat had lost previous games and support was especially needed.²⁵ To be fair to the TV supporters, supporting the team on TV was not an easy business, and also demanded a lot of dedication. Often, the games were transmitted only on the radio, sometimes only half of the game was shown, or the transmission was interrupted by political news. Moreover, it was not always possible to receive

commentary in Armenian language, and sometimes the supporters had to settle for Russian-language commentary.²⁶

Support for Ararat engulfed all of Soviet Armenia. In the words of Baghdasaryan, '*the whole nation had become football lovers*'.²⁷ This became especially obvious after the large victories by Ararat, particularly, after Ararat won the Cup, and after the last game of the championship, when it became obvious that Ararat would also become the champion of the USSR. Support for Ararat was not confined by the limits of Yerevan, the city, which the club represented. It was perceived as a team that represented all of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. While other Armenian cities had their own clubs, none of them were represented in the top League. Moreover, talented players from other Armenian clubs were usually transferred to Ararat. In other words, Ararat was perceived as a national team of Soviet Armenia, and hence its supporters included the whole country. The descriptions of celebrations of Ararat's victories, given by Kakosyan and Baghdasaryan paint a picture of a pan-national celebration, which included all cities and regions of Armenia. The sheer numbers of supporters, as well as the presence of people who had brought food from villages, musicians playing folk instruments, all these elements of the celebration imply wide support, which goes beyond the urban metropolis of Yerevan.²⁸

The largest celebrations occurred after a dramatic Cup final in October 1973, in which Ararat beat Dinamo Kyiv and won the Cup of the USSR. The celebrations started immediately as the game finished and supporters who had watched the game on TV, spilled out in the streets of Yerevan.²⁹ However, the biggest attendance was a few days later, when the team was returning to Yerevan. The crowds were so huge, that Kakosyan was unable to reach the airport, where the team was arriving.

I went to the airport to meet the winners. What is happening? The car got stuck half way. Traffic jam. Nobody had announced the time and the number of the flight, but it seemed that the crowd of supporters had taken that into account. I had missed everything. But still I was able to find out some details. There were tables on the Echmiadzin highway with wine and the goods of the Ararat valley – grapes and peaches.³⁰

This description is echoed by Baghdasaryan: '*there was a sea of football fans who had come to meet our heroes. There was no place to drop a needle in the airport, people had come with posters, flags, flowers. Everyone was happy... Strong security measures were taken, but many tried to break through the barrier and even enter the runway... rejoicing and celebration continued throughout the republic*'.³¹

Another major celebration occurred when Ararat won the last game in the Championship, securing its place as the Champion of the USSR.

celebration started in Hrazdan stadium... Because of the big victory everyone had become happy and kind, they were congratulating each other... The stadium... became lightened by the torches, which the fans were burning on the tribunes... The wave of celebration spread to the streets of Yerevan and its central square... The whole night nobody slept... the big victory had consolidated and united Armenians.³²

There is not much information about organized forms of support, such as unions, rituals, songs, etc. Victories of Ararat occurred at a stage, when these were only beginning to enter the Soviet Union, due to influence from the West. Besides, the government did not encourage such forms of support. However,

Kakosyan describes one of the rituals that emerged among Ararat supporters. It referred to the wall of the 'Tairov' farming complex ('sovkhoz'), on which supporters were writing their predictions for game scores. *'It started when one supporter wrote their forecast for the upcoming game "5:0" and it came true, then next time they wrote "4:0" because the rival was stronger, and it also came true ... So then they started writing on that wall ...'* When Ararat was playing the last game in the championship the supporters also wrote on that wall, and also painted the champion's cup'.³³ This episode reflects another common feature of supporter culture, attention to various omens and signs, which also seems to have existed among Ararat fans. Thus, Kakosyan talks about the prejudices among the footballers, the fans, and even sport officials. For example, the head of the Sports Committee of the republic³⁴ had told him that he was not going to the stadium, even though he loved football, because whenever he went, Ararat was losing. However, he started going after Ararat won a series of victories.³⁵

Posters were a common for through which Ararat supporters expressed their feelings about the team. Some of these posters presented where the team came from, but some also were more complicated. Thus, Kakosyan is telling the story of a poster, which said 'Ararat – a star team, Ararat – a team of stars', which was a response to Russian sports commentator Nikolay Ozerov, who had said that 'Ararat is a star team, rather than a team made of stars'.³⁶ There were also team chants, like 'A-ra-rat hoop toor' ('A-ra-rat, push it') or simply 'Haaaayer' ('Armenians'), which were chanted both in the stadium and in the streets.³⁷ As for violence, we have not come across descriptions of violent incidents during the high point of Ararat's success in the early 1970s. Existing reports of violent incidents involving Ararat and its supporters, refer to later periods, specifically 1980s, when there was a rise in tension around the country (see the last section of this paper).

