

Armenia Marks Centennial of First Republic

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The 100th anniversary of the First Republic of Armenia and the May heroic battles were solemnly celebrated in Armenia on May 28.

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, President Armen Sarkissian, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, President of Artsakh Bako Sahakyan, Defense Minister of Armenia Davit Tonoyan, Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Armenia Artak Davtyan, Director of the National Security Service of Armenia Artur Vanetsyan, Police Chief Valery Osipyan, Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan and other high level officials were present at the ceremony at Sardarapat Memorial.

At the beginning of the ceremony Pashinyan, President Sarkissian, Catholicos Karekin II and President of Artsakh Sahakyan laid flowers at the memorial see CENTENNIAL, page 3



The military parade at Sardarapat



Artsakh President Sahakyan Receives ADL Supreme Council President Nazerian

STEPANAKERT – On May 22, Artsakh Republic President Bako Sahakyan received a delegation led by President of the Supreme Council of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Vartan Nazerian.

Artsakh President Bako Sahakyan, right, meeting with President Vartan Nazerian of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Supreme Council, center, left, with Karen Kakoyan to his right and Khoren Kalinian to his left.

A range of issues related to foreign and domestic policy and the socioeconomic development of Artsakh were on the agenda. Sahakyan highlighted the importance of the maintenance of ongoing dialogue with the traditional Armenian political parties abroad, considering this one of the practical manifestations of ties between the homeland and its diaspora.

After 70 Years, the New York Armenian Home Closes, Merging with New Jersey Facility

By Katrina Shakarian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

FLUSHING, N.Y. – Tucked between large, non-descript apartment blocks on a stretch of 45th avenue in Flushing, Queens, stands a three-story federal-style brick house. It's situated on the edge of just over an acre of land dotted with trees and park benches painted in the red, blue and orange of the Armenian flag. Since 1954, this building has been the location of New York's only residential facility for Armenian seniors, the New York Armenian Home.

"In the autumn of their years," recounted Jerry Bezdikian, "residents experienced the peace and contentment of living amongst their own. Being served food that they had been accustomed to their entire lives, and even being able to enjoy Armenian cultural events, as well as regular religious services."

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Piecing Together the Words of a Saint

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

POTSDAM, Germany – A revolutionary technology developed in Germany has made it possible to reconstruct an early version of Saint Gregory of Narek's *Book of Prayers* (or *Lamentations*), conserved in the Matenadaran in Yerevan. The work is a manuscript dating back to the 13th-14th century, and is one of the earliest copies of the 10th century original, which has been lost. The task presented to restorers seemed hopeless due to the desperate condition of the manuscript. The book had fallen

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Badly damaged pages of St. Gregory of Narek's Book from 13th-14th century.



NEWS IN BRIEF

French Foreign Minister Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian called for the expansion of France's cordial relationship with Armenia on Monday, May 28.

"Armenia is at a turning point in its history," he said after talks with his new Armenian counterpart, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan. "We welcome the responsibility shown by political forces and the Armenia people [during the political crisis,] which allowed the election of a new prime minister [on May 8.]"

"I am very proud of being the first high-ranking foreign official to visit new Armenia and meet its new leaders," he told a joint news briefing with Mnatsakanyan. "France will continue to stand with Armenia and help it to build democracy."

Le Drian, who met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan later in the day, also reaffirmed France's strong support for Armenia's efforts to forge closer links with the European Union. He stressed the significance of a wide-ranging agreement which the previous Armenian government signed with the EU last November.

Mnatsakanyan also emphasized the "privileged" character of French-Armenian relations. He said he and Le Drian held a "productive discussion" on bilateral ties and regional security.

Those ties stem in large measure from the existence of an influential Armenian community in France. Yerevan will underline them when it hosts in October a summit of Francophonie, a grouping of over 70 mainly French-speaking nations.

Armenian Tycoon Probed for Tax Fraud

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The National Security Service (NSS) confirmed on Tuesday that it has launched a tax evasion investigation into Armenia's largest retail chain controlled by Samvel Aleksanian, a wealthy businessman representing the Republican Party (HHK) in parliament.

An NSS spokesperson said that the law-enforcement body is now looking to the Yerevan City supermarket chain's financial statements and other records.

Aleksanian, 49, is one of Armenia's richest men who has long effectively controlled imports of sugar, cooking oil and other basic foodstuffs. Aleksanian has been a member of the Armenian parliament since 2003.

The inquiry into suspected tax evasion at Yerevan City food supermarkets followed a crack-down on corruption announced by Artur Vanetsian, the new head of the NSS, on May 19.

The NSS arrested late last week three senior executives of a customs brokerage firm accused of failing to pay millions of dollars' worth of taxes. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said his government will not be waging "vendettas" against members of the former ruling regime or their allies.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

European, American Investors Interested in Defunct Nairit Plant

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Minister of energy infrastructures and natural resources Arthur Grigoryan says there are investors who are interested in the defunct Nairit plant of Yerevan.

Nairit was known for producing synthetic rubber.

Speaking to reporters on May 30, the minister said that the investors are from several European countries and the United States.

“There are international organizations at this moment which are interested in the future plans of operations of the Nairit plant. They will soon arrive to Armenia and will carry out technical audit, after which we will have a conclusion,” he said.

The minister said that the plant is currently going through a bankruptcy process, a liquidator is dealing with the issue and they cannot make any interference, but they’ve tried to reach an agreement to suspend the process of auctioning the property.

Soldier Wounded by Azeri Army

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A soldier wounded in Artsakh on May 13 as a result of Azerbaijani shooting is in critical condition, Gayane Hovhannisyan, the head of the military-medical department of Armenia’s Defense Ministry, told reporters.

“The soldier was wounded in the night of May 13, after which he has been transported to the Stepanakert military hospital where he underwent surgery. After stabilization he has been transported to the central hospital. Now he is in intensive care unit, is connected to an artificial respiratory device,” Hovhannisyan said, adding that at this stage there is no need for another surgery.

Shamkhal Petrosyan, 20, was wounded in one of the military units located in the northern direction of the Defense Army, has been transported to Yerevan on May 15.

The military investigative committee launched a criminal case on attempted murder on motives of national, racial or religious hatred or religious fanaticism.

EU Envoy Impressed with Armenian ‘Revolution of Mindsets’

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The recent dramatic events changed not only Armenia’s government but also the “mindsets” of its citizens and earned the country a “very positive image” abroad, a senior European Union (EU) diplomat said on Tuesday, May 29.

“I believe that what happened in Armenia is something very deep,” Piotr Switalski, the head of the EU Delegation in Yerevan, said. “It’s not just about a change in power, it’s not about bringing new faces or new political personalities into the government. It’s not about changing policies.”

“This was a revolution of mindsets,” he said. “People decided to get rid of the remnants of past thinking, past syndromes. I believe that is something lasting. In particular, the young people [in Armenia] are different people now.”

“The challenge for the [new] government and also for the society at large is to sustain this positive change and this positive energy which has started emanating from the people,” stressed Switalski.

He also praised Armenia’s former leadership, the leaders of protest movement that removed it from power as well as “other political and societal forces” for jointly ending the nearly month-long unrest.

“I think that from the political point of view what happened in Armenia was very unique because the crisis which erupted in Armenia has been solved, defused peacefully and within the constitutional frameworks, which has sent a very powerful message to the outside world ... This message is building a very positive image of Armenia in the outside world,” he said.

“It is sending a powerful signal about the solidarity, unity and political maturity of the Armenian society,” added Switalski.

UWC Dilijan Holds Third Commencement Ceremonies with New Premier as Speaker

DILIJAN, Armenia — On May 26, the UWC Dilijan Class of 2018 — 104 students from 63 countries — bid farewell to the college and Armenia and set off on their new journey of adulthood. The third UWC Dilijan graduation was attended by Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of Armenia, who delivered a keynote speech and wished the best to the graduates who had spent the last two years in Armenia.

In his speech, he called the school a source of hope and inspiration, of enthusiasm and optimism and a symbol of Armenia’s future. He expressed his hope that the students and their families would return to Armenia, “a country with big soul, with big hope and big endeavor to human rights, democracy, rule of law and tolerance” many times in the future.

The ceremony was full of touching speeches from the students and staff and beautiful musical, dance and poetry performances by the students. The concert was opened, as is tradition,



The members of the graduating class and friends and families taking pictures

story of coming from a family of farmers with a very modest background but with great aspirations for education. He mentioned all the teachers and mentors who had helped him through-

to them and how it had shaped their characters.

Katie said, “Life here is home. This school and its people...they cast a magical spell that make you forget that we are from different nations. You may call us ignorant idealists, but I’d argue we are simple believers. We believe in the gift of ideas far beyond idealism, we believe in the strength of actions far beyond activism, we believe in the power of language far beyond words”.

Mauro added, “How to forget the treasures Armenia has shown to us? This country has so much to offer, so much that is hidden and is yet to be discovered... Distance is nothing when people mean a lot. That’s why I can say for sure, it’s not a ‘good-bye’, it’s a ‘see you soon’”.

In her speech, Chair of the Board of Governors Veronika Zonabend thanked Head of College Denise Davidson for her two-year work and passed the leadership of the college to Gabriel Abad who will be leading the college starting from the next school year.

Graduates of the UWC Dilijan Class of 2018 will set out on various paths. Some are taking a gap year and are going to travel and explore the world, to work in NGOs in their home countries, study in educational programs like “Global citizen” or to stay in Armenia for the “Enterprise Dilijan” program supported by UWC Dilijan and IDEa Foundation. Others are head-



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan with students

with a dance performance by all the second year Armenian students and a Komitas song sang by a chemistry teacher Elizabeth Sepetdjian.

One of the most important parts of the ceremony was the celebration of the donor-student relationship, as 96 percent of UWC Dilijan students study on full or partial scholarships. Workneh, from Ethiopia, shared his

out his life to strive for education, and especially the donor who paid for him to study at UWC Dilijan, and he responded to their support by earning the best possible grades and a scholarship to study from Harvard University.

Graduating students, Katie from Germany and Mauro from Costa Rica, devoted their speeches to recalling everything that the college had given

Elton John Hails ‘Wind Of Change’ in Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Elton John, the legendary British singer and composer, spoke on Sunday, May 27, of a “wind of change” sweeping through Armenia when he visited the country for the first time to support a local charity helping children with disabilities.

John and his husband, David Furnish, arrived in Yerevan at the invitation of President Armen Sarkissian, the man behind the Yerevan My Love charity. He said that he also wants to help create a safe environment for AIDS testing, and to help rid Armenian society of the stigma associated with the disease as well as with being a member of the LGBT community.

“We have a lot of Armenian friends in England and America,” he said. “They always talk about Armenia. It’s emerging as a new country. It’s only been independent for 25 years. So we have always wanted to come here.”

“This feels like a new country, feels like it has a lot of energy, a lot of hope and promise,” he said while visiting, together with Sarkissian, the Yerevan My Love center in the Armenian capital where he and Furnish handed out hearing aids to children.

John, 71, said he feels that Sarkissian and new Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who came to power in a wave of mass protests in early May, will enable “things to change for the good” in the country.

“I think the wind of change is here and I think it’s very, very positive. I’m very happy to be here and to be a part of it and feel the vibrancy of this country,” he said.

Sarkissian also received John at the presidential palace in Yerevan. Joined by their spouses, the two men had dinner with Pashinyan later in the day.

Sarkissian lived and worked in Britain for nearly three decades before being elected president of the republic in March. He raised funds there for Yerevan My Love together with Britain’s Prince Charles and organized the latter’s visit to Armenia in 2013.



British singer Elton John and Armenian President Armen Sarkissian pose for a photograph with children in Yerevan,



ARMENIA



Dancers on stage at Republic Square on May 28.

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eternalizing the memory of the victims of the May heroic battles, after which Nikol Pashinyan delivered a speech.

Pashinyan's speech was followed by a solemn military parade, during which the history of the establishment of the Armenian army and the heroic path of the Armenian people during the May heroic battles, the Great Patriotic War and the Artsakh liberation war were introduced.

The procession was led by Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Armenia, Major-General Andranik Makaryan.

The servicemen of a joint Armenian-Russian military unit also participated in the march. About 200 servicemen from the Southern Military District of Russia stationed in Armenia also participated in the military parade for the first time.

On his way back to Yerevan, Pashinyan cov-

Republic Day, May 28.

According to the prime minister, each time the Armenian people have won, they decided they had to win and they believed in themselves.

"We have won and we will win in all the events when we will decide to win, when we will rely on ourselves rather than others, when we will not give in before any difficulty, when we will love, love unlimitedly our fatherland and each other, when we will not attempt to tie our personal interests to our own people and the state, when each and every citizen will realize that he is an owner in his country, not a vassal," the PM said.

He said that this sense of an owner isn't simply a right, but also a duty, in order each corner of the country and every countrymen to be treated with respect and dignity.

"The Armenian people had to win, because the blood of the heroes of Sardarapat, Bash



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Armen Sarkissian walk to the commemorative program on May 28.



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan speaks at the Sardarapat memorial.

ered some part of the road on foot, approaching the gathered citizens and talking with them.

The festive events dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the First Republic of Armenia and the May heroic battles will be concluded by a concert at the Republic Square.

The formula of victory for the Armenian people is relying on its own strengths and believing in victory, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in his remarks at the Sardarapat Memorial on

Aparan is flowing in its veins, the blood of Aram Manukyan, the blood of Tovmas Nazarbekyan, the blood of Movses Silikyan, the blood of Daniel Bek-Pirumyan," he said.

"The establishment of the First Republic was crowned with the proclamation of the Third Republic, was glorified with the victory of our people in the Artsakh War and gained worldwide fame with the non-violent people's velvet revolution," the premier said.

Numerous events and programs such as forums, conferences, cultural and public performances, took place nationwide. Celebrations will take place in Artsakh as well.

Government officials will pay a visit to the Sardarapat Memorial to pay tribute to the memory of the fallen heroes who gave their lives for independence and freedom.

A military parade also takes place in Sardarapat.

The holiday will be wrapped up with a concert in Yerevan's Republic Square in the evening.

On May 28, 1918 the Armenian people restored their independence, which was lost

nearly 9 centuries earlier, with the triumphant victories in the fierce battles of Karakilisa, Bash Abaran and Sardarapat.

With this victory, Armenian troops were able to stop the Turkish invasion to Transcaucasia and saved Armenia from total destruction.

On May 28, after the collapse of the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic in Tbilisi, the Armenian National Council declared the Republic of Armenia.

The first Prime Minister of the First Armenian Republic was Hovhannes Kajaznuni, and the last Simon Vratsyan.

The First Republic of Armenia was invaded by the Red Army in 1920 and two years later the country became part of the USSR.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Candidate from Turkey Nationalist Party Is Armenian

ISTANBUL (Public Radio of Armenia) — Istanbul Armenian Elmas Giragos, who is a co-founder of the Turkish nationalist Good Party, founded one year ago, will be running for parliament from Istanbul.

Giragos is eighth on the list of this party's parliamentary candidates at an Istanbul election district, according to Milliyet newspaper of Turkey.

Considering the poll results, however, she is not likely to win a parliamentary seat.

When submitting her documents required for as a candidate, Giragos stated that she is Armenian, she goes to church, and is proud to be a progeny of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Snap parliamentary and presidential elections will be conducted in Turkey on June 24.

Two Armenian MPs in the current parliament—Garos Paylan from the opposition pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), and Markar Esayan from the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) — again have been nominated MP candidates by their parties, whereas opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) MP Selina Dogan has not been nominated this time.

Syria Recognizes Abkhazia, South Ossetia

DAMASCUS (Public Radio of Armenia) — Syrian has reached agreements with Abkhazia and South Ossetia on mutual recognition and establishment of diplomatic relations.

"The Republic of South Ossetia and the Syrian Arab Republic declare mutual recognition and the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries at the level of embassies from the date this communique is published," reads a communique on the website of the Ossetian Foreign Ministry.

Both countries are seeking "to establish and develop full-scale political, economic and cultural cooperation," the communique says.

On May 29, the Republic of Abkhazia and the Syrian Arab Republic (SAR) agreed on the mutual recognition and establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries through embassies, which reflects their common strive to develop relations in all areas," Abkhaz President Raul Hajimba said in a statement released on his official website on Tuesday.

"We highly value this step made by the government of the Syrian Arab Republic and are confident that our relations will be developing in the spirit of mutual confidence and cooperation," Hajimba stated.

Russia, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Nauru were the only nations to have recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia so far.

Armenia Looks to Expand Iran Ties

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has said that the relations with Iran are of great significance to Armenia, stressing the need for expanding bilateral economic relations.

Speaking to IRNA news agency this week, he said "political relations between Armenia and Iran are now at a high level" and pledged to do the best to further increase bilateral political relations.

He noted, however, that unlike political ties, economic relations with Iran have not expanded.

"One of the priorities of our government is to expand trade and economic relations with Iran," Pashinyan said, adding that in a recent telephone conversation with Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, he expressed his government's readiness to further develop economic relations.

He pointed out during the phone conversation the two leaders decided to meet in the near future.

Pashinyan said: "We are, of course, worried about the situation. We also have good relations with the United States and we hope that the crisis will be resolved through negotiations."

He added that Yerevan seeks to expand bilateral relations with both Iran and the United States.

Pashinyan Visits Georgia

TBILISI (Armenpress) — On an official visit to Tbilisi, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili.

"I'm glad to meet Armenia's democratic Prime Minister. I hope your visit will give new impetus to centuries-old relations between Armenia and Georgia.

Nikol Pashinyan noted in turn, that he's glad the visit is taking place against the background of democratic processes in Armenia.

"I'm confident democracy is of vital importance to our countries," Pashinyan said, pledging to spare no effort to give new impetus to bilateral relations.

