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Progress in Karabagh Talks

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian on Tuesday confirmed that Armenia and Azerbaijan could soon reach a framework agreement on Nagorno-Karabagh but cautioned that it would have to be approved by the disputed territory's ethnic Armenian leadership.

Nalbandian stood by statements made by official Yerevan and Baku on his weekend talks in Moscow with his Azerbaijani counterpart, Elmar Mammadyarov.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov hosted the talks in preparation for the next Armenian-Azerbaijani summit due to be held in the Russian city of Kazan later this month.

"You know that the [Armenian] Foreign Ministry circulated a statement on the trilateral ministerial meeting in Moscow saying that the parties managed to bring their positions closer to each other on a number of pivotal issues," Nalbandian told journalists. "If this positive trend is maintained at Kazan, then we will be able to register positive progress."

The Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents will meet in Kazan one month after the United States, Russia and France jointly urged them to finalize the "basic principles" of the conflict's resolution without "further delay." Diplomats from the three mediating powers discussed the matter during their recent tour of the conflict zone.

Bako Sahakian, the president of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabagh Republic, told them in Stepanakert on June 8 that the basic principles can not be put into practice without being endorsed by the Karabagh Armenians. Sahakian also insisted on their direct participation in further peace talks.

Speaking at a joint news conference with Sweden's visiting Foreign Minister Carl



Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian

Bildt, Nalbandian backed these demands. "It will be impossible to switch to the second phase [of the peace process] if Karabagh doesn't agree to the basic principles," he said. "The second phase would see the elaboration of a [comprehensive] peace accord, and Nagorno-Karabagh must definitely take part in it."

"For us, the cornerstone of a peaceful settlement is that the people of Nagorno-Karabagh must decide their fate," he added.

Azerbaijan has refused to directly negotiate with the Nagorno-Karabagh since the late 1990s, saying that the territory is occupied by Armenia and has no legitimate government.

The Karabagh conflict was on the agenda of Nalbandian's meeting with Bildt. The Armenian Foreign Ministry said the Swedish minister was briefed on recent developments in the Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiating process.

Bildt, who arrived in Yerevan from Baku, expressed hope that the conflicting parties will achieve a breakthrough "in the not-too-distant future." "There is no alternative to a peaceful resolution," he said. "That requires a sense of compromise on both sides because a movement forward will require compromises."

"But the ultimate prize is peace and that is, of course, of immense importance for both countries and for the possibilities of moving the region forward," he added before holding a separate meeting with President Serge Sargsisian.

Georgian-Armenian Church Disputes Closer to Resolution

TBILISI (RFE/RL) – The Armenian Apostolic Church said over the weekend that its supreme head, Catholicos Karekin II, reached agreements with Georgia's political and spiritual leaders that will help to resolve its long-running disputes with the Georgian Orthodox Church.

Karekin met with Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II at the start of a weeklong visit to Georgia on Friday. The two pontiffs held a more detailed discussion in the presence of high-ranking Armenian and Georgian clerics on Saturday.

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From left, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II



Catholicos of All Armenians in Javakhk

Catholicos Visits Javakhk

First Visit to Region by Head of Armenian Church in Century

AKHALTSKHA (President news service) – Earlier this week, Catholicos Karekin II started off on his visit to the region of Javakhk, Georgia. It was the first time that a head of the Armenian Apostolic Church set foot in the Armenian-populated area in over 100 years.

Accompanied by Ilia II, Catholicos patriarch of All Georgia, Karekin II was feted in the Georgian town of Borzhom, famed for its mineral waters. The two were greeted by local church and government officials.

From there, the Armenian Church delegation made its way to the town of Akhaltskha where they were received by Lasha Jkadvan, regional governor of Samtskhe-Javakhi, and Armenian Church Locum Tenens for Javakhk, Fr. Babken Salbyan.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Mirror-Spectator Annual Vacation

WATERTOWN – The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* will close for a two-week break in July, as part of its traditional summer holiday.

The last issue before the break will be that of July 2; the first issue back will be that of July 23.

Press releases on events between July 2 and 23 should be submitted as early as possible for inclusion in issues prior to the break.

The office will reopen on July 18.

Aivazovsky Seascape Returned to Armenia

MOSCOW (*Moscow Times*) – A painting by the 19th-century Russian-Armenian painter Ivan Aivazovsky is back in Armenia, 21 years after being stolen. It is now part of the collection of the National Gallery in Yerevan.

A Russian senator of Armenian descent, Oganeg Oganian, withdrew it from a Moscow auction and sent it to Yerevan after being informed it was stolen.

RI Assembly Passes Genocide Education Bill

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (*Boston Globe*) – The Rhode Island General Assembly has passed a bill directing the state Department of Education to help schools teach students about genocide.

Under the legislation, the state Education Department would be required to post on its website curricular materials dealing with genocides, including the Holocaust and those in Armenia, Cambodia, Darfur, Iraq and Rwanda.

The bill is sponsored by state Rep. Anastasia P. Williams of Providence and state Sen. Joshua Miller of Warwick.

The General Assembly in 2000 passed a bill requiring state education officials to develop a curriculum on genocide and human rights issues.

Mouratian Heads Anti-Bias Group in Arg.

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Argentina's President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner has appointed Pedro Mouratian as the head of the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI) for a term of 180 days, following the resignation of INADI President Claudio Morgado and Vice President Maria Rachid.

Mouratian is an expert in combating discrimination, xenophobia and racism. He took part in the development of UN Human Rights Committee's concept on struggle against discrimination.

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Mystery Man

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenian Lecturers to Train in US

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The International American Council's Organization will conduct a contest, the winners of which will train in the US as lecturers. It is sponsored by the US government, on behalf of the Educational and Cultural Affairs Department of the US Department of State.

Nane Abrahamian, whose office is organizing the contest, said the goal of the program is to provide an opportunity to the lecturers of a number of universities of Armenia, CIS and Eastern Europe to pass training in humanitarian and public sciences.

The participants of the program will closely cooperate with the American partners. While staying in the US, the participants will attend conferences and give lectures. Abrahamian said during the program about 51 lecturers have already been trained.

The deadline for applications is June 20. The studies will launch in January 2012 and will last five months.

Tribute Paid to Late Premier Margarian

YEREVAN (Presidential News Service) – Earlier this week, President Serge Sargisian, accompanied by the leadership of the country, visited the Komitas Pantheon and paid tribute to the memory of the late Prime Minister Andranik Margarian, on the occasion of his 60th birthday.

Sargisian attended the event at the Alexander Spendiarian National Academic Opera and Ballet Theater dedicated to Margarian.

Sports Tournament for Disabled in Gumri

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – A decision was made to hold the 2012 Armenian Disabled Sports Festival outside Yerevan, in Gumri, according to Hakob Abrahamian, chairman of the Armenian Paralympic Committee and the Phoenix club of disabled sportsmen.

Abrahamian said that the decision to move the tournament out of Yerevan was made in part so that more people in the rural areas would have access to it.

Ministry Advisor Viewing Porn at Meeting Quits

YEREVAN (news.am) – An advisor to the Armenian Economy Minister who was watching porn during a European Union-Armenia workshop, handed in his resignation, which was accepted.

The ministry's representative said the advisor handed in his resignation on Monday, June 6, upon his return from a business trip to Moscow.

The reason for his resignation was not mentioned. A representative of the ministry did not rule out that the reason may be the recent scandal. The website slaq.am showed the advisor engrossed in his viewing.

Armenian Trucks Not Allowed to Enter Turkey

YEREVAN (news.am) – Armenian cargo is not allowed to enter Turkey while in transit, despite that they have permission from the European Conference of Ministers of Transportation and Black Sea economic cooperation, Armenian Minister of Transportation and Communication Manuk Vardanyan said at the International Road Transport Union (IRU) conference here.

However, Turkish trucks enter Armenia without any problems. Turkey is also a member of IRU.