Another important aspect of Ararat supporter culture were the jokes that circulated around the team and its stars. Probably, the most favourite star who figured in these jokes was Levon Ishtoyan, the forward who scored two decisive goals in the dramatic Cup Final against Dinamo Kyiv, one on the 89th minute of the 2nd half, and the other one during the added time. One of these jokes suggested that inhabitants of the his native city Leninakan³⁸ wanted to replace Lenin's statue with that of Ishtoyan. Another similar joke suggested that Yerevan authorities will replace the one of the city's symbols, the sculpture 'Hands of Friendship' (which as it is obvious from the title, consists of two hands), with another one, 'Feet of Ishtoyan'.³⁹ Probably an earlier version of that joke, about Ishtoyan's feet being transferred to a museum was recalled by Kakosyan as a poster made by one of the supporters on the night Ararat won the cup.⁴⁰ Kakosyan also recounts another joke about Ishtoyan: *'they say Pelé has lost his mind, he walks around and says "I am Ishtoyan, I am Ishtoyan"'*, but he claims it had emerged earlier, and its emergence was a result of the experiments of Ararat's previous coach Glebov, who wanted to introduce techniques he had learned from international football teams.⁴¹ Finally, one of these jokes made it into famous Soviet film 'Mimino' (1977). In the film, Armenian character awkwardly consoles his Georgian friend over failing to romance a Russian woman who works as a flight attendant: *'What do you want? Every day she sees artists, scientists, cosmonauts, Ishtoyan ... who are you to her?'*⁴²

The diversity of Ararat's supporters

Ararat was perceived as a team that represented not only inhabitants of Soviet Armenia, but also Armenians who resided outside of Armenia, both in other Soviet Republics, and around the world. These included large Armenian communities in other South Caucasus republics, Georgia and Azerbaijan, whose support for Ararat we shall discuss in the next sections. It also included Armenians living in various other parts of the Soviet Union, especially Moscow, which as the capital of the USSR had a mixed population, with a large representation of Armenians. Finally, Armenians who resided outside of the USSR also supported Ararat, even though it was often technically difficult for them to follow their favourite team.⁴³

Ararat had also non-Armenian supporters, but probably most of these were 'cool' supporters, to use Giulianotti's terminology, or even *'flaneurs'*, to the extent that this term can be applied to the Soviet reality. Thus, according to Baghdasaryan, Moscow was a place, where Ararat felt comfortable, and it was not only because of the local Armenian community *'Moscow had become a city where Ararat felt at home ... Artistic, combinational, attacking style of football had enchanted many people [in Moscow], and at our wonderful team's games there were not only our compatriots from Moscow, but many people of other nationalities'*.⁴⁴ This assessment is echoed by Kakosyan, quoting Ararat's coach Nikita Simonyan: *'my Moscow friends were telling me they don't remember when else there was such a celebratory atmosphere in Moscow'*.⁴⁵ Simonyan himself played an important role in extending the support for Ararat to non-Armenians, especially in Moscow, as he himself was a veteran of the Soviet national team and of the Spartak Moscow.

Kakosyan also writes about the fan mail that Ararat players received from spectators from around the USSR after their victories in 1973. He does not specify, which part of this fan mail came from ethnic Armenians living outside of Armenia, and which part came from non-Armenians, but the geographic variety suggests it must have included a significant amount of non-Armenian spectators:

[Ararat players] knew approximately how many fans they had in Yerevan, in the cities and villages of Armenia. And how large their number was outside the borders of the republic, they felt for the first time. Warm, friendly. . . several thousand messages of greeting had been sent from Siberia and Central Asia, the Baltic States and Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan, and many other cities and regions of the country.⁴⁶

Support for Ararat also transcended social boundaries. Giulianotti, building on the work of Taylor and Critcher, talks about 'the bourgeoisification' of football in Western Europe, which was taking place in the 1970–1980s.⁴⁷ Obviously, when talking about the Soviet Union, it is important to understand that Soviet Union had a very different social structure from the capitalist nations at the same time. However, in the 1960–1970s the Soviet Union experienced the emergence of a class of shadow businessmen, operating illegal or semi-legal businesses, who were referred to as *'tsekhoviki'*.⁴⁸ In the memories of Ararat players and supporters, these *'tsekhoviki'* emerge as actors who at times provided 'informal' financial support to players, and often enjoyed certain privileges, such as entrance into the locker room after the match, or presence at the team's celebration banquets.⁴⁹

