Istanbul Bids Final Farewell to Mesrob II

ISTANBUL, (Public Radio of Armenia) – Archbishop Mesrob II Mutafyan, the 84th Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, was laid to rest on Sunday, March 17, as many political and religious figures and Armenian nationals from overseas bid their final farewells to him. Hurriyet Daily News reported.

The archbishop's coffin was rested on a catafalque for mourning visitors to pay him their respects after the prayers and was referred to the Sisli Armenian cemetery in an area designated for patriarchs for burial. Many senior officials from ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) including the party's spokesperson Omer Celik and its Istanbul mayoral candidate Binali Yildirim, along with the presidential spokesperson Ibrahim Kahrn attended the funeral service.

Mutafyan died at age 62 in the Surp Pingic Armenian Hospital in Istanbul's Zeytinburnu district on March 8 where he was receiving treatment. He had been incapacitated since 2018 with an early onset of dementia. Preparations for the election of a new patriarch for Turkey are expected to begin after a 40-day mourning period.

In Defense of Christians (IDC), a leading advocacy organization for Christians and religious minorities in the Middle East, referred to the Sisli Armenian cemetery in an area designated for patriarchs for burial.

Eminent Byzantinist Dr. Speros Vryonis, Jr., Supporter of Armenian Studies, Dies

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

SACRAMENTO, Calif. - Eminent Byzantinist and historian Dr. Speros Vryonis, Jr. passed away on March 11 peacefully in his sleep at the age of 90. Vryonis wrote extensively on Byzantine, Balkan and Greek history. Secondarily, he contributed to the advancement of Armenology through his research in Byzantine history, his unwavering stand against shoddy scholarship and the distortion of history, and his personal participation in the institutional development of Armenian studies.

Incongruously, or at least unexpectedly, combining a Southern twang and courtesy with a Southern accent, Dr. Speros Vryonis, Jr. regarded the note in Armenian and other languages found on one of the weapons used for the attack on the two mosques in the city of Christchurch, on Friday, March 15, NZP spokesperson Anna Naghdalyan noted. “We are in contact with New Zealand’s relevant authorities on all issues linked with the incident,” Naghdalyan said.

Brenton Tarrant, a 28-year-old Australian, was charged with the deadly attacks on two mosques in the city, which killed 50 and injured as many. One of the weapons used for the attack on the two mosques in New Zealand was covered with notes in different languages, including Armenian and Georgian, the videos released from the incident show.

The Georgian state security service has already reacted to these reports, stating that it is cooperating with its partners.

The gun covered in white lettering featured the names of King David Agmashenebeli and Prince David Stalin, the second husband of Queen Tamara. In Georgian, the Battle of Kagul 1770 (Russian-Turkish war) and the Battle of Bular 1913 were written in Russian.

The Battle of Sarikamish (one of the biggest military clashes between the Russian and Ottoman empires during World War I) is written in Armenian on the gun.

New Zealand’s Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern described the shootings as a terrorist attack.

Memorial to Victims of Armenian, Assyrian Genocides to Be Erected in Sweden

VÄSTERAS, Sweden (Panorama.am) – A monument dedicated to the memory of the victims of Armenian and Assyrian Genocides by the Ottoman Empire will be erected in Västeras, in central Sweden, Ermenihaber reported.

Originally a suggestion had been submitted by the Christian-Democratic party for the memorial but the issue has been purchased by the local mayor’s office, which had referred to a ban on the City council’s adopting decisions on foreign policy matters.

To address the matter, the factions at the city council gave a press conference noting that the monument should be placed on private property because of constitutional restrictions.

A local church was among the first to respond to the initiative and suggested its land for the monument.

Guns Used by New Zealand Terrorist Had Armenian, Georgian Writing

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenia’s Foreign Ministry was in contact with the authorities of New Zealand regarding the note in Armenian and other languages found on one of the weapons used for the attack on the two mosques in the city of Christchurch, on Friday, March 15, NZP spokesperson Anna Naghdalyan noted.

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Ara Khatchadourian Tackles Mountains, Life and Obstacles

LOS ANGELES — Ara Khatchadourian, a renowned French-Armenian adventurer, extreme sport athlete and mountaineer who climbed the highest mountain in the world, now has his eyes set on a new challenge as he continues his “next Everest.”

In 2018, he ran a tri-continent marathon from Marseille to Yerevan. Khatchadourian covered 11 countries, 500 towns, and 2,685 miles in an astonishing time span of 105 days. He ran an incredible 26 miles a day without stopping for a day break. So remarkable was this achievement that he was greeted by crowds of people in Yerevan, and most notably was commended in person by the president of France, Emmanuel Macron.

Born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1964 to Armenian parents from Erzurum, he grew up in a community that welcomed his Armenian roots. Unfortunately, after
**Café Owners, Employees Protest Dismantling Order**

YEREVAN – Owners and employees of several cafés in Yerevan are protesting the decision of the city authorities to dismantle the property located in the vicinity of the Opera House that the municipality believes should be free from commercial facilities. The dismantling began on March 13 – four weeks after the Yerevan Mayor’s Office formally notified the café owners that they should vacate the premises and leave the area. The demolition work with the use of heavy equipment continued in the area adjacent to Freedom (Opera) Square on Thursday. A number of employees of the cafés briefly blocked traffic in one of Yerevan’s central streets on March 14 as a sign of protest against the actions of the city authorities. “It is inhuman to deprive people of their daily earnings,” said one angry woman who participated in the protest.

President Sarkissian Hosts Chess Great Leonov Aronian

YEREVAN – President Armen Sarkissian hosted on March 19 Armenia’s leading chess player, three-time World Chess Olympiad winner Leonov Aronian. Aronian told Sarkissian about his forthcoming plans and tournaments and noted that the year is pretty eventful. Sarkissian wished him every success and said, “Each victory [by you] presents unforgettably joyful moments of pride to our people.”

Armenian Figure Skaters Head to Japan for World Championships

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Armenian team of figure skaters have left for Japan to take part in the 2019 ISU World Figure Skating Championships to open on Wednesday, March 20, in Saitama, Japan. The Armenian team, accompanied by the Deputy General Manager of the Armenian Ice Skating Federation Vardan Yengibaryan, arrived in Japan on March 19. The team announced that it intends to expand its financial support to Armenia more targeted.

Armenian Chess Player Wins Individual Bronze at FIDE Tournament

ASTANA, Kazakhstan (Panorama.am) — Individual medals were awarded on Friday, March 15, at the FIDE World Team Championship, which had concluded the day before. As the Chess Federation of Armenia reports, a member of the Armenian women’s team, Lilit Mkrtchyan, won the bronze individual medal.

Armen Sarkissian, the President, met with the President of the FIDE Skating Federation of Armenia Mekhitarist Congregation of Venice Father Vahan Ohanyan and Australian-Armenian figure Ara Ketipyan, the Presidential Office reported.

The guests were informed that the congregation launched the publication of a 10-volume English edition relating Armenian culture reports in the preceding and following years of the Armenian Genocide, which will include six leading US newspapers – the New York Times, the Boston Daily Globe, the Chicago Tribune, the Christian Science Monitor, the Los Angeles Times and the Washington Post.

They gifted the two-volume book, titled The Armenian Genocide: Prelude and Aftermath. As reported in the U.S. Press to the president. The authors stated that the books for the specialists and researchers of the world, and are available in libraries and universities.

**Armenia**

News From Armenia

**Mekhitarist Delegation Meets with Armenian President, Presents Book**

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian on March 15 hosted Armenian delegation of the Mekhitarist Congregation of Venice Father Vahan Ohanyan and Australian-Armenian figure Ara Ketipyan, the Presidential Office reported.

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Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan polled most votes in Armenia’s recent presidential election. The election was won by the political team backed by popular Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who polled over 80 percent in municipal elections last fall, insists that the green zone around the Opera House, one of the landmark buildings in central Yerevan, should not be overburdened with commercial properties.

Still late last year the mayor made public a plan to gradually free the area from cafés. City authorities believe that the cafés can be located elsewhere in the city and thus their business will not be affected. “Today we fulfill our dream of many years as we free the area surrounding the Opera House [from commercial property] and bring back the atmosphere of the cultural hearth,” Marutyan said in a Facebook post on Thursday.

The mayor vowed continuous efforts in “recovering Yerevan’s cultural features” and thanked the city’s residents for “being next to the authorities in this matter.” “We feel your support,” Marutyan wrote.

Still, the café owners believe that the decision to dismantle their property is wrong and unlawful. “We have a lease contract with the state until 2026… How can we run a business in this country from now on? How can we trust them?” a manager part of Yerevan’s identity. We do understand all this. But this area, which is directly adjacent to the Opera House, must be kept free from cafés. We even want to improve entire Theater Square,” said Mutskyan.

The official stressed that the cafés that are being dismantled now were built without proper documentation and are therefore illegal structures. Opposition Prosperous Armenia Party lawmakers Naira Zohrabyan and Arman Arbovan arrived at the scene of the dismantling work in the afternoon after what they described as alerts about violence being used against the protesters.

The two lawmakers urged the authorities to exclude violence and engage in dialogue with the café owners.

Meanwhile, the police reported that 16 protesters had been detained for “not complying with police officers’ lawful demands.” They were released later on.

At least one protester and one police officer were hurt in the standoff and were briefly hospitalized to be treated for their injuries.

The standoff between protesters and police officers continued in the afternoon, with the dismantling activities halted.

**Swedish Official to Visit Armenia**

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Armenian team of figure skaters have left for Japan to take part in the 2019 ISU World Figure Skating Championships to open on Wednesday, March 20, in Saitama, Japan. As the National Olympic Committee reported, Armenia will be represented by Shlom Hayrapetyan and Anastasia Galustyan.

Galustyan was scheduled to perform a short program on March 20, while Hayrapetyan was to perform on March 21.

The Armenian team was accompanied by the Deputy General Manager of the Armenian Ice Skating Federation of Armenia Mekhitarist Congregation of Venice Father Vahan Ohanyan and Deputy President Ari Zakaryan.

Galustyan was scheduled to perform a short program on March 20, while Hayrapetyan was to perform on March 21.

**Swedish Official to Visit Armenia**

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Sweden’s Minister for International Development Cooperation Peter Eriksson was to visit Armenia on March 21-22, Sweden’s International Development Cooperation Peter Hituxar said.

He added that the government of Sweden was looking to expand its financial support to Armenia next year.