The Armenian Ministry of Transportation and Communication and IRU will sign a memorandum which allows Armenian cargo to enter Turkey, Chairman of Armenian International Road Carriers Association Herbert Hambardzumyan said. The memorandum will give Armenian authorities a chance to maneuver in negotiations with Turkey.

ATP Celebrates World Environment Day & International Children's Day at Mirak Family Reforestation Nursery

YEREVAN – Armenia Tree Project (ATP) celebrated World Environment Day and International Children's Day on June 1 at the John and Artemis Mirak Nursery in Margahovit Village. The event was attended by the staff from ATP's Yerevan Office and the Mirak Reforestation Nursery, along with their families.

"The children made friends instantly and started playing together," explained ATP Community Development Specialist Vardan Melikyan. "The nursery workers invited musicians from the village to take part in our gathering and the kids had

fun dancing to traditional live music in the fresh mountain air. The boys were impressed with ATP's agricultural equipment such as tractors and an all-terrain motorcycle, while the girls enjoyed gathering field flowers."

ATP's Environmental Education staff presented notebooks and the children drew beautiful pictures of nature and trees which now decorate the inside of the small building at the nursery. After an outdoor lunch, ATP specialists showed the children how to plant trees and they planted five symbolic evergreens at the nursery. "Everyone, especially the children, had a great time and ATP hopes to organize similar events with our stakeholders in the future," concluded Melikyan.

On June 1, activities are organized for children including outings with families. The day is dedicated to children worldwide and is often marked with speeches on children's rights and well-being.

World Environment Day is a widely-celebrated global day for environmental action held on June 5. The UN



Armenia Tree Project staff and their families celebrated World Environment Day and International Children's Day at the John and Artemis Mirak Nursery in Margahovit Village

US Official Briefed on Armenian Unrest Probe

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Prosecutor-General Aghvan Hovsepian and other Armenian law-enforcement officials on Monday briefed a visiting senior US State Department official on their renewed investigation into the 2008 post-election unrest.

Armenia's Office of the Prosecutor-General said Thomas Melia, the US deputy assistant secretary of state for democracy and human rights, inquired about the controversial probe and received detailed information about it. It said Melia was specifically interested in the execution of a recent order issued by President Serge Sargisian to investigators.

Responding to opposition demands, Sargisian told Special Investigative Service (SIS), a law-enforcement body subordinate to prosecutors, to investigate the March 2008 clashes in Yerevan in "a more meticulous" way. Sargisian said investigators should specifically try to identify those responsible for the deaths of eight opposition protesters and two police personnel.

According to a statement issued by his office, Hovsepian told Melia that they have still not succeeded in doing that because of "objective obstacles." "The events took place at night and involved thousands of people in a residential area covering several thousand square meters," he was quoted as saying.

Hovsepian also said that the investigators, who continue to be accused by the opposition Armenian National Congress (HAK) of cover-up, need assistance from international forensic and other experts in that endeavor.

Andranik Mirzoyan, the SIS director, and Vahagn Harutiunian, the head of an SIS team conducting the inquiry, were also present at the meeting. Harutiunian told Melia that since Sargisian's order issued in late April his team has interrogated 70 witnesses and plans to question more than 400 others.

The statement added that the US official praised the investigators for the "great deal of work" done by them. "I can feel just how well-informed you are about the investigation," he was quoted as saying.

The investigation has until now targeted supporters and associates of HAK leader Levon Ter-Petrosian. More than 100 of them were arrested following the unrest on what the Armenian opposition regards as trumped-up charges. By contrast, virtually no law-enforcement officers have been prosecuted to date.

Melia met with Ter-Petrosian later in the day. A short statement by the HAK said they focused the political situation in Armenia.

The US diplomat also met with Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian. According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, the two men discussed "the Armenian authorities' efforts to strengthen democracy, positive progress registered in that direction and further steps."

Scholar Bojolian Completes 10-Year Term for Treason

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Murad Bojolian, an Armenian scholar and former diplomat, was released from prison on Friday, June 10, after completing a 10-year sentence on charges of spying for Turkey, which he strongly denies.

Bojolian, 60, was arrested and charged with passing "military, economic and political information" on to Turkish intelligence in January 2002. He was tried and convicted of high treason less than a year later.

Bojolian initially admitted to working for Turkey's intelligence service, MIT, but later retracted the pre-trial testimony and pleaded not guilty to the charges. The former head of the Turkey desk at the Armenian Foreign Ministry said during his two-month trial that he falsely incriminated himself because he feared torture and wanted to ensure the safety of his wife and three children.

Bojolian, who made occasional freelance contributions to Turkish media after leaving the government in the late 1990s, lodged an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in 2003, saying that he was jailed for his journalistic activities and never had access to state secrets. The Strasbourg case rejected the appeal in November 2009.

The scholar, who was born in Turkey and immigrated to Soviet Armenia in the 1960s, insisted on his innocence after being greeted by family members and activists of the opposition Armenian National Congress (HAK) outside a maximum security prison in central Yerevan.

"I think that during all these years a considerable part of the society has realized what the truth is," he said.

Bojolian said he has not yet decided whether to engage in political activities. "I never engaged in politics. I was a specialist, I did my job ... God knows what will happen from now on," he said.

He also confirmed his strong support for the HAK. "But it would be wrong to give credit only to the HAK because it

Environment Programme describes it as a day for people from all walks of life to come together to ensure a cleaner, greener, and brighter outlook for themselves and future generations, and this year's theme was "Forests: Nature at Your Service."

the people who rose up," he added.

The HAK has regarded Bojolian as a political prisoner throughout its two-year existence. Its top leader, former President Levon Ter-Petrosian, used Bojolian as an adviser and Turkish-language interpreter, during his 1991-1998 tenure. The latter was one of Armenia's few experts on Turkish affairs then.

In a long speech at his 2002 trial, Bojolian said that he played a key role in establishing direct communication between the governments of Turkey and Armenia in 1992. He said that made him the object of envy and jealousy by his Foreign Ministry superiors, whom he accused of spreading false rumors in 1992 and 1993 about his links with Turkish intelligence operatives.

He claimed that then-Foreign Minister Vahan Papazian, a key member of Ter-Petrosian's administration, told him to resign or risk criminal proceedings. Papazian denied that in an October 2002 interview with RFE/RL's Armenian service.

In his initial pre-trial testimony, Bojolian claimed to have passed on a broad range of information about Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh to Turkish intelligence agents in exchange for money. The testimony contained detailed accounts of his alleged contacts with MIT during six different trips to Istanbul between 2000 and 2001.

Although the defendant retracted the written account during the trial, the court found it credible. One of the trial prosecutors said that its detailed descriptions "could not have been fabricated even with the best imagination."

But Bojolian and his lawyers insisted that the National Security Service (NSS), which handled the case, failed to come up with any compelling evidence. Some human rights campaigners agree with this assertion. One of them, Artur Sakunts, on Friday called Bojolian a "prisoner of conscience."



INTERNATIONAL

Armenian Foundation Retrieves Former Property in Istanbul

By Vercihan Zifilioglu

ISTANBUL (*Hürriyet Daily News*) – The Foundations Directorate General has turned over the property rights of a historical building in Istanbul's Topkapi neighborhood back to the Surp Nigoghos Armenian Church Foundation.

The church foundation's president, Monik Ergan, expressed his satisfaction with the move, but many other buildings in Topkapi were yet to be reclaimed, according to the administration.

"I believe the laws passed by the Justice and Development Party [AKP, in 2008] concerning foundations are extremely useful. [But] I do not want to talk about either politics or anything else about the AKP," Ergan, the church foundation's president, said.

Another historical building, the

Selamet Inn in Karaköy in Beyoğlu, was also handed back to the Surp Pirgiç Armenian Hospital Foundation earlier in 2011, following a legal battle that lasted several years.