However, in Soviet Union social stratification was largely defined not so much by access to material resources, but by access to political power and/or knowledge production. From this point of view support for Ararat in Soviet Armenia was very diverse, ranging from agricultural and industrial workers to the academic, creative and political elites.⁵⁰ Kakosyan describes the meeting between the Ararat players and members of the Academy of Sciences of Armenia: *«There was a big oval table in the centre of the room, where usually the members of the Academy gathered, including famous scientists . . . There was a crowd of people, mostly regular workers of the Academy, elbowing each other to see the team, and asking each other ‘which one is Levon Ishtoyan’. Then some elder scientist with a very solemn look comes in and, learning that this is a meeting with the football team, shakes his head [and says] ‘this is not serious at all’. Then he asks ‘which one is Levon Ishtoyan?’»*.⁵¹

Probably the most high-ranking supporter of the team was the leader of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicos (i.e. patriarch) Vazgen I. A story illustrating this is mentioned in an interview with Ararat’s forward Nikolay Ghazaryan, published by Baghdasaryan, which refers to the late 1960s. Ghazaryan recalls a meeting with the Vazgen I, which took place after the player endured a 12-game goalless streak in the 1967 championship. At the meeting Catholicos Vazgen I gifted the team boots, which he claimed were blessed and would bring success. In the next game Ghazaryan wore the boots, scored, and went on to net 11 goals as Ararat’s top scorer.⁵²

Of course, there were some limits to the diversity of the football supporters of Ararat. Thus, football spectatorship was mostly a masculine affair. It is very telling that one of the few times women are mentioned in Kakosyan’s ‘Fan diary’ is in his description of watching the Cup finals with his older male neighbour: during the break after the first half, which Ararat lost, ‘my neighbors’ daughters served some life-saving coffee’.⁵³ However, oral interviews show that there were a lot of women among the supporters of Ararat, especially among ‘the TV supporters’, but some also attended games at the stadium.⁵⁴

It is also important to remember that football supporters in Soviet Armenia lived at a time, when Soviet citizens were still subject to ideological control and government repression. Of course, the degree of government repression in the 1960–1970s was uncomparable to the decades of Stalin’s reign. However, it was still not safe to voice views and opinions that differed from the official government policies. It is a sad coincidence that it was in the same year that Ararat made its ‘golden double’, in 1973, that Sergey Parajanov, famous ethnic Armenian film director, whose art and dissident political views made him a target of the Soviet leadership, was arrested, accused of ‘homosexuality, sodomy, and propagation of pornography’ (homosexuality was criminalized in the USSR at the time). Parajanov was sentenced to 5 years in a hard labour camp, and was released after 4 years, following an international outcry.⁵⁵ Thus, while most Armenians were able to cheer for their favourite team, those at odds with the Soviet system, faced the danger of persecution.

‘Transcaucasian Derbies’: football and the complicated context of South Caucasus

There was another aspect to the complicated relationship between nationalism and Soviet system, in which the story of FC Ararat unfolded. It is the context of the South Caucasus,

or as it was called then Transcaucasia,⁵⁶ which included Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijani Soviet republics. The politics of football reflected the complicated relationship between the three republics and their societies. This relationship combined a sense of common Caucasus identity, distinct from the rest of the USSR, with a sense of competition, at times bordering on ethnic tension. The competition in sports between the three republics had a direct relation to nationalist sentiment. The relationship between the clubs from the capitals of the region – Ararat Yerevan, Dinamo Tbilisi and Neftchi Baku, reflected a certain sense of common regional identity, on the one hand, and fierce competition, on the other. An important aspect of these rivalries was the existence of large ethnic Armenian communities in Georgia and Azerbaijan. Football spectators from these communities were torn between loyalty to the teams representing their own cities, and Ararat, which represented their ethnic homeland. From today's perspective this part of Ararat's legacy is especially interesting in the context of the complicated relations between the three countries of the South Caucasus in the post-Soviet period, particularly the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict that erupted as the USSR collapsed.