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Armenia Will ‘Attentively’ Listen to Azerbaijan’s ‘Counterarguments’

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenia’s proposal for Nagorno-Karabakh’s full engagement in negotiations with Azerbaijan is no challenge, but an invitation to dialogue, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on March 19, stressing that Yerevan is ready to listen attentively to Baku’s counterarguments.

At a press conference in Yerevan, Pashinyan repeated what he already told senior Armenian and Karabakh security aides in Stepanakert a week ago, that Nagorno-Karabakh, a full party to the peace talks “is not a whim or a precondition” on the part of Armenia, but a necessity for a durable settlement process. Azerbaijan has opposed Nagorno-Karabakh’s participation in the talks as a separate party, insisting that the region is “occupied” by Armenia and should be held only directly with official Yerevan.

Last week, Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev rejected the latest Armenian proposal on the change in the format of the talks by way of involving Nagorno-Karabakh as a full party to the talks. It is unacceptable, and it is an attempt to block the negotiations process,” Aliyev said at a forum in Baku on March 14, again calling on Armenia to withdraw its forces from the region.

Pashinyan today insisted that his state- ments on the need for Stepanakert’s engage- ment in the talks that he has repeatedly made since being first elected prime minister in May 2018 “are not a challenge, but an invita- tion to dialogue.” He further argued that he had already raised the issue during his infor- mal meetings with Aliyev on the sidelines of different international events during the past months.

Earlier this month the American, Russian and French cochairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, an international format set up to mediate a solution to the conflict, announced that Pashinyan and Aliyev had agreed to have their first formal talks soon under the umbrella of the international mediators.

No date and venue of such possible talks have been announced yet. Ahead of his possible talks with the Azerbaijani president Pashinyan said: “We will continue discussions on this subject with our partners and will try to continue this discussion in the field of arguments, because negotiations are negotiations only when we listen to each other. At least Armenia has shown its ability to listen to its opponent, try to understand the other side, and we expect the same from them. Where our partners consider that our position can be viewed as excessively tough, we can soft- en this position, but we would expect the same from our partners, because otherwise no con- vention will take place.”

The Armenian leader said that “we do not imagine regime when one of the parties to the talks says it refuses to have a dialogue.”

“It will not be a logical approach. Naturally, we will not refuse to have a dialogue and dur- ing this dialogue we will put on the table our arguments and will attentively listen to the counterarguments of our partners. I think that a constructive and effective solutions or continu- ation should be within the framework of this logic,” Pashinyan said.

Asked whether a possible exchange of pris- oners between Armenia and Azerbaijan could be discussed at his upcoming meeting with Aliyev, Pashinyan said: “The Armenian side is ready to exchange Azerbaijani citizens who were strangled into Armenian territory with Armenians who strangled into Azerbaijani territory.”

The Armenian leader stressed, however, that such an exchange cannot concern Azerbaijanis who penetrated into Armenian or Karabakh ter- ritory and committed murders.

Protestors Ask for Release of Detained Iranian Lawyer

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – A number of human rights activists in Armenia have joined the open letter of Amnesty International calling on the Iranian authorities to release Iranian human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh.

On Tuesday, March 19, they held a silent protest in front of the Iranian embassy in Yerevan.

Sotoudeh, the co-winner of the European Parliament’s 2012 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, last year represented several of the women detained for removing their head coverings in public in protest against the coun- try’s Islamic dress code.

She has repeatedly been sentenced to a total of 38 years in prison and 148 lashes after what Amnesty International called “a grossly unfair” trial.

The 55-year-old activist was arrested in June 2010 and ordered to serve a five-year sentence for defiling images of Islamic leaders, but no one came out to take it. Eventually, they had to put the letter into the mailbox placed at the entrance to the embassy.

Yerevan protest could change anything. “But one thing is clear: we cannot remain indifferent when this kind of repression against a human rights activist takes place in the neighboring country,” he said.

Iranian-Armenian Vardges Garap, who is a prominent activist in Armenia, said he was raising his voice to “encourage the jailed activist moral- ly.”

“So that she can feel that she is not forgotten, that there are people, even if few, who are con- cerned about her fate,” the activist added.

The protestors in Yerevan tried to hand over a letter, stating their protest, to the Iranian embassy staff, but no one came out to take it.

In March 2014, Armenian govern- ment decided to extend the plant’s ser- vice life up to 2026 because of delay in building a new unit. The service life extension has become possible thanks to Russia’s financial resources. The country provided $270 million to Armenia as a loan and $30 million as a grant. The Russian company Rosatom, Russia’s nuclear energy corporation, Rosatom is a glob- al technological leader. It is handling the project owned to extend the service life of the second power unit of the Armenian NPP.

Rosatom also supplies fuel for the NPP and implements joint projects in the fields of healthcare, education and training of specialists for the Armenian nuclear power industry.
President of Kazakhstan Nazarbayev Resigns

Azerbaijani Ambassador To UAE Steals Caviar Intended For Abu Dhabi

Ara Khatchadourian Tackles Mountains, Life and Obstacles

Genocide Museum to Open in Buenos Aires

German Parliamentarian On Baku Payroll Fined

Ara Khatchadourian with Cathedrals of the Great House of Cilicia Armv I

Ara Khatchadourian running in Armenia

CLIMBING, from page 1

finally finding his place in Lehenbar as a jeweler, he was forced to leave at age 19 for Marseille due to the escalating Lebanese Civil War.

In France, with almost no money and no knowledge of the French language, Khatchadourian worked 16 hours a day, seven days a week in order to keep his head above water. Khatchadourian did find solace in Marseille however, as it was home to a large Armenian community and the weather and its surroundings reminded him of his former home in Beirut. It was here that Khatchadourian became more connected to his Armenian roots as he learned Armenian songs and danced from the community there. He also developed his artistry in jewelry, making it his passion and profession.

Khatchadourian made many friends in his new adopted city, and some were very adventurous. When one new friend heard that he had taken up rock climbing and completed his first marathon just a few years back at the age of 40, he told Khatchadourian about his upcoming mission to climb Mont Blanc, the tallest mountain in Europe west of Russia’s Caucasus peaks, and invited him to join them. Mont Blanc, in Switzerland, is notorious as climbing fatalities reach nearly 10 per year with 10,000 climbers attempting to be from 6,000 to 8,000, making it the deadliest mountain in the world.

Khatchadourian, a man with no mountaineering experience, but in great physical condition due to his marathon running, took up his offer and embraced the challenge to explore a new horizon. He was taught by a mountaineering expert over three days on how to rock climb, including the basics such as using an ice ax and putting on crampons. After three days of developing the proper skills, Khatchadourian, his friend, and his teacher set out to climb Mont Blanc. After a long and arduous climb, Khatchadourian and his companions reached the peak at 6:30 a.m. and witnessed a breathtakingly beautiful sunrise view. This site inspired Khatchadourian to climb even more mountains, and when he scaled Mt. Ararat before long, he described it as being the "most beautiful and greatest climb I have been a part of."

Khatchadourian then ascended Mt. Kilimanjaro, the tallest mountain in Africa at 19,341 ft.

Next, he set a very personal goal, to climb Mt. Everest, the tallest mountain in the world, and he wanted to climb it in 2015 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. To physically and mentally prepare for this grueling undertaking, Khatchadourian trained rigorously and climbed mountains around the world, especially those with high elevations throughout South America and Central Asia.

In spring 2015, Khatchadourian headed off to Everest to begin the ascent with his team and fellow climbers and sherpas. Khatchadourian and his team set out to conquer Everest from its north face due to its greater challenge; a route that is traditionally harder than its south counterpart, as it has high altitude base camp, technical climbing, and stronger winds. The Everest climb also included crossing massive crevasses on small bridges, with only pieces of rope protecting climbers from falling 10,000 feet into certain death.

"The task is not to get scared," Khatchadourian said. "When you get scared you stop, and especially when crossing crevasses, such slippery terrain could be deadly."

By far the most treacherous part of the climb for Khatchadourian was when they reach the "death zone," with an altitude above 25,000 feet. This term was coined by Everest climbers due to its extreme elevation and the knowledge that a person cannot acclimatize to that altitude: humans can only take in 30 percent of the oxygen in the air that they would take at sea level. Most of the deaths on Everest happen in this zone, with almost all the dead bodies remaining on the mountain, as it would require a heroic effort to remove them at that altitude.

This provides a grisly reminder to mountaineers on how treacherous the climb for mountaineers is when they reach the "death zone," with an altitude above 25,000 feet. This term was coined by Everest climbers due to its extreme elevation and the knowledge that a person cannot acclimatize to that altitude: humans can only take in 30 percent of the oxygen in the air that they would take at sea level. Most of the deaths on Everest happen in this zone, with almost all the dead bodies remaining on the mountain, as it would require a heroic effort to remove them at that altitude.

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"To see the bodies line the trail like that gave me even more motivation to reach the summit, as I was not just doing this for me and my people, but for my fellow mountaineers who never made it," he said.

"The "death zone" is also known for its extreme, unbearable cold, causing frostbite to many including Khatchadourian who later felt the tips of his two big toes burn to it at this sector. Khatchadourian and his peers made a mad dash to the summit, as time was of the essence. It took Khatchadourian 12 straight hours of strenuous climbing without rest to get from 27,230 feet to the summit at 29,029 feet. He and his team finally reached the summit at midnight. Years of preparation and training, "pain and suffering, and hard work led to this moment for Khatchadourian, as he now stood literal-ly at the top of the world at the age of 51. This was symbolic for Khatchadourian as, well as he pondered coming from the bottom of society as a poor refugee from a war-torn country to now achieving a trium- ph which only about 4,000 people in the entire world have accomplished.

"I tell the children I talk to that they don't do such achievements for them-
Sword Wound, the superb first volume of his Ottoman Quartet and Endgame, a phantasmagorical crime story. From the latter he has, at the heart of all the violence, a dreamy, wide-eyed quality that seems to be quintessential Altan. To be taken to court, the disorientation continued. The guards were out of Kafka, but as in Kafka, not a sausage or broth, but exotic, bewildering, surreal. He was afraid that he had been arrested not, as originally stated, for sending "subliminal messages" in support of the attempted coup, but for having participated in it. Challenged as to the change of charge, the judge, remarked, airily: "Our prosecutors like using words the meanings of which they don't know.

He was released and returned home; later that evening, a new warrant is issued and he is back in prison, put into a cell marked Ladies' Infirmary. He launches an appeal, based on the Supreme Court's rejection of his conviction; as he waits for the verdict, he tries to dismiss "the pale flickering dreams fed by hope" that "stir shuddily in the shadows of my mind". He begins to realize as he waits that he is living out the very scene that he wrote years earlier in his novel A Sword Wound where a character also waits for a verdict. "Years ago as I was wandering in that unmarked, enigmatic, hairy territory where literature meets life, I had met my own destiny but failed to recognize it. I wrote thinking it belonged to someone else. I feel I am being dragged into a vertiginous, whuthering vortex. The novel and life are entangled, where what is real and what is written imitate one another and change places, each disguised as the other."