Unlike the Selamet Inn, however, the return of the building in Topkapi was accomplished without any legal hassle after the church foundation simply filed an appeal to the directorate general.

"Even the reclaimed buildings will not be sufficient to [help with the financial] upkeep of the school and the church," said Murat Çakan, the church foundation's second president.

The foundation is in desperate financial straits, Çakan said, adding that many documents listing foundation property had been found in the church archives.

The foundation in Topkapi, a 195-year-old institution, operates the Levon Vartuhan Primary School in addition to

the church, Ergan said.

Patriarch Mesrob II and other leading figures in the Armenian community had decided to close the school down, following an appeal by the foundation's former administration, but this decision was later overturned, said the church president.

Turkey's Greek community decided last month to close down the Iokimian School in the district of Fener, the Tavatla Boys' School in Sefa Square in the district of Sisli as well as the Private Arnavutköy Coed Greek School, which was founded in 1902. The historical schools will be transformed into cultural centers to provide new income for the community.

"The Greek community may have shut their schools down, but we are a community 60,000 strong," Ergan said, reiterating his opposition to closing their schools.

AGBU Buenos Aires Joins Other Organizations in Hosting 'First Days of Cinema and Independent TV'

BUENOS AIRES – On March 17-19, the organization BRIDGE – with the support of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Buenos Aires, the National Institute of Audiovisual Arts (INCAA), the government of the City of Buenos Aires and Atorrante Films – hosted a three-day presentation and seminar, titled "First Days of Cinema and Independent TV."

The first day began with a greeting from Eugenia Akopian, a member of BRIDGE, to the attending public. She presented Gabriel Nesci to the audience, who is the director and scriptwriter of the television miniseries, "All Those Against Juan." This series was originally broadcast in 2008 by America TV, while its second season in 2010 was broadcast by Telefe. It received the Martin Fierro award, the most prominent Argentinean award for radio and television, in two categories, including best miniseries and best lead actor of a miniseries. The series was also honored with the FUND TV award for best fictional miniseries.

At the beginning of the lecture, Nesci recounted his childhood and early interest in television and film. The young director maintained the audience's attention, while he discussed his experience creating the first and second season of his acclaimed miniseries. An open discus-

sion followed Nesci's talk and the filmmaker answered every question. He even touched upon his newest cinematographic production, "All You Need is Love," a romantic comedy that delves into the lives of four people. The film is due to start production in June and will be out for distribution next year. The first day of the three-day event ended with a special concert by Brenda Vaneskeheian and Tigran and Tomás Vardanyan, members of the band, Without Class.

The second day focused on the Short Film Contest. After months of receiving films that were sent from several countries, the jury chose 10 finalists. Jury members included Roger Kupelian ("Lord of the Rings," "Alice in Wonderland," "Flag of Our Fathers"); Martin Yernazian ("Art Officially Favored," "Through the Looking Glass," "Amelia's 25th") and



Members of the organization BRIDGE with renowned television director Gabriel Nesci

actress Electra Avellan ("Machete," "Grindhouse," "Proof of Death" and "Amelia's 25th"). The short films of the finalists were screened and awards were presented to the winners.

Ignacio Balassanian, president of the AGBU Young Professionals of Buenos Aires, awarded an honorable mention to the short film "On the Culture of Hawaii Saturday," which was directed by Patricio Carragio. Third place was presented by Francisco Balassanian, president of the AGBU Youth League, to Khen Shomron's "Paper Games." Second place was given to the Spanish production of "The Courtship of Mariana Seresesky" and first place was awarded to "Because There Are Things That Are Never Forgotten," by Lucas Figueroa. The award was presented by Berdjuhi Emirian, benefactor and honorary member of AGBU.

"First Days of Cinema and Independent TV" came to a close on March 19 in the Jorge Luis Borges Auditorium of the National Library. The film "Andres Doesn't Want to Take a Nap," by Daniel Bustamante and Aleandro Norm, was screened. Following the viewing, director Bustamante and actors Fabio Aste and Marcelo Melingo recounted their experiences making the film. Through questions from the public, the panel not only addressed the technical components of their work, such as the photography, art and overall production, but the social and historical narratives that were implicit in the theme of the film.

Catholicos Visits Javakhk

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The two church leaders then made their way to St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church in Akhaltskha. There to greet them were local community leaders and young Armenians dressed in folk costumes who offered the traditional welcome of bread and salt.

Karekin II then addressed the assembled crowd, saying he was pleased to see that Javakhk Armenians continued to follow the path of their ancestors and remain faithful to the Armenian Church.

The Armenian Church pontiff urged the crowd to boldly face the challenges confronting them while at the same time promising that the church would do all it could to provide religious and educational guidance.

It was then the turn of Catholicos Ilia

II to address the crowd. He stated that the trip of Karekin II was an historic occasion and stressed the important contributions made by Armenians in Georgia in the life of the country.

Karekin II then presented the church with a gift of a painting of the Holy Virgin Mother.

The delegation then made its way to the Hovhannes Tumanyan Armenian School in Akhaltskha. There they were entertained by students, who had prepared a literary and musical recital.

School Principal Svetlanna Harutyunyan welcomed the church leaders on behalf of the school staff and pupils. Karekin II then blessed all in attendance, urging them to watch over the educational institution as a national treasure.

International News

Iran Now Turkey's Premier Oil Supplier

TEHRAN (UPI) – In a development fraught with significance for Turkish-US relations, Iran has become Turkey's leading provider of crude oil. Turkey's Energy Market Regulatory Authority (EPDK) noted the development in a report, the Tehran Times reported Tuesday, May 31.

The development represents a new challenge for the United States, which has repeatedly tightened sanctions on Iran over its nuclear energy program. Tehran insists the program is for peaceful purposes, but Washington and other Western countries maintain that it conceals a covert nuclear weapons program.

From January-March, the EPDK reported that Iran exported more than 1.8 million tons of crude oil to Turkey, accounting for 30 percent of Turkey's crude imports.

During the first two months of 2011, bilateral trade between Iran and Turkey surpassed \$2.1 billion, while in 2010 bilateral trade value was worth \$10.6 billion and in 2010, a 97 percent increase over 2009 statistics.

The Turkish Statistical Institute reported that bilateral trade value will surpass \$15 billion in 2011 under the terms of a preferential trade agreement.

Armenian Cultural Center Opens in Tbilisi

TBILISI (PanArmenian.Net) – Mayor of Yerevan Karen Karapetyan and Mayor of Tbilisi Gigi Ugulava attended the opening ceremony of an Armenian cultural center in the Georgian capital.

According to Georgia Online, the two mayors stressed the importance of maintenance of cultural ties and cooperation between the neighbor countries.

Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, who was also present at the ceremony, noted that opening of a cultural center evidences close cooperation between Armenia and Georgia.

Cooperation between Armenia and Sicily

PALERMO, Italy (Armenpress) – Armenian Ambassador to Italy Ruben Karapetyan was here on June 9-12. He met with the local authorities as well as representatives of business circles.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs press office reported that June 9 the ambassador met with the president of the Regional Assembly of Sicily, Francesco Cascio, and Palermo Mayor Diego Camarata, with whom he discussed the development of trade and cultural ties between Armenia and Sicily. During the meetings an arrangement was reached to organize the visit of the Sicilian businessmen to Armenia to get acquainted with investment opportunities.

On the same day, Karapetyan participated in the business forum where he presented the investment opportunities in Armenia, the prior programs of the government as well as the favorable legislative field.

During the visit to Palermo the ambassador gave a lecture at the Palermo Rotary club, during which the film, "Armenia, Noah's Country," was presented.

ICRC Representatives Visit Armenian Captives In Azerbaijan

BAKU (PanARMENIAN.Net) – The employees of the local chapter of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited Armenian captives in Azerbaijan.

As the head of the public relations service at ICRC Armenian representation, Ashot Astabatsyan said three Armenian servicemen and a family of five were visited. "A monitoring of the keeping conditions and their physical state was conducted, letters to families passed over," he said.