Football rivalries play an important role in football.⁵⁷ Soviet Union was not an exception. Among the most important and well-known rivalries was the rivalry between Moscow teams Spartak and Dinamo, which was often perceived as rivalry between a relatively liberal supporters of Spartak, and pro-state supporters of Dinamo, a representation criticized by some scholars.⁵⁸ Another set of rivalries characterized the relations between Ukrainian and Russian clubs.⁵⁹ Another interesting case of football rivalry was related to clubs Kayrat Almaty and Pakhtakor Tashkent from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan respectively, a rivalry which reflected the competition of the leaders of these republics for membership in Politburo (the highest organ of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union). Moreover, reflecting the intensity of the rivalry, the prize for winning was a few times higher than a football player's annual salary,⁶⁰ a situation which to a certain extent had its parallels in the rivalry between Ararat and Neftchi Baku.

During the early 1970s, there was a certain rivalry between Ararat and Dinamo Kyiv. However, it was mostly a sports-fuelled rivalry, which emerged due to the fact these two teams were among the strongest in the Top league at the time, and completed for the titles. A kind of friendly rivalry existed between Ararat and Moscow teams, especially Spartak. The friendly character of this rivalry was especially pronounced in 1973, when a former Spartak player and coach, Nikita Simonyan, became the coach of Ararat. These rivalries were rather situational and mostly conditioned by factors that had to do with pure football, though the factor of nationalism entered the picture sometimes.⁶¹ However, situation was different when it came to clubs representing Armenia's neighbours in the South Caucasus, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Here, the relations were much more complicated and multi-layered, reflecting both commonalities and differences between the three republics.

Before proceeding to the discussion of the rivalries between the teams, it is important to say a couple of words about the historical and political context of these rivalries in the South Caucasus. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are three countries characterized by a unique combination of cultural similarities, when it comes to some elements of culture and tradition (e.g. food, gender relations, music, etc.) and differences when it comes to others (religion, language, literature, political culture). Politically, South Caucasus

presents a complicated picture, which reflects both commonalities and conflicts. Armenia and Georgia, as ancient Christian kingdoms share cultural affinities in art, architecture, literature, as well as common resistance against Persian and Ottoman empires. At the same time Armenian-Georgian relations have been characterized by competition over territory (including a short war in 1918), as well religious divisions, between Monophysite Armenian Church and Orthodox Georgian Church. Relations between Armenians and majority-Muslim Azerbaijanis have been more strained, characterized by territorial disputes, which erupted into large-scale violence in 1905–1907 and in 1918–1920. At the same time, Armenians, Georgians, and Azerbaijanis have had a long history of shared communal life, including in the largest cities of the Russian Empire in the Caucasus, Tbilisi, Baku and Yerevan, which in 1918 became the capitals of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia respectively.⁶²

After a brief period of independence in 1918–1920, marred by territorial conflicts between all three countries, they were forcibly reincorporated into the USSR in the early 1920s. The Soviet government in Moscow, supported by local Armenian, Azerbaijani and Georgian communists, imposed a forced peace on the three republics, ending the territorial conflicts between them. The ‘pax Sovietica’, based on the ideas ‘of friendship of peoples’, lasted until the late 1980s, when the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict started in Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-populated enclave in Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic.⁶³ At the same time, most Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Georgians also shared a feeling of distinct difference from Russians and other peoples of the Soviet Union, which was often articulated in terms of common ‘Caucasian’ or ‘Transcaucasian’ identity. This complicated picture set the stage for football rivalries as outlets for national expression.

Friendly rivalry with Dinamo Tbilisi

The friendly rivalry between Ararat Yerevan and Dinamo Tbilisi was important for supporters of both teams. Baghdasaryan talks about Ararat-Dinamo Tbilisi games as ‘a peculiar Transcaucasian derby, like the super-classico “Barcelona”-’Real’ ... a similar type of games took place between ‘Ararat’ and ‘Neftchi’ Baku’.⁶⁴ It is probably a sign of the importance of the Ararat-Dinamo Tbilisi rivalry, that when a documentary was shot about Soviet Armenia, and the authors decided to include shots from FC Ararat’s game, they chose the game between Dinamo and Ararat in Yerevan, when Ararat scored.⁶⁵

It is interesting to note that when Ararat was playing in Tbilisi, there was usually serious support from local Armenian community. Thus, when Ararat was playing in Tbilisi in 1973, according to Baghdasaryan, ‘Our compatriots in Tbilisi expected with great inspiration that Ararat would defeat the Dinamo’.⁶⁶ Because of the presence of local Armenian supporters at the Dinamo Tbilisi games, Kakosyan jokes that the games in Tbilisi took place on a ‘a neutral’ ground.⁶⁷ However, he also complained of the horrible noise at the Tbilisi stadium, because ‘1/3 of the stadium are Tbilisi Armenians cheering for Ararat, and the other 2/3 are Georgians’.⁶⁸ Baghdasaryan tells that when in 1971 Ararat’s Sergey Bondarenko scored a goal from 40 metres’ distance in Tbilisi against Dinamo, Georgian Armenians called it ‘a goal from Avlabar’, referring to an Armenian-populated quarter of Tbilisi.⁶⁹ According to Baghdasaryan, though Georgians supported Dinamo Tbilisi quite enthusiastically, the general atmosphere during the matches in