The verdict is handed down: life, without parole. As he writes, "I will never see the world again; I will never see a sky unframed by the walls of a courtyard I am descending to Hades. I walk into the darkness like a girl who writes his own destiny. My hero and I disappear into the darkness together.

But in time, his imagination saves him. "Like Odysseus, I will act with heroism and cowardice, with honesty and craftiness. I will be a lead and victory, my adventure will end only in death ... a ship stands in the middle of the tributary of the river of time had hit a dam and formed a lake. We sat at the bottom of that lake without light"

The book is put together from papers found in the prison, translated – superbly – into English by his friend Yasin Çongar. I Will Never See the World Again is deeply satisfying in form. It is not Midnight Express; it is not From the House of the Dead, and it is not De Profundis. In a sense, it eclipses all of these. It is a radiant celebration of the inner resources of human beings, above all those triggered by the imagination. Its account of the creative process is sublime, among the most perfectly expressed analyses of that perpetually elusive phenomenon. And it is a triumph of the spirit. "You can imprison me but you cannot keep me here. Because, like all writers, I have magic," Altan says in his final phrases. "I can pass through your walls with ease. Yes, but enough is enough. He is still in prison. Eighty Nobel prize winners have protested, unsuccessfully. We must move heaven and earth to spring him himself."

What a beautiful scene to describe. I reach for a pen with a hand that is white in the ghostly light. I can write in the dark. I take the ship cracking in the storm in the palm of my hands and begin writing. The prison door shut behind me."

I Will Never See the World Again, translated by Yasin Çongar, is published by Granta (£49.99). To order a copy go to guardianbookshop.com.

Businessman, Philanthropist Osman Kavala Indicted on Government Overthrow Charges

ISTANBUL (Armenian Mirror-Spectator) — Turkish activists behind mass 2013 anti-government protests on Monday, March 4 rejected as “trivial” and “ilegal” an indictment against prominent Turkish businessman Osman Kavala on charges he sought to overthrow the state.

Kavala, in premature detention since 2017, is accused of ties to the protests which erupted over development plans for an Istanbul park and grew into a major challenge to Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was premier at the time and is now president. Turkish prosecutors are demanding life imprisonment for Kavala and 15 others on charges of attempting to topple the government. Erdogan accuses the philanthropist of financing “terrorism.”

“His irrational and unlawful hill of indictment must be withdrawn immediately,” Muratca Yavuz, spokeswoman for the-Takim Solidarity advocate group, told a press conference in Istanbul.

She said the suspects “must be released immediately.”

Western governments accuse Erdogan’s government of eroding rights especially since a 2016 failed coup and the mass arrests and purge of tens of thousands of people from the public sector that followed.

The so-called Gezi Park rallies constituted the biggest challenge against Erdogan’s government, and snowballed into nationwide protests against the country’s rulers.

The police response drew criticism from Turkey’s Western allies.

In 2013, a Turkish court acquitted 26 defendants on trial for their involvement in the Gezi protests – most of them were members of the Taksim Solidarity Platform.

“We reject your futile efforts to smear Gezi!” said Yavuz. “Gezi is this land’s hope for equality, freedom and justice.”

“We will never allow you to recast the Gezi resistance as an action associated with crime, terror, coups or insurrections.”

The trial of Kavala and 15 others will begin on June 24.

A respected figure in intellectual circles in Turkey and abroad, Kavala is chairman of the Anadolu Kultur (Anatolian Culture) foundation.

In 2019, Kavala launched an international urgent action campaign for Kavala, Yigit Alsakoglu and 14 other rights defenders: “The indictment attempts to rewrite the history of the Gezi Park protests and silence some of Turkey’s most prominent civil society figures.”

The following letter at Minister of Justice Abdilahettin Gül. “I am deeply concerned about the April 3 decision of the Istanbul Heavy Penal Court No. 30 accepting the indictment against Osman Kavala, Yigit Alsakoglu and 14 other prominent civil society figures, accusing them of ‘attempting to overthrow the government or prevent it from performing its duties during the other’.

Kavala and 15 others are accused of “attempting to overthrow the government or prevent it from performing its duties during the other.

The book I Will Never See the World Again, translated by Yasemin Çongar, is published by Granta (£49.99). To order a copy go to guardianbookshop.com.

The Amnesty International launched an urgent

LONDON (Guardian) – To review certain books seems like an impertinence. This is one of them. It speaks for itself with such clarity, certainty and wisdom that only one thing needs to be said: read it and then read it again. It is a short book, divided into brief chapters, some no longer than two pages each, recounting some incident from the author’s prison experience. It is wonderfully distilled, told as only a man in extremis, Erdogan never loses the lip service and transience, void with the vividness of dreams, which is characteristic of his other writing – as far as one can judge from the only other books of his available in English translation. Like a short book, divided into brief chapters, some no longer than two pages each, recounting some incident from the author’s prison experience. It is wonderfully distilled, told as only a man in extremis, Erdogan never loses the lip service and transience, void with the vividness of dreams, which is characteristic of his other writing – as far as one can judge from the only other books of his available in English translation. Like a

I WILL NEVER SEE THE WORLD AGAIN

By Simon Callow

not effortlessly maintained whatever your inner fortitude, prison, by its very nature, is crippling. “In a matter of 5 hours I had travelled across five centuries to arrive at the dungeons of the Inquisition.” The sensory deprivation was immediately disorienting: like Oscar Wilde, he discovers that time ceases to mean anything. “The air and the light in our cage never changed. Each minute was the same as the last. It was as if a tributary of the river of time had been dammed and formed a lake. We sat at the bottom of that timeless pool.”

In a heart-stopping moment, he thinks to himself: “What a beautiful scene to describe. I reach for a pen with a hand that is white in the ghostly light. I can write in the dark. I take the ship cracking in the storm in the palm of my hands and begin writing. The prison door shut behind me.”

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The Amnesty International launched an urgent
**New Director Nadjian Sees Global Role for AIWA**

**WATERTOWN** — The Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA) hired its first fulltime executive director in November 2018. In that post, Rachel Onanian Nadjian is attempting some major changes in direction for the organization.

Nadjian has extensive experience in nonprofit management, advertising and as well as decades of involvement in the Armenian community. She related that though her mother was not Armenian, she raised her two daughters to be involved in Armenian affairs.

Rachel Nadjian

**By Aram Arakun**

**Mirrors-Spectator Staff**

**Hai Guin Scholarship Association Hosts Spring Benefit Luncheon**

**BELMONT, Mass.** — The Hai Guin Scholarship Association will hold its 2019 Spring Benefit Luncheon on Saturday, April 27th at the Belmont Country Club, Belmont. This year a fashion presentation and pop-up shop will be featured by world renowned St. John of Boston.

St. John is an American luxury house that was founded in 1962 by Robert and Marie Gray. A fascinating coming together of craft and couture based on the premise of a simple, yet elegant knit dress. Over the years, the brand has evolved, but the basis for the collection remains the same today as it did from the very start – effortless, alluring, and refined clothing that appeals to women all over the world. St. John has a unique American signature with a core in signature innovative knits, and has an undisputed reputation for luxury and quality.

The Spring Benefit will begin with a silent auction, raffle prizes, a Pop-Up Shop & more, followed by a luncheon and Fashion Presentation by St. John. Proceeds from the Pop-Up Shop will be donated to the organization’s scholarship fund. Michele Kolligian, Joyce Jones, and Pamela Gechijian, Benefit Co-Chairs, Gladys Partamian, president, and committee members are diligently working to put the final touches on the Spring Benefit event. Committee members are: Christine Berberian and Andrea Garabedian, ticket reservations; Karen Martin, donations; Cindy Arakelian, centerpieces; Sandra Aghababian, program booklet; Carol Haroutunian and Donna Deranian, silent auctions; and Joyce Guin, and Mary Kupjian, raffle prizes.

The Hai Guin Scholarship Association has provided educational assistance to undergraduate and graduate college students of Armenian heritage since 1935. Proceeds from this event fund scholarships to students who are Massachusetts residents, and attend a college in the continental United States. Candidates must have completed one year at the school for which the scholarship is requested. Scholarships awarded are based on merit and need. Your attendance and support is requested. Scholarships awarded are based on merit and need. Your attendance and support is requested. Scholarships awarded are based on merit and need. Your attendance and support is requested. Scholarships awarded are based on merit and need. Your attendance and support is requested. Scholarships awarded are based on merit and need. Your attendance and support is requested. Scholarships awarded are based on merit and need. Your attendance and support is requested. Scholarships awarded are based on merit and need. Your attendance and support is requested. Scholarships awarded are based on merit and need. Your attendance and support is requested.
I saw a lot of opportunity that was being over- the role of AIWA. She said, “In that year or so Jennifer Philips, a part-time executive director, board starting in June 2017. AIWA had hired with brand and mission so it makes sense.”

Nadjarian said she felt there was an incred- ible amount of work being done in Armenia about which most people abroad are not aware. She concluded, “I felt very inspired and said I think AIWA is in a very good position to change the conversation, the platform, the playing field on which Armenian women are connected around the world.”

Nadjarian urged that the AIWA director posi- tion be expanded to full-time, and offered her- self for the post. She said that first of all, “We have to simultaneously…recreate the brand a little, recreate the conversation, the narrative, the message, and engage more women around the world. As we do that, we are going to start to see reach, engagement and membership increase and then the fundraising strategy will come from that.”

Nadjarian’s initial focus will be on the vision and the message and their dissemination. She already has rewired AIWA’s original goals “in a 2019 way as opposed to a 1993 way,” and her goal is to redo the entire platform, not just the website.

To redo the platform, she is assembling a vision team of 8-9 young people from around the world who will be led by a UX (User Experience) designer in Armenia. They are not AIWA members but, Nadjarian said, are engaged and active users of technology who have a lot to say about what they think Armenian women want and what the chal- lenges to them are.

Most immediately, Nadjarian has begun a lis- tening tour of all of AIWA affiliates as well as citizens with Armenian populations with no offi- ciate affiliates, and to Russia and Armenia, to hear the needs, aspirations, challenges and opportunities of Armenian women. She said that the information gathered will help decide how to redirect the efforts of AIWA. She also is engaging new people and spreading the word about AIWA.