According to the ICRC, eight Armenian citizens – three servicemen and family of five civilians – are held hostage in Azerbaijan.



INTERNATIONAL

Azerbaijan Frees Journalist after Years of World Pressure

By Kathy Lally

BAKU, Azerbaijan (*Washington Post*) – On Thursday, May 26, at 6 p.m., Eynulla Fatullayev lay on his prison bunk ready for his nightly battle with despair, a young newspaper editor growing old midway through an eight-and-a-half year sentence for writing articles that the Azerbaijani government disliked.

Fatullayev knew that media and human rights groups around the world – and even the US government – were fighting for him, but he had little reason to hope for justice. When told to pick up his things and report to the warden, he had no idea what to expect – they could hardly move him to a prison worse than Strict Regime Penal Colony No. 1.

Moments later, the warden told him he had been pardoned by the president, Ilham Aliyev. Unbelievably, Fatullayev was free. The warden did not let him call his parents – no crowds should gather to cheer him – but personally drove him home. After more than four years of cold and deprivation, Fatullayev left prison in a Mercedes Benz.

"I only wanted to run a professional newspaper," said Fatullayev, who entered prison at age 29, dark-haired and youthful-looking, and emerged at 34, balding, graying and paunchy

from lack of exercise.

"It was a terrible experience," he said, his eyes red and blinking, still adjusting to normal light two days after his release. "I spent a lot of time in dark rooms."

Fatullayev said he was moved to different prisons, often held in solitary confinement and frequently ill. In standard barracks, 100 to a room, prisoners were awakened at 6 a.m. and sent out into a small yard where they stayed until 10 p.m., with no roof overhead and nothing to sit on. In solitary, where he spent three, five and 10 days at a time, a wooden frame without a mattress was pulled down from the wall at 9 p.m. and folded up at 5 a.m. The single window had no glass.

A long list of media and human rights organizations appealed on his behalf. The Council of Europe's human rights commissioner visited him three times, Fatullayev said, and eventually won him the right to read newspapers. The US State Department publicly called for his release.

Both President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, he was told, brought his case up with Aliyev.

After his editor at the *Monitor* newspaper was killed in 2005, Fatullayev started two newspapers of his own, one in Russian and one in Azerbaijani. He first got into trouble describing a police gang of criminals, led by a deputy minister who was ultimately jailed.

Fatullayev wrote that the interior minister was responsible, as well, because he was in charge. The minister won a defamation suit, and Fatullayev was fined, given a suspended jail sentence and the kind of government attention meant to keep him quiet.

He was arrested in April 2007. "The government suddenly remembered I had visited Nagorno-Karabagh in 2005," he said, referring to the territory that is the subject of an unresolved dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Fatullayev's interviews had produced an account of a well-known massacre there in 1992 during Azerbaijan's six-year war with Armenia. He was jailed for two-and-a-half years for insulting the honor and dignity of Azerbaijani refugees from the territory.

Another article suggested that if the United States and Iran ever went to war, Iran could attack Azerbaijan. He was charged with terrorism.

An article about the prevalence of tribalism in national politics – many officials are from the president's home region – brought him ethnic-hatred charges.

"Six months later, the tax inspectorate launched an investigation into my newspapers," he said. "I was charged with evading taxes. I got an additional three months." His newspapers were closed, and he had a total of eight-and-a-half years of prison ahead of him.

In April 2010, the European Court of

Human Rights ruled he had been denied a fair trial and ordered his release. "The government was very irritated," Fatullayev said. Before the ruling could be acted upon, he was accused of possessing heroin in prison and given a new sentence of two-and-a-half years.

From March 2 to April 2, he was in solitary at prison No. 1. "There were great rats," he said. "At night I could see them on my body."

Both his mother, 60, and his father, 61, lost their jobs because of him. Without help from the Committee to Protect Journalists, Amnesty International, the Open Society Institute and others, he said, his family would not have survived.

He turned to the late Alexander Solzhenitsyn. "Every prisoner had a book," he said. "One might have the *Koran*, another the *Bible*. Mine was *The Gulag Archipelago*. When I lost hope, I opened Solzhenitsyn and I said to myself – I talked to myself every night – 'He was in a far worse place and kept his will. You can keep yours.'"

Now, in freedom, he is trying to figure out how to live again.

"I am thinking, how can I continue my journalism? The first way leads me to prison. The second may lead me to the cemetery. What do I do?"

"Right now," he added, "I can only say that I'm trying to understand freedom. It's a miracle for me, and I'm trying to understand it."

Cyprus President Inaugurates AGBU Armenian Cultural Centre

LARNACA, Cyprus – On May 5, Demetris Christofias, president of the Republic of Cyprus, inaugurated the AGBU Armenian Cultural Centre, which is a new home for Armenian culture, ethnology and art. The center will present and promote the history and culture of Armenia in general and the Armenian community of Cyprus in particular, with the aim of deepening the understanding and appreciation of the cultural heritage that bonds all Armenians. It will disseminate information with regard to the positive contributions of the Armenian community to the economic, social and cultural development of Cyprus. It will also organize conferences, seminars, symposia and workshops; present artistic and musical performances and house a library.

The gathering of over 200 participants included the current mayor of Larnaca, Andreas Moyseos, along with two previous mayors,

councilors of the Larnaca municipality; several members of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus and representatives of all the political parties represented in the House, as well as Armenian and Greek Cypriots from Larnaca, Limassol and Nicosia. Also attending the ceremony on behalf of the president of the AGBU, Berge Setrakian, and the AGBU leadership, was Damascus-based Central Board member Vasken Yacoubian, who arrived for the occasion.

In his opening statement, Roupen Kalaydjian of the AGBU Larnaca Chapter thanked the president not only for agreeing to personally preside over the opening of the new center, but also for his decades-long support of the Armenian community of Cyprus, culminating in his unveiling of the Armenian Genocide Memorial on Larnaca's seafont three years earlier. After Kalaydjian's statement, the Archbishop of the

Armenian Prelature of Cyprus, Varoujan Hergelian, conducted an official blessing of the new building.

Yacoubian conveyed his gratitude to Christofias for his agreement to personally open the AGBU Armenian Cultural Centre. He also stressed the excellent relations that have always existed between the AGBU and the government of the Republic of Cyprus. Furthermore, he stated that the Center in Larnaca aimed not only to preserve and promote Armenian culture but also to highlight the positive role that Armenians have played in the island's development.

The chairman of AGBU Larnaca, Stephanos Kamakian, thanked all the parties involved in the project, including the AGBU Central Board, the Kalaydjian Foundation, the AGBU Larnaca, Limassol and Nicosia Chapters and several prominent Armenian-Cypriot families, as well as



Demetris Christofias, president of the Republic of Cyprus, cutting the ribbon at the May 5 inauguration ceremonies of the AGBU Armenian Cultural Centre in Larnaca, Cyprus

him "particularly with its invitation to celebrate the opening of the Armenian Cultural Centre." He added that the Center, beyond its cultural character, proved that Armenians, as an integral part of the Cypriot people, contributed positively and substantially to the broader economic, social and cultural development of the island.

Referring to the centuries-old friendship between the Armenian and Cypriot peoples and their common struggle for peace and justice, as well as the excellent relations between the republics of Armenia and Cyprus, the president recalled the importance of Larnaca as the first port of call for the thousands of Armenian refugees fleeing the Genocide of 1915-1923.

He also thanked the Armenian community for its support to the government in its efforts to find a just and viable solution to the Cyprus Question, and paid tribute to

benefactors from abroad, who with their generous sponsorship and guidance, as well as financial support, had made the realization of the project possible.

Dikran Kalaydjian, the chairman of the Kalaydjian Foundation and vice-chairman of AGBU Larnaca, presented Christofias with a commemorative gift – a book about the history and culture of the ancient Armenian territory of Karabagh.