The Prime Minister noted that 2018 is rich in events and said he hopes to meet Giorgi Margvelashvili once again on the sidelines of the 17th Francophonie Summit.

Pashinyan noted he was pleased that his first official visit abroad was to Georgia, "as the development of relations with Georgia is of special importance on Armenia's political agenda."

"There are no unsolvable issues in the Armenian-Russian relations, Pashinyan said.

"We have come here to open up new perspec-

tives and solve concrete issues," Pashinyan said.

"It's no coincidence that I'm paying my first official visit to brotherly Georgia, as we are tied with close historic centuries-old relations, friendship and mutual trust. I'm confident the warm relations between our peoples and countries will form a solid basis for the further reinforcement of inter-state ties," he said.

Kvirikashvili noted, in turn, that Georgia was closely following the developments in Armenia and is supporting the democratic processes taking place

in the country.

"Stability in Armenia is important to us," the Georgian noted.

During talks in Tbilisi the Armenian and Georgian Prime Ministers discussed a wide range of issues related to cooperation in the fields of trade and economy, energy, transport, agriculture, tourism and culture.

The interlocutors hailed the level of energy cooperation and attached importance to the further deepening of cooperation in the transport sector.

Pashinyan invited his Georgian counterpart to Armenia.



President Giorgi Margvelashvili, left, with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

Turkey Hands Life Sentences to 104 People Over Coup Attempt

By Carlotta Gall

ISTANBUL (New York Times) — A court in Turkey has sentenced 104 people to life in prison for involvement in the failed military coup of 2016, handing down the heaviest penalties possible in the country.

The defendants were part of a group trial of 280 people, mostly military personnel, accused of participating in an attempt to overthrow President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Scuffles broke out at the sentencing on Monday as some of the defendants tried to attack two witnesses who had turned state's evidence and given details of the plan during the trial, according to Turkish news reports.

The court in Yenisekran, near the coastal city of Izmir in the west of Turkey, convicted 104 of the defendants to "aggravated life," the heaviest sentence possible in Turkey, with very little chance of parole.

An additional 21 people were given 20 years in prison for their part in the attempt to overthrow the president, and 31 others were sentenced to 10 years and six months for "membership of a terrorist organization," the newspaper Hurriyet reported.

The men were on trial for their part in the events of the night of July 15, 2016, when a group of military officers and civilians commandeered tanks and warplanes, firing on protesters and bombing the Parliament building in the capital, Ankara, in an effort to seize power. Mr. Erdogan narrowly escaped capture,

but 250 people, mostly unarmed civilians, were killed as they faced down tanks on the streets.

Turkey has been holding a series of mass trials for those accused of involvement in the coup, including retired and active military and air force officers, special forces personnel and cadets who were ordered out from their barracks that night.

The government has accused them of following the orders of the United States-based preacher Fethullah Gulen, who is being tried separately in absentia. Turkey has requested his extradition, but American officials have said that the Turkish government has yet to provide credible evidence of his involvement.

The latest trial offered some of the strongest evidence to date that the plan was indeed formed by followers of Mr. Gulen. Many defendants in this and previous trials denied involvement in the coup or made light of their presence at one of the air bases on the night of the coup.

Among those sentenced were Brig. Adm. Ibrahim Yildiz and Col. Hakan Biyik, who had admitted to ties with Mr. Gulen's movement and served as secret witnesses during earlier hearings. Both men received sentences of 16 years and eight months, even after their cooperation with prosecutors was taken into account. Their testimony forms a key part of the extradition request that Turkish prosecutors have submitted to the United States. The Treasury Department is examining Turkey's extradition request.

Colonel Biyik, who went by the code

name Cap, told prosecutors that he had been present at planning meetings for the coup in a villa in Ankara, according to Turkish news reports. He identified some of those present and said the meetings, called the Peace at Home Council, were organized by a theology lecturer, Adil Oksuz, who has been accused of playing a leading role in the coup and remains at large. Prosecutors said they had found fingerprints in the villa of some of those he had named, the newspaper Haberturk reported.

Admiral Yildiz, who went by the code name Raven, has emerged as one of the most important witnesses of preparations for the coup. He also attended the meetings in Ankara and, according to the indictment, testified that at one, Mr. Oksuz had announced that he would take the plan to Mr. Gulen for his approval and that he had traveled to see Mr. Gulen in Pennsylvania three days before the coup, according to Hurriyet.

Admiral Yildiz took part in the coup but gave himself up before the attempted ouster of the president was foiled.

"I am one of the first people who testified that Gulen was behind the coup," he said in court in March, the news agency Anadolu reported. He said he had been introduced to the Gulen movement by a fellow officer and had been drawn closer to it because of his Muslim faith, but he added that he had ultimately been deceived.

"I am just an Anatolian boy who became an admiral," he told the court. "I want you to accept me as someone who is not trying to avoid a sentence but whose religious sentiments were abused and cheated by them."

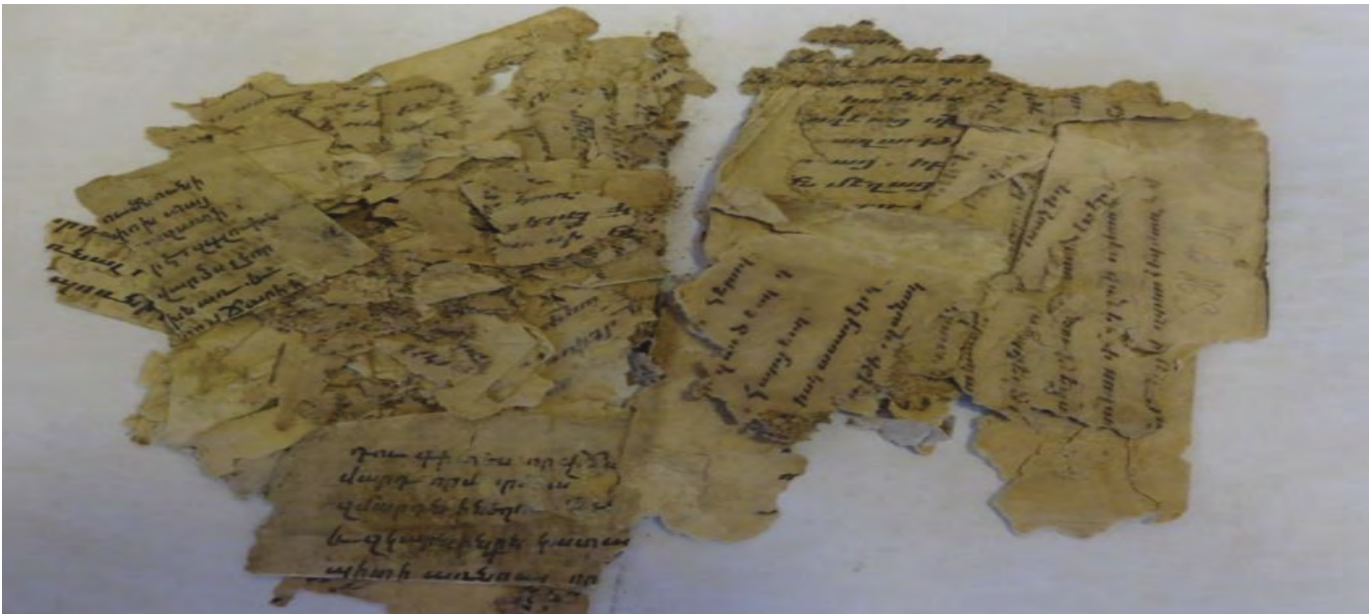
Piecing Together the Words of a Saint

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into decay, its pages reduced to fragments, and those were in utter disarray so that it was impossible to place the individual pieces of pages in their original order.

There was no way to salvage the precious manuscript using traditional methods of restoration. In 2016 the Fraunhofer Institute initiated a feasibility study to determine whether its methods could be successfully applied to recovering damaged documents at the Matenadaran. Fraunhofer is recognized as the leading organization for applied research in Europe, with 72 institutes and research centers (www.fraunhofer.de/en.html). The method adopted is known as automated virtual reconstruction; as explained in an article in the institute's publication *FUTUR*, the so-called ePuzzler, which the Institute has developed, is "a reconstruction software that uses sophisticated image-processing and pattern detection algorithms to automatically recombine scanned paper fragments into complete pages."

There are three stages in the reconstruction process. The fragments are digitized, to make it possible to process them virtually. "Then the ePuzzler processes the digital copies and reconstitutes them into full pages. The third stage goes beyond the reconstruction of single pages to embrace mechanisms both for the automated match-up of single pages to form complete files and for development of their content."

Funded by the German Foreign Ministry, the Fraunhofer scientists organized two workshops in Yerevan, in which they presented the virtual reconstruction technology and preparation and procedure of digitalization work to the members of the staffs involved in restoration, digitalization, research and archive at the Matenadaran. Together they drew up potential applications scenarios, and selected and digitized exemplary material for sample processing. The results were very promising and work continued. At the end of last year, the Narek project was completed, with the financial support of the Foreign Ministry. The work was conducted by Fraunhofer collaborators Siranoush Varderesyan and Henry Zoberbier under the direction of Dr. Bertram Nickolay, head of the Department for Security Technology. It is expected that in September



the results of the project will be presented to the public in Germany.

The advantages of the virtual reconstruction method pioneered by Fraunhofer should be obvious: in the case of ancient and damaged documents, it is important to reduce manual handling to an absolute minimum. Once the virtual reconstruction has been completed, work can proceed on actual physical restoration.

For the Matenadaran this technology may prove to be a godsend. The world famous institute in Yerevan houses a collection of inestimable value, parts of it have been welcomed into the "Memory of the World Register" of UNESCO. Its experts enjoy recognition internationally for their advanced skills in restoring books and documents and the institute, as *FUTUR* writes, "is the key reference point and port of call for all enquiries regarding restoration and reconstruction in the region." Despite this high level of expertise, work on restoring the immense amount of manu-

scripts has been hampered by the lack of adequate technical support.

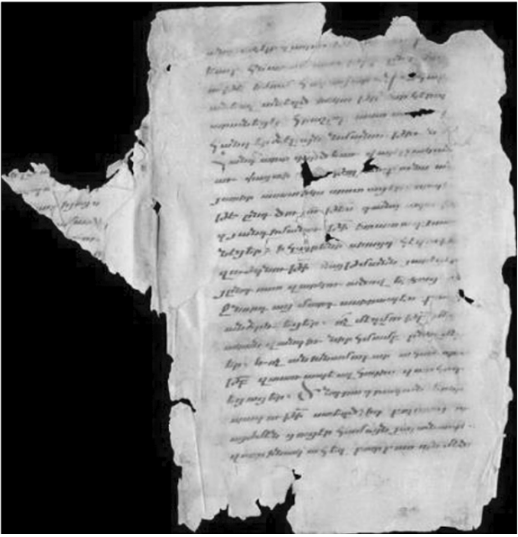
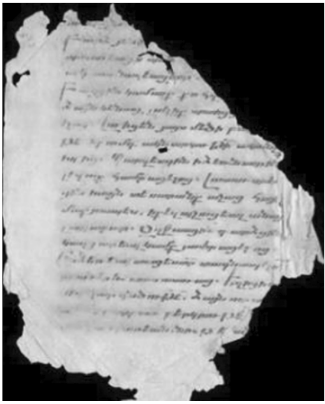
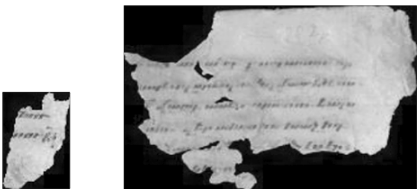
Sharing the Fruits of Revolutions

There is a wonderful irony in the fact that this particular technology from Germany should come to the aid of cultural protection in Armenia, at this particular moment in history, when Armenia is going through a profound revolutionary transformation. Many Germans, following the events of the past weeks in the media, have been reminded of the peaceful revolution carried out by East Germans in 1989, which brought down the Berlin Wall and led to national reunification — an unthinkable development, during which not a shot was fired. The events unfolding in Armenia in April and May recalled that experience, for its steadfast commitment to non-violent, peaceful change.

Now, it turns out that the revolutionary technology developed by Fraunhofer became famous for its application to the reconstruction of documents belonging to the files of the Stasi, the Communist East German State Security Service, which had been torn, shredded or otherwise physically destroyed at the time of the 1989 peaceful revolution. Through the Stasi Fragments Project, the Fraunhofer group reconstructed the files of that entity, beginning a four-year pilot phase in 2007. This was no mean task. There were 15,000 sacks of documents that had been ripped by officials seeking to destroy the evidence, and 400 sacks were slated for processing in the pilot phase.

On the cultural level, this method has been successfully applied to reconstruct books that were destroyed in the collapse of the Historical Archive of Cologne, as well as works of the great German scientist Wilhelm Gottfried Leibniz. There are 200,000 pieces of paper, on which this seminal thinker noted down his ideas on a vast array of themes, handwritten fragments now being deciphered, ordered and published thanks to the Fraunhofer method. The technology can also be applied to three-dimensional objects, making it possible to recover statues and frescoes that have been damaged by natural decay or even terrorism.

And now the precious work of Gregory of Narek has been recovered. The Armenian saint who lived from 950 to 1003, has been honored in recent years by the Pope, in the spirit of Christian unity. On the centennial of the genocide, Pope Francis officially declared him a Doctor of the Church and on April 5 of this year he unveiled a bronze statue of Gregory of Narek at the Vatican.



German Officers' Role in Armenian Genocide Explored



By **Muriek Mirak-Weissbac**
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

POTSDAM, Germany — Retired Brigadier General Eckhard Lise delivered a lecture at the Lepsius House in Potsdam on May 17, on "The Armenian Genocide in World War I — German Officers Involved?" At the outset, Lise made clear that there was no doubt that this was genocide. Then he moved to the issue of the role of Germany, allied to the Ottomans.

Drawing on material from his recent book on this theme, he presented a differentiated picture of the attitudes and behavior of the German Military personnel engaged in the war effort. He concentrated on single individuals: Liman von Sanders, Colmar von der Goltz and others. With his privileged insight as a military man with 50 years of experience, Lise developed his insights into the issue of military ethics facing soldiers and officers. Where are the limits to their obedience to

their own officers? And how did they relate to their superiors in a foreign army or coalition partner?

Lise used charts from his book to show the chain of command, whereby the Germans, like Bronsart von Schellendorf (Chief of General Staff), Admiral Wilhelm Souchon (Fleet Commander) and Admiral Guido von Usedom (Inspector General of the Coastal Fortifications) were under War Minister Enver Pasha. Although Liman von Sanders had a special role, he had no direct influence on Schellendorf, Souchon or Usedom. Regarding the deportations, Lise said they could not have come on the initiative of Schellendorf, because he was not in a position to order them, but at most implemented the orders.

The audience, which included students from the Potsdam University, listened with rapt attention to stories he told from his personal experience in Turkey. From 2002 to 2005, he was Assistant Chief of Staff Support of the NATO Rapid deployable Corps in Turkey, stationed in Istanbul.

Community News

St. Nersess Seminary Graduates Two Students

ARMONK, N.Y. — On Saturday, May 19, more than 100 guests, including friends and family of the graduates, clergy, board of directors, alumni and supporters of the seminary, celebrated the graduation of Deacons Arman Galstyan and Michael Sabounjian who received their diplomas from St. Nersess Seminary.

Among the dignitaries at the event were the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan, new Primate of the Eastern Diocese and President of the St. Nersess Board of Directors, and Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, who for nearly three decades led the Diocese and the Seminary as its Primate and President.

The program began with a vespers service in the St. Hagop Chapel. The Rev. Fr. Mardiros Chevian, dean, welcomed the guests and introduced each speaker who addressed the graduates during the graduation ceremony. Deacon Albert Hambardzumyan, representing the St. Nersess student body, spoke to the graduates saying, “Remember your roots at St. Nersess and always remain faithful servants.”

Chevian then introduced Garen Karamyan, instructor of classical and modern Armenian, who proclaimed on the eve of Pentecost, he chose to speak in Armenian. “Let it be Pentecost in your lives every day so that you may be able to speak in all the unique and various languages of our people in order to bring unity in your parishes as future priests of the Armenian Church,” said Karamyan.

Speaking to the graduates next was Dr. Roberta Ervine, professor of Armenian Studies, who also referenced Pentecost, citing the uncertainty that the disciples felt on that day and asking the new graduates, “How will you encounter others and how will they respond?”

This was followed by the President of St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, the Very Rev. Dr. Chad Hatfield, who thanked St. Nersess for its long standing 50-year collaborative relationship. “We will celebrate our anniversary with a special symposium on October 5, 2019...save the date.”

Next the graduates addressed the attendees, starting with Dn. Arman, who completed his studies in the St. Nersess the Great Program for Late Vocations and received a Diploma in Armenian Church Studies. “Sometimes when you look back at your choices in life, you are not always sure of your decision. But I am so happy to have attended St. Nersess and am at peace with my choice. It was not always easy,” he explained, as he detailed how his wife and children in Canada supported his busy travel schedule to the seminary to complete his degree.

Both Galstyan and Sabounjian expressed their gratitude to their instructors, as well as Barsamian and Chevian for their unconditional support and love. “As I reflect on the last three years, I am able to say I am a better Christian and servant of the Armenian Church,” exclaimed Sabounjian, who received a diploma in Armenian Church Studies. “St. Nersess filled my head with knowledge as I explored the heart of our church traditions,” said Galstyan.