Armenia will be her final stop. There used to be an affiliate there which never got going but now Nadjarian feels there is a good possibility for collaborating with the My Step Foundation of Anna Hakobyan, wife of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. AIWA always worked with the American University of Armenia (AUA) and the Women’s Support Center, but, Nadjarian said, now she wants to deepen AIWA’s work beyond just providing funding.

Among the programmatic areas being con- sidered for the near future is a global mentor- ship program, an examination of domestic vio- lence on a deeper level, not only in Armenia but in other Armenian communities around the world, and a conference in Armenia next year. Nadjarian is putting together a conference com- mittee now which she wants to “work on a very different form of interaction among people, that will not only architect conversations but move those conversations to the next place, which could be architecting solutions or creating con- tent which could be the basis of change for the future.” The conference, she said, would be an opportunity to bring the new membership to Armenia.

The membership of AIWA at present is under 500. Nadjarian finds this to be far too low for a global network of Armenian women. There are Armenian women’s Facebook sites with much larger memberships. She believes it should reach the tens, if not hundreds, of thousands. Membership costs $50 annually or $1,000 for a lifetime. Nadjarian is focusing on bringing in younger people, and says, “So far, everyone said it is a part-time job. I think they are used to what is happening. In Armenia too, there are many young women, including the web generation, who are coming forward, as well as our scholarship recipients of the past.”

Nadjarian is also forming committees and subcommittees at various levels of engagement bringing new people in on what we are doing and in which they have a vested interest.

AIWA, under Nadjarian, has a number of top goals: “From a fundraising point of view, the diasporan gala or banquet culture is a lot to be said for a celebratory event. They can be great but inevitably leave people out.”

Another possible avenue of coop- eration is with the Diaspora which is a nonpartisan body of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation just announced a gender quota and though that might have been forced, the truth will become clear if everyone embraces this approach.

AIWA is in conversation with Girls of Armenia Leadership Soccer (GOALS) a pro- gram started in 2015 which began the first women’s soccer league in Armenia in 2016. AIWA would like to work together to bring Armenian girls in soccer in the US into this pro- gram. Nadjarian pointed out that “this is an example of something done in Armenia that shows a huge opportunity to connect outside of Armenia and we should be the connecting tis- sue for that.” Another possible area of coop- eration is working with the Diaspora in Tech chap- ter in Armenia, whose managing director, Seda Papoyan, is a graduate of a program sponsored by AIWA at AUA.

AIWA will continue to work at the United Nations as a nongovernmental organization with the Commission on the Status of Women, where AIWA holds five seats. This year’s prior- ity themes include “social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infra- structure for gender equality and the empow- erment of women and girls.”

Funding will be necessary to achieve many of AIWA’s long-term goals. Nadjarian said that the diasporan gala or banquet culture is both a blessing and a curse, noting, “There is a lot to be said for a celebratory event. They can be great but inevitably leave people out. We have this understanding that if I shake hands with someone who gives a million dollars, then I am a fundraiser. But really good fundraising is a mindset, how you envision coop- eration. They take time and they take build- ing trust and transparency.”

Nadjarian said that a treating AIWA like a professional nonprofit, and building it so that in two or three years it will be running how a model nonprofit should be run. She noted that her board is very supportive. Nadjarian said, “Armenians are not good at accountability. Nonprofit has to be better, you have to have the accountability and be in the hotseat so that I can make real progress, rather than interpreting the will of the people and then making the decisions.”

The 12-person AIWA board itself may under- go change soon, with a number of open seats coming up as older members withdraw. Right now it is all American, with a majority on the West Coast, but, Nadjarian said, in the future it may become international.

### Hagop, Arousia, & Arpy Kashamian and Hazaros Tabakoglu Funds

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Advance ticket purchase required.
Eminent Byzantinist, Dr. Speros Vryonis, Jr., Supporter of Armenian Studies, Dies

Dr. Speros Vryonis, Jr.

American Academy of Arts and Sciences and Fellow of the American Philosophical Society. In 2000, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences established the Speros Vryonis, Jr. Armenian History and Culture Fellowship to honor his contributions to the field of Armenian Studies.

Vryonis did postgraduate work at Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection in Washington and later provided advice for it on Byzantine studies as a Senior Fellow from 1985 to 1991. He served from 1996 to 2000 as director of the Sporos Bayou Arts Center of the University of Hellenism near Sacramento, which was named by his son-in-law, Dr. Ronald Vryonis, Jr., in his memory.

Vryonis was known for his prolific writing, which included more than 50 books and over 300 articles. His works focused on various aspects of Byzantine and post-Byzantine history, particularly the history of the Crusades and the Ottoman Empire. He was a prolific scholar who contributed significantly to the field of Byzantine Studies.

His legacy lives on through his numerous students, who continue to contribute to the field. Vryonis was a revered mentor and a source of inspiration for many scholars and students. His dedication to his work and his passion for learning were an inspiration to all who knew him.

Funeral services were held at Saint James Armenian Church, Watertown, on Tuesday, March 19. Interment was in Needham Cemetery. Arrangements were made by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.
John P. Amboian
Church Leader, Veteran, Executive

HAVERHILL, Mass. – John P. Amboian died at the High Pointe House, on March 16, at the age of 87. He was the husband of Patricia (McLarnon) Amboian for 60 years and the father of Michael Jr., Megan, Andrew, Madison, and Tourvanda (Juknavorian) Amboian. He was a former president of the Boston Chapter of the Budget Executives Institute, and a member of the National Financial Executives Institute. He served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Waltham, Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, and Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Town of Dracut.

He was an active member of several fraternal organizations, some of which included: Pentucket Masonic Lodge, in Lowell; 32 Degree Scottish Rite; Allepo Shriner; Armenian Knights of Vartan; Armenian-American Veterans of Lowell and the Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee of the Merrimack Valley in Massachusetts.

He was a lifelong active member of Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church, of Chelmsford. He served in several significant leadership positions in his parish, along with leadership roles in the New England Region, and with the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America. He served as a Diocesan Delegator for 32 years, was chair of the 1995 Diocesan Assembly Host Committee, and chaired on a myriad of other committees. In 1996, he chaired the Pontifical Visitations Committee to the New England Region, upon the visit of Karekin I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholics of all Armenians of blessed memory. His willingness to give generously of his time and talents found him elected to the Diocesan Council and as a member of the Diocesan Board of Trustees of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

He served as a member of the St. Nersess Armenian Seminary Board of Directors, and was a recipient of the prestigious St. Nersess Shirninhalt Medal from the Holy See in Armenia. In 2007, John was honored by the Diocese by being selected as the ‘Armenian of the Year’. He was part of the delegation which represented the Diocese at the 1995 and 1999 National Ecclesiastical Assemblies, convened in Holy Echmiadzin in the Republic of Armenia. Karekin I, Catholicos of All Armenians, honored him by inviting him to participate in the 1995 election of Karekin I, Catholics of all Armenians of blessed memory, and in the 1999 election of Karekin II, Catholics of All Armenians.

His funeral was held on Wednesday, March 20, at Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church, 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford, with burial at Edison Cemetery in Lowell.

Death Row Exoneree Anthony Ray Hinton to Speak At Holy Trinity Armenian Church on April 25

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – The issues with today’s criminal justice system are human rights issues. On Thursday, April 25, an evening with death row exoneree Anthony Ray Hinton of the Joy Kolligian Distinguished Speaker Series.

LOS ANGELES (Press Enterprise) – Asmender Adrin Nazarian, D’Van Noy, announced proposed legislation on February 13 that he said would provide incentives for public schools across the state to offer students a plant-based entree and plant-based milk at meals.

Under AB 479, the Healthy Climate-Friendly School Lunch Act, schools would receive additional state funding for serving the vegan options, which Nazarian said would be healthier and more climate-friendly.

The bill would also provide state support for staff training, engagement, recipe development, and other technical assistance needed to help boost participation rates, according to Nazarian’s office.

“This is going to be one option that looks at not only making us more healthy as Californians, not only helping us meet our climate goals, but also allowing us to save money in the long run,” Nazarian said.

Nazarian announced the bill at a news conference outside Los Angeles City Hall, alongside City Councilman Paul Koretz and members of organizations backing the idea.

“We’ve received a lot of positive feedback, which doesn’t surprise me, considering the last few years there has been a 600 percent increase in people who identify as vegan,” Koretz said.

The bill is backed by Annual Hope in Legislation, Friends of the Earth, Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and Social Compassion in Legislation, according to Nazarian’s office.

Public Schools Should Offer More Vegan Menus, Assemblyman Nazarian Says

The event is open and free to the public. A reception and book signing will follow Mr. Nazarian’s talk, and books will be available for purchase. For further information, contact the Office of Assemblyman Adrin Nazarian.

The Armenian Legionsaires: Sacrifice and Betrayal in World War I

By Susan Paul Patti
Saturday, March 23, 2019 4:00 – 6:00 pm
Scoby Swiss Armenian Apostolic Church | 1800 Fifth Drive, Bethesda, MD, 20816
Free street parking or Friendship Heights Metro (< 10 minute walk) (other side ways)
Admission free | Book launch and signing followed by light appetizers and beverages

For more information, please contact Nancy Habelian
(202) 235-7824 | susanpatti2@gmail.com | Books will be available for purchase

Using illustrations from the more than 50 photographs in The Armenian Legionsaires, Susan Patti will discuss the creation of the book, the research and translation and how the many sources were found. The book describes the motivations and dreams of the Armenian Legionsaires and their ultimate betrayal as the French and the British shifted priorities, leaving Armenian Armenian Volunteers and their leaders in distress.

The author has done a wonderful job by giving voice to the main actors of this story, the Legionsaires. This book provides an insight into the history of the Great War through the lens of a small, vulnerable people caught in a war that was not their own, but which had already devoured their kin’s world.

“The author has done an admirable job by giving voice to the main actors of this story, the Legionsaires. This book provides an insight into the history of the Great War through the lens of a small, vulnerable people caught in a war that was not their own, but which had already devoured their kin’s world.”

John Tachtjian
director and chief editor of Haoshahdakaj Project

Susan Patti is an Honorary Senior Research Associate at University College London and former Director of the Armenian Institute in London. She holds a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
ATP Thins Hrant Dink Memorial Forest to Ensure Its Health

By Vahe Martirosyan and Jason Sohigian

WOBURN, Mass. – In the days after the senseless killing of Agos editor Hrant Dink in Istanbul in 2007, the Armenia Tree Project (ATP) decided to plant a memorial forest in his honor. Advisory board member Nancy Ricianian penned a crowd-funding appeal about her friend and colleague, and a living legacy to the renowned intellectual was born. The effort was supported by people around the world, even from organizations within Turkey. On the West Coast, friends in the Armenian Bar Association mobilized support for the forest.