A view of the recently inaugurated AGBU Armenian Cultural Centre in Larnaca, Cyprus

and expressed his admiration for the philanthropic work done by the AGBU for over a century. In his closing remarks, the president announced that as an acknowledgement of the importance of the creation and operation of the center, the Government had decided to donate the sum of 15,000 euros (about \$21,100), as a further token of support.

The ceremony concluded with the unveiling by the president of a plaque and the cutting of the ribbon, followed by a reception and media interviews.

Addressing the large gathering, the Cypriot president stated that the AGBU had honored

Georgian Church Disputes Closer to Resolution

DISPUTE, from page 1

Karekin expressed his satisfaction with the meetings as he and Ilia made public statements at the Georgian patriarch's official residence in Tbilisi.

In a separate statement, Karekin's press office said the two sides agreed that the Georgian authorities should finally grant a "legal status" to the local diocese of the Armenian Church. Like Georgia's other minority denominations, the diocese has no official registration and is therefore not treated by the Georgian authorities as a single legal entity.

The statement said the parties also agreed on the need to grant an official status to "the Georgian religious community in Armenia." It was not clear if it referred to Armenia's tiny ethnic Georgian community or Armenian adherents of Greek Orthodox faith that were subordinate to the Georgian Church during the Middle Ages. Very little is known about them at present.

Ilia cited Saakashvili as saying that the Armenian Church should have the same status in Georgia as the Georgian Church in Armenia. The patriarch backed this position.

According to Karekin's office, the Georgian side also pledged to preserve several medieval churches previously used by the Georgian-Armenian community "until their return to the diocese." "The issue of the return of the churches will be discussed at the next stage," read its statement.

Karekin visited two of those churches located in Tbilisi later on Saturday. One of them partly crumbled last year, while the other was severely damaged by a fire in 2001.

Karekin did not inspect another, more famous Tbilisi church built in the 15th century and known as Norashen. It has been the largest source of tensions between the two ancient Christian institutions.

Ilia, meanwhile, pressed Georgian claims to several medieval and mostly abandoned churches located in Armenia's northern Lori province. The area was for centuries controlled by Georgian kings through their Armenian vassals. Some of those noble families were members of the Georgian Church.

"When talking about churches, one must not forget that both sides have demands," said Ilia. "Both sides have facts and documents regarding Armenian churches in Georgia and Georgian churches in Armenia."

Ilia proposed that the two sides set up a joint commission of scholars who would look into the matter and propose solutions. Karekin said the Armenian Church supports the idea in principle.

Both church leaders stressed that these disputes should not damage relations between the two states. "Our peoples are bound by numerous spiritual, cultural and historical links contrary to theological differences between our Churches that emerged as a result of historical developments," said Karekin.

Community News

'Bridge to the Future' Gala to Be Held October 1 for New San Diego Church

SAN DIEGO – On Saturday, October 1, the St. John Garabed Armenian Church Trust Fund Committee will host the "Bridge to the Future" Gala Banquet at the Grand Del Mar Hotel. The gala will celebrate a new era for the San Diego Armenian community as it builds a new church campus.

Headlined by attorney Mark Geragos as master of ceremonies, with guest of honor Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, the gala will feature entertainer Koko Hayitian and his band, as well as silent and live auctions.

The St. John Garabed Trust Fund has purchased 14 acres of land at 13860 El Camino Real, to build a new church campus, including a state-of-the-art banquet and reception hall, cultural/educational center and library, gymnasium and heritage park. Overseeing this effort is the parish priest of St. John Garabed Armenian Church, Rev. Datev A.K. Tatoulian. The gala will support the first phase of fundraising for the "Bridge to the Future" campaign.

"The San Diego-Armenian community has never had an opportunity like this, to create a true center of Armenian life in the county," said Gala Co-chair Kathy Kassardjian, "a place for all Armenians to come together to worship God, learn, raise their families, experience lifelong friendships and live the Armenian-American dream." For information about the gala or sponsorship levels, email sjgsdtrust@gmail.com.

St. Mark Church Notes 53rd Anniversary

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. – Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), visited St. Mark Church, on Sunday, May 15, where he celebrated the Divine Liturgy and presided over the church's 53rd anniversary banquet.

Barsamian congratulated the St. Mark parish and expressed his appreciation to its members for their dedication to building a strong community. The Primate added that he looked forward to returning to Springfield for the 110th Diocesan Assembly, which will be hosted by St. Mark Church in the spring of 2012.

During the afternoon program, the parish honored choir director Brenda Jermakian with the "St. Mark Parishioner of the Year" award. The award was presented by Jane Garabedian.

Barsamian congratulated Jermakian, and wished her continued success in directing the choir program.

Parish Council member Steven Omartian served as master of ceremonies. He introduced the students of the parish Armenian School, who greeted the Primate, recited a poem in Armenian and sang *Yerevan Erebuni*.

Edward Garabedian spoke about the church's parking lot and driveway construction project. The day's proceeds will help fund the undertaking.

The afternoon concluded with a slide presentation by Marie Vartanian, a registered nurse, who spoke about her involvement in providing medical training in Armenia. She noted that Harvard University has worked with area hospitals to collect and donate medical equipment to Armenia.

Anna Garabedian, Parish Council chair, expressed her appreciation to Banquet Committee members for their hard work and thanked the attendees for supporting St. Mark Church in its anniversary celebration.

Banquet Committee members include: Linda Arslanian, Diane Boghosian, Shelley Cotton, Donna Scagliarini and Honor Takorian. Marian Orcutt Varteresian chaired the committee.



David Barber

Barber Foods' Future Based in Investments, Fewer Jobs

PORTLAND, Maine (*Maine Business News*) – In the past year, as David Barber and his three siblings shopped for a buyer for their family-owned company, they refused to consider any potential owner who would move the longstanding Barber Foods factory and headquarters out of Portland.

"The plant has always been here," says David Barber, president of the company. "Dad started the company 55 years ago here and we didn't want to see the jobs or the plant shift out of here."

Gus Barber, a first-generation Armenian who died in 2008, founded Barber Foods in 1955 with one employee, a sharp butcher knife and an old truck, according to the company website. Today the company has 650 employees and operates out of a 230,000-square-foot facility on St. John Street, producing products such as frozen chicken cordon blue, scallop-and-lobster-stuffed chicken, chicken nuggets and chicken fingers. This year it

paid about \$71,000 in property taxes to the city of Portland, according to the city's treasury department.

Last week, the four Barber siblings announced they sold the company to AdvancePierre Foods, based in Cincinnati, for an undisclosed price. AdvancePierre, which was formed by the merger of two family-owned companies last year, sells packaged sandwiches, chicken, beef and bakery products to the food service, school, club, vending and convenience store markets. The acquisition of Barber Foods is AdvancePierre's 11th food production facility and will help the company expand on the East Coast, according to Bill Toler, CEO of AdvancePierre Foods. Oaktree Capital Management LP, a Los Angeles-based investment firm, is the majority shareholder and will continue to maintain a majority share of the company, according to a company press release. AdvancePierre, which employs 4,000 people, reported net sales of \$1.4 billion last year.

AdvancePierre plans to invest up to \$10 million of equipment upgrades starting immediately at the Portland facility to increase the efficiency and speed of production lines, according to Toler. The goal is to eventually double the plant's production, although Barber declined to reveal current production levels.

The modernization of the plant will result in layoffs over the next 12 months. While layoffs at any workplace are difficult, the population at Barber Foods may make the upcoming changes even more challenging.

Since the Vietnam War, Barber Foods has made a name for itself as a welcoming workplace for Portland's immigrants. "We actively reached out in the 1970s when the Vietnam War ended," Barber says. "We were an entry point for immigrants who could start on the production lines and start a new life." A few employees working at Barber Foods have been with the company for more than 30 years, he adds.