Before Findikyan presented the graduates with their diplomas, Archbishop Barsamian addressed the room with a heartfelt message. “Today is a celebration of progress for both St. Nersess and our graduates. I have worked hard to make the vision of Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan a reality. The mission of the Armenian Church now continues through our graduates, whom I have watched grow through the years. With Fr. Daniel as the new Primate — this is also progress — I am confident for the

see GRADUATES, page 8



Lucy Mirigian

111-year-old San Francisco Woman Had to Prove to US Government that She Was Still Alive

By Steve Rubenstein

San Francisco Chronicle

SAN FRANCISCO (*San Francisco Chronicle*) — Lucy Mirigian is 111 and very much alive, no matter what the U.S. government says.

She was working a jigsaw puzzle in her San Francisco home this week

and said that you really do need to be alive in order to solve one.

“I’m old but I’m not stupid,” she said, seated at her kitchen table and connecting two puzzle pieces to make a picture of a dog. “People expect old people to be stupid. That’s not me.”

Mirigian likes solving jigsaw puzzles almost as much as she dislikes people telling her she’s dead.

In November, the government agency that administers her federal pension decided that Mirigian was dead because she had not returned a form letter saying she wasn’t. Mirigian said the letter never arrived. The result: the government stopped sending Mirigian her monthly pension of \$377.26. Her health insurance was about to be cut off, too.

It was a nightmare, according to Mirigian and her daughter, Sonia, and son-in-law, Jack Koujakian, who share the house near Balboa Park that Mirigian bought in 1950. Being alive is one thing. Persuading the US government that you are alive when it disagrees is something else.

The Koujakians wrote letters. They made calls. They left messages. Nothing worked. Once the government thinks you’re dead, it’s not easy to change its mind.

In desperation, the family walked into the San Mateo office of Democratic Rep. Jackie Speier. The office staff took one look at Mirigian and concluded that she was still very much in a condition to keep collecting the pension she was entitled to as a retired clerk at the US Mint on Market Street.

Speier’s staff made some calls. Calls from a congresswoman’s aide, unlike calls from a congresswoman’s constituent, tend to get things straightened out lickety split. The pension was restored this week and the past-due benefits were paid. That’s a good thing, Mirigian said, because her family has booked a vacation in Calistoga next month and the hotel isn’t free.

Mirigian retired from her job at the Mint about 60 years ago and says she doesn’t remember exactly what she did there.

“I did what the person in charge told me to do,” she said. “That’s what you do when you work in an office.”

In any event, she said, proving you’re alive is inconvenient. Ten years ago, she related, the Social Security folks sent someone to her home to make sure she was still entitled to her monthly check. The visitor was a nice lady and stayed for coffee.

It’s one thing when the feds assume you’re alive, and they come by for coffee just to make sure. It’s another thing when the feds assume you’re dead, and

see ALIVE, page 7

Former Armenian Ambassador, Russian National Charged in Bribery and Money Laundering Scheme

LOS ANGELES — Two employees of an international engineering consulting firm were charged in a superseding indictment filed on May 24 for their alleged participation in a scheme to launder bribe payments to foreign government officials for the benefit of a Columbus, Ohio-based subsidiary of Rolls-Royce plc, to secure a contract to supply equipment and services to power a gas pipeline from Kazakhstan to China.

Acting Assistant Attorney General John P. Cronan of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division, US Attorney Benjamin C. Glassman of the Southern District of Ohio, Acting Inspector in Charge Nicole Davis of the US Postal Inspection Service’s Criminal Investigations Group, Assistant Director Christopher Hacker of the FBI’s Criminal Investigative Division and Special Agent in Charge Matthew J. DeSarno of the FBI’s Washington Field Office Criminal Division made the announcement.

Azat Martirosian, 62, a citizen of Armenia, and Vitaly Leshkov, 50, a citizen of Russia, were charged by a superseding indictment filed in the Southern District of Ohio with one count of conspiracy to launder money and 10 counts of money laundering. Petros Contoguris, 70, a citizen of Greece, was also charged on these counts, as well as one count of conspiracy to violate the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), and seven counts of violating the FCPA. Contoguris previously had been charged on all of these counts in an indictment that was filed on Oct. 12, 2017 and unsealed on Nov. 7, 2017. Martirosian, Leshkov and Contoguris are believed to be residing outside the United States.

“The charges announced today against Azat Martirosian and Vitaly Leshkov further demonstrate the Criminal Division’s unwavering resolve to prosecute those who facilitate corruption and launder illicit proceeds,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Cronan. “Thanks to the coordinated efforts by our prosecutors and agents — working closely with their counterparts throughout the world — these defendants will face prosecution for their allegedly corrupt schemes.”

“The charges filed today reflect the continued determination of the United States to prosecute those who engage in foreign corrupt business practices,” said US Attorney Glassman. “International actors should think twice before executing bribery schemes because the United States can and will discover and prosecute such schemes and their perpetrators.”

“The US Postal Inspection Service has a long history of successfully investigating complex fraud and corruption cases,” said Davis. “Corruption and bribery schemes such as this involving international corporations and conspirators are not victimless crimes. This type of conduct can damage competitive domestic and international markets, and cause immeasurable economic losses both here in the United States and around the world. Anyone who engages in deceptive practices like this should know they will not go undetected and will be held accountable, regardless of where they are. The collaborative investigative work on this case conducted by Postal Inspectors and our domestic and international law enforcement partners illustrates our efforts to protect the United States and the international marketplace.”

“The allegations outlined today exemplify how a small group of individuals, who knowingly engage in illegal payments in an attempt to advance businesses dealings, create an

see BRIBERY, page 10



COMMUNITY NEWS

Rhode Island Approves Legislation Commemorating Sumgait Massacres

PROVIDENCE — On May 17, the State of Rhode Island General Assembly approved a measure to recognize the Sumgait massacres committed by the Azeri government, a few months after its 30th anniversary was commemorated.

The bill recognizes that Artsakh has been Armenian land and that during their quest for liberation from Azerbaijan and attempt to be unified with Armenia, the Azeri armed forces rounded up Armenians in Baku and Sumgait and massacred them.

The bill also pays homage to the “tens of thousands of Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan [who] found shelter across the United States, including thousands of our current compatriots in the State of Rhode Island.”

The bill also condemns the Baku government for continuing to “instigate anti-Armenian sentiments and refuses to implement US-backed measures aimed at strengthening regional peace and stability by lowering tension along the border between Artsakh and Azerbaijan.”

The bill also “welcomes freedom aspirations of the Republic of Artsakh to continue developing as a trustful member of the international community of nations” and additionally, the bill supports “peaceful initiatives by the United States government and other international mediators called to pro-

mote final peace between Artsakh and Azerbaijan.”

The bill was sponsored by Representatives Katherine S. Kazarian, Nicholas A. Mattiello, K. K. Joseph Shekarchi, William O’ Brien and Gregg Amore.

Garen Bagdasarian, president of Memory Dignity Justice Organization, which had been instrumental in the passage of the bill, said on behalf of the organization, “We are grateful to the legislature of our home state of Rhode Island for adopting this resolution. The resolution pays tribute to the memory of the innocent victims of the regime in Azerbaijan, which 30 years ago launched attacks, killing hundreds of civilians in Sumgait and Baku, whose only crime was being Armenian. Facing no condemnation, Azeri authorities later expanded their attacks and launched a full-scale military aggression against Artsakh.

Since then, hundreds of thousands of Armenians have been forced out of their homes in Azerbaijan, and many found their new homes in the United States. For us, it is important to share our story, and help protect our compatriots in Artsakh who continue to face threats of renewed aggression by the same Azeri regime.”

To view the text of the bill, visit <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/HouseText18/H8211.pdf>.



From left, Rep. Katherine Kazarian, Ernest Atalian of Memory Dignity Justice Association, Rhode Island House Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello and president of Memory Dignity Justice Association Garen Bagdasarian



Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.

Dr. Nubar Berberian Annual Awards

Dr. Nubar Berberian, intellectual, journalist, activist and editor of many ADL daily newspapers for more than 50 years passed away at the age of 94 in November 23, 2016. In his Will, Dr. Berberian directed his Trust Fund managers to appropriate awards every year to college students of Armenian descent worldwide who major in either International Law or Political Science.

ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Eligible recipients are college students of Armenian descent who major in either International Law or Political Science.
- 2) Applicant must be enrolled in a full-time graduate program in a fully accredited college or university in the world.
- 3) Applicant must provide all of the information requested on the application form.
- 4) Applicant must submit a copy of his or her most recent college transcript.
- 5) Applicant is to include a small head and shoulders self-portrait.
- 6) Application could be received by requesting from Tcadirector@Aol.com.
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: Tcadirector@Aol.com. The Paper submissions will be accepted by the deadline at:

Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.
Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund
755 Mt. Auburn Street
Watertown, MA 02472
USA

but electronic application is preferred.

- 8) The deadline of receiving the applications is **August 30, 2018**.
- 9) The administrators and managers of the fund will vote the qualified winners in **October, 2018** based on the merits of each applicant.
- 10) The winner or winners will receive their awards in **November, 2018**. Applicants who were not selected will be notified in writing and invited to apply next year again, if they are eligible.
- 11) Winning applicants are not eligible to apply again.
- 12) This announcement is published in Armenian, English, French and Spanish.

Watertown, MA, April 23, 2018

111-year-old Woman Had to Prove She Was Still Alive

ALIVE, from page 6

then leave it up to you to disabuse them of the notion.

But, she said, the trip to Speier’s office did get her out of the house.

“My whole life, I’ve never sat still,” she said. “You see old ladies sitting on a bench, waiting to die. Not me.”

As a 4-year-old, Mirigian left her home in Armenia on the back of a donkey in 1910. She crossed the Atlantic on a boat, made her way to Fresno and attended Fresno State University. In San Francisco, she raised a family, taught Sunday school, served as a PTA president and had a second career making elegant, elaborate sculptures from beads and wire. Her husband of 40 years, Ashod, died in 1998.

Being old is plenty interesting, the family says. The three of them like to take ocean cruises, and it’s hard to prove your identity aboard ship, too. Some years ago, at the age of 101, Mirigian entered her stateroom and found a crib. The cruise line computer, it turned out, had dropped two digits and assumed she was 1. On the next cruise, a cocktail waitress asked to check her ID, because her computer said that Mirigian was a newborn, too.

Aboard ship, Mirigian said, she was able to prove she was older than 1 without a congresswoman’s help. Life at sea is easy compared to life ashore. She’s taken 43 cruises, she said, and has only been carded that one time.

“I like ships and I like to go places,” she said. “It’s a big world.”

Lindsay Haake, a spokeswoman for the Office of Personnel Management, the agency that administers government pensions for civilian employees, said the agency could not comment on Mirigian’s case due to privacy rules. Asked whether Mirigian had been asked to prove she wasn’t dead, Haake said she couldn’t say.

According to the OPM website, the survivor of a benefit recipient is “required to notify OPM in the event of death” but it doesn’t say anything about Mirigian herself being required to notify the OPM in the event of her non-death.

Speier said the OPM “probably should have made a phone call” to Mirigian’s house before cutting her off.

“People are living a lot longer now,” she said. “But there’s a lot of fraud going on, and you want (the OPM) to do their due diligence, too.”

Mirigian seemed to have already put her dustup with the feds behind her. She said she was looking forward to her next puzzle, her next trip and her next pension check. Her only concession to her advancing years, she said, was to switch not long ago from 500-piece jigsaw puzzles to 60-piece puzzles.

“I’ve had a very exciting life,” she said with a big smile, “and it’s not over.”



COMMUNITY NEWS



Dn. Arman Galstyan, Fr. Mardiros Chevian, Fr. Daniel Findikyan, and Dn. Michael Sabounjian

St. Nersess Seminary Graduates Two Students

GRADUATES, from page 6

future of the seminary and the diocese," declared Barsamian. He also thanked Chevian and the faculty for their dedication, as well as the board of directors and benefactors of the seminary.

Findikyan concluded the ceremony, referencing Pentecost and the disciples who were able to speak eloquently and inspire others and fill them with hope. "The Holy Spirit takes the divine energy of God and makes things possible. The Holy Spirit took Dn. Michael and Dn. Arman and made them graduates of the seminary. What will the Holy Spirit do next with St. Nersess? We must set our eyes and vision beyond where it has been."

The guests moved from the chapel into the lobby of the Theological Center where they enjoyed a reception prepared by Wilma

Petrosian, Manager of Food Services, and had an opportunity to personally congratulate the graduates on their accomplishments. The dessert table was prepared and donated by Mary Stevoff of Chicago, the aunt of Yn. Diane Chevian.

Earlier in the afternoon, Sabounjian was among the 20 graduates at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary where he received his Master of Divinity degree. Seminarian Timothy Aznavourian gave the salutorian address, a first for a St. Nersess student.

This summer, Galstyan will continue his parish internship at St. Leon Armenian Church in Fair Lawn, NJ. Sabounjian will be teaching at the Deacons' Training Program in June and in the fall, he will continue his studies at the Seminary of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin for an academic year.

OBITUARY

Harry G. Vorperian

SCARSDALE, N.Y. — Harry G. Vorperian, formerly of Scarsdale, died May 5, at his Norwalk, Conn. home. He was 93.

He was born November 7, 1924, in Pittsburgh, Penn. to Hovannes Vorperian and Zarouhi Bishirjian and raised in (Bay Ridge) Brooklyn, NY.

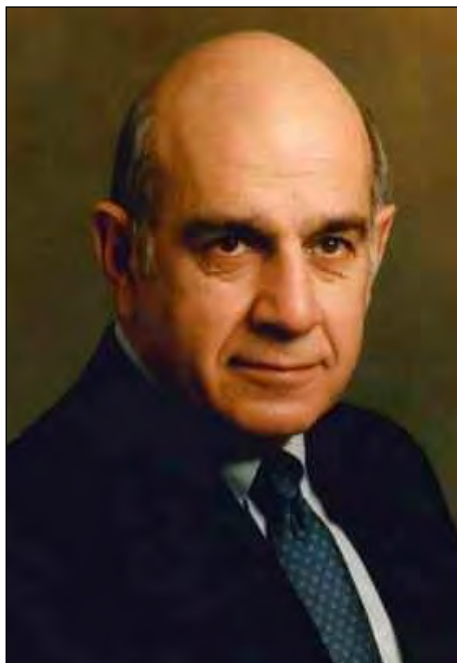
In December 1942 he enlisted in the U.S. Navy, sent to flight school in Chapel Hill, NC. He was honorably discharged in November 1947.

He later attended Pratt Institute and had an extended successful commercial flooring sales career.

He was a long-time member and elder at the Hitchcock Presbyterian Church in Scarsdale.

He was a devoted husband, 59 years to Martha (née Saradjian) who predeceased him May 6, 2017. He is survived by his son John (Milder) White Plains, NY and Richard (Kate) Somers, NY.

A funeral service was held on May 9. A memorial service will be held at a later date.



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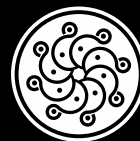
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COMMUNITY NEWS

After 70 Years, the New York Armenian Home Closes, Merging with New Jersey Facility

HOME, from page 1

Bezdikian, a New York based photographer, entertained residents with his kanun, a string instrument, on weekly visits to the home where his aunt was a resident.

On April 14, the Home discharged its last resident as it prepares to close its doors permanently. Residents have been relocated to similar facilities in the area.

“As the Armenian community in the New York City tristate area developed and thrived, the needs of our families have changed as well, and there is now a need for a more up-to-date facility with modern amenities,” wrote the Home’s Executive Director Jenny Akopyan in an open letter on its website. “In keeping with the expectations of our community, our Board of Directors made a decision for the relocation and upgrade of the New York Armenian Home.”

Two years ago, the Board of Directors entered into an agreement to sell the building at 137-31 45th Ave. to Eastone Capital LLC for \$50 million and began looking for a new location in Long Island.

“What we didn’t know was that it would be so hard to find a new piece of property,” said Neiri Amirian, chair of the nine-person board. “For us to look in the Long Island areas, those towns all need tax revenue.”

The Home’s non-profit status exempts it from paying real estate tax.

At the same time, the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center (ANRC), a skilled nursing facility, was seeking to upgrade its facility on its three-and-a-half-acre property in Emerson, NJ.

“They had the land and no money, we had the money and no land,” said Amirian.

As a result, the New York Armenian Home, Inc. and ANRC have agreed to enter into a joint venture, for which they are currently finalizing the legal paperwork. The sale of the Flushing home will close in August, and part of the proceeds will finance the partnership.

“We’re going to be establishing a new non-profit company that each side will have participation in. And, we are currently talking with the Hackensack Meridian Health Network to be the developer, to build the new building, and also to manage the building going forward once it’s completed,” explained Khoren Bandazian, secretary of ANRC’s Board of Directors.

According to Bandazian, construction on the New Jersey property will begin with the next nine months and is expected to be completed 18 months later.

The current facility will be demolished and replaced with a new building on an adjacent por-



The New York Armenian Home in Flushing

Armenian food will be served to residents who want it.

The partnership between the new non-profit and Hackensack Meridian Health Network promises to open up new avenues for elder care in the Armenian community. Bandazian discussed the possibility of establishing a home healthcare program, where elderly can stay in their homes with the help of visiting health aides. Historically, ANRC has had neither the resources nor the ability to implement such programming on its own.

On a rainy Friday afternoon in April, not long after the last resident was discharged, I visited Akopyan and Amirian in the Flushing Home, where they described the factors behind the board’s decision to sell the property: a decline in the number of residents, evolving demands for care, the outdated facility, and a shrinking donor pool.

According to Akopyan, the census has been decreasing for years. While the facility is licensed for 79 beds, the number of residents has not exceeded 70 since she began working there in 1996.

The Armenian Home is an adult care facility providing geriatric custodial care, not a nursing home with medical services. In its early days, most residents were self-sufficient and the facility had the air of a retirement community.