A new forest was established on two plots of land in Maragavot and Poieltov village in honor of Dink. Twelve years later, the location has become one of ATP’s model sites; the trees planted included pine and wild apple.

The site has been visited by numerous dignitaries including Rakel Dink, Dink’s widow, Henry Morgenthau IV, the great-grandson of Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, and artist-activist Serj Tankian. The large forest is located on a hillside along the main road in the Lori province just across from ATP’s Ohanian Environmental Education Center and close to the Mirak Reforestation Nursery.

In following the best practices for planting a new forest, about 3,000 trees were planted per hectare at a density of one meter apart, which is done to take average tree mortality into account. Over time, a healthy, mature forest should have closer to 1,000 trees per hectare. Due to an exceptionally high survival rate of the trees planted, the Hrant Dink Memorial Forest has become overcrowded. This impedes the overall growth of the forest, forcing the trees to compete for soil nutrients, sunlight, and water.

As a result, ATP’s plans for 2019 include carrying out thinning activities in the Hrant Dink Memorial Forest. The thinning will be done on two hectares of the 11-hectare plot in several stages, starting in spring and continuing for the next five years. ATP has continuously monitored the Hrant Dink Memorial Forest, and the need for thinning was identified in 2018. It is the first forest planted by ATP that has required thinning in order to ensure the overall ecological health of the site.

In accordance with the country’s forest management regulations, ATP has consulted with experts from Armenia’s forestry department (HayAntar), the Environmental Department of the Provincial Administration, and the State Forest Monitoring Center. These departments will visit the forest to study the area, set up experimental zones, and estimate how many trees will be cut. Selected trees will be marked with a stamp for clear identification.

Thinning has proven to be an effective management tool for sustainable forest management worldwide. It will leave the rest of the trees in better health and allow them to flourish. Thinning can also stimulate more plants to grow on the site, increasing the likelihood that wildlife will inhabit the forest.

Another benefit is the reduction of wildfire risks and effects, as fires tend to spread more easily when trees are planted close together. There is a high risk of wildfires in Armenia as a result of the dry climate and ecological changes caused by climate change.

Several criteria will be taken into consideration before thinning activities begin. For example, only trees that are growing in the highest density will be removed. Trees growing on the steepest parts of the forest will not be thinned in order to avoid land erosion and degradation.

After the thinning, hardwood species such as oak, birch, wild apple, and pear trees will be added to the forest in order to transform it to a more diverse forest ecosystem.

The removed wood will be turned into mulch, which ATP has been using as a natural form of weed and grass control in its new forestry sites. Placing mulch around small seedlings has been found to hold moisture and prevent tall grass and weeds from overcrowding the young trees.

ATP’s forests are planted on community, publicly owned land with a 20-year lease at no cost, and ownership of the sites is passed back to the community after the lease ends. ATP’s forestry and environmental education departments work with officials and residents in those communities to teach them about the importance of forests and sustainable resource management, with the expectation that people will protect the site in future years. ATP’s leadership will continue to monitor the sites and provide consultation to ensure that the forest is managed in a sustainable manner for future generations.

(Vahe Martirosyan is ATP’s forester and Jason Sohigian is the organization’s deputy director.)
As an East Coaster, it was a culture shock every time we traveled to Los Angeles to visit my parent’s birthplaces of Aleppo and Beirut. It wasn’t Hollywood we were heading to — we were instead of entering, my grandfather’s old office. We were also a few miles away along the storefronts of Zankou Chicken and FKO records. It was a marvel to me that we were somehow reminiscent of the Mediterranean.

As I’ve woven into the thread of the intricate fabric here in Los Angeles, for almost a year, I once again see the fusion of the past and the present: reading books of an eminent church leader who read my grandfather’s books, seeing him in the community the same way I saw my grandfather do a generation before; shopping at the same bookstore I would go to as a youngster, now the next generation at the helm with a similar vision intact; going up and down those steep stairs of the Tekeyan Cultural Center, this time passing by, instead of entering, my grandfather’s old office.

This city is the Armenian Diaspora squeezed into a radius of less than 100 miles. Among the cramped freeways and open valleys, pockets of neighborhoods have formed and flourished over the years. Armenians from Iran, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Cyprus and Armenia itself, each bringing something palatable to the diverse table, whether it be the literature, music, cuisine, customs or history reflecting the very communities around them found safe haven and newfound opportunities.

It is where one can experience the entire diaspora in a solitary sitting and exchange conversation with a multitude of Armenians who have contrasting perspectives, but whose core essence remains the same: whether it be the owners of the local family-owned Armenian coffee shop down the street to the Uber driver whose father fled Yerevan during the Armenian Genocide and sought solace in Tehran, only to witness further upheaval at the onset of the Iranian revolution, serve in the Iran-Iraq war and eventually return to that Armenian trajectory, displaced once again and finding peace.

By Taleen Babayan

Torkom Movsesian

VEM Ensemble to Perform at Holy Trinity Church

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Boston-area classical music lovers are in for a treat. On Sunday, March 31, the classical VEM Ensemble will perform at 4 p.m. at the Holy Trinity Armenian Church at 455 Brattle Street, as a concert cosponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association and Holy Trinity Church.

The concert is part of an overall North American tour with stops in Detroit (March 27), Montreal (March 29), Glendale (April 27) and Altadena, Calif. (May 19), organized with the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada.

A new musical piece based on the poetry of Vahan Tekeyan will receive its premiere during this tour and musical masterpieces by Komitas, Khachaturian, and Tigran Mansurian will be performed.

The VEM Ensemble consists of the VEM Graduate String Quartet, in residence at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, and a singer, currently mezzo-soprano Danielle Segan. VEM means “rock” in Armenian, symbolizing the strength and power of this ensemble to bring to live music written by prominent and emerging Armenian composers.

The ensemble is the cornerstone of the newly created Armenian Music Program at UCLA, which, thanks to generous donor support as well as artistic guidance of the Lark Musical Society, endeavors to raise awareness and celebrate the richness and depth of Armenian musical tradition. As part of their studies, members of the quartet strive to cultivate an appreciation and passion for Armenian music throughout the community through musical performances, music education, outreach services, and a series of collaborations with composers to create new works dedicated to and enriching the Armenian cultural heritage.

Please tell us how your passion for raqs sharqi began. I never imagined that one day I am going to be a dancer. As a child, I dreamed of becoming a pop singer, which is why I moved to New York City at the age of 18. While working at a women’s clothing store as a stock boy, my Moroccan coworkers would constantly play Arabic music, to which I would always enthusiastically move my hips. One day one of my coworkers, Souad, told me, “You dance so passionately. I don’t believe you! You are Turkish,” in which I replied with a laugh that I am not. While auditioning as a singer, I began acting as well. During those times, I was performing in cabarets in New York as a belly dancer and in export shows. I was in the “Aladdin” show.

By Arshris Bakhchianyan

Torkom Movsesyan

"Actually All Men Can Perform Eastern Dances!"
This play has brought together the East and West Coast Armenian communities as many longtime friends, who are currently living in Los Angeles, became part of this production, including leading actors, such as Harout Soghomonian, who, along with Naro Agajanian and Sossy Varjabedian, transcended a bygone golden era.

“It is delightful to be part of an original play and interact with all generations of Armenians,” said Soghomonian, an actor, comedian and musician who plays the role of the patriarch, Koko in the play. “This is a great group of talented individuals who I look forward to sharing the stage with while bringing laughter and meaningful dialogue to the audience.”

The 20-member cast and crew — including Aileen Khanjian, Maralik Iskenderian, Addigig Abadjian, Arvecig Abadjian, George Semerjian and Arees Setrak — have become embedded in their culture while expanding their networks and friendships by joining this production.

“I am so eager to possess this creative outlet,” said Khanjian, who assumes the part of the non-Armenian wedding planner. “This play is fresh, funny, and relatable and I feel privileged to take part in it.”

They fuse their experiences with Sarineth Garapetian and Ralfi Rupchian, trained actors who are familiar with the stage through diverse productions on the stage and in film. “Where Is Your Groom?II” also creates a forum for those with a natural propensity towards acting, providing a safe place to further dig into the craft.”

“It’s been a refreshing and fulfilling journey to find the key to unlock my character, who is a mirror image of our generation,” said Zaven Demirjian, who tackles the role of the groom. Ari Demirjian’s interest in theater was sparked as a student at the AGBU Manoogian-Demirjian School, where he participated in the drama department. This production has further ignited his passion for acting. “I am excited for the audience to engage and connect with our characters’ modernized struggles, not only in relationship, but also in themselves.”

This play has brought together the East and West Coast Armenian communities as many longtime friends, who are currently living in Los Angeles, became part of this production, including Aileen Khanjian, Joseph Hovsepian, Hannah Pollock, Haig Hovnanian and Deepender Singh. A decades-long cross-country friendship is highlighted through Los Angeles-born cast member Dr. Shirani Simonian, whom I met during the AGBU Summer Internship Program in New York.

“Taleen has broken ground by conveying the portrayal of an Armenian-Indian character. ‘Where Is Your Groom?’ II will take place on Sunday, March 31, at 6 p.m., at the AGBU Manoukian Performing Arts Center in Pasadena. The play is in English with some Armenian. Tickets are available online at https://www.showclix.com/event/where-is-your-groom.”

Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

Spring Vegetable Beef Soup

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound lean beef for lamb stew meat, cut into 1 inch cubes, seasoned with salt and pepper, tossed in flour
- 4 tablespoons olive oil or unsalted butter
- 1 c. chopped onions (about 3 cloves)
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 medium leeks, well-washed and thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1/2 cup dry white wine, optional
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 cup dry white wine, optional
- 2 medium leeks, well-washed and thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- Salt, pepper, dill, tarragon, or paprika to taste
- 1 tablespoon dried crushed oregano
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 pound green beans, cut into 1-inch lengths, or frozen peas
- 1/2 pound carrots, sliced into thick coins
- 1/2 pound rutabagas, peeled and cut into bite-sized chunks
- 2 cups hot low-sodium beef or vegetable broth, water
- 1 cup chopped flat leaf parsley
- 1/2 cup chopped mint, fresh herbs, and fresh lemon wedges

PREPARATION

Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven or heavy pot. Add the beef or lamb, toss, and cook until beef is browned. With a slotted spoon, remove beef to a bowl and set aside. Add the tomatoes, garlic, onions, vegetables and tomato paste to the same pot, and stir constantly until vegetables are softened. Stir in spices, lemon juice, and bay leaf. Add the browned meat, and stir in the broth, wine, and some water to slightly cover the meat and vegetables.