Over the years, as more immigrant communities arrived in Maine beyond the first wave of Vietnamese refugees, they were directed by social service workers to apply for jobs at Barber Foods. Today, at least half the work force comes from outside the United States, and at any given time 50 different languages might be spoken on the plant floor, according to Barber.

A few of the workers were highly-trained professionals, such as doctors or engineers, in their home countries, Barber says, and some did so well at Barber Foods they were able to attain supervisory positions over time.

At the moment, it is unclear how many jobs will be lost when AdvancePierre completes its upgrade. Barber says within the next month, the company will have a better idea of its future production needs. All workers on the production lines,

see BARBER, page 7

Officials Call on Feds To Probe Murder Suspect's Release

LOS ANGELES (CBS) – City Councilman Paul Krekorian called Wednesday for a federal investigation into the decision by a Puerto Rican judge to release a North Hollywood murder suspect who has since gone missing.

Krekorian introduced a motion calling on the Los Angeles congressional delegation and Sens. Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein, both D-Calif., to push for an investigation by the FBI and other relevant federal agencies.

"I cannot comprehend any justification for this judge to release a murder suspect who may be responsible for brutally taking an innocent life over nothing more than a text message," Krekorian said.

"This bail decision is so completely contrary to standard protocol it defies any explanation based on law, evidence or justice."

Mike Yepremyan, 19, was shot and killed in a Sears parking lot in November 2009.

Puerto Rican Judge Gloria Maynard allowed 23-year-old Zareh Manjikian, the primary suspect in the murder, to post \$50,000 bond in late May, despite specific protests by the LAPD. District Attorney Steve Cooley had also requested Manjikian's extradition to Los Angeles, according to Krekorian.

Federal marshals were searching for Manjikian, who was living in a beach town apartment in Carolina, near San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Investigators believe Manjikian shot and killed

Yepremyan in a series of events that started with Yepremyan sending a text message.

Yepremyan allegedly sent a text message to his girlfriend insulting her friend, Kat Vardanian. Prosecutors said Vardanian saw the text message, was angry and called her brother to beat up Yepremyan.

Witnesses said Yepremyan received phone calls from a stranger who wanted to meet him outside Sears in the 6400 block of North Laurel Canyon Boulevard, near Victory Boulevard.

When Yepremyan and several friends arrived at the parking lot there were two men. The conversation appeared to reach a peaceful conclusion, but somebody struck Yepremyan. Officials said Manjikian pulled out a gun and shot Yepremyan in the back of the head.

Manjikian and the other man, who was identified by prosecutors as Vahagn Jurian, 23, sped off in a black BMW. Jurian's father said that a day after the shooting his son had called and described his involvement in a deadly fight.

Jurian was arrested in his Van Nuys home last week on suspicion of murder.

Krekorian's motion also asks the city to go on record requesting that Puerto Rican Gov. Luis Fortuno and Attorney General Guillermo Somoza-Comobani direct all necessary resources and attention to Manjikian's recapture.



Mike Yepremyan, 19, was shot and killed in Los Angeles in November 2009.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Nutrition Symposium Satisfied Appetite of Participants

BEVERLY, Mass. — The Northeast Massachusetts Dietetic Association (NEMDA) sponsored its first Integrative Nutrition Symposium (INS) on March 11, at the Wylie Conference Center and Inn here. The event was a full day with five speakers, vendors and hands-on demonstrations from local providers. The speakers were planned perfectly to build on each other's topic.

Colleen Fogarty Draper, MS, RD, LDN, started the morning reviewing the science of genetics in relation to nutrition, food and lifestyle. Dr. Alan Gaby spoke next on controversies in nutrition, specifically discussing calcium, Vitamin D, iodine, Vitamin E, homocysteine, folate, Vitamin A and strontium. The antioxidant paradox was addressed by Dr. Jeffrey Blumberg. The hypothesis of dietary antioxidants inhibiting oxidative injury, in turn reducing the risk of chronic disease was examined closely by reviewing current literature and research.

The fourth speaker of the day was Gita Patel, MS, RD, CDE and LDN. Patel reviewed inflam-

mation in relation to gastrointestinal disorders, the dietary causes and strategies to reduce it as well as how to test for allergies and immune responses. At this point, the INS attendees were learning how oxidative stress is linked to chronic disease and the current research on how nutrition can play a role in improving health. The final speaker wrapped up the entire day by reviewing nutrition therapy approaches by utilizing several case studies. Ranan Cohen, MS, RD and LDN, discussed



The committee with Susan Hazarvartian, fifth from right

nutrition challenges that people manage and how dieticians can make a difference by improving quality of life through lifestyle, intake and

supplement changes. During breaks, attendees were able to trial a Reiki or Tong Ren healing session, work with a physical therapist or speak with a body therapeutics expert.

The INS was also an opportunity for MDA members and students to volunteer in planning and coordinating a full, day-long program. Overall, the feedback from the participants that attended INS emphasized how each speaker complimented each other's lectures and attendees were able to enjoy a day, which was filled with opportunities to network with other nutrition professionals.

Susuan Hazarvartian was chairperson of the day. She and her committee planned a vegetarian luncheon buffet, which got rave reviews that went along with the theme of the speakers of the day.

NEMDA has been asked to be on the second Integrative Nutrition Symposium, which MDA has established a grant to do so, thus they are in the process of implementing another symposium for April 2012 at this time.

nutritional challenges that people manage and how dieticians can make a difference by improving quality of life through lifestyle, intake and

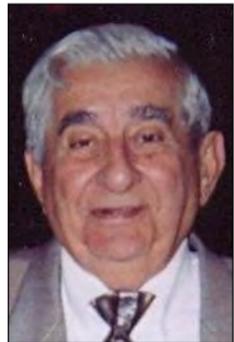
OBITUARY

Ohannes John Avdoian: Veteran, Born Aboard Ship Headed to America

NIAGARA FALLS, N. Y. — Ohannes John Avdoian, age 87, died at home on Saturday, May 28.

Born at sea aboard the S. S Mexico on February 3, 1924, he was the son of the late Sahag and Gulizar (Der Ohanesian) Avdoian who had left their ancestral homeland of Van, Armenia, in the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide.

Gulizar had seen her first husband and three sons, Ohannes, Arsen and Ardzroon killed by the Turks in Van. Having survived, she made her way to Istanbul, where she was employed as a housekeeper for a wealthy Armenian family. There she met Sahag, who also had managed to escape the Van massacres. He was a chauffeur and taxi driver, driving prominent passengers around Istanbul. The two were married in the church there and



Ohannes John Avdoian

began a journey all the way to India, walking most of the way, seeking passage to freedom and a new life in America. Eventually they were able to book passage on a ship from India to America. Filled with refugees, the people were starving. There was a cow on board, but no one dared kill it for fear of antagonizing the Hindus on board. Sahag butchered the cow and made herissah to feed the people. Because there was a quota on the number of Armenian refugees allowed to enter the US annually, they disembarked in Cuba, where they stayed for several years until they were granted entry into the US. Sahag managed to learn enough Spanish to sell dresses in the streets of Havana. Eventually, they were able to book passage to Ellis Island aboard the S. S. Mexico. On board the ship, Gulizar gave birth to twins, Ohannes and Margrid. They were quarantined at Ellis Island for some time and then made their way to Niagara Falls to join many other families who had settled there from Van.

While Avdoian survived, his twin sister died a few months after birth. Eventually two brothers and two sisters were born. The boys were given the names of Gulizar's first three sons. The girls, Margaret, after Sahag's mother, and Vartanoush. Sahag always told his son he had left with a purse filled with gold coins. Ohannes asked, "Hayrig, why didn't you save them, where did they go?" Sahag answered, "Son, do you think I walked on water to get here?"