“I remember a resident that lived here and used to have a part time job in the city, Kirkor Goybasyan,” said Akopyan. “He was a *terzak* [tailor]; he was doing alterations on clothing. So, every day he would have breakfast here, take a sandwich with him for lunch and go about his work, and come back by 5 o’clock for dinner,” she said.

Over the years, however, a needier demographic began seeking residency at the Home, such as seniors who were wheelchair bound and in the early stages of Alzheimer’s. The facility was neither licensed nor equipped to serve this population, although Akopyan admitted that by hiring additional health aides and seeking waivers from the Department of Health, they often accepted such residents to stay afloat.

“The demand for a facility like ours was decreasing, whereas the demand for a facility that would have more abilities than ours, like borderline nursing facility and assisted living, that’s where most of the demand was coming from,” she said.

The board considered applying for additional licenses to broaden the scope of its care and potentially boost its census. However, in order to qualify to provide enhanced care, the facility would have to undergo significant renovations such as making bathrooms wide enough for wheelchairs.

“The current thinking for any kind of medical and senior living is very different from what this place looks like,” said Amirian. “The amount of money we have in our endowment funds was nowhere near enough to renovate this place and make it more acceptable and desirable for Armenians to come and stay here. The building is old enough that it’s not worth renovating,” she explained.

The Home supplemented residential rates ranging from \$2,000 to \$4,000 monthly, which Amirian and Akopyan both described as under market to remain affordable for the community, with a patchwork of fundraising activities such as picnics, an annual Christmas Card, and money left behind in wills.

Eventually, donations, too, would decline. Akopyan recalled contributions decreasing in half after 9/11, when the economy experienced a recession.

“Financially, we’ve been operating in the red for years,” said Amirian soberly.

Against that backdrop, she considers a joint venture with ANRC the last best hope.

“It’s not an ideal situation for people who’ve lived in New York and people are very disappointed and unhappy that we will no longer have a presence here, at least not in the near future,” admitted Amirian. “But in general, it’s a good path because it benefits both communities. Both New York and New Jersey will have some place for Armenian elderly people,” she said.

The shuttering of the Home has generated strong reactions from the local Armenian community.

“From the community, I have been hearing dismay and dissatisfaction. Many are inconvenienced,” said Lucine Tegnazian, a resident of Bayside, Queens.

Over the years, Tegnazian visited the Home to support residents with her own children through their Sunday school, as part of the Daughters of Vartan, and attended its fundraising picnics.

“With the closing of the Home, it is highly unlikely that our ever-growing population of elder Armenians in the New York City area will ever be able to experience the safety, security, and comfort that the Armenian Home had provided to our previous generations of elders,” said Jerry Bezdikian, whose aunt was a resident.

According to Akopyan, since 1980, 1,293 people have resided at the Flushing Home. Many of their names were logged into slim and now aging notebooks by hand, and typed onto index cards that are filed between powder blue dividers in a long storage container.

Newsletters published by the Home over the years provide a glimpse of the lives that con-

verged there like John Sarian, a pianist and vocalist of Armenian music who taught at city colleges, and Paul Sagsoorian, a World War II veteran who became an illustrator at local advertising agencies and of Armenian school books. There was Edward Bolsetzian, a professional tool and die maker, Henry Sanossian, who married his wife, Alice, at the Holy Cross Armenian Church in 1950, and Irene Kasbarian who was 8 months old when her family immigrated to the U.S. from Istanbul in 1920.

The Home was notably a final destination for survivors of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 such as Perouz Kalousdian from Harput, Charlotte Kechejian from Nigde, and Arshaluys Dadir from Shabin-Karahisar, all locations in modern day Turkey.

In fact, the Home was founded as a refuge for the elderly of a new Armenian community in America, most of whom had fled state violence in the Ottoman Empire, beginning with the Hamidian massacres in the 1890’s and culminating with the Armenian Genocide in 1915.

At the turn of the 20th century, Armenian immigration to the United States grew from a trickle to a stream. According to U.S. Bureau of Immigration figures, just under 1,000 Armenians were admitted to the U.S. in 1900, and roughly 10,000 were admitted in 1921.

In the 1920s, a member of this fledgling community, Siranoush Sanossian, recognized the



Siranoush Sanoissian

need for an institution to house its elderly. She enlisted a group of women from the Holy Cross Armenian Church in Washington Heights, and eventually the broader community, in a grassroots effort to make it a reality.

That campaign culminated with the incorporation of the Armenian Welfare Association and the opening of the New York Armenian Home at its first location in Elmhurst, Queens in 1948. The Home would relocate within Elmhurst once more before the purchase of its permanent location in Flushing in 1954, where it would transition from being run by volunteers to being a fully professional and state certified operation.

The Armenian Welfare Association was officially renamed the New York Armenian Home, Inc. in 2000.

Its founding was a decades long labor of love by New York City’s Armenian community. From the \$117,000 deposit raised by churchgoers for the first location in Elmhurst, to the Astoria Ladies’ Auxiliary who organized a dinner dance and picnic to raise the money for an oil burner installation in the second location. From every able-bodied community member under sixty who piled the Home’s furnishings into trucks bound for the final location in Flushing, to the hundreds of thousands of dollars raised to modify and expand that facility – the founding of the home was an extensive grassroots effort undertaken and achieved by the local community.

“The Home served as a symbol of the spirit and will of Armenians in the diaspora to properly and respectfully care for our elders,” said Jerry Bezdikian.



At the Home’s garden

tion of the property. Construction will take place in phases so that current residents are not displaced.

The new facility will incorporate both skilled nursing and assisted living models, as well as the Armenian spirit of both homes.

“Both Boards are in unanimous agreement that we’re not going to lose the Armenian-ness of the Home. It’s very important to everyone,” said Bandazian.

There will be an Armenian chapel on the premises with regular visits from local clergy, and



COMMUNITY NEWS

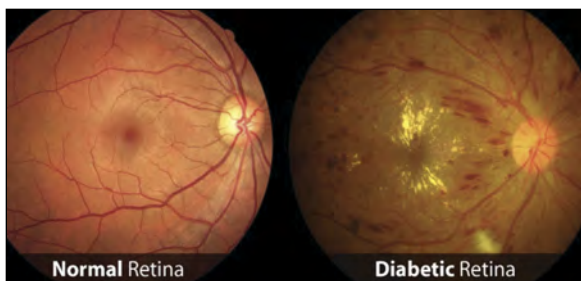
LDS Charities Funds Two Lasers for AECP Diabetes Program in Armenia

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — Diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness throughout the world. In Armenia a little more than nine percent of the three million people who live in the country have diabetes — about 270,000 — and are all at risk for diabetic retinopathy and blindness if their diabetes is not controlled.

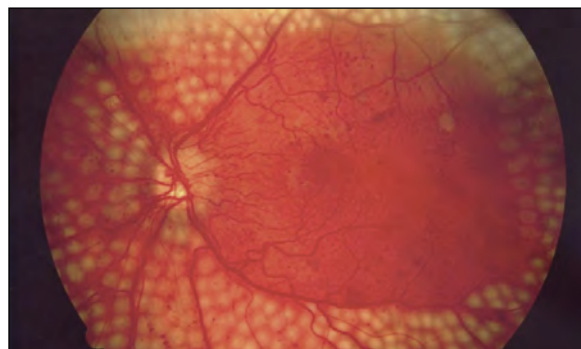
Statistically, of the 270,000 diabetics in Armenia, one-third have diabetic retinopathy — 90,000 people. And of these 90,000 people, one third — or 30,000 — have vision-threatening diabetes and require treatment. If they do not receive treatment they will go blind.

To prevent blindness from diabetic retinopathy in Armenia, in 2017, the Armenian EyeCare Project (AECP) launched a countrywide Diabetes Program in Armenia with the goal of preventing eye disease among all residents with diabetes through early detection and intervention.

Using a retinal camera, all persons in Armenia with diabetes will be screened annually by a retina team, comprised



A retina with normal vision (left) and a retina with diabetic retinopathy (right.)



The retina of a patient with diabetic retinopathy after receiving laser treatment.

of Armenian physicians trained by the EyeCare Project through fellowships at major U.S. medical institutions. They will photograph the retinas of all diabetic patients and record any changes. These photographs will then be evaluated for signs of eye disease and referred for treatment if needed. Those that show vision-threatening disease will be scheduled



An Armenian physician screening a patient in Armenia.

for laser treatment. Any person identified with diabetic retinopathy will be treated before it is too late to prevent blindness. The Project's goal is to screen every diabetic in Armenia and to provide early treatment to prevent blindness.

In support of the EyeCare Project's Diabetes Program, LDS Charities, the humanitarian arm of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has donated two \$45,000 lasers enabling the project to treat diabetic eye disease with a laser procedure following diagnosis, which will prevent vision loss and ultimately blindness.

One laser will be placed in the AECP's Mobile Eye Hospital, which travels throughout Armenia to provide eye care to residents living outside the country's capital, and the other will be placed at the Malayan Ophthalmological Center in Yerevan, Armenia's leading ophthalmology hospital and where the AECP's Subspecialty Clinics are located.

"We're very impressed by the work that's been done in Armenia by the Armenian EyeCare Project and the dedication of its founder, Dr. Roger Ohanesian," said Dr. Roger

Harrie, an ophthalmologist in Salt Lake City, Utah, who serves on the LDS Charities' Committee for Vision Care. "They're really making an impact."

The AECP's Diabetes Program is also made possible through the help of the World Diabetes Foundation, which has funded a grant for a three-year, countrywide effort to reduce vision impairment and blindness from diabetic eye disease in Armenia alongside the AECP.

Diabetic retinopathy is a preventable cause of blindness — 80 percent of all blindness is preventable or treatable. Through its intensive prevention and early intervention retina program, utilizing retina cameras and software, the Project will demonstrate these programs can treat diabetic retinopathy — a major avoidable cause of blindness.

The recent funding of two lasers from LDS Charities will have a direct impact on the treatment of thousands of residents in Armenia with diabetic eye disease. Still, patients in Armenia need to be diagnosed with diabetes-related eye disease so they can be treated.

Former Armenian Ambassador, Russian National Charged in Bribery and Money Laundering Scheme

BRIBERY, from page 6
uneven global marketplace," said Acting Assistant Director Hacker. "The FBI with our partners continues to work these important cases in order to remove the notion that bribery, through backroom deals, is an acceptable way of doing business. This investigation demonstrates the importance of international cooperation amongst law enforcement in combatting fraud and money laundering on a global basis."

"Today's charges serve as a reminder of the important role the FBI plays in rooting out international corruption," said FBI Special Agent in Charge DeSarno. "No one is above the law, so let today's announcement be a warning to those who may try to perpetrate a similar scheme that the FBI will work with global partners in its mission to detect and prevent corrupt business practices, and we will continue to hold those who attempt to take advantage of international markets accountable."

According to the superseding

indictment, Contoguris, the founder and chief executive officer of Gravitas & CIE. International Ltd. (Gravitas), former Rolls-Royce employees and executives, and others, allegedly conspired to pay bribes to foreign officials in exchange for directing business to Rolls-Royce Energy Systems Inc. (RRESI). RRESI was a US-based subsidiary of Rolls-Royce plc, the United Kingdom-based global manufacturer and distributor of power systems for the aerospace, defense, marine and energy sectors.

The superseding indictment alleges that Contoguris, working with employees of an international engineering consulting firm (Technical Advisor), including Martirossian and Leshkov, devised and executed a scheme with Rolls-Royce executives and employees, whereby Rolls-Royce would pay kickbacks to the Technical Advisor employees and bribes to at least one foreign official in Kazakhstan, and disguise these payments as commissions to Contoguris's company, Gravitas, in

exchange for helping Rolls-Royce win contracts with Asia Gas Pipeline LLP (AGP).

According to the superseding indictment, AGP was created to build and connect a gas pipeline between Central Asia and China, and the Technical Advisor purported to provide independent engineering consulting advice and other services to AGP. The superseding indictment further alleges that after AGP awarded Rolls-Royce a contract in November 2009, worth approximately \$145 million, Rolls-Royce made commission payments to Gravitas, and Contoguris then passed a portion of those commission payments onto the Technical Advisor employees, including Leshkov and Martirossian, knowing that a portion of that money would be shared with a foreign official consistent with their corrupt agreement.

The charges announced today follow the Jan. 17, 2017 announcement of a deferred prosecution agreement (DPA) with Rolls-Royce plc and a more than \$800 million total penal-

ty as part of a global resolution to investigations by the Department of Justice, U.K., and Brazilian authorities related to the corrupt conduct. The charges also follow upon the Nov. 7, 2017 announcement, concerning Rolls-Royce former executives and employees James Finley, Keith Barnett and Louis Zuurhout, and Technical Advisor employee Andreas Kohler, each of whom have entered guilty pleas in connection with their respective roles in the bribery scheme. The DPA acknowledged Rolls-Royce's cooperation in this case, including with the Department's investigation into individuals, and significant remedial measures.

An indictment is merely an allegation and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

The US Postal Inspection Service and the FBI's International Corruption Squad in Washington, D.C., investigated the case. Trial

Attorneys Kevin R. Gingras and Vanessa Snyder of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and Assistant US Attorneys J. Michael Marous and Jessica Kim of the Southern District of Ohio are prosecuting the case.

The Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs provided significant assistance in this matter. The United Kingdom's Serious Fraud Office provided assistance in this matter, as did law enforcement colleagues in Brazil, which both coordinated with the Department to reach simultaneous resolutions with Rolls-Royce. The Department also thanks its law enforcement colleagues in Austria, the Bahamas, Germany, the Netherlands, Singapore, Switzerland and Turkey.

The Criminal Division's Fraud Section is responsible for investigating and prosecuting all FCPA matters. Additional information about the Justice Department's FCPA enforcement efforts can be found at www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/fcpa.



COMMUNITY NEWS

NAASR's Mardigian Library Receives Rare Guerguerian Archives

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) has received one of the most significant archives of documents relating to the Armenian Genocide—the archive collected by the late Very Rev. Krikor Guerguerian — for research and study in NAASR's Mardigian Library.

These materials are considered “priceless” by scholar Prof. Taner Akçam, who relied on them heavily for his book, *Killing Orders: Talat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide* (Palgrave, 2018). Akçam holds the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair in Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark's Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

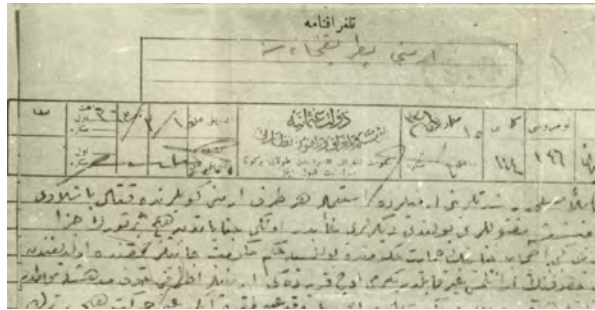
Among the important items in the Guerguerian archive are photographic copies of numerous official Ottoman telegrams which were used in the 1919-20 Military Tribunals but had since vanished, including one from Behaeddin Shakir, one of the founders of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), inquiring about details from the field on the deportations and killings of Armenians. Akçam considers this document as a clear expression of the CUP leadership's genocidal intentions. The archive also contains photographic images of the now lost Memoir of Naim Bey published by Aram Andonian around 1920.

Guerguerian's nephew, Dr. Edmund Gergerian of New York, preserved his uncle's

materials after his uncle's death in 1988 and recently donated them to NAASR in April upon Akçam's recommendation that the original materials come to NAASR and after meeting with NAASR's Academic Director Marc Mamigonian.

“The Guerguerian archive is a tremendous addition to our rich Mardigian library holdings,” said Mamigonian. “Father Guerguerian collected materials from around the world and brought them together in one location. Many of these materials exist nowhere else or, if they do exist, are not accessible to the public.”

Guerguerian's nephew had given Akçam access to the archives in 2015 and allowed him to digitize them. Akçam has plans to launch an online Guerguerian archive, partly through the support of grants from NAASR. “It is important, however, for researchers to have access to Fr. Guerguerian's originals, in addition to the digital copies that Prof. Akçam will be offering online,” noted Mamigonian.



A copy of a telegram sent during the Genocide

NAASR's headquarters in Belmont, where site work began in May for an all-new, state-of-the-art global center for Armenian Studies, will securely house this very special archive upon completion in 2019.

This donation has brought the Mardigian Library to a new level of importance for scholars and researchers worldwide, as well as recent donations of nearly 3,000 volumes from Prof. George Bournoutian of Iona College on Armenian history with particular attention to interactions with Russia and Persia; the extensive Armenian



Some of the Guerguerian papers

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linguistics collection of the late Prof. John Greppin of Cleveland State University; hundreds of rare Armenian books from Harvard's Widener Library; and thousands of volumes from Armenian rare-book collectors Abraham Krikorian and Gene Taylor of Long Island. “Many of these books are nearly impossible to find in this area outside of Widener Library at Harvard, and are available to the general public at NAASR,” says Mamigonian.

Very Rev. Krikor Guerguerian was born in Gürün in the province of Sivas (Sepastia) in 1911. He was the youngest of a large family and lost his parents and many siblings and other family members during the Armenian Genocide. Educated at Bzommar Catholic Monastery and St. Joseph University in Lebanon, he continued his theological training in Rome at the Levonian Academy and settled in Cairo, Egypt.

In addition to his duties as a priest in Cairo and later in the US, Guerguerian devoted much of his adult life to researching the Armenian Genocide, traveling to important archival repositories, such as the Jerusalem Patriarchate and the Nubarian Library in Paris, where he photographed or copied crucial materials which are today either lost or inaccessible.