Bring to a full boil, reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 50-60 minutes. Stir occasionally, adding more broth or water, if needed. Stir in parsley and cook for another 10 minutes. Discard bay leaf. Serve with warm pita bread, chopped mint, fresh herbs, and fresh lemon wedges.

Note: This soup keeps well in the refrigerator for a few days, but you may need to thin it with beef broth when you reheat it because it thickens up a lot when chilled. For more ideas about spring soups, go to: https://www.foodandwine.com/slideshows/spring-soups

Serves 6.
Hence, limiting the art of raqs sharqi non-

In general, art is open to anyone, disregarding

Do you think that only non-macho men are able to perform raqs sharqi?

To reiterate my point about stereotypes, all men can perform raqs sharqi as it is an art form. In general, art is open to anyone, disregarding age, race, religion, sex, political orientation, sexual orientation, etc. There are no boundaries in art. Hence, limiting the art of raqs sharqi to non-macho versus macho men is like claiming that it is only suited for well-fed or wider hip women versus skinny women.

What is the most vivid experience of your stage life?

In 2016, when the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council awarded my not-for-profit organization, Torkomada, the Creative Engagement grant to host my first Middle Eastern dance festival, Raqs Without Borders. What’s more, many more prestigious awards followed for several of my dance projects. I remember seven years ago when I was dreaming of opening my own dance festival but had no funds to begin. As the saying goes, “Work hard and dream big.” Torkomada is a not-for-profit organization that advocates for the arts in cultural diplomacy through dance classes, cultural festival, foreign language classes, genocide prevention, acting, and academic research (www.torkomada.weetbly.com).

You have also some experience in films. I love acting and transforming into different characters. My acting career, namely my multilingual skills and ability to produce various accents and dialects, enabled me to be a part of major Hollywood projects HBO, “Everyday with Rachael Ray,” “The Daily Show with Jon Stewart,” “TimeOut NY,” “Law and Order,” “Guiding Light,” a commercial for Nissan, voice-overs for an ESL textbook for the Cambridge University Press, a commercial print model for Microsoft, a voice-over for a documentary on the Discovery Channel, assistant dialect coach and Armenian Genocide consultant for “The Cut,” acting in a series of educational videos for the American Museum of Natural History, acting in the Celebrity Ghost Series for the Biography Channel, a voice-over in Bulgarian for Google and a voice-over in Bulgarian for the insurance company AIG.

According to your Facebook page, you know 23 languages. How so?

Because my lovely ears catch languages the same way some people catch a flu. I was born and raised in Bulgaria, surrounded by many cultures. I grew up with Bulgarian Romans and Turks learning about their culture and language. Bulgaria’s geographical location is excellent as it is where East meets West. Growing up I was exposed to international music and art, and studied Armenian, Russian and English in elementary school. Transitioning to college, I learned German, Turkish, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, French, Persian, Mandarin, and Portuguese among many others. Although a gifted polyglot, I am not fluent in all 23 languages. If I had the opportunity, I would travel to every single country in the world to learn every single language. While in college, my classmates used to call me a language freak. I practically became a piece of furniture in the library’s foreign language department. I still remember being interviewed for the honors program at the City College of NY, and asked in what language do I dream. I am currently teaching Arabic, English as a second language and Spanish language courses at various U.S. universities.

You have an ancient Armenian name, very beautiful, but rare among us. Where do your roots go back to?

I was very fortunate to grow up in a strong Armenian family. My parents came from Ortaköy. Celebrating Armenian traditions and holidays with my family was one of the best moments I cherish in life, from attending Sunday church to enjoying delicious Armenian food. In 2013, I was privileged to work as an Armenian Genocide consultant and assistant dialect coach for the movie “The Cut.” I would like to express my gratitude to some Armenian-American organizations that awarded me scholarships: Holy Cross Church of Armenia (Washington Heights, NY), the Armenian-American Students’ Association, Armenian Relief Society, the Armenian Educational Foundation, the Organization of Istanbul Armenians, and the Constantinople Armenian Relief Society. In like manner, I would like to thank you for acknowledging my achievements in your book Armenians in World Choreography.

The stage life of ballet dancers is short. What about male belly dancers?

I am grateful for the opportunities I have encountered as a raqs sharqi performer, and look forward to future endeavors. I am in preparation for my fourth major Raqs Without Borders Middle Eastern dance festival, Raqs Without Borders in NYC. A Dance-in-Cultural-Diplomacy Series. It is an original contribution to the world of art and diplomacy versus more traditional methods that have failed. In today’s strenuous US-Middle East relations where both do not need divorce but therapy, raqs sharqi may serve as a diplomatic tool in international affairs. I am currently in preproduction for my award winning dance spectacle, Raqs Revolution. Similarly, I am working on a big dance project with a live band of musicians and dancers, dedicated to Egyptian music from the 50’s, 60’s and 70’s. In like manner, I am preparing for a massive Egyptian Shaabi dance event in NYC. I aspire to open my own foreign language school, write a book about raqs sharqi in cultural diplomacy, present new lecture-demonstration series, and pursue my PhD studies.
MAY 5 — The Armenian Highland: Western Armenia and the First Armenian Republic of 1918. 4 p.m. at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, 15105 Mission Hills Road, Mission Hills, CA. Co-sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, Karbert Cultural Association, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). 617.354.0632, or www.htaac.org/calendar/event/652/

APRIL 9 — Alessandro Safina, will bring in his pop-opera rhythms to the US. Safina will be accompanied by Victor Espinola and the Forbidden Saints. The tour will feature Armenian Duduk Solo, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Thursday, 9:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. Sponsored by Knights and Daughters of Vartan, AGBU Hall St. Leon Armenian Complex, Fair Lawn. Sponsored by Knights and Daughters of Vartan, Under 21 & students $65. Specially priced AFA Rooms & Students $21 & under. Deadline April 1. For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com.

APRIL 27 — SAVE THE DATE! Hai Guin Scholarship Foundation Luncheon/Benefit, Belmont Country Club. Saturday, 11:30 a.m. for lunch. For further information, email office@htaac.org, or log onto www.htaac.org/calendar/event/622/.

APRIL 28 — Save the Date! “In the Shadow of Branches: Diana Apacar/Berjouhi Kailian.” The Armenian Museum of America and the Armenian National Council present the Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. 6-8:30 p.m. The Armenian Museum presents a new exhibition in the Adile & Hag D. Abajian Gallery. The exhibition includes a selection of diplomatic letters of diplomat Diana Apacar (1859-1937) and artist Berjouhi Kailian (1914-1997). The Armenian Museum invites you to meditate around this solemn subject which permeates Armenian experience around the world. Candlelighting of the gallery will be accompanied by the traditional effects of the Genocide to remember the victims, survivors, and individuals who chose to intervene.

APRIL 30 — Panel, “Bucking the Trend? Why is America Moving Towards Democracy When Authoritarianism is on the March Worldwide?” (provisional title), 7:30 p.m. Featuring Anna Chayanian (Stonehill College), Dmitri Sotropoulos (Visiting Scholar, Center for European Studies, Harvard), and Valerie Searing (Clark University), moderated by Lisa Guerisian. At Harvard University. Co-sponsored by the NAASR/Cautilene Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Studies, AGBU YP Boston, and the Harvard Armenian Students Association.

MAY 3 — 117th Diocesan Assembly Gala Banquet – V. Rev. Father Der Apkarian at Der Apkarian in Andover, MA. Tickets Purchased before 9/13/19 will include the Great Venue, Outstanding Buffet, The Vosbikian Band and 5 Free Raffle Tickets Adults $75.00, Vosbikian Band and 5 Free Raffle Tickets Adults $75.00, & Students $21 & under. Deadline April 1. For more information, email DerApkarian at 978.808.5038. Visit www.AmanelFriendsofAmerica.org


MAY 9 — The Armenian National Committee of America and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) present an illustrated talk by author Matthew Kauer and a film screening, “The Armenian Language: Armenia and the First Republic of 1918.” On Thursday, May 9, 2019, 7:30 pm at the Armenian Museum of America, 65 First Street, Watertown, MA. Copies of Matthew Kauer’s book will be available for purchase. Receipts following purchase.

MAY 15 — Leon Guin Foundation Fundraiser to benefit the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe Building Fund. 8 p.m. The Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe Building Fund. 8 p.m. Bringing Melodies: Arts, Appetites and Conversation. Fundraiser to benefit the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe Building Fund. 8 p.m. Bring your Institute dealers packages are available. Tickets will only be sold in advance, not at the door.

MAY 15 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association and the Armenian General Benevolent Union will present a literary evening with writer Aris Janarian, author of Writing for Lipchitz at Chateau Marmont, Bloodvine and Rivering, among other publications. With discussant authors, editors and Susan Barba. 7:30 p.m. AGBU Building, 247 Mount Auburn Building. Free, reception to follow. Books will be on sale.

MAY 19 — SAVE THE DATE! Concert at the Armenian Museum. Concert to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Louise Hovhaness, poet Hovhannes Tumanyan, Saturday, 2-4 p.m.

MAY 19 — “International Food Festival – A Taste of the World,” presented by the Armenian Community of Greater Boston. Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston. 5:30-7:30 p.m. 375 Granite St. Sponsored by Knights and Daughters of Vartan, Under 21 & students $65 Specially priced AFA Rooms & Students $21 & under. Deadline April 1. For full details visit www.stnersess.edu. More information, email tcadirector@aol.com.

JUNE 27 — Under a Strawberry Moon. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Sponsored by the Armenian National Council and AGBU Building Fund. 8 p.m. The Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe Building Fund. 8 p.m. Bring your Institute dealers packages are available. Tickets will only be sold in advance, not at the door.


JULY 17 — Tea and Tranquility. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Thursday, 8:30 p.m. Meet & Greet. The Luscious Chocolate Dipped Strawberries, hosted by vicki Pastries Paklava, Kadayif, Cheoreg and morePlus Activities for the Children, White Elephant Table, Gift Exchange, Hello@armenianheritagepark.org.

JUNE 10 — St. James Armenian Church 7th Annual Armenian Food Festival. Sts. John Sts. in Lowell, MA. Sponsored by the Armenian National Council, Merrimack Valley (ANCMV) with the participation of all area Armenian Churches and Organizations.