Ohannes attended local schools, graduating from Niagara Falls High School in 1942. He began taking aviation lessons in order to fulfill his desire to become an airline pilot and in 1943 enlisted in the Army Air Force with the rank of

aviation cadet. He became an aerial gunner, receiving his aviation badge as a member of the 3701st Army Air Force Base Unit. He was awarded the American Theatre Service Medal and the World War II Victory Medal and was honorably discharged in November 1945. He considered his years as a pilot his life's highest accomplishment and a source of honor and pride for the rest of his life.

A dutiful son, he put aside his heart's desire to become a commercial pilot because his mother would cry in fear of losing another son. He then went to school in Cleveland to become a licensed Master Butcher. Returning to Niagara Falls, he, with his brothers, opened Avdoian Bros. Groceries. The store was a fixture there for 47 years, where many citizens of the city to this day remember going for their penny candies and other treats.

True to the generous spirit instilled in them by their father, many were the times Avdoian and his brothers filled needy customers' grocery bags with much more than the money tended accounted for.

As he and his brothers took turns working the evening shift at the store, he also became a full-time employee of the US Postal Service as a mailman, retiring in 1986 after 25 years of service.

On May 13, 1950, he married Lucille Lucia Kakligian of Granite City, Ill. She ran the grocery store by day. They had a son and two daughters. She predeceased him on January 11, 2008 after 57 years of marriage. He was a very proud and loving grandfather to his five grandchildren.

In retirement he and his wife enjoyed spending the winter with their daughter in Las Vegas. In his mid 70s he enrolled at UNLV taking aviation courses, giving him the opportunity to once again soar through the air piloting an airplane.

Even as illness confined him to a wheelchair, he was a Buffalo Bills fan and avid sports fan, rarely missing the chance to wager a small bet on a game or a horse. Known by his initials, OJ, to all, he considered he had a charmed life.

While training as an aviation cadet he was involved in a midair collision with another plane. Safely managing to land that aircraft, his instructor had him jump in the next plane and immediately go back up. Later, in order to avoid a head-on collision, he had to swerve and topple his US Mail truck on its side. He managed to walk away uninjured. Much later in life, when he was 81, Ohannes was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease. He survived for more than six years as the disease slowly took away his body's ability to function. Doctors were baffled that he did not manifest all the symptoms sooner. Both the VA and the Cleveland Clinic asked for blood samples to be used in clinical studies to help find a cure for this debilitating disease. Their conclusion was that there was something in his genetic makeup that was fighting this disease head-on. He was extremely happy that his blood

donation may further the science to conquer this disease. In the end, it was not the ALS to which he succumbed. At 87 years, while sleeping peacefully, his weakened heart stopped.

He is survived by his son, Richard Dikran (wife Nancy) Avdoian of Fairview Heights, Ill., daughters, Deborah Zevart (husband Albert Sargavak) Amato, of Niagara Falls and Pamela Ashkhren Avdoian of Las Vegas; five grandchildren, Alexan Avedis Amato, Esq., Karine Lucia Amato, Gregory Ara Avdoian, John Nishan Avdoian and James Sahag Avdoian. He is also survived by his brother Arthur Ardzroon (wife Mary) Avdoian, sister, Margaret Avdoian both of Niagara Falls, and sister, Rosalind Vartanoush (late husband, Michael) Mashoian of California. Also, he is survived by sister-in-law Shamiram (late husband Hrant) Kezirian and special cousin-in-law Takouhie Kakligian of Illinois, also survived by many cousins, nieces and nephews, one great-nephew and one newborn great-niece.

In addition to his wife and parents, he was

predeceased by his infant twin sister, Margrid, brother, Arsen (wife Alice) Avdoian and nephew Gregg Avdoian.

He was a member of the American Legion and the Armenian American Veterans Organization. He was also a communicant of both St. Sarkis and St. Hagop Armenian Churches in Niagara Falls.

Officiating at prayers for the repose of his soul and the funeral were Very Rev. Keghart Kosbakian, Rev. Serop Azarian and Rev. Datev Melingitchian, assisted by his son-in-law, Deacon Albert Amato.

The funeral service was on Thursday, June 2 at St. Sarkis Armenian Church, 300 Ninth St. honors was at Riverdale Cemetery Lewiston, NY.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that, to honor his wish, memorial donations may be made to St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, 150 Stratton Rd., New Rochelle, NY 10804, to be used for the education of future priests of the Armenian Apostolic Church in America.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Symmes Maini & McKee Associates Fosters a Collaborative, Intellectual Culture through a Series of Education and Training Programs

By Bruce Rogovin

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (Inc.) – Ara Krafian, Symmes Maini and McKee Associates' (SMMA) president and CEO, came to the firm at age 28. Offering educational programs, he says, is key to cultivating leadership.

Every company looks for smart employees. But Symmes Maini & McKee Associates, an architecture firm here, goes the extra mile to continually stimulate its employees' intellect once they have arrived. The company regularly invites academics and other experts to train employees in the latest industry practices, and it pays for employees to hone their expertise by taking courses at local universities, including Harvard and MIT. It also boasts its own set of educational programs, including knowledge groups in areas such as sustainable design and a mentorship program that annually matches principals with junior employees.

SMMA's emphasis on education and training, says Krafian, is rooted in his belief that intellectually engaging work leads to higher morale. The company strongly encourages its employees to develop thought leadership in design for sectors such as life sciences and education. To further encourage knowledge sharing and connectivity, the company in 2009 reorganized the office into interdisciplinary units. Architects, engineers and designers now sit together and regularly collaborate.

The company also has a strong track record of homegrown leadership. Krafian has been with SMMA since 1991, and none of the firm's board members have been with the company for fewer than 12 years. Last year, SMMA reinforced its commitment to leadership development through LEAP, a yearlong program for department and project managers, who receive

evaluations from their direct reports and attend workshops to address any weaknesses in their management skills.

By virtue of these practices, SMMA has been able to thrive even as the construction sector has severely diminished. Over the past four years, the firm has steadily grown, posting revenue of \$29.3 million in 2010. Krafian spoke with *Inc.* senior reporter April Joyner on the company's approach to fostering a stimulating, collaborative culture.

Inc.: Why did you decide to organize the office into interdisciplinary groups?

Ara Karafian: A lot of firms are very competitive: if you're not on the project that's getting attention, then your contribution isn't meaningful. Ours is more a culture of winning and losing together. I think the relocation has elevated our game substantially. For people, their work becomes something more than just their technical discipline. A mechanical engineer will not only be worrying about how to flow air through a building, but what type of system is most appropriate for kids in a K-12 building. Also, I think it's interesting. That's the quality of life piece.

Inc.: Although a collaborative culture has advantages, isn't there also an upside to a competitive culture, in that it pushes employees to produce better work?

AK: A culture of niceness shouldn't be confused with a culture of laziness. We as a firm are very hardworking. I think there's always individuals trying to outdo each other, to do the best they can do. We work in comprehensive teams, so there's cross-discipline involvement. The architects, the engineers and the site planners are constantly striving to keep up with each other. It's a more healthy approach – nobody wants to disappoint.

Inc.: Are employees permanently assigned to groups, or do they rotate?

AK: People move around. We try to make it not so often, so that the feeding and caring for one another by learning has time to happen. My aim is to have half of the staff dedicated to a group and the other half move around and shift to where there is the most workload, but it's not quite that mathematical now. We have project leaders who are thought leaders for their industry, so they stay in the same group. Our goal is for people to be able to develop a level of respect and trust for their colleagues. We don't want anyone to have a consultant type of gig.

Inc.: Do employees in other departments also work collaboratively?

AK: Well, you can't push finance onto the floor. Some things have to remain secure. We thought about pushing marketing onto the floor, but we decided not to at the end of the day. Having five or six people spread out across an organization wouldn't be as effective, so we ended up keeping the department together. There may be a time when we relocate them, depending upon the project and need.

Inc.: Do people come to the firm already having expertise or interest in a particular industry, or is that something you seek to foster internally?