Publishing under the pen-name “Kriger,” he contributed a seminal, if still not widely known article entitled “Aram Antoneani Hratarakats Turk Pashtonakan Vaweragruru Vawerakanutiwne” (“The Authenticity of the Official Turkish Documents Published by Aram Andonian”) to the 1965 collection *Hushamatean Mets Egherni* (Memorial Book of the Great Crime), and wrote the volume *Yozghati Hayaspanutean Vaweragrakan Patmutiwn* (Documentary History of the Armenocide in Yozgat), published in 1980. However, among his archives are a number of unpublished book-length works, as well as vast amounts of notes and documents that he gathered for these projects and for others he was never fully able to realize.

Guerguerian was one of the pioneers of what is now the field of genocide studies. In his 1965 article on the Aram Andonian documents, he complained that “to this day no serious scholarly work has been presented to the discretion of the general public and the international public opinion concerning the Armenian massacres of 1915.” That is no longer the case thanks to several generations of scholars. The trailblazing work of Fr. Guerguerian will continue to contribute to the growth of that scholarly work, thanks to the accessibility of his archives.

NAASR's Edward and Helen Mardigian Library at NAASR, one of the largest publicly accessible Armenian libraries outside of Armenia, consists of nearly 30,000 books as well as thousands of periodicals, documents, and other items, primarily in Armenian and English, dating as far back as the late 17th century.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Even Brief Maternal Deprivation Early in Life Alters Adult Brain Function and Cognition

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — When a baby is taken from its mother for even a brief period early in life, this traumatic event significantly alters the future, adult function of the brain, according to a new animal model study from the School of Science at Indiana University-Purdue University (IUPUI).

These changes in the brain are similar to disturbances in brain structure and function that are found in people at risk for neuropsychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia.

The study was conducted in the laboratory of associate professor of psychology Christopher Lapish. In the study, young rats were removed from their mothers for 24 hours when they were nine days old, which is a critical period of brain development. The resulting scans revealed that, unlike animals that were not separated from their mother during this crucial period, the separated rats exhibited significant behavioral, as well as biological and physiological, brain abnormalities in adulthood.

“Rat and human brains have similar structure and connectivity,” Lapish said. “Understanding what happens in the brain of a young rat that’s removed from its mother gives us important insight into how this type of early trauma — perhaps comparable to the incarceration of a human mother — affects the young human brain.

“In this study, we found memory impairment, as well as less communication between brain regions, in the animals that had been removed from their mothers, among other neurological changes,” said study corresponding author Janetsian-Fritz, formerly a graduate student in the Lapish lab and now a post-doctoral fellow in neuropsychology at the Indiana University School of Medicine. “These are all clues to how a traumatic event early in life could increase a person’s risk of receiving a schizophrenia diagnosis in the future.”

Another author of the study was Sarine Sona Janetsian-Fritz.

The causes of schizophrenia and the delay in the appearance of symptoms of this lifelong disease remain a mystery.

“Children exposed to early-life stress or deprivation are at higher risk for mental illness and addictions later in life, including schizophrenia,” said study co-author Brian F. O’Donnell, professor of psychological and brain sciences at IU Bloomington. “We have identified enduring changes in the brain and behavior that result from one type of stress in a rodent. These types of brain changes might mediate the effects of adverse events on children. Thus, policies or interventions that mitigate stress to children could reduce vulnerability to emotional disorders in adulthood.”

The study appears in *Translational Psychiatry*, a Nature Publishing Group journal. Authors, in addition to Lapish, Sona Janetsian-Fritz and O’Donnell are Nicholas M. Timme, Maureen M. Timm, Aqilah M. McCane and Anthony J. Baucum II, all of the School of Science at IUPUI.

The study was funded by an Indiana University Collaborative Research Grant awarded jointly to Lapish, who studies the neurophysiological basis of cognition; O’Donnell, who studies schizophrenia in humans; and Baucum, who conducts brain chemical analyses.

Janetsian-Fritz is a fourth-generation Armenian American. She was born in Los Angeles and attended Rose and Alex Pilibos Armenian School and graduated with honors in 2006. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from California State University Northridge in 2010. She accepted a position as a graduate student at Indiana University Purdue University-Indianapolis and studied the effects of illegal drugs as well as neuropsychiatric disorders, including Schizophrenia, on the brain. She received a Master of Science degree in 2012, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in 2017 in Addiction Neuroscience.



Event in LA to Support Fiona Ma

GLENDALE — On Monday May 21, several community leaders organized a reception in support of Board of Equalization Member and former California State Assembly Speaker Pro-Tem Fiona Ma for state treasurer.

The event was held at the Glen Arden club in Glendale and the host committee included Chairman Steve Samuelian, and Committee Members Anna Menedjian, Harout Semerdjian, Araz Parseghian, Steve Bullock, Larry Kosmont, Sarine Abrahamian, among others.

Elected officials in attendance included L.A. City Councilmember Paul Koretz, Glendale City Councilmember Paula Devine, L.A. Community College District Board Members Mike Fong and Scott Svonkin, and City of South Gate City Councilmember Denise Diaz.

The master of ceremonies for the event was Steve Samuelian.

Welcoming remarks were provided by Anna Menedjian and Araz Parseghian.

The event was attended by more than 75 community leaders from across L.A.

At left, Ma can be seen above, at center, and at bottom, third from right.



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Arts & Living

GALAS to Mark Two Decades of Service to Armenian LGBTQ Community

WEST HOLLYWOOD, Calif. — More than 20 years ago, a small group of LGBTQ Armenians felt the need to start an organization that would create a sense of community and belonging. At the time, many LGBTQ Armenians had been ostracized from their families, friends and the Armenian community at large. What started as mostly a platform for social interactions, grew quickly into a formidable organization that has become the leading voice for the Armenian LGBTQ community in Los Angeles and worldwide.

Early on, Gay and Lesbian Armenian Society (GALAS) members realized the need to foster a safe and supportive network for LGBTQ people of Armenian descent. Various programs aimed at empowering members of the community have been launched throughout the organization's existence. These include free-of-charge psychotherapy services, college scholarships, outreach to public schools with significant Armenian student populations, "coming out" support to individuals and their families and showcasing talents within the arts.

GALAS will celebrate its 20th anniversary with a special gala being held at Vertigo Event Venue in Glendale, on June 2. The evening will be hosted by comedians Lory Tatoulian, Mary Basmadjian and Movses Shakarian.

This year will mark a renewed pledge to building bridges between GALAS and other LGBTQ and Armenian community organizations. GALAS also plans on doing more in terms of uniting LGBTQ Armenians worldwide by creating affiliate chapters. In recent years, a close partnership with the Yerevan-based PINK Armenia NGO has been developed, which aims to provide support for the full protection of the rights of LGBTQ people in Armenia.

Special honorees at this year's Gala are: Openly gay comedian, actor, impressionist James Adomian; executive director of PINK



James Adomian

Armenia and Armenia liaison for GALAS, Mamikon Hovsepian; transgender Army reservist Rudy Akbarian, and Azad Mazmanian, a member of the Armenian LGBTQ community, who was the first organizer to form a social circle in the 1990's.

Performances include Element Band, known for their distinctive musical arrangements that preserve and popularize traditional Armenian songs. Additionally, there will be a special performance by LA based aerialist Artoor Voskanian.

To learn more about GALAS and tax-deductible contributions, visit www.galasla.org.



Photographer Armen Djerrahian (photo credit: David LS)

Star Photographer Captures Music, Fashion Worlds

BROOKLYN, N.Y. — On an unusually sun soaked April afternoon in this shifting section of Brooklyn, where some flock into a millennial-friendly juice bar while others exit a legendary bodega, Armen Djerrahian checks the sun's strength on his forearm.

By Taleen Babayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The photographer's ears perk up as he hears the approaching screeches of the above-ground J train in this pocket of the notoriously grim-turned-hipster Bushwick. He motions to his subject, who takes a stance underneath the rattling rails as Armen ducks down to catch a shot of the subway whirring past, culminating in an authentic New York moment.

A stone's throw away from the Marcy Projects, the birthplace of rapper Jay-Z, whom Djerrahian has photographed, is another MC here in front of his lens. The subject, Los Angeles-based rapper R-Mean, who is in the midst of a photo shoot for his upcoming album, is a little more personal to the prolific photographer due to a shared cultural heritage. After a few clicks, Djerrahian gives into the sun and decides to take a break, heeding a self-taught lesson from his early days as a photographer in his birthplace of Paris, France.

Over pizza, Djerrahian speaks passionately about photography and his process behind capturing some of the most iconic shots in modern music history. He remains humble, allowing his photos to express his influential art and style, but also engaging in conversation and generous with the floor.

"Believe it or not, I'm really shy," he says. "I would rather be behind the lens than in front of it, but over time I have learned to tell my story through my photos."

see PHOTOGRAPHER, page 16



Popular rapper 50 Cent on the cover of *Vibe* magazine, by Armen Djerrahian

Haig Hovsepian Is Hitting All The Right Notes

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BELMONT, Mass. — Haig Hovsepian of Belmont is a son and grandson of musicians and the cousin of the most famous violinists performing today. Still, he said in a recent interview that his career choice as a violinist is an accident.

"My family said there are enough musicians in the world. It is a tough life," he recalled, laughing.

The young violin virtuoso, 19, is the son of Ani Hovsepian, a pianist who often accompanies him, and the grandson of Anahit Tsitsikyan, the first female professional violinist in Armenia. He is also a cousin of Sergey Khachatryan, an internationally acclaimed violinist who has the distinction of being the youngest winner of the International Jean Sibelius Violin



Haig Hovsepian while performing

Competition in 2000 as well as the Queen Elizabeth Music Competition in 2005.

His father, Jirair Hovsepian, concurred adding, "We never wanted it. It is the hardest field to go into."

But his son countered the comment by saying, "It is how I want to make my living. I can't see my life without music."

Hovsepian, a rising sophomore at the Cleveland Institute of Music (CIM), was 4 years old when his mother's friend, a violin teacher, as a lark, asked him to test out a small violin and play a few notes. Little Haig took to it and ended up studying the violin.

"They never forced it on me or anything," he said. He joked, of course, that while "no one likes practicing," he has continued studying intensively because he has wanted to.

Hovsepian will perform the Sibelius *Violin Concerto in D Minor* at Symphony Hall on June 9, making his debut with the Boston Pops at the Armenian Night at Pops.

The same day, at 3 p.m., he will perform at Symphony Hall as winner of the Boston Symphony Concerto Competition.

One defining moment for him was seeing his cousin, Khachatryan, perform at Symphony Hall in Boston in 2007.

At the time, he said he thought, "It is going to be me one day."

And now, of course, it is.

"It's definitely a dream come true," he said.

Hovsepian has had a long list of private teachers, and thus his family did not want him to take up the violin in school. Therefore, he chose a different one, the saxophone.

From 2012 to 2017, he studied at the New England Conservatory (NEC) Preparatory Division. Aside from a list of private teachers, he has also participated in master classes with NEC President Tony Woodcock, Atlanta Symphony Concertmaster David Coucheron, Khachatryan and Amayak Douragian.

see HOVSEPIAN, page 17



BOOK REVIEW

By Kapil Komireddi

Avedis Hadjian's *Secret Nation* Tells Plight of Turkey's Armenians

The dilemma that Turkey's Armenians are viewed as 'foreign agents in their own land' is examined in a moving new book

"They lie to themselves every day and try to invent a sort of cosmic mythology ... genocide is their history." To read Avedis Hadjian's *Secret Nation: The Hidden Armenians of Turkey* is to appreciate how completely applicable VS Naipaul's trenchant appraisal of Argentina, uttered with appropriate revulsion in 1979, is to modern Turkey.

Eastern Anatolia was the home of Armenians for centuries before Ottoman Turks penetrated and overran the mountain plateau in the 16th century.

The survival of the Armenian way of life under the Ottomans is often cited as evidence of the relative liberality of their regime; the Armenians themselves are erased from such apologetics for Ottoman imperialism. In reality, Armenians – an overwhelming majority of them peasants – endured tremendous hardships after becoming subjects of foreign rulers.

The Ottoman Empire was as brutal as – and in many instances infinitely more brutal than – any imperialism that ever emanated from Europe. If Armenians survived – and some among them flourished in Istanbul – it is because of their own pluck and tenacity, and not the kindness or enlightened



governance of their overlords.

Armenians' successes did not, however, insure them against violence: they were viewed with suspicion, as foreign agents in their own land, and hundreds of thousands were massacred between 1894 and 1908. The Young Turks who rose to power in the early 20th century were worse still. Having decided to join the Central Powers, they conveniently pinned the blame for their total rout at Russia's hands on Turkey's Armenians, triggering what has been called the century's first genocide – comprising ethnic cleansing, deportation, and murder – in which more than a million Armenians were killed.

Turkey annexed Armenian lands, but it could not extinguish Armenian life. There may be two million Armenians in Turkey today – citizens of a state that, having sought to annihilate them, refuses even to acknowledge the crime. Hadjian, a journalist of Armenian descent who was born in Syria and grew up in Argentina, first heard about the "secret Armenians" living in the Anatolian mountains as a boy in the 1980s. In 2011, he made his journey to Turkey to discover them. Nothing – no corner, no village, no people – seems to have escaped his eye. Every custom, nuance of language and nationalist longing is captured in this lively book of reportage.

Hadjian's sympathetic portraits of people who, unlike him, have been compelled to shed their Armenian identity is deeply moving. "With pain upon pain, tear upon tear, our elders became Muslim," a man in Hemsin tells him. "They butchered Armenians because they were Armenian, so why would we say we are Armenian?" he asks Hadjian.

Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

Rice, Shrimp and Spinach Salad



SALAD

2 cups cooked white or brown rice, chilled
1 pound medium or large raw shrimp, peeled and deveined, chilled
1 cup fresh spinach, cut into thin strips
1 cup drained cooked green peas
1/2 cup each chopped green onions, mint and flat-leaf parsley
1/2 cup chopped green or Kalamata olives
10-12 cherry tomatoes, halved
1 medium English cucumber, diced
4-8 radishes, sliced
2-3 stalks celery and tops, diced
1 medium red onion, sliced thinly
1 medium yellow, red or green bell pepper, seeded and diced
1 medium carrot, shredded
Crumbled feta or blue cheese

DRESSING

Olive oil, red, white or balsamic vinegar, sea or kosher salt, coarse black pepper
2-3 cloves garlic, minced
2 teaspoons low-sodium soy sauce
1 teaspoon sugar (optional)
1 teaspoon finely grated fresh ginger
1/2 teaspoon paprika
Juice and zest of one large lemon or two large limes
Toasted pine nuts, pecans, sesame seeds or slivered almonds (optional)

PREPARATION

In a medium bowl, whisk together dressing ingredients and chill for 2-3 hours before serving.

In a large bowl, combine salad ingredients together and toss a few times. Drizzle with dressing and toss again. Serve in scooped-out pineapple halves or on a bed of mixed greens, Bibb lettuce, baby spinach or Asian salad mix.

Top salad with crumbed cheese and toasted nuts, if desired, and serve extra dressing on the side.

Serves 4-6.

* Bottled Italian or French salad dressing may be used for this recipe. Sautéed scallops, grilled shrimp or sliced grilled chicken breast, pork or beef may be served on top of this salad.

*Christine's recipes have been published in the *Fresno Bee* newspaper, *Sunset* magazine, *Cooking Light* magazine, and at <http://www.thearmeniankitchen.com/>



This is an existential dilemma for even those citizens of Turkey who self-identify as Armenian. What is their place in Turkey?

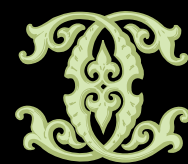
How can they be full citizens of a state that exalts the imperium that uprooted their ancestors from their own lands?

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has encouraged Turkey to see itself simultaneously as a victim of Europe and as a modern avatar of the Ottoman Empire. His insistent reminders of Turkey's past greatness intensify the resentments bred among his supporters by the perceived condescension of Europe to today's Turkey. The result of this combined use of inferiority and superiority to electrify the masses is a concerning ethno-religious nationalism frozen in a seemingly permanent state of self-pity.

Erdogan's critics say that he contemptuously stamps on international law, persecutes Turkey's Kurdish minority, casually threatens Arab states who don't genuflect to him and tirelessly vilifies the European Union – all the while claiming that Turkey is the wronged party.

This book demonstrates why other nations should not indulge Turkey by refusing to examine the events of 1915-1916 for what they were. Until then, *Secret Nation* is likely to be the final word on this subject.

(This review originally appeared in *The National*.)



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ARTS & LIVING

‘100 Aprils’ by Leslie Ayvazian at Rogue Machine Opens June 9

LOS ANGELES — Rogue Machine Theatre (2017 Ovation Award “Best Season,” and two-time recipient of the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle “Polly Warfield Award for an Excellent Season in a Small to Mid-Size Theatre”) presents “100 Aprils” opening on Saturday, June 9.

“100 Aprils” is a darkly comic look at the generational consequences, and insanity, of history denied.

John Saypian is a modern-day Don Quixote. He and his family are second-generation Armenians whose parents escaped the Genocide. John believes that a tormentor is pursuing him. Is the enemy a haunted memory from his childhood or is he real?

“I needed to contribute something to honor, and coincide with, the centennial commemoration of the Armenian Genocide,” said playwright Leslie Ayvazian. “It is a story that all Armenians carry, and tell throughout generations. This particular telling comes from an absurdist world. It lives partially in hallucination and partially in dreams that cannot be silenced.”

Ayvazian is the author of eight full-length plays and seven one-acts, published by Samuel French and Dramatists Play Service. “Nine Armenians” won the John Gassner/Outer Critics Circle Award for best new American play, the Roger L. Stevens Award and second place for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. She has received commissions from the Manhattan Theatre Club, Windancer Productions and South Coast Repertory Theatre. “High Dive” was produced at the Long Wharf Theatre and the Manhattan Class Company, directed by David Warren, and went on to be produced in Poland and Slovakia. Her short film “Every Three Minutes” starring Olympia Dukakis was produced by Showtime and won a Telly Award.