JUNE 28 – July 10 – St. James Armenian Church 7th Annual Armenian Food Festival. Sts. John Sts. in Lowell, MA. Sponsored by the Armenian National Council, Merrimack Valley (ANCMV) with the participation of all area Armenian Churches and Organizations.

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VEM Ensemble to Perform at Holy Trinity Armenian Church

VEN, from page 11
made her open air debut as a violist with the Boston Pops in 1990, about which Richard Dyer of the Boston Globe wrote: “There is freedom in his playing, but also taste and discipline. It was a fiery, centered, and highly musical performance.” Praizer’s several; in most, including the 1896 Tchaikovsky International Competition, he extensively performed as soloist and recitalist in Europe, Northern America, and Asia. He was one of the 2016/17 Artists in Residence of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. He is Artistic Director of the acclaimed Dilijan Chamber Music Series, currently in its 14th season. Chamber music in the New music, Pogossian has premiered more than 70 works. In Los Angeles, Pogossian frequently performs on Monday Evening Concerts and is a recipient of the 2011 Forte Award, given for outstanding contributions to the promotion of new music. Pogossian’s discography includes the recently released “Complete Sonatas and Partitas” by J.S. Bach (Mara Press) with recording director, as well as solo violin CDs “Bloomming Sounds” and “In Nomine,” and Kurtág’s “Kafka Fragments,” with soprano Tony Arnold.

Since earning his advanced degrees from the Kennesaw Mountain Conservatory in Armenia and the Thelonious Conservatory of Music in Moscow, Pogossian has held teaching positions at Douglas Bowling Green, Wayne State, and SUNY Buffalo. He is committed to musical education. In Moscow, Pogossian is currently Professor of Violin at the UCLA Herb Albert School of Music. He proudly participates in the Future Food project, which raises awareness of the human relationship to food, faced by a large percent of the populations and gives the opportunity to the powerful role music can play as a catalyst for change.

VEM will perform at 1 p.m., Sunday, March 31 cosponsored with Holy Trinity Armenian Church at 145 Brattle St. For more information, please visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BA4lSmYHyc.

For reservations please call Ann Ayarssian 401-529-9210.

Memorial of St. John Armenian Church Recreation Center, 22001 Northwestern Hwy, Southfield. Free admission. Introduction by Arthur H. Kamalian (Dean of the Boston Conservatory at Berklee) and program of Armenian art song arrangements, as well as world premiers of a new song cycle for mezzo-soprano and string quartet by Arakelyan, a new string quartet arrangement of Tigran Mansurian’s “Four Hayrens.”

VEM will perform at 1 p.m., Sunday, March 31 cosponsored with Holy Trinity Armenian Church at 145 Brattle St.

For more information, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BA4lSmYHyc.

VENUE:

OCEANO

APRIL 28 — Book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian, editor of her father’s memoir, Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army, Sunday 2 p.m. Mattz Museum of Jewish Heritage. In co-sponsorship with St. Gregory Narek Church and Armenian Cultural Group, 3292 Rainbow Road, Beachwood, Ohio 44122. RSVP info@jewishcenter.org or (216) 593-0575. Book sale/signing during reception following the presentation — proceeds will be donated.

TEXAS

APRIL 4 — Book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian, editor of her father’s memoir, Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army. Thursday 11 a.m. Gradel Music Institute, UCLA. Co-sponsored by Armenian Church of St. Kevork, 9220 Kirby Drive (Suite 100), Houston, Texas. RSVP (713) 527-1141. Book sale/signing will following presentation — proceeds will be donated.

RHOE ISLAND

MARCH 30 — Saintly Women’s Day dedicated to the Three Women from the Holy Hosts, hosted by the Women’s Guild of St. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church, Providence, 70 Jefferson St. 10:00 a.m. greeting of guests, 11:00 a.m. Worship Service in Sanctuary followed by Litanies, lunch sponsored by the Women’s Guild, Eganian Cultural Center. Guest speaker Dr. Fotini Dioriospoulos, DMD. Proceeds will be divided between CASP and the Vanadzor Old Age Home in Armenia, $185.00. For reservations please call Ann Ayarssian 401-529-9210.

Positioning for DAMAGES!

OHIO

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CANADA

MARCH 29 — Telokan Cultural Association of the US and Canada Presents the 2019 North American tour of the VEM Ensemble of the UCLA Herb Albert School of Music. Danielle Segen, mezzo-soprano, J Eun Hwang, violin 1, Aiko Richter, violin 2, Morgan O’Shaughnesseey, viola, Jason Pegis, cello. Wednesday, March 27, 8 p.m. Cosponsored with Music Guild of St. John Armenian Church Recreation Center, 22001 Northwestern Hwy, Southfield. Free admission. Introduction by Artistic Director Professor Mihaela Martin, Patinka Kopec, Samuel Rhodes, Yael Weiss, Ani Movses Manouelian. Her B.M. at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill as a student of Nicholas DiEugeno and is currently studying her M.M. at UCLA with Moshe Poggession and Varty Manouelian. VEM will perform at 1 p.m., Sunday, March 31 cosponsored with Holy Trinity Armenian Church at 145 Brattle St. See for more information, please visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BA4lSmYHyc.

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.
Karabakh Conflict at Crossroads

By Edmond Y. Azadian

The press statements of the co-chairs come with a preamble admonishing the parties “to reduce tensions and reduce inflammatory rhetoric.” This refers to Armenia and particularly to Mr. Aliyev. On the other hand, they ask “to refrain from statements and actions suggesting significant changes to the situation on the ground.”

This, in turn, refers to Pashinyan’s insistence on the participation of Karabakh representatives in the negotiations.

Some analysts believe that by the above position, Armenia has been pushing itself into an untenable situation, because Aliyev has refused that proposal out of hand. But Armenia maintains a flexible position by its willingness to engage in negotiations, even without Karabakh’s participation.

Historically, the negotiations have been between three parties: the cause for negotiation in Bishkek in 1994 was signed by a Karabakh representative. Armenia has been alone in the negotiations against Azerbaijan since 1997, because Presidents Robert Kocharyan and later Serzh Sargsyan had worn double hats by virtue of their participation in the Karabakh war as leaders.

The trickiest part of the negotiation is contained in the principles laid down in the statement of the co-chairs. Those principles have been discussed time and again in many prior sessions in Madrid, Karaz, Geneva, Key West, and on and on. But today, they have become as crystallized and rigid as final terms for the parties to accept.

The following are those terms:

• The return of the territories surrounding Nagorno Karabakh to Azerbaijan’s control
• An interim status for Nagorno Karabakh providing guarantees for security and self-government
• A corridor linking Armenia with Nagorno Karabagh
• Future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will
• International guarantees that would include a peace-keeping operation

As one may detect easily, these principles mostly favor Azerbaijan. Whatever Azerbaijan could not achieve on the battlefield, it is trying to achieve at the negotiation table with the help of the international community. The party which has lost the war is being offered the upper hand.

This reminds us of the remembrences of the World War I, when a group of fair-minded statesmen understood all too well, one of the most powerful nations in the Middle East, courtesy of the Great Powers.

The above principles come with many loopholes and they need further explanation and exploration. That is why the Armenian side has requested clarification on all the points.
By Dr. Hratch Chilingirian

Patриарх Месроб Мутафян was one of the most courageous, principled and forward looking church leaders in the contemporary world. Under his leadership, the Armenian community in Turkey faced the challenges of both state and church in the 21st century. His youth, physical and mental strength, strong pastoral and administrative leadership were assets that the community in Turkey needed at the time of his election as Patriarch. His youth also made it possible for him to fulfill the hopes of the expected new era in the life of the Armenian community in Turkey.

Patricrarch, as he resembled a biblical character, his thinking was fully in step with the times, creative and purposeful. Above all, as a priest and hierarch, he was a deeply spiritual person and tried to live what he preached. He became an inspiring role model for multitudes of young people for whom he dedicated serious time and energy to the work of his flock.

For Patriarch Mesrob, Christian faith and Armenian culture and language were inseparably intertwined—like body and soul. Unlike many high-ranking clergymen, his sermons were almost entirely focused on the Gospel message and its relevance to Armenians today. His Eastern message to the Armenian people on the occasion of the Jubilee of Christianity in Armenia on 14 October 2008, was indicative: “Although you have not personally seen the miraculous Resurrection of the Saviour, re-cross and strengthen your faith in the witness of the first Illuminators, St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew and the other Apostles. Anchor unshakably your spiritual life in the preaching, character and exemplary life of our Patriarch Saint Gregory the Illuminator, and the multitudes of other Christ-loving holy fathers.”

In August 1999 a devastating earthquake hit Turkey’s Marmara region, killing almost 20,000 people, injuring more than 27,000 people and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless. Patriarch Mesrob was one of the first leaders behind the immediate organization of relief work. Within hours after the earthquake, he mobilized the Armenian community and sent rescue teams to the affected areas to help the victims. Aid distribution continued for months. This enormous effort was organized despite far-right Nationalist Action Party Health Minister Osman Durmus’s notorious decision to rescue rescuers and aid from Armenia, Greece, and Romania. In this context, Mutafyan adopted three Armenian orphans whose parents were killed in the earthquake—one of them a 12-year-old girl whose left leg was amputated. He assured them that they will be taken care of until they graduate from university.

Two of the eminent patriarchs that Mutafyan admired for their impeccable leadership and prolific scholarship were Vazken I in Echmiadzin and from where the Armenian, and then his faith as a Christian in a country which continues to refuse to recognize them as legal personalities. In addition to his audacious public pronouncements during these elections became the catalyst for the community to become active again and engage with the Government and politics. Mutafyan mobilized a group of young and progressive Armenians and engaged them in community affairs. Among them was Harut Dink, who became a spokesperson of the Patriarchate in the early 1990s and from his ability to attract attention to the problems the Armenian Church Community officially represented 15,811 church members from Istanbul, Rasen, Diyarbakir, Iskenderun, Kirklar, and Vakaliot.

Mutafyan’s appreciation and taste for aesthetic details brought a certain degree of sophistication to the Patriarchal office and regalia, yet he remained faithful to church tradition and the rich history of the Patriarchate, which was established in 1461.

The assassination of Hrant Dink in January 2007 had a shocking effect on Mutafyan, as he too, started to receive more frequent death threats. In June of that year, he went to Ankara to meet with the Chief of the General Staff, General Yasar Bozyikant, the top military man in Turkey, a rather unusual visit for a religious leader, but indicative of the tortuous relationship between the church and the community with the Turkish state. When asked why Mutafyan wished to meet with the military head rather than the Prime Minister, he said there were allegations that Hrant Dink was assassinated by the security forces. The Prime Minister denied any official connection and asked Mutafyan why he thought that. He accepted the challenge. Mutafyan’s spirit was strong and he invited the Prime Minister to a personal meeting to discuss the matter.