Tbilisi had been more friendly than during matches in Baku.⁷⁰ However, to be fair, there had been incidents involving unruly fans in the history of Ararat-Dinamo matches. Thus, in 1961 during the match Spartak⁷¹ Yerevan – Dinamo Tbilisi, the Armenian team was winning 3:1, ‘the fans of Dinamo, frustrated by their team’s unsuccessful performance, invaded the field’.⁷²

At the same time, there was a certain feeling of regional solidarity, vis-à-vis teams from other parts of the Soviet Union, particularly Russia. Thus, according to Baghdasaryan in 1958, when Yerevan’s team, called Spartak at the time, was playing against Rostov-on-Don’s club in Tbilisi, in order to decide which of the teams would be able to join the Soviet championship’s higher league, Georgian football fans were cheering for the Armenian team.⁷³ It is interesting to compare this account with a case from the later period, recounted by Sugden and Tomlinson, when Georgian football fans cheered against the Soviet team during the match USSR-England, which took place in Tbilisi in 1986. Dinamo Tbilisi player David Petriashvili, who was in the stadium that day said: *‘The stadium was incredible, because all of the people supported England! Georgians are quite different from Russians, our culture is ancient, older than Russia and . . . our football expresses this’*.⁷⁴

This atmosphere of friendly rivalry between Ararat and Dinamo Tbilisi is captured in an excerpt from an interview with an ethnic Armenian woman from Tbilisi, quoted by Georgian researcher Marika Gharibashvili:

I have a funny story to tell you about the neighborhood, it’s a purely Tbilisi thing. Armenians and Georgians had perfect relations until two football clubs, Dinamo Tbilisi and Ararat Yerevan played against each other. That was the time when everyone forgot how to be a good neighbor. But the next day, when the match was over and everything was decided, everyone gathered in the center of the yard, where we had a big table. Men would buy some fish and beer and drank together, forgot about the day before. It was fun.⁷⁵

A complicated relationship: Ararat-Neftchi

Things were more complicated, when it came to the relationship between Ararat Yerevan and Neftchi Baku. On the one hand, Baku had a sizable ethnic Armenian community, and many of its members were active in the football life of the city, including the leading Baku team, Neftchi. At the same time, already in the 1970s there were signs of tension in the relationship between the two teams and their fans, which became more obvious later. Baghdasaryan claims that in Baku

especially during the matches with Ararat, very few [ethnic] Armenian football fans were coming to the stadium, and those who did, didn’t dare to chant and support our team loudly . . . in this sense it was different from the Dinamo-Ararat matches in Tbilisi.⁷⁶

A sign of special importance attached to the Ararat-Neftchi rivalry, was the fact that after those games footballers received unofficial financial assistance, provided by *‘tskhoviki’* (the shadow businessmen), as was the case after most important games in the tournament. Thus, after a match in Baku in 1971, which ended 0:0 *‘in our locker-room there was such enthusiasm, as if we had won some important award . . . the team’s manager Eduard Grigoryan gave boys 150 rubles each as a reward’*.⁷⁷ Baghdasaryan claims that the team members were *‘very inspired, because playing in Baku was not easy, first of all*

because of biased refereeing.⁷⁸ Another fact that shows the importance attached to the Ararat-Neftchi matches was that in 1978, after Ararat lost to Neftchi in Baku 2:0, the team's coach at the time, Nikolay Gulyaev, had to resign.⁷⁹

Within this context it is interesting that some of leading players and coaches of Ararat came from Baku's Armenian community. At least three of them, coach Artyom Falyan and players Eduard Margarov and Alexander Mirzoyan played a big role in the history of Ararat Yerevan. Falyan was an ethnic Armenian from Baku, who played in various teams, including both Baku's 'Dinamo' and Yerevan's 'Ararat', and afterwards became a coach for Ararat in the late 1960s. It was under his supervision that Ararat became a Higher League team, later he was appointed the trainer of Alma-Aty's Kayrat team.⁸⁰