Director Michael Arabian was honored with five Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Awards, including Best Production and Best Direction, for “Waiting for Godot” at the Mark Taper Forum.

The production was nominated for 10 Ovation Awards, winning five, including Best Production; and was cited as one of the ten most memorable

(Arlene Saypian).

The crew includes: John Iacovelli (Scenic Design), Brian Gale (Lighting Design), Kevin

ognized with 12 Ovation Award nominations, including one for Best Season and two for Best Production. KCRW’s nod to Best Theatre was a highlight of the 2016 season, as was receiving a Shubert Foundation grant awarded to select theatre organizations for their artistic achievement, administrative strength, and fiscal stability along with the company’s development of new work and other significant contributions to the field of professional theatre in the United States. A recipient of the American Theatre Wing’s 2014 National Theatre Company Grant, given only to 12 theatre companies in the country, Rogue Machine (BEST PRODUCTION for three years – Ovation and LADCC Awards) presents plays that are new to Los Angeles. They recently received support from the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, and the company has garnered recognition for their work in upwards of 75 awards and nominations.

“100 Aprils” opens on Saturday, June 9th at 8:30 p.m. and runs Saturdays and Mondays at 8:30 p.m., Sundays at 3 p.m.



Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award Winning Director, Michael Arabian, Outer Critics Circle Award Winning Playwright, Leslie Ayvazian, Artistic Director of Rogue Machine Theatre, John Flynn

productions of 2012 seen in either New York or LA by Los Angeles Times critic Charles McNulty who called it a “luminous revival.” He has directed and produced numerous west coast and world premieres in New York and Los Angeles winning over 50 awards. Selected directing credits include “Disgraced” (SD Critics Award nom Best Production) and “Red” at San Diego Rep (both shows were in the San Diego Stage Beat’s top 10 list), “Kingdom of Earth” (Odyssey Theatre), “Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks” with Leslie Caron (Laguna Playhouse), “Staging the Unstageable” (Kirk Douglas), and “God of Carnage” (La Mirada).

The “100 Aprils” ensemble cast includes Leslie Ayvazian (Beatrice Saypian), Robertson Dean (Ahmed/Dr. Ahmed), John Perrin Flynn (John Saypian), Janet Song (Nurse), and Rachel Sorsa

Anthenill (Sound Design), and Kate Bergh (Costume Design).

Rogue Machine Theatre won the Ovation Award this year for Best Season and received, for the second time, the Polly Warfield Award for an Excellent Season from the LA Drama Critics Circle – 2016 and 2011. They were recently rec-

through July 16, (no performances on Monday, June 25th). Pay-What-You-Can on Monday, June 11th (\$5 minimum starts 7pm at box office only). Rogue Machine is located in The Met, 1089 N Oxford Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90029. For more information visit www.roguemachinetheatre.com

Restaurateur Sarmanian Sues Harvard over Nearby Construction

By Max Stendahl

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (bizjournals.com) — When Peter Sarmanian signed a lease in early 2016 for a new restaurant in Harvard Square, he had high hopes for the venture. His company, Classic Restaurant Concepts, already owned two successful pubs. The upscale tapas joint on Holyoke St., located less than a block from Harvard University’s campus, promised to draw heavy foot traffic.

But despite positive early reviews, the restaurant, called En Boca, generated minimal sales. Sarmanian and his co-owners knew why: A massive construction project to renovate Harvard’s nearby Smith Campus Center had closed Holyoke street and made it an eyesore. Amid significant losses, En Boca closed its doors last June, just nine months after opening.

According to Sarmanian, it wasn’t merely a case of bad timing. Classic Restaurant Concepts has since filed a fraud lawsuit in Middlesex County Superior Court, accusing Harvard of lying about the extent of the construction project even as it was encouraging the company to sign the lease at 8 Holyoke St. The suit, which was filed in August, claims that the university knew the street would be closed for two years, but failed to inform the restaurant. (Harvard has denied wrongdoing.)

“I’ve been in the restaurant business since my early 20s, and I’ve never heard of anything like this happening,” Sarmanian said in an interview. He described the construction, with the sound of jackhammers and swirling dust and grime, as “a war zone.”

Shortly after Classic Restaurant Concepts signed the lease, Harvard and its construction company filed a permit with the city of Cambridge, seeking permission to close the

sidewalk and bar vehicle traffic during business hours until August 2018, according to the suit. Meanwhile, Harvard was allegedly telling the restaurant that the street would reopen as early as August 2016.

Sarmanian said that Classic Restaurant Concepts would never have spent \$2.6 million renovating the space had it known the truth. He noted that other nearby retailers, including the soon-to-be-sold Andover Shop, made similar complaints about the construction to the Boston Globe in a recent report.

Harvard has denied fault. It also filed a counterclaim against Classic Restaurant Concepts, alleging that En Boca’s owners failed to make required rent payments and breached the terms of the lease by closing down.

In a statement, the university said it could not comment on specific, ongoing litigation, but noted that the Smith Center project “went through a significant public approval process, including more than 30 public meetings.”

“Since then, Harvard’s construction mitigation office has worked closely with all abutting businesses and residents to help minimize any disruptions to the extent possible,” the university said. “The project has always been scheduled to continue through the fall of 2018 and the expected completion date was heavily advertised.”

Sarmanian acknowledged that En Boca did not pay rent, but said it was because the restaurant was losing up to \$100,000 per month due to the street closing and construction. (Classic Restaurant Concepts’ lawsuit asks a judge to rule that it doesn’t owe Harvard any lease payments.) Eventually, Sarmanian said, the losses became so steep that he was forced to sell his own house.

“They thumbed their nose at us,” Sarmanian said of Harvard. “They literally said that it was not their problem. What they did was a fraudulent act.”

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ARTS & LIVING

Star Photographer Captures Music, Fashion Worlds

PHOTOGRAPHER, from page 13

Growing up in Paris's urban culture, Djerrahian came of age in the golden era of hip hop, when Rakim and Big Daddy Kane reigned supreme, foreshadowing the timeless images of music legends he would soon snap — his shots splashing across the covers of major music publications, from *Vibe* magazine to *L'Affiche*, France's leading hip hop monthly.

Amid the street art, BMX and break dancing milieu, Djerrahian was equally entrenched in his Armenian culture, attending the Armenian Cathedral on Rue Jean Goujon with his family, and forging a special bond with his grandparents. He reminisces about the savory Armenian



Photographer Armen Djerrahian (photo credit: Michael Beauplet)

dishes of his grandmother, whose name, Berjouhie, lives on through his daughter.

"When I was born in 1969, no one knew who or what an Armenian was," said Djerrahian. "It wasn't until Charles Aznavour really became big and started talking about his background that people began to understand."

A product of an artistic family — his Lebanese-born Armenian father was a well-known dancer and choreographer of the acclaimed National Armenian Ballet and Moiseyev Dance Company while his French mother, also a dancer, was a graduate of the prestigious École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs where she learned to design sets and costumes — he reflects on his childhood and how it molded him both personally and professionally. When his parents decided to stay home and raise their two children — ultimately leaving behind successful careers — his father taught him an important life lesson that still echoes in Djerrahian's ears.

"We are Armenian," he recalls his father



Vibe magazine spread of multi-platinum singer Usher, shot by Armen Djerrahian

telling him. "And Armenians always get back up, even after they were massacred. You may have one knee to the ground, but remember there is another knee to get up with."

It's a philosophy Djerrahian adopted when he moved to New York City from Paris in 2006, where he had created a notable career for himself, photographing the biggest names in music, from his visually stunning and evocative portraits of Eminem to Stromae to Jay-Z. But he wanted to continue to push his own boundaries and explore new grounds with his strong work

ethic and creative mind.

"I was stamped as the hip hop photographer in Paris," said Djerrahian. "So I came to New York City."

It wasn't the first time he was starting from scratch. As a teenager in 1982, he had made a name for himself through break dancing, hip-hop, graffiti and BMX culture, but decided in 1991 he was ready to pursue photography. While his parents encouraged his goals, they also urged caution.

"My dad told me it would take 10 years to get recognized and asked if I could make it on my own while I built my portfolio." As a 21-year-old, Djerrahian felt photography was something he naturally gravitated towards and notes his father was right; it took him exactly a decade to establish a name for himself.

"It's an amalgam of my parents being dancers and me watching them on stage," said Djerrahian, whose mother also pursued painting and photography. "There was something definitely artistic in me and photography ended up being where I felt the most comfortable."

He began his career by shooting his friends, who dominated the Parisian urban scene and by 1994 he was shooting album covers. As a freelance photographer for *L'Affiche*, where he shot the likes of Nas and Mobb Deep, he always found an imaginative way to style the shots with the use of lights, props and empathy with his subjects. He juxtaposed his work in France with assignments in the US, where he shot covers for *Vibe* magazine featuring Usher, Meek Mill and Mary J. Blige.

One of the turning points in his career was in 1997 when he photographed Jay-Z, who was at the beginning stages of his soon-to-be explosive career. In Paris to open for The Fugees, Jay Z's record company gave Djerrahian only one minute to take a photograph as the rapper exited his hotel. The clever photographer made the most of it and snapped a shot of Jay-Z pointing at his camera as he walked into his awaiting car. The image appeared in *L'Affiche*, where Jay-Z saw it and bought the entire collection, later making it the cover photo of his chart-topping single, *Wishing On A Star*.

"It was a huge recognition of my work," said Djerrahian, who worked closely with Jay-Z at the pinnacle of his fame in 2003. The images of the rapper playing pool in Brooklyn soon landed on the cover of *Groove* magazine.

Djerrahian's humility comes through when he speaks of his decades-long career photographing artists who have broken musical barriers, set records, won awards and amassed fortunes.

This morning in Bushwick he is using a Canon 5D but says any camera will do as long as the photographer has a creative eye. Case in point, he shot the famous French rapper Seth Gueko on his iPhone at Central Booking in downtown Manhattan, a photo that gained thousands of "likes" on social media.

As a professional photographer, when the subject of Instagram is raised, he concurs that the app has changed the landscape.

"Everyone now is a photographer," he says. But instead of critiquing the amateur photographers, he sees it as a positive development, particularly in terms of documenting his photos and portfolio in one space and making it accessible to the world, adding short stories or amusing anecdotes to his posts.

He concedes that there are different kinds of cameras that can enhance a photo, but what's key is the photographer's skill and interpretation.

"You can have a Lamborghini but if you don't know how to drive it, you'll go straight into a wall," he said. "Same with a camera. You learn how to shoot and grasp concepts in time."

Likening fashion to photography in terms of trends, he shoots in both color and black and white, but appreciates the latter because it "never ages" and produces striking, "rich photos."

Today he's photographing in both black and white and color, but keeping an eye on the sun. He reflects on his beginnings in photography,

learning about light and aperture while on the job. Now he shoots with a digital camera without relying on a flash or a reflector, noting it's "the way I started shooting, except now I have the technique to control the light."

When asked about another well-known photographer of Armenian origin, Yusuf Karsh, he finds a thread and posits a theory.

"Armenians have always had a special talent for visual arts and photography," said Djerrahian. "I feel it's a response to what was taken from us so we observed and interpreted the rest of the world when we didn't have anything else."

He remarks that Armenians brought color photography to Africa and that every portrait of the Ethiopian Royal Family has been shot by an Armenian.

"There are amazing directors and cinematographers who are Armenian," he added. "So there must be a sensibility within us that makes us a little different."

That same sensibility was inherent in him but took years of honing his skills to develop his own personal style.

"To me, a photographer becomes a photographer the day someone opens a magazine and can recognize who took that photo," he explained. "That happens to me now, but it didn't back then."

The photos, however, serve a larger purpose beyond visual appeal.

"The wealthy can possess everything in the world," said Armen. "But the only thing they can

being in the Illuminati but he was actually throwing the Roc-A-Fella sign, which is a diamond," he explained.

Over time, Djerrahian learned to foster an environment to compel even the most camera-averse artist to get in front of the lens. At the apex of 50 Cent's career, the rapper was with his G-Unit group for a concert in Paris and Djerrahian was scheduled to photograph Young Buck and Lloyd Banks, fellow G-Unit members. At the time, 50 Cent was embroiled in a feud with fellow rapper Ja Rule.

"50 was at the top of his career and didn't want to do photo shoots," he said. He rented prop guns and brought them with him to the shoot.

"I'm in the suite setting up my flash and Young Buck comes in and looks through the bag," said Djerrahian, describing the rapper's shock at the guns, causing him to run down the hallway to show 50 Cent, who entered the suite amused by the photographer's boldness.

"We start talking and laughing and then he kicks Young Buck and Lloyd Banks out and I knew then we'd have the photo shoot," said Djerrahian. "The funny thing is, I don't know anything about guns and I refuse to take a gun in my hands, but I had to do it so we could start a conversation."

He acquiesces that there is a certain level of creativity and psychology involved but at the end of the day, he said, "all I wanted was to shoot a photo of 50."

The photos, which graced the cover of *Rap US*



Anabela Belikova shoot for *The WILD Magazine*, by Armen Djerrahian

possess one of is a piece of art." He encourages the public to delve into art and "understand the trends in different eras of painting." To Djerrahian, photography is the new way of painting in the sense that it's a reflection of life in a certain time period.

He cites fashion and fine art photographer Jamel Shabazz as an example of someone who documented the street hip hop culture in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

"His photos witness the way people were dressed in that time period in New York City," he said, drawing a parallel between painting and photography. "I'm old school when it comes to art and I love paintings that show beauty, lighting and technique that serve as a source of inspiration, especially for photographers."

Though he has photographed many influential artists, there is one he was denied a chance at, simply through fate. En route from Paris to London to photograph a cover of *L'Affiche* with the Notorious B.I.G., he found out the celebrated rapper had been shot and killed.

"He was only doing a couple of photo shoots and I was one of them," said Djerrahian. "I was devastated when I heard the news, not only because it would have been a huge achievement to photograph him, but also because he was one of my favorite MCs."

His photos have had more influence than he initially thought when he first took them, including the famed photo of Jay-Z displaying the "Roc-A-Fella" symbol (denoting his record label, Roc-A-Fella Records) with his hands, reaching millions and causing a stir of its own.

"Because of that picture, Jay-Z was accused of

magazine, depict 50 Cent looking out a window in Paris, shades drawn and gun in hand, and made its way across the Atlantic in more ways than one.

"I came to the Interscope label in Los Angeles to shoot The Game and my photos were all over the walls," said Djerrahian. "It was a big accomplishment for me that my photographs were appreciated like that in the US market."

We exit the pizzeria and like the Bushwick neighborhood he is shooting in, he too is evolving, changing and looking towards the future. After cultivating decades of experience, know-how and sharpening that sensibility behind the camera, Armen is transitioning into a creative director, shooting commercial videos for Van Cleef & Arpels and Giorgio Armani, featuring Hollywood star Chris Pine.

"I can bring the artist out of the box and remove them from the cliché the labels are showing to the mass media," he said, once again extending his arm to check the light as the afternoon sun begins to settle. "I have no boundaries."

He is reminiscent of French photographer Jean Baptiste Mondino, whom he considers a mentor. Mondino also left a successful career in Paris and headed to New York to shoot award-winning music videos in the 80s and 90s of Madonna and Prince, bringing the MTV concept to France.

"Mondino, to me, is one of the most influential photographers because he never wanted to be categorized as a music artist photographer but as a photographer," said Armen. "What's important is how your heart translates into your photography."



ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

FLORIDA

JANUARY 20-27, 2019 — Armenian Heritage Cruise XXII 2019. Western Caribbean Cruise aboard the Royal Caribbean’s Allure of the Sea. Traveling to Nassau, Cozumel, Roatan, Costa Maya. Cabin Rates, starting from \$949/person based on double occupancy, including port charges and ACAA registration fee. Government rates of \$137.45 are additional. Armenian entrainment, Armenian cultural presentations, Armenian Festival Day, Tavlou and Belote Tournaments and much more. Call Travel Group International at 1-561-447-08750 or 1-866-447-0750 ext. 108, contact person Janie.

MASSACHUSETTS

JUNE 1-2 — Armenian Food Festival Sponsored by the Hye Pointe Church Women’s Guild, 11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe, 1280 Boston Post Road, Haverhill. Chicken Kabob, Losh Kabob, and Kheyma Dinners, Armenian Delicacies including Lahmejoon, Cheese Beoreg, Spinach Pie, Tourshi, Cheoreg, Kataif, Paklava, and many more delicious items. For more information call the church at (978) 372-9227.

JUNE 9 — The Friends of Armenian Culture Society will host the 67th annual Armenian Night at the Pops on Saturday, at 8 p.m. at Symphony Hall in Boston. Talented violinist Haig Hovsepien, a winner of the 2017 Boston Symphony Orchestra’s Concerto Competition and a rising sophomore at the Cleveland Institute of Music, will appear as soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra under the direction of Keith Lockhart. He will perform the Sibelius *Violin Concerto in D-minor*. The Pops will present Dance to the Movies with Dancing Celebrity Pros, So You Think You Can Dance top finalists, and singing stars from American Idol and The Voice. Tickets \$95, \$70 and \$35, available at: www.FACSBoston.org

JUNE 10 — St. James Armenian Festival. Delicious Armenian Food! Live Music! Raffle! Children’s Activities! Moon Bounce, Balloons, Face Painting, Caricatures and More! Rain or Shine - On Church Grounds. Sunday. 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown MA info@stthagop.com. www.stjameswatertown.org/festival

JUNE 16 – Book presentation by Adrienne Alexanian (editor) of her father’s memoir Forced into Genocide: Memoirsof and Armenian soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army Worcester Library – Saxe Room – 2 - 3:30 pm 3 Salem Square – Worcester MA – (508) 799-1655 ext. 3 Book signing will follow the presentation – proceeds will be donated to charity

JUNE 18 — The Gregory Hintlian Memorial Golf Tournament, sponsored by Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston at the Marlborough Country

Club, Marlborough; 9:30 a.m., registration; 11 a.m., “Shot Gun.” Join us for a day of golf - player’s fee: \$175 (includes hospitality, lunch, dinner, green & cart fees, prizes and gifts) – or just dinner and a social evening (\$50 per person). Limited to 128 players. Tournament and tee sponsorships available. RSVP deadline, June 11. To register or for further information, log onto www.htaac.org/calendar/event/562/ call the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632, or email office@htaac.org.