In that fateful year, he was involved in a serious car accident from which he did not fully recover. Along with the anxieties caused by death threats, his health drastically deteriorated for many years. In 2008, the Holy Salvator Armenian Hospital in Istanbul officially announced that the Patriarch is afflicted with Alzheimer’s disease. Eight years later, in October 2016, Mutafyan was admitted to the hospital for an operation. He was finally discharged after a six-month stay in hospital, but his son, Patriarch Vazken I in Echmiadzin. While continuing his post graduate studies in Stuttgart, Germany. He graduated with Bachelors in sociology from Essayan Armenian School, he attended a British secondary school in Istanbul. He continued his elementary education at the local Shadovskian Kollegium in Istanbul for mandatory Turkish military service, which limits the list of eligible candidates to be discussed is the “Parliament”.

Among the critical challenges Patriarch Mesrob faced at his election was the lack of adequately trained and sufficient number of priests to staff the schools and the Patriarchate. During his tenure, he successfully recruited a cadre of young candidates, trained and ordained them to the priesthood. Many of them continue to serve the Patriarchate until today.

Mesrob Mutafyan, his baptismal name, was born in Istanbul in 1956. Upon completing his elementary education, he attended the Essayan Armenian School, he attended a British secondary school in Istanbul and later the American High School in Stuttgart, Germany. He graduated with Bachelor in Sociology and anthropology from the University of Memphis, Tennessee. He was ordained a priest in 1979 by his spiritual mentor Patriarch Vazken. He was consecrated as a bishop in the Armenian Patriarchate with rubber-based tiles (“eternite”). During his post graduate studies, he studied the pastoral and spiritual needs of the community through various workshops in Cyprus, the Greek Islands and held high level positions within the Patriarchate. Being Patriarch of Turkey is not an enviable position. The Armenian community, the religious and lay leadership in Turkey have to constantly juggle their ethnic and state loyalties. “Every Armenian in Turkey grows up with three elements in his awareness: his Armenian, and then his heritage as an Armenian, and then his faith as a Christian in a country which is overwhelmingly 99 percent-Muslim,” Mutafyan had explained in an interview.

The elections of church and charity trusts are major “political” issue for the Turkish Government. It is one of the controlling mechanisms of the state by which it manages the affairs of the minorities and ensures loyalty. Since 2013, the Government has not allowed minorities to hold new elections. Previously, every election campaign was considered for months. In 2012, for instance, in 1993, the Turkish government had granted the Patriarchate to disband its Council of lay advisors. In the coming months it remains to be seen as to how the Turkish government will handle the Charities Act in the upcoming elections which is due to be discussed.

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Church Saves AGBU Center in Toronto In A Last Minute Financial Arrangement

This week’s article is about a major controversy in the Armenian community of Toronto, Canada, which has been ongoing for over a year. On October 30, 2018, the AGBU Toronto Chapter issued a statement, announcing that it could no longer afford to pay its portion of the Diocesan Center’s cost, which has become a “real drag.”

The AGBU Chapter further announced that it has received an offer from the Centennial College to buy the AGBU Center. Subsequently, it became known that the price for the AGBU Center was 8.5 million Canadian dollars. The Central Board – the headquarters of AGBU in New York City – had endorsed the decision to sell the property, which was built in 1983.

The immediate impact of this potential sale was on the operations of the adjacent Holy Trinity Armenian Church where the Chapter had both the parking lots and the adjacent meeting rooms of the AGBU Center. Furthermore, the Church had “the first right of refusal” to acquire the AGBU property, which meant that if the Chapter chose not to purchase the AGBU Center, it had the priority to do so before its sale to the Centennial College, under the same terms.

On November 5, 2018, the AGBU Chapter issued a second statement expressing its regret that “a few have chosen to mischaracterize the recent announcement” regarding the potential sale of the AGBU Center. The Church Board further stated that “while we understand that some did not like this decision, it is neither fair nor consistent with the events of the past two decades’ run on the Diocesan Council, despite calls for greater transparency.

At the upcoming Diocesan Assembly in Massachusetts in May, Mr. Kalustian will be publicly asked to resign and/or face a vote of no confidence. Mr. Kalustian, who is up for re-election in 2021, will no longer be able to serve without fear of term limits, as he has done since 2001. A “term limits” proposal has been submitted to the Proposals Committee as a framework that would only allow for a Diocesan Council member to serve for two consecutive four-year terms. The term limits proposal would undoubtedly pass and in due time will be implemented. It is clear the tone of Mr. Kalustian’s almost two-decades’ run on the Diocesan Board has been of poor communication skills, a lack of transparency, an inability to unite, the failure to properly maintain the Diocesan Center, which was being held up by “Scotch tape” as he publicly stated last year, colossal failures in hiring executive staff, and a lot of outer appearances that would only allow for this year’s agenda or will Mr. Kalustian propose that the church save the AGBU Center – a major achievement for the Diocese and registered in the name of the Diocese. In 90 days the Diocese secured the required financing, exercised its right of first refusal, and completed the 8.5 million Canadian dollar transaction on February 19, 2019.

When asked for further details, Bayoujan and the Mandated Committee declined to disclose the following information:

1. The Diocese was able to secure the financing of the project, which of course means that it got a Loan, purchased the AGBU property, and registered it in the name of the Diocese.

2. The Loan is secured by a $1.5 year mortgage using only the property as a collateral. The financiers currently want to remain anonymous, and the Diocese is obliged to respect their wishes.

3. The Diocese’s feasibility study and the cash flow projections ensure that over the next five years the Diocese will head lease the premises and be able to carry the proper- ties of the AGBU Center and Centennial College will head lease the premises and be able to carry the necessary expenses and payments. This will include any loss of income due to granting AGBU the right to continue its operations and activities in the building free of charge for eleven months, at absolutely no cost to AGBU.

4. The principal amount of the Loan will be due in five years. This will provide enough time for the Diocese to strategize and plan to undertake a much-needed project which will benefit the Toronto community at large.

In a follow-up email, Bayoujan explained that the term “head lease” in the above point 3 means “a Tenant leases the entire leaseable space from the Landlord and pays rent to the Landlord, or in this case to the Diocese as the owner of the property. The AGBU Chapter will be able to find, negotiate and sign a head lease with a reputable Tenant prior to the purchase (during the 90-day Right of First Refusal period) to enable the Diocese for the next five years to cover all the expenses of the building, including the interest payments of the Loan. This was supported by a feasibility study and Cash Flow projections.

Bayoujan’s explanation is that the Holy Trinity Armenian Church will pay the interest only on the 8.5 million loan for five years, after which the entire loan amount will become due and has to be either paid or refinanced.

The most important point is that the Church leaders were able to prevent the AGBU Center from being sold in a very short time and save the AGBU Center – a major achievement for the Armenian community of Toronto! Finally, it would be unfair to all Armenian organizations worldwide to become as transparent as possible in dealing with community properties and issues to avoid unnecessary rumors and the loss of trust.

To the Editor:

Rebecca Bakalian Hachikian

Death,” a reference was made to Arpiar Arpiarian’s book, Garmir Jamuts (The Crimson Offering).
The Nobility Of Henry Morgenthau
By Kay Mouradian

In my heart, along with many Armenians throughout the world, honor Henry Morgenthau, Sr., the American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913-1916. Morgenthau championed and alerted the world to the sufferings of the Turkish Armenians in 1915. A charismatic and wealthy man with a degree in law, he lived by the ethical principles he had planted as seeds during his young teenage years.

At age 14 he took seriously his confirmation at the temple and visited churches of all denominations, making abstracts of sermons by famous pulpit orators of his day, especially Congregationalists Henry Ward Beecher and Richard Storr. Emerson at the time was leading American thought, and young Henry Morgenthau also read the works of Horace Greeley and William Bryant. He was learning how human great men really are.

In the Morgenthau home at the time there was a boarder, a hunchbacked Quaker doctor, who was softened instead of embittered by his affliction. He and Henry had become fast friends. Young Henry listened to the noble doctor's long talks and loved the inspirational 1762 book by William Penn, No Cross, No Crown, which the doctor had given him. That book prompted young Henry to compose 24 rules of action tabulating virtues he wished to acquire and vices he needed to avoid. He made a chart and every night he marked his breaches of that day. Much like an athlete who practices hours to perfect his skills, Morgenthau loved focusing and demanding his will in victory over those vices. That's how he built his moral muscles as a young man. He titled his chart:

Tabulating virtues to be acquired and vices to be avoided
Do not use any profane words.
Do not eat much sweet food as it darkens the mind.
Always speak the truth.
Spend nothing unnecessarily, for if you save when young, you can spend when old.
Never be idle as it will cause you to think of winning things.
Talk little, but think much.
Study daily, or else your knowledge will not improve.
Keep your own secrets, for if you do not keep them, no one will keep them for you.
Never speak evil of anyone.
Work for your employer as though it was for yourself.
Deal fairly and honestly with your fellow clerks, but be not too intimate.
Be not inquisitive.
Neither borrow nor lend if avoidable.
Trust none too much, but be not distrustful.
Be not vain, for vanity is the destruction of men.
Be grateful for the smallest favor.
Never leave for tomorrow what can be done today.
Drink no kind of intoxicating liquor nor smoke any weed.
Never play at any game of chance.
Conquer temptation though it be ever so powerful.
Keep yourself clean, as cleanliness is next to godliness.
Wonder not at the construction of man, but use your time in improving yourself.
In deciding any doubts in the meaning of above maxims, let conscience decide.

I've read this chart often throughout my research of this great man and when I look at the quality of the virtues he charted, I'm still astonished that a boy of fourteen would take such deep interest in developing his moral muscles in preference to playing football or searching out pretty girls in school. Those moral muscles he developed and practiced as a teenager built with-in him strength of an honest power that eventually led to the world's recognition of him as a wealthy entrepreneur, a diplomat extraordinaire and a notable humanitarian.

I wonder if it is even possible in today's celebrity driven society to encourage our young Armenian boys and girls to follow Morgenthau's conscious preparation for living an honorable way of life and ask them to design similar charts of their own. If they did and faithfully took note of their daily breaches and tried to overcome them, could they, then, grow into the likes of a Henry Morgenthau and become great men and women with hearts filled with goodness for humanity?

(Kay Mouradian is the author of My Mother's Voice: An Armenian Story.)