Margarov was one of the strongest forwards, first in Neftchi, then in Ararat. His father, Artyom, also a football player, had played for Yerevan's team, so their family had lived in Yerevan, when he was young. However, Margarov elder was disappointed with Armenian sports authorities who had failed to provide him with an apartment in spite of their promise: *'One day our father came home and said "pack your things, we are returning to Baku" . . . My father was offended by that attitude. Then he told me "If you become a footballer, play wherever you want, but I won't let you go to Armenia"*. But after the death of his parents, Margarov, by then a prominent player of Neftchi Baku, accepted an invitation to play in Armenia. *'I had to file an application to the Sport Committee, I said I don't have relatives in Baku any more, all my relatives are in Yerevan . . . In this way, they let me go, though they could have forbidden it. By the way, I left Baku at night. For safety I kept a knife in my car, because I did not know what could have happened on the way, but we reached Yerevan without any incidents'*.⁸¹ According to Baghdasaryan, *'in Azerbaijan a there was a big uproar because of the fact that Margarov moved specifically to Ararat'*, and Margarov, who had transferred to Ararat in 1971, did not come to Baku in order to take part in the matches against Neftchi in 1971 and 1972 *'because of security concerns'*.⁸² Margarov himself, however, stressed his origins from Southern Armenia: *'everybody thinks my roots are from Baku, but our family is from Shrvenats village in the Syunik region [of Armenia]'*.⁸³

Another ethnic Armenian player, Alexander Mirzoyan was still playing in Neftchi in 1973, though, according to Baghdasaryan, he wanted to transfer to Ararat one year after Margarov, in 1972, but it did not work out. However, he did get a transfer to Ararat in 1975, and with Ararat became the winner of the USSR Cup, and next year, the vice-champion of the USSR.⁸⁴ In fact, transfers between Neftchi and Armenian teams were not an exceptional case. As mentioned before Margarov's father had been a football player and coach, and he was the coach for Baku's 'Locomotiv' team, but he had also played in Yerevan's Spartak/Dinamo team.⁸⁵ Another Armenian, born in Baku, Sergey Poghosyan (Poshosov), started his career in Polad Sumgait, an Azerbaijani team, and then moved to Zenith Leningrad, which at the time was trained by another Baku Armenian Artyom Falyan, who, in turn, had trained Ararat before moving to Leningrad. In 1970, in Poghosyan's own words, *'someone came for me from the Sports Committee of Armenia'* and he moved to Yerevan, where he started playing for Ararat.⁸⁶ Neftchi and Ararat were both part of the Soviet football world, after all.

There were signs of strained Armenian-Azerbaijani relations in the Soviet all-union bodies as well. Thus, according to Baghdasaryan, Central Television commentator Georgi Sargsyants, ethnic Armenian from Russia, was fired because of a complaint by vice-

director of central TV, Mamedov, and ethnic Azerbaijani, who accused Sargsyan of being an Armenian nationalist. However, Sargsyants was re-instated in his position as a result of interference of another ethnic Armenian, significantly more powerful, Anastas Mikoyan, at the time the Chairman of the USSR Supreme Council.⁸⁷

In any case, things were not black and white: there was tension, but there was also a genuine sports spirit. In 1973 Neftchi was not a part of the Top league, therefore there were no matches between them and Ararat in the Championship. However they did meet in the Cup 1/8 final. When Margarov did come to Baku to take part in that *'it created a real football frenzy ... only at the pre-match training about 10 000 spectators came, including our compatriots from Baku ... in any case, Margarov was also a cult figure among Azerbaijani football fans ... when [coach] Nikita Simonyan was giving tasks to the footballers, he told Margarov: 'the tension in the city is quite big, maybe you shouldn't play, so that you don't get injured, just in case' ... Margarov replied 'No, I've come here to play, besides my relations with the players of Neftchi are good, and there's no threat like that'*.⁸⁸ This story is echoed also by Kakosyan.⁸⁹ Ararat won 1:0, and it was Margarov who scored the only goal. Atmosphere was still quite friendly after the game and there was space for jokes: Baghdasaryan tells how in the evening, during the supper *'our boys asked for sugar – "we are in mourning and you want sugar" said the Azerbaijani waiter gloomily'*.⁹⁰

This rivalry between Ararat and Neftchi grew tenser in the 1980s, spilling into violence at least once, when Neftchi lost a match 2:0 to Ararat in 1984. The incident is described by Baghdasaryan in detail:

after the match furious fans of Neftchi turned everything upside down ... right next to the sports base of Neftchi they burnt a traffic police car, smashed several shops... The hotel, where Ararat was staying was under strong security, as if under martial law ... We stayed quite long at the locker-room ... The chief of Baku police introduced himself and asked to stay as long as it was needed for the passions to calm down ... That lasted until midnight.'⁹¹