JUNE 20 — Tea & Tranquility, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston, Wednesday, 5-6:30 p.m. Meet & Greet! Enjoy Tea & Desserts hosted by MEM Tea Imports and The Bostonian Hotel. Walk the Labyrinth. For first-time walkers introduction to walking a labyrinth at 5:30 p.m. RSVP appreciated. hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

JUNE 28 — Under a Strawberry Moon, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston, Thursday, 8:30– 9:30 p.m. Meet & Greet! Moonlit Labyrinth Walk. Enjoy chocolate-dipped strawberries, hosted by Vicki Lee’s and Ice Teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports. RSVP appreciated. hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

JUNE 7 — Talk by Suzi Banks Baum about New Illuminations, the Jewish Federation of Pittsfield, 196 South Street, Pittsfield. 10:30 a.m. Baum has traveled to Gyumri three times in the past two years to develop a project called New Illuminations which unites women artists with the ancient practice of hand bound books, known to many as illuminated manuscripts. New Illuminations connects women to their heritage while empowering them through personal narrative writing and brings the book art form in to contemporary and eager hands. For more information, go to NewIlluminations.com or <http://www.suzibanks-baum.com/new-illuminations/>

JULY 7 — Save the date! Armenian Church of Cape Cod second annual Kef Time dinner and dancing at the Cape Club, 125 Falmouth Woods Road, North Falmouth. Leon Janikian Band with DJ and special appearance by Harry Minassian. Details to follow.

JULY 18 — Tea & Tranquility, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Wednesday, 5- 6:30 p.m. Meet & Greet! Enjoy Tea & Desserts hosted by MEM Tea Imports and The Bostonian Hotel. Walk the Labyrinth. For first-time walkers introduction to walking a labyrinth at 5:30 p.m. RSVP appreciated. hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

AUGUST 15 — Tea & Tranquility, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston, Wednesday, 5-6:30 p.m. Meet & Greet! Enjoy Tea & Desserts hosted by MEM Tea Imports and The Bostonian Hotel. Walk the Labyrinth. For first-time walkers introduction to walking a labyrinth at 5:30 p.m. RSVP appreciated. hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

AUGUST 23 — Under an August Moon, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston, Thursday, 7:30 - 9:30 pm. Meet & Greet! Berklee All-Star Jazz Trio! Enjoy signature tastings, hosted by anoush’ella say kitchen; creative mocktails, hosted by The Bostonian Hotel; luscious ice teas hosted by MEM Tea Imports. RSVP appreciated. hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

SEPTEMBER 16 — Sunday Afternoon at the Park for Families. Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, 2-4 p.m. Cindy Fitzgibbon, WCVB TV5, Emcee; Boston Hye Guys-Ron Sahatjian, clarinet; Joe Kouyoumjian, oud; Art Chingris, percussion; ADD At 2:30pm “Match the Pair”: Game for all ages! Face Painting: For Kids by Kids, Hoodies RSVP appreciated. hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

NOVEMBER 14 — Najarian Lecture on Human Rights at Historic Faneuil Hall, Boston Wednesday. Doors open at 6:45pm, Program at 7:30pm. Reception follows at The Bostonian Hotel An endowed public program of Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway. Details forthcoming.

NEW JERSEY

SEPTEMBER 30 — Save the Date! Armenian Fund USA and Ardzagang Armenian TV are proud to present Artash Asatryan and band, guest singer Grisha Asatryan, from Armenia! The concert is dedicated to Armenia’s and Artsakh’s independence celebration. Don’t miss the performance by the son and grandson of the legendry singer Aram Asatryan. Proceeds to benefit Fruitful Artsakh Project. 4 p.m. Bergen PAC, 30 N. Van Brunt St., Englewood.

RHODE ISLAND

JUNE 16 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church Presents A Tribute Concert Honoring Garo Nichanian (Bass – Baritone, Canada), for his 40 years of contribution to the Arts and Culture. Invited Performers: Janette Khalarian, singer, Mari Panosian, piano, David Griego, flute, Nazeli Dance Group Saturday, 7 p.m. Egavian Cultural Center 70 Jefferson Street, Providence, RI. Wine & refreshments will be served. Admission \$20

Calendar items are free. Entries should not be longer than 5 lines. Listings should include contact information. Items will be edited to fit the space, if need be. A photo may be sent with the listing no later than Mondays at noon.

Haig Hovsepien Is Hitting All The Right Notes

HOVSEPIAN, from page 13

For all his efforts, he has won several competitions, including the Max Reger Ambassador Award and the NEC Concerto Competition. He has also won town wide competitions in Concord, Brockton, Waltham and Belmont, as well as a Classical International Competition in Canada.

Hovspeian also appeared on the NPR radio music program “From the Top,” last year. He performed *Kaddish* by Maurice Ravel and *It Ain’t Necessarily So* by George Gershwin.



Haig Hovsepien

While he still contends with pre-performance nerves, he has come to a realization. “I came to understand that I play for myself and I want to bring joy to the audience,” he said. “You tell a story. After all those years, the nerves don’t go away. It shows you care and adds energy and a

spark.” Hovsepien is adjusting to life in college more than 600 miles away from home, finding the change easier than expected.

“The community is so nice there. It is one big friend group,” Hovsepien said of the CIM.

“It is nice to practice all day,” he said.

Hovsepien added that as far as he knows, he is the only Armenian currently studying at the CIM.

Aside from the lovely group of folks there, one other perk for CIM students is that they get free tickets to all the concerts of the Cleveland Orchestra, routinely ranked as one of the top orchestras in the world.

Hovsepien said he could not possibly choose a favorite composer, as each had their own genius. He noted, however that the Khachaturian Violin Concerto feels different. “It [marks a] milestone for me and it’s in my blood,” he said.

Hovsepien, continuing in the footsteps of his grandmother, said he is still inspired by her artistry and listens to her records. “It touches me very closely,” he said. “I get inspiration from them.”

She was one of the foremost violinists in Armenia and the first person there to perform Khachaturian’s Violin Concerto.

The saxophone came in handy during a classical concert abroad when he was a high school senior. The orchestra was visiting Iceland and he was playing the violin when the orchestra was performing Sergei Rachmaninoff’s Symphonic Dances. By coincidence, there is a saxophone solo in the music and he just switched from one to the other.

But it is not only classical music that fills his days. Hovsepien



Haig Hovsepien with his mother six years ago after performing at the State House in Massachusetts

grew up in Belmont, where the school system emphasizes musical education.

Jazz and classical music fulfill different aspects of his soul, Hovsepien said. “Classical music is more conservative, but jazz is totally different, with improvising and solos. It’s like talking about your day. It’s a nice change of pace.”

While CIM does not have a jazz program, there are many student jazz groups. He has also started a jazz combo with friends here and performed at local jazz clubs.

To hear his performance on NPR, visit <https://www.from-thetop.org/musician/haig-hovsepien/>; to buy tickets for the Pops on June 9, visit www.bso.org.



COMMENTARY

In the Middle East, Putin Has a Lot to Thank Trump for

By Robert Fisk

Vladimir Putin will have paid very close attention to the location of the Syrian artillery battery where four Russian soldiers lost their lives at the weekend. The desert around Deir ez-Zour remains a dangerous place – politically as well as physically – in which the Americans and Russians play an extremely risky game of war.

Putin still suspects the Americans helped the artillery guidance of a mortar battery which killed the commander of the Russian Far East 5th Army in Deir ez-Zour, lieutenant general Valery Asapov, less than a year ago. Was the mortar fired by pro-American Kurdish fighters? Or by Isis? The Russians say that ISIS mobile attackers stormed the Syrian artillery position this weekend at night – the Islamists’ normal routine, streaming out of the desert wadis in suicide trucks and motorcycles – even though the little Syrian forts, hillocks of sand and cement strewn across the vast sand plateaus, are supposed to be invulnerable.

So now the Russians are directing artillery. First they were the air component to the Syrian army, their forward air observers on the ground with Syrian troops directing the Sukhois onto Assad’s enemies. Then the Russians were the de – miners of Palmyra and Deir ez-Zour, Homs and Aleppo. Then the Russian military police escorted the beaten jihadists to the wastelands of Idlib province or the Turkish border. The Russians liaise between the Syrians and the pro-American Kurds on the Euphrates River.

Twelve months ago, Putin’s top artillery technicians were searching through the rubble of eastern Aleppo to draw up painstaking maps of the fall of shot – the exact bomb crater and blast effects of air – dropped Russian munitions. I met one of their teams. Its reports were circulated, of course, to Russian military intelligence. But they first go directly to the Kremlin.

Putin reads them. He is a micro-manager.

There will be no Brezhnev-style Afghanistan disasters in Syria – or so the Russians pray – no slovenly retreats across the Amu Darya by political generals, no Kremlin lethargy. Russian officers speak good Arabic (and quite good English) – products of the Moscow School of Foreign Languages – and, like the Syrian army, their officers go to the front lines.

That’s why Asapov was killed. Putin decided to pursue his Chechen and Russian jihadi enemies all the way to Syria – and kill them all. He saved his ally, Bashar al-Assad. But at the very same time – give or take a warning or two and one downed Russian jet courtesy of a later – to – repent Erdogan – he

for “saving” Syria. He calls Israel’s racist Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman “brilliant.” Indeed, one Russian translation of a Kremlin meeting quoted Putin as claiming that Lieberman – a former nightclub bouncer from the ex-Soviet Union – was “a great Russian.” Netanyahu is always welcome at the Kremlin, even when he’s bombing the Iranians in Syria. Sultan Erdogan of Turkey, whose air force shot down one of Putin’s jets, scurried to befriend Putin when the Russians ordered their holidaymakers to dry up Turkey’s seaside tourist industry. When Putin travelled to Erdogan’s golden palace in Istanbul, he stationed a helicopter-carrier bang in the very center of the Bosphorus,

State Department which called for “restraint on all sides” – usually when the Israelis were invading or bombing Lebanon or Gaza – but now it’s the Kremlin which calls for “restraint” between Israel and Iran.

So to what degree has Putin’s shrewd, hard, sardonic character brought all this about – and how much did Trump’s instability and unpredictability hand Russia its political triumph in the Middle East? It’s tempting to say a bit of both. But I suspect that an Obama might have provided a regional equilibrium which Putin has now claimed for himself. When Moscow is now the interlocuteur valable in the Middle East, it’s difficult to take the gift of equilibrium politics away from Putin. Europe’s case is hopeless.

Europe cannot engage with a Kremlin that still occupies part of Ukraine and annexes the Crimea. It showers sanctions upon Russia. But it grovels like the Americans to an Israel which occupies the West Bank and annexes Jerusalem and Golan.

Israel can fire off its missiles into Syria after claiming that Iranian missiles had fallen on Golan – actually Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan, although that got a little lost in the telling – but Putin is not going to order an end to Golan attacks. There is a strong suspicion that it was the Syrian army which fired those missiles at

the Israelis – in retaliation for the constant Israeli bombing of Syrian forces (never Isis forces, of course) over the last three years. Thus the Israelis, fearful of a reopening of the “South Lebanese Front” in a future war with Hezbollah, have unthinkingly opened a “Golan Front” – along a border which has been largely silent for 45 years. It’s the kind of equation Putin can savor. Be sure, he’ll be there to intervene if anyone needs him.

And he’s insisting that it’s the Syrians who move onto the Golan plateau on their own. No Iranians. No Hezbollah. The Syrians can’t object if they’re back on their border with occupied Golan. And the Israelis can’t object if Russia keeps the Iranians and the Hezbollah out. “Deconfliction”, the Russians like to call this. Everyone backs off. No war on Golan. That’s the hope.

As for what the “experts” like to call geopolitics, Putin immediately understood the need to uphold the Iranian nuclear accord when Trump tore it up. At one stroke, he became a closer ally of Iran, he could sympathize with Europe and he was able to present himself as steadfast in a treaty he signed with China. But he is entering a potential market war with the US – a dollar war – alongside a Europe whose governments may be prepared to stand up to Washington (some of them, at least), but whose big businessmen are already showing their usual cowardice in the face of American profit and loss.

There is something scornful about all this. Putin is not going to worry about Russian mercenary deaths in Syria; their activities are intended to test American military willpower in Syria. Nor does America weep for its Kurdish mercenaries, or protect them in Afrin.

Putin is not going to scream about human rights abuses in Gaza – the shooting down of unarmed demonstrators or the Israeli destruction of clinics or hospitals – when his own jets have been destroying clinics and hospitals in Syria. He sticks to the “war on terror” – and being an ally of all. The children may rattle their toys, but the tsar has the keys to the nursery. The crackpot in the White House neither knows nor cares nor, one suspects, understands. He long ago opened the door for Putin – and Putin walked straight through it.

(Robert Fisk is the Middle East columnist for the *Independent* newspaper. This column originally appeared in the May 29 edition of the publication.)

PUTIN IS NOT GOING TO SCREAM ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN GAZA — THE SHOOTING DOWN OF UNARMED DEMONSTRATORS OR THE ISRAELI DESTRUCTION OF CLINICS OR HOSPITALS — WHEN HIS OWN JETS HAVE BEEN DESTROYING CLINICS AND HOSPITALS IN SYRIA. HE STICKS TO THE “WAR ON TERROR” — AND BEING AN ALLY OF ALL.

remained a trusted friend of Israel, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and so on.

Refusing to join his insane counterpart in Washington in a sectarian war between Sunnis and Shias, Putin deploys the one phrase which unites every dictator, prime minister, mafiosi autocrat, king, president, mass-murdering tyrant, public relations hack or fawning editor: the “war on terror.” I reckon Putin and Trump use this circumlocution about the same number of times. It’s a cracker for the masses, and it doesn’t matter if it’s uttered by a cynic in the Kremlin or a guy in the White House who is completely bananas. But Putin, of course, is a man for all seasons. He accepts the praise of Bashar al-Assad

right opposite the Topkapi.

Egypt’s Sisi takes Putin to the opera in Cairo. In the Kremlin, Putin welcomes King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. He welcomes the Qataris. He pays court to Iran’s Rouhani. He listens – glowering, to be sure – as the Supreme Leader Khamenei explains the evils of American interference in the Middle East (this only two years ago).

Mercifully, the Iranian did not mention the Russian invasion of northern Iran in the Second World War, nor its setting up of Soviets in Azerbaijan and Mahabad in Iranian Kurdistan when the war was over. No more than Sisi recalled how Sadat threw the Russians out of Egypt in 1972. No more than Putin would have mentioned to Assad how the younger Lion of Damascus flirted with the West and attended the Bastille Day parade with Nicolas Sarkozy in 2008 – Trump was equally hooked by this military flummery last year – and declined to respond publicly to Russian requests in 2000 about Chechen rebels who had fled Russia.

But after the Libyan debacle, Putin was going to take no nonsense when his western partners tried to unseat Assad. There would be no more humiliating Russian retreats from the Mediterranean.

When the Russians later wanted to talk to the American-trained anti-Islamist Libyan military seigneur de guerre Khalifa Haftar, they simply airfreighted him onto a Russian carrier off shore. When the Americans complained that Russian airstrikes in Syria were only hitting the CIA’s favorite (and fairly mythical) “Free Syrian Army” rebels, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov grimly replied that “if it looks like a terrorist, if it acts like a terrorist, if it walks like a terrorist... it’s a terrorist.”

Putin sheds as few tears over the Russian mercenaries who die in Syria fighting the Kurds as he did over the Kurds who died defending Afrin from the Turkish army and its Isis cohorts. That deal seems to have been simple. The Turks could have Afrin province – for the time being – if they let the Syrians and Russians clear the Islamists out of Idlib province in the future (note: watch out for this war).

And a bigger compromise seems to have been achieved with the Israelis. They could hit the Iranians if they wished, but no war on Syria, no Israeli (or American) no – fly zones, and – above all – no war with Iran. The Iranians don’t want a war with Israel (neither side would win, as Netanyahu knows), and in Tehran, Putin is the voice of common sense. Once it was the

LETTERS

Community Input Needed Before Deciding Fate of Diocesan Complex

(The following letter, sent to the new Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan, and Diocesan Council Chairman James Kalustian, was shared with the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* by its author, Hirant Gulian.)

I am sure you know the turbulence in the Armenian community concerning the sale of Diocesan air rights.

Over the past 100 years, the community worked very hard to purchase one of the most valuable properties in New York City, and built the Diocesan Center and St. Vartan Cathedral. *No one* has the right to sell anything without consulting the Armenian community.

Today, the Diocesan Council and its chairman are in the process of selling, or better yet, giving away the blood and sweat of those who sacrificed and made possible the purchase of the Diocesan Complex.

Therefore, it is the Armenian community members who should make the final decision, not the Chairman of the Diocesan Council.

In the United States, like in Armenia, people speak, leaders listen, and those leaders who do not listen to the people will have to resign and go home.

I have been communicating with community benefactors, delegates, parish council members and other Armenian community members at large – they are all against the *sale* of the air rights.

Hokeshnorh Hayr Soorp, I respectfully request a town hall meeting at the Diocesan Kavookjian Hall and invite members of the community and the leaders of community organizations to acknowledge and discuss the Diocesan Council’s plan.

A decision of this magnitude for the Diocesan Complex and St. Vartan Cathedral *cannot* be made by a single person without consulting the community leadership and members.

Thank you in advance for your assistance and understanding. *Harkanok*,

Deacon Hirant Gulian
Member, Knights of Vartan, Inc.
Cliffside Park, N.J.



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Azerbaijan's Secret 'Laundromat' Scheme Pays \$1.5 Million to US Lobbying Firm

The website of Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) revealed last week the possibly illegal lobbying in the United States funded by Azerbaijani sources.

Investigative journalist Jonny Wrate reported on May 23, 2018 that “some of the money that passed through the Azerbaijani Laundromat, a secret money laundering scheme and slush fund that saw \$2.9 billion flow out of the country between 2012 and 2014, ended up in the hands of a purportedly private Azerbaijani organization that hired a Virginia firm to lobby the US government for more than a decade.”

OCCRP had reported earlier that “other monies from the fund were used to advance the Azerbaijani government's political agenda, with some ending up in bank accounts belonging to European politicians who spoke highly of President Ilham Aliyev's regime even as it arrested journalists and political activists. The precise origins of the funds are unknown, hidden behind secretive shell companies. But there is ample evidence that the authoritarian country's ruling elite is behind them.”

Last week, OCCRP revealed that two shell companies established by Azerbaijan “funneled over a million and a half dollars to a mysterious Baku-based organization called Renaissance Associates” which in turn hired “a US lobbying firm to orchestrate praise for Azerbaijan and had its repre-

sentatives make thousands of dollars in campaign donations, including to Senators and Representatives who sat on committees that determine foreign aid budgets.”

At the center of this scheme is Elkhan Suleymanov who “runs a pro-regime organization in Baku which appears to work hand-in-hand with Renaissance, even using the same office space.... Other payments were made to an influential oil and gas consultant with close ties to President Aliyev who presents himself as an immigration success story and lives in Dayton Ohio – even as he also lobbies the US government on his homeland's behalf.”

According to OCCRP, two offshore shell companies – Metastar Invest and Hilux Services – made 18 payments totaling \$1.7 million to Renaissance Associates S.A. from September 2012 to December 2014 through two separate bank accounts at Volksbank AG in Liechtenstein and Privatbank IHAG Zurich AG in Switzerland. US Justice Department reports filed by Bob Lawrence & Associates (BL&A), a lobbying firm in Alexandria, Virginia, showed that it received \$1.5 million from Renaissance – which almost equals the amount transferred by the Azeri shell companies to Renaissance, BL&A's sole international client.

Since 2004, BL&A has handled the visit of President Ilham Aliyev to the White House and three years later arranged for President Obama's former campaign manager, David Plouffe, to visit Baku and meet with Azeri officials. BL&A has also lobbied for US Defense appropriations to Azerbaijan, against Karabakh (Artsakh), and for the oil pipeline from Azerbaijan to Turkey. Between 2008 and 2016, BL&A president Bob Lawrence has testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Matters, recommending foreign aid to Azerbaijan. In his testimony, Lawrence called Armenia “a rogue nation... clearly protecting criminals” and that it commits human rights violations.

US Justice Department reports indicate that BL&A paid \$250,000 in 2015 to hire the Crane Group to lobby on behalf of Azerbaijan. At the same time, BL&A contracted former Rep. Solomon Ortiz (D-TX) and his firm, Solomon P. Ortiz Holdings LLC, to lobby for the interests of Azerbaijan.

OCCRP also reported that “between 2012 and 2015, individuals registered as lobbyists acting directly or indirectly on behalf of Renaissance made thousands of dollars in donations to political candidates, including to Senators and Representatives who were sitting on, or chaired, appropriations subcommittees at the time.”

Surprisingly, and possibly illegally, BL&A has not registered with the US Justice Department as a lobbyist for Azerbaijan. On its website, BL&A states that it “does not work for, report to, or take directions from the Azerbaijani government or any member of the Azerbaijani government.” OCCRP stated that “in 2005 – a year after BL&A first began working with Renaissance – Azerbaijan's independent Turan News Agency reported that it had received a letter identifying Renaissance as a lobbying firm representing the Azerbaijan government in Washington.”

Furthermore, “between at least 2006 and 2008, BL&A's website listed the country of Azerbaijan, rather than Renaissance, as its client. In May 2012, BL&A agreed to represent the Embassy of Azerbaijan and disclosed this under FARA [Foreign Agents Registration Act] before quickly annulling the registration, claiming that no services had actually been performed and no payments received.”

BL&A acknowledges on its website that it collaborates with the Association for Civil Society Development in Azerbaijan (ACSDA), a pro-regime non-profit organization based in Baku and controlled by Elkhan Suleymanov, a member of Azerbaijan's parliament. According to BL&A's website, Renaissance “supports and nurtures ACSDA. The two organizations share the same Baku apartment.” OCCRP also reported that “when in April 2016, ACSDA signed a three-month contract with US lobbying firm Greenberg Traurig, the firm's FARA filing shows that the \$25,000 per month fees had been paid by Renaissance.”

OCCRP's extensive report revealed many other lobbying activities funded by this secret slush fund. All these efforts should be reported to the US Congress asking for a thorough investigation. A lawsuit should also be filed against BL&A to block its unregistered lobbying campaigns!

Discover Armenia

The Next Tourist Paradise

By Miran P. Sarkissian

THE ABOVE HEADLINE would be only one of the many slogans I would use as the next minister of tourism in Armenia. Only, there is no such position and no such person in Yerevan knowledgeable and professional enough in tourism matters to initiate such a campaign slogan outside Armenia to attract new visitors to the country.

Having spent the past two weeks in Armenia celebrating the earthmoving political changes, I was impressed by the increasing number of Russian, Ukrainian and Iranian tourists walking, eating and shopping on the streets of Yerevan. The first two groups come in large numbers because of Russian as a common language but also the low cost of travel to Armenia. The second comes to Armenia in larger numbers during the Ramadan season, earlier this year than ever before, during which time they can eat and drink to their hearts' delight, not having to follow the strict rules of their imams in Iran.

But, those groups or Armenians visiting their homeland or paying visits to the families they left behind in search of employment outside the country are not where the success of Armenia's tourist development lies in the future. This publication carried an editorial not long ago speaking rather forlornly of the unfortunate “religious and night life” being the only tourism coming to Armenia to-date. There could be so much more than that.

Thematic tourism has been the trend of the tourist industry around the world for the past decade. Yes, religious sites in Armenia abound in the form of wonderful and unique monasteries like Tatev and church complexes and museums like Echmiadzin. Yes, there are numerous night clubs like Malkhas and others for jazz and all other kinds of music.

However, there are also mountains which offer beautiful trails for hiking. There is mountain climbing. There are skiing and winter sports. There are high mountain and hill points for gliding enthusiasts. There is Lake Sevan where sailing and parasailing could take place. There are vineyards and wine producing lands where oeno-tourism could accommodate many wine loving tourists from Europe. Agritourism could be developed to show Armenia's famous production of apricots and pomegranates. There is a rich Armenian cuisine from khash to mante to lehmajoon to dolma and unequaled sweets which could be taught to Northern and Central European and American tourists now looking to enrich their usually bland diets with exotic dishes.

That is only to begin with before one starts organizing new events such as the Annual Yerevan Marathon with international runners competing in 5k, 10k and 26k races, the Annual Tour d'Armenie Bicycle race matching the Tour de France or the Italian Giro, for both professional and amateur bikers, the Yerevan Air Show with antique monoplanes racing for awards, the Yerevan International Marching Bands' Competition where military bands from around the world would compete in Republic Square and many other such events.

Aside from utilizing the country's natural beauty, however, let us not forget that we could very profitably capitalize on medical tourism. Armenia offers top-notch doctors in almost every specialty but we could easily begin with plastic surgeons and dentists who offer top quality services at very reasonable rates. I have seen hordes of Middle Easterners crowd Bangkok hospitals in search of medical care unavailable in their own countries. Armenia is closer to them, cleaner and more beautiful than Thailand.

To begin with there is need for the appointment of a Minister of Tourism, a cabinet position that has never existed in Armenia with a multilingual, well-travelled and cosmopolitan individual. There is so much one can do in order to make Armenia a relevant, interesting and exciting destination for tourists. In order to attract attention and entice visitors, however, a country has to have a strong infrastructure to support such a growth-oriented movement.

The airport authority should become more competitive in their landing fees under the new government's directive so people do not go to Kiev or Tiflis to reach Yerevan because they can do so at half air ticket prices compared to direct flights to Yerevan which are uncompetitive due to high landing fees. The Ministry of Tourism should negotiate with IATA (International Air Travel Association) and the ITA (International Tourism Association) for special programs existing to promote tourism in developing countries like Armenia.

There should be more hotels built by international chains like the French Accord group and accommodations owned or operated by big travel agencies like TUI of Germany which moves some seven million Germans to tourist destinations around the world every single year. A Club Mediterrane from

France with also hundreds of thousands of French tourists could also operate in one or more locations in Armenia.

There should be more tour agencies started by tourist guides and professionals so visitors can have many choices and not the taxis lined up in Republic Square touting their destinations on paper posters, remnants of ex-Soviet Union practices.

There should be regulation of taxis pertaining to the type and age of the cars they drive, their taxi meters, taxi cleanliness and driver manners equivalent to European standards.

All museums, whether in Yerevan or other cities that have them, should be armed with credit card machines and have obligatory maps and information in at least three languages (English, Russian, Arabic) to accommodate current and future visitors. If you are wondering why Arabic just think that there are now in Yerevan more than ten thousand Syrian-Armenian refugees all fluent in the Arabic language and traditions.

All of the above is easy to achieve when there is a Plan of Action and the right person or persons to execute it. The government should also believe and commit to tourism development as the fastest and most immediate way of bringing income to the country and also creating employment so very much needed in the Armenian youth that is still residing in the country and has not left to Russia or the Ukraine in search of gainful employment. Each tourist rubble, dollar or Euro can create jobs in hotel personnel, transportation, restaurants and other food services, retail outlets and their suppliers, entertainment and many other areas of the economy.

Being friendly and hospitable, traits that are deeply rooted in Armenians, is not enough these days. We need to look at Armenia as a precious jewel that needs to be aggressively promoted and marketed the proper way in order to produce far reaching positive results into many aspects of the country's society.

Finally, having travelled more than sixty countries over the years, I can vouch that there are not many countries offering 50-to-1 exchange rates for their currency to the US dollar or the Euro. In addition, if there have been no funds allocated to tourism promotion to-date and Armenia does not know how to present her tourist attractions by participating in international exhibitions in Europe or North America, some of the above programs would attract attention by having non-Armenians participate in events held in Armenia herself. When Azerbaijan can spend millions on CNN International showing in Europe advertising Baku as the ‘Paris of the Caucasus’ and the ‘Land of Fire’ because they have oil money, the counter to that message from Armenia could be to promote the country as a place to discover “Western culture in the Caucasus”. And that message should flood the internet!

The number to keep in mind today is two million tourists visiting Armenia by 2025.

It is doable, so let's do it. We know how.



Singapore Is Now Home to Asia’s First Armenian Museum

SINGAPORE (*The Straits Times*) – The Armenian community is opening a museum – the first in Asia – in Singapore to celebrate its presence in the southeastern Asian nation.

Armenians are behind some of most commonly-used machines used today – including the automated teller machine and magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI. They were also pioneers in plastic surgery and color television.

In Singapore, members of this diaspora include Catchick Moses who started *The Straits Times* in 1845, the Sarkies Brothers who founded Raffles Hotel in 1887, and Agnes Joaquim who in the late 1800s hybridized Singapore’s national flower, the Vanda Miss Joaquim.

Now, the small but prolific community is spending \$1.2 million in its first concerted effort to raise awareness about its presence and role in the Republic as one of its oldest communities.

It has built a museum at its Parsonage building in Hill Street and is in the midst of constructing a community center there. It will also continue the ongoing restoration of the Armenian Church in the same Hill Street compound.

Pierre Hennes, 45, a trustee of the church, has said sometimes they get mistaken for Jews.

He said: “We want to share who we are with Singapore. Armenians have always punched above their weight although no more than 100 Armenian have ever lived in Singapore at the same time.”

The Armenian museum is officially launching on Thursday, May 24 by National Heritage Board (NHB) chief executive Chang Hwee Nee and Bishop Haigazoun Najarian from the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Australia and New Zealand.

Artifacts on display include an intact British-made Doulton & Co mid-to-late 1800s glazed stoneware bottle



The new Armenian museum in Singapore

found on a ledge in the church spire two years ago. There are also paintings of “Armenian Streets” across the globe.

The church in Singapore is the oldest Armenian church in South-east Asia.

The gallery opens to the public on an appointment basis from June 7. It will be opened to the public on a daily basis once the Community Centre is completed next year.

Government Accused of ‘Political Pressure’ On Yerevan University Head

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The Yerevan State University (YSU) administration accused Armenia’s new government of exerting “political pressure” on its rector, Aram Simonian, on Tuesday after he was confronted by angry students demanding his resignation.

Simonian, who is affiliated with the former ruling Republican Party (HHK), has faced growing pressure to step down since the April 23 resignation of Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan

resulting from massive anti-government demonstrations.

Students involved in the popular revolution led by Sargsyan’s successor, Nikol Pashinyan, accuse him of mismanagement and corruption. They also accuse him of having abused his powers to spread HHK influence on Armenia’s largest and oldest university during his decade-long tenure.

More than a hundred of them demonstrated

outside the main YSU building in Yerevan on Tuesday morning before holding a tense meeting with Simonian in a university conference hall. They refused to leave the auditorium and began a sit-in there after he rejected their demands. The protest continued late in the evening.

“We waited for about month, hoping that there will be some reforms in the university and that there will be some statements in support of the students,” said Davit Petrosyan, a leader of the protesting students. “But the opposite happened.”

Simonian insisted that the demands are “not legitimate” and that only a small percentage of

YSU’s 17,000 or students are demonstrating against him. “This is not democracy, this is repression, including for my political views and party affiliation,” he told reporters. “I won’t make any concessions under duress.”

Simonian went on to accuse Pashinyan’s government of being behind the protests. He argued that two recently appointed government officials joined the students holed up in the YSU auditorium.

In a statement released later in the day, the YSU administration likewise charged that the protests are being “guided” by the new government.

Johnson Makes Gaffes in Interview

LONDON (Reuters) – Britain’s Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson talked international relations and rude poetry with a hoax caller who pretended to be the Armenian prime minister in a new gaffe by one of Britain’s most prominent politicians.

In the 18-minute call, Johnson discussed relations with Russia, the Iran nuclear deal and the Syrian war, according to audio of the call uploaded on YouTube and shared on the Twitter pages of Russian pranksters Vovan and Lexus.

Britain’s foreign office confirmed that Johnson had been hoaxed and said the perpetrator was “childish,” while a spokeswoman for Prime Minister Theresa May said an investigation was under way “to make sure this doesn’t happen again.”

“This shouldn’t have happened,” the spokeswoman said.

The caller, impersonating Armenia’s new Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, said he was going to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin, and asked Johnson’s advice for dealing with him.

“I hope he will not poison me with Novichok,” the prankster joked, referring to a nerve agent used in the March attack on ex-spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter, for which Britain has blamed Russia. Johnson can be heard chuckling on the other end of the line.

Later in the call, Johnson said he would like to come to Armenia to find out more about “Armenia’s Novichok experiences,” and they also talk about sanctions against Russia and high-profile individuals.

“You throw a stone in Kensington and you’ll hit an oligarch,” Johnson said, in reference to the central London district favored by Russian tycoons. “Some of them are close to Putin and some of them aren’t.”

Vovan and Lexus are known in Russia for targeting celebrities and politicians with their audacious stunts, and in 2015 they prank-called British singer Elton John.

Johnson too is no stranger to controversy. In the run-up to Britain’s 2016 referendum on EU membership, the prominent Brexiteer compared the goals of the European Union to those of Adolf Hitler and Napoleon, causing consternation in European capitals. Also in 2016, Johnson wrote a controversial poem about Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, involving wild oats and a goat, which the prankster complimented him on.

But despite his penchant for colorful rhetoric, Johnson stuck closely to official British policy throughout the call and eventually stopped replying altogether.

“The Foreign Secretary realized it was a hoax and ended the call. We checked it out and knew immediately it was a prank call,” the Foreign Office said in a statement. “These childish actions show the lack of seriousness of the caller and those behind him.”

The perpetrators of the stunt admitted they had underestimated Johnson. “We were surprised that he turned out to be a smart diplomat, an intellectual,” Lexus was quoted as saying in Russia’s *Komsomolskaya Pravda* newspaper. “This is probably the first time we have spoken with someone who is not an idiot.”

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DELICIOUS ARMENIAN FOOD!

Shish, Losh and Chicken Kebab! Kheyma, Hummus, Eetch
Delicious vegetarian options!

LIVE ARMENIAN MUSIC!

Bob Raphaelian * Jay Baronian * Leon Janikian * Kenny Kalajian

CHILDREN’S ACTIVITIES!

Moon Bounce * Balloons * Face Painting * Treats * Games

FUN FOR ALL AGES!

Armenian Music & Dancing! Raffle! Armenian Vendor!

For more information or to volunteer contact:
Shant Broukian—sbrouk@gmail.com or 617.233.0453
Andrew Seropian—andrew.seropian@gmail.com or 508.826.8656

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www.stjameswatertown.org