However, the 1980s were already a different period both in the life of Ararat Yerevan, and Soviet football in general. At that time Ararat Yerevan was no longer fighting for Championship, even though it had a steady place in the Top League. When it came to football, violence was on the rise, and rivalries between the teams were becoming harder. It was in 1982 that a horrific incident took place during the game Spartak-Harlem in Moscow, which resulted in numerous casualties.⁹² It would be outside of the scope of this paper to examine these phenomena, however, it is possible that these were related to the progressing crisis of the Soviet system, which led to the crisis and break-up of the Soviet system in the late 1980s. However, this is a topic for a different paper.

Epilogue

In post-Soviet Armenia, Ararat Yerevan's 1973 Soviet double triumph endures as a profound symbol of national pride and collective identity. As one of the retired players, Sergey Poghosyan, said years later: *'A lot of time has passed, but even now elderly football fans approach us, when they see, shake our hands'*.⁹³ In 2016, a sculptural ensemble immortalizing Ararat players was erected: they are shown, holding the USSR football Cup. The legacy of Ararat lives on, meaning different things to different people. To some it is a symbol of nostalgia associated with the Soviet times, to other, on the contrary, it is

a symbol of Armenia's defiance in the face of totalitarian pressures of the Soviet system. This legacy lives on also outside of Armenia. In 2025 a film called 'The Golden Double' was made in Russia, which hit the cinemas of Russia and Armenia in 2026, sparking new debates about the team's legacy.

However, whatever the social and political context in which the phenomenon of football supporters occurs, it is ultimately about community, possibility to connect to other human beings and experiencing a variety of feelings collectively. Let us finish with another quote from Kakosyan's 'Fan's Diary':

'Some pessimists consider football a mass mental disorder, others call it a powerful drug that distracts in the evening from the failures, troubles and pains of the day. Even if that was true . . . If the football spectacle rejuvenates and invigorates tired people, brings aesthetic pleasure with its beauty and harmony . . . then that is already a lot. But, in any case, it seems to me that football today has a "grand mission". We often complain about our 20th century, which created cars and skyscrapers, which accelerated the pace of life, but also disconnected and divided people. Let's look at it from another point of view, from the point of view of the jubilant grandstand. You will not even notice a shadow of loneliness on the face of any fan. . . When I was told about a fan who never misses a single match, despite being blind, I understood that a person wants to be surrounded by other people. That is why football will never die, despite the gloomy predictions of doomsayers'..⁹⁴

These lines, written half a century ago in Soviet Armenia, sound surprisingly relevant today.

Notes

1. The research was supported by the Science Committee of the Republic of Armenia, in the frames of the research project № 21AG-6C041 'Cognitive, Communicative, and Semiotic Mechanisms of the Formation of Historical Memory: a Transdisciplinary Analysis of the Armenian Epic, Historiography, Urban Space and Political Discourse'.
2. Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*; and Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*.
3. Edelman, *Serious Fun: A History of Spectator Sports in the USSR*; and Zeller, *Sport and Society in the USSR: The Politics of Football after Stalin*.
4. Samkharadze, 'Football and Nationalism in Georgia in the 1960s-1980s'.
5. Arnold, 'Nationalism and Sport: A Review of the Field'.
6. De Wael et al., *The Palgrave International Handbook of Football and Politics*, 8.
7. Ibid., 9.
8. Mertin, 'Ethnic Minorities and National Identity in Soviet Sport'.
9. Sugden and Tomlinson, 'Football, Ressentiment and Resistance in the Break-up of the Former USSR', 100.
10. Gloriovova, 'Russia', 268–9.
11. Pipes, *The Formation of the USSR: Communism and Nationalism, 1917–1923*; Conquest, *The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities*; Conquest, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations*; Nahaylo and Swoboda, *Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR*; Slezkine, 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism'; Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the USSR, 1923–1939*; Broers, "David and Goliath" and "Georgians in the Kremlin"; and Annus, 'The Problem of Soviet Colonialism in the Baltics'; Annus, *Soviet Postcolonial Studies*.
12. Sugden and Tomlinson, 'Football, Ressentiment and Resistance', 92.

13. Zeller, *Sport and Society in the USSR*, 143–73.
14. Glorizova, 'Russia', 271.
15. See note 13.
16. Ruzhelnik, 'Ukraine', 314.
17. Ibid., 316.
18. Zolyan, 'The Story of "Ararat-73"'.
 19. Kakosyan *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*.
20. Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*.
21. For a more detailed discussion on the change of the name of the club and the connotations of the name 'Ararat' in Zolyan, 'The Story of "Ararat-73"'.
 22. On 'national revival' in Soviet Armenia in 1960–1970s. see Dadrian, 'Nationalism in Soviet Armenia – A Case Study of Ethnocentrism'; Suny, *Looking towards Ararat*; and Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*.
23. Zolyan, 'The Story of "Ararat-73"'.
 24. Giulianiotti, 'Supporters, Followers, Fans, and Flâneurs'.
25. Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*, 155.
26. See note 23.
27. Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*, 13.
28. Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*, 242; Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*, 337, Zolyan, 'The Story of "Ararat-73"'.
 29. Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*, 237.
30. Ibid., 242.
31. Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*, 315–16.
32. Ibid., 337.
33. Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*, 262–63.
34. The main governing body dealing with sport in Soviet system.
35. Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*, 247.
36. Ibid., 117.
37. Abrahamyan, Discussion with the author, 2025, According to him, the chant 'Haaayer' imitated the Ajax fans chant, which Ararat supporters had heard on television.
38. The name of the city, connected with Lenin, was changed after 1991, now it is called Gyumri.
39. Abrahamyan, Discussion with the author, 2025.
40. Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*, 237.
41. Ibid., 183.
42. Danelia, *Mimino*; and Zolyan, 'The Story of "Ararat-73"'.
 43. for a detailed discussion of this topic see Zolyan, 'The Story of "Ararat-73"'.
 44. Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*, 46.
45. Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*, 175.
46. Ibid.
47. Giulianiotti, 'Supporters, Followers, Fans, and Flâneurs'.
48. Rawlinson, 'Russian Organised Crime'.
49. Zolyan, 'The Story of "Ararat-73"'.
 50. Ibid.
51. Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*, 243.
52. Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*, 103; and Zolyan, 'The Story of "Ararat-73"'.
 53. Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*, 234.
54. See note 49.
55. Pisu, 'New Perspectives on the Parajanov Affair'.
56. The term, which literally means 'territory beyond Caucasus mountains' was used mostly during the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, is considered inaccurate and outdated today, partly due to its colonial connotations.
57. Bandyopadhyay, *Face to Face*.
58. Glorizova, 'Russia', 271.

59. Ruzhelnik, 'Ukraine'.
60. See note 58.
61. Zolyan, 'The Story of Ararat' . . . that was the case in 1973 with a very tense match Karpaty-Ararat in Lviv, which Ararat lost, in view of Armenians fans due to wrong decisions of a referee, creating an outcry in Armenia, which demanded the involvement of the local Communist Party official, responsible for ideology.
62. Dadrian, 'Nationalism in Soviet Armenia – A Case Study of Ethnocentrism'; Suny, *Looking towards Ararat*; Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*; Jones, 'Old Ghosts and New Chains'; Jones, *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918–2012*; Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity Under Russian Rule*; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905–1920*; Swietochowski, *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition*; and Shnirelman, *The Value of the Past: Myths, Identity and Politics in Transcaucasia*.
63. De Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*; and Broers, *Armenia and Azerbaijan: Anatomy of a Rivalry*.
64. Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*, 127.
65. Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*, 226.
66. Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*, 128.
67. Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*, 88.
68. Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*, 89.
69. Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*, 121.
70. *Ibid.*, 143.
71. Yerevan's football team was called 'Spartak' and was renamed 'Ararat', Zolyan, 'The Story of "Ararat-73"'.
72. Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*, 180.
73. Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*, 213.
74. Sugden and Tomlinson, 'Football, Ressentiment and Resistance in the Break-up of the Former USSR', 93.
75. Gharibashvili, 'The Generation Matters: Armenian Families in Tbilisi (a Yard in Avlabari)', 107.
76. Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*, 143.
77. *Ibid.*, 144.
78. *Ibid.*, 7.
79. *Ibid.*, 349.
80. *Ibid.*, 239.
81. *Ibid.*, 78.
82. *Ibid.*, 142–3.
83. *Ibid.*, 74.
84. *Ibid.*, 143.
85. *Ibid.*, 76–7.
86. *Ibid.*, 52.
87. *Ibid.*, 47.
88. *Ibid.*, 143–45.
89. Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*, 187.
90. Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*, 147.
91. See note 88.
92. Zeller, *Sport and Society in the USSR*, 22; and Glorizova, Russia, 276.
93. Baghdasaryan, *Ararat 73. Haykakan Futboli Voskedare*, 56.
94. Kakosyan, *Futbolin Hajordogh Gishery*, 9.

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