AK: We certainly do foster it within the company. We have outside people come in to do lectures on specific areas of practice, and we send employees to offsite courses. Recently, we had a member of our life sciences team take courses at Harvard to become more expert on a particular lab type. But we look at it in a variety of ways. The most prevalent example is our internal mentoring. Very senior architects typically focus on an industry type, and they in turn teach our younger employees.

Inc.: What qualities do you look for in new employees?

AK: You're looking for the entire person. Obviously, they have to be qualified, to do the things that need to be done. I think in all cases they have to share a belief in our mission statement and our value statement. Some people don't like the idea of integrated collaboration. I'd say 75 to 80 percent of people probably don't want to work in our environment, and I wouldn't want them here. But for the 20 per-

cent who do, it's a great place to stretch yourself. We're turning away more people than we take in.

Inc.: Do you like to hire young employees?

AK: I always like to bring young people in, to give them freedom and allow them to challenge things. I like not to pull out the academia so quickly. In school, you're meant to stretch out your mind, to think about innovation and creativity without any preconceived notions of solutions. You're more apt to be experimental. When you've designed 10 labs, and you start the next project knowing this is your 11th lab, you become stale – you approach everything very similarly. We like to develop a lot of ideas, test modules and do things differently. We like people who push us.

Inc.: How do you approach leadership development? What qualities do you look for in a manager?

AK: Most of our people have been here a long time. I'm not just bringing someone in here and saying, "You're in charge." I'm allowing them to perform and watch. I'm looking to see if they're providing quality and fitting into our culture. Are they influencing things internally and externally in the industry? I think those are the keys. We want our most talented people to be the most senior people. It can't just be that you have the right attitude and you're hardworking. We still need the most talented people to lead the organization. But we're not bringing in management from the outside. We rarely do that, if ever.

Inc.: Is that why the company invests so much in education and training programs?

AK: It's just the culture we have – it's a learning culture. Obviously, we have lots of tools in place to encourage and teach leadership skills, whether through classes outside the company or doing things inside the company. For me, it all comes back to this: you're on Earth for a certain amount of time, and you want to enjoy it. That doesn't mean putting your feet up on a chair. It means challenging yourself. You want to make money, make friends, build respect, learn something, contribute. All that has to come together in your personal life and your professional life.

Barber Foods' Future Based in Investments, Fewer Jobs

BARBER, from page 5

as well as any senior staff people, will receive a 60-day notice and severance pay based on length of time with the company, as well as job replacement services and possible transfers to other locations, company officials say.

Barber, who this winter stepped into his new job as company president, plans to stay on with the company. His sister Julie will remain in her sales manager role. Their older brother, Steve, is retired, and Kathy, their other sister, does not work for the company. While the name of the company will switch to AdvancePierre, Barber says the brand name on all its products will remain intact.

Efrem Weldmichael, a human services counselor with Portland's refugee services program, says his office will work with the state's Department of Labor to help laid-off Barber Foods workers fill out unemployment forms. Since the layoffs have yet to happen, the state and city have no plan in place to help them, but will assist those willing to be retrained for new work, Weldmichael says. They might be encouraged to apply for positions with other Portland employers with a history of hiring non-native English speakers, such as Nichols Portland or Paradigm Windows Solution. Weldmichael says Hannaford Bros. Co., a few local hotels and the two hospitals are all potential employers as well. But it is a hard time to lose work, he adds.

"Naturally they are upset," Weldmichael says, of the Barber workers he has spoken to. "Because at this time there are no jobs in the country." Weldmichael, who is from the African country of Eritrea, says he knows of two Eritreans who have been employed at Barber Foods for 20 years.

Though the company will change ownership, Barber insists that the business's values will

stay in place, including the company's commitment to hiring foreign-born workers. When asked about this, Toler wrote in an email that AdvancePierre expects "to continue [to] honor local commitments, upholding Barber company



Efrem Weldmichael, a human services counselor with Portland's refugee services program, says his office will work with the state's Department of Labor to help laid-off Barber Foods workers fill out unemployment forms.

values and being a good corporate citizen whenever we conduct business."

Barber says, "AdvancePierre has the same cultural aspects as we do. At one of their plants, the second most spoken language is Hmong."



Թեքեան Մշակութային Միութիւն

LONG WEEKEND - CAPE COD *

June 24, 25 and 26, 2011 (St-Jean Baptiste weekend – Friday to Sunday)

JOIN US FOR A FUN FILLED WEEKEND



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\$ 232 (quadruple occupancy)

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Departure: Friday, June 24 at 7:00 am sharp from Tekeyan

Return June 26 around 10:30 pm

* This trip is catering a mixed group. Women are welcome

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Keghetzi Tradition of Pagharch Comes Alive in Detroit

By Betty Apigian Kessel

DETROIT – If I don't follow through on a promise, it wears on me. A group of Kegetzis chatting at the St. Sarkis Church bazaar last fall wanted to have a get together where we could dine on *pagharch* also known as "Feast of the Hittites," the glorious ancient ancestors of we Keghetzis.

The last time I made it was as a surprise to honor retired *Macomb Daily News* editor Mitch Kehetian at his book signing where he and I gave talks about his successful book, *Giants of the Earth*. Mitch has spent decades putting the Detroit community on the map with his fine reports about the Armenian Cause in the American and Armenian language newspapers. He has history and newspaper ink in his blood.

I volunteered to tackle the difficult *pagharch*-making duties, but no headway was being made for a venue and a date. The holidays came and went without a plan in place and now it was May. It was time to take action before it got too warm.

Mitch is 100-percent Keghetzi and I was not going to fail him. He has what is known as "The Gardens of Keghi" where at home in Allen Park, Mich., he plants tomatoes and cucumbers start-



Tribute to Hittites; Table #1 Dines on Keghetzi Pagharch

ed from seeds from Armenia. He calls his sprouted seedling his "little Armenian soldiers."

Krista Tossounian who with husband Ara heads up the twice-a-month *kebab* dinners at the Dearborn Armenian Community Center, gave permission to have our Keghetzi gang take part in a *pagharch*. The understanding was all of us would per usual purchase our dinners from her first, *pagharch* would come later.

Mitch Kehetian Proud Keghetzi

Kehetian is the historian who set me straight. He said, "Some have mistakenly said *pagharch* was shaped like Mt. Ararat ... not so ... it is Mt. Sulbuz. The following are Kehetian's own words:

"The link of the *Hyes* of Kigi (the way the Turks spell it) Province to the old Hittite Empire dates back to 1600 BC, when the Hittites, an Indo-European people, ruled central and southern Anatolia. Their empire lasted 500 years, blended with the Hurrian and Mitanni tribes (who were off-shoots of the Urartu era.) The Hittites survived severe winters by stationing themselves in the mountain regions of central Anatolia (east of present day Ankara) with grain ... and *pagharch*. They made *pagharch* to look like their holy mountain, Mt. Sulbuz, seen from the entire Kighi region. They put the tahn on the top of the *pagharch* to resemble the snow-capped Mt. Sulbuz."

"When I was there in 1969, I had *pagharch* with my half-Turkish cousins," offspring of Kehetian's Aunt Parancim, about whom the search in *Giants* is written.

"The old Keghetzi historians always told me about Mt. Sulbuz's Hittite story at *pagharch* dinners at the old Zavarian hall in Delray." Delray was an old section of Detroit where Armenians first settled and where they had a community center.

"As for the Hittites, they were the first to use iron spears. Iron mineral is still abundant in Kigi region. You could even see the discoloration of the western tributary of the Euphrates River. (The Kigi River) The Hittite Empire was battered by the Mameluks of Egypt.

The present people of Kigi, mostly Kurds and Turks with Armenian mothers, call it "Feast of the Hittites. That's what I had in Kutluja with my half Armenian cousins."

Kehetian continues, "the Hittite history is much like the history of Urartu, not known by the general public, just historians and persons with an outreach to their roots like good Keghetzis like you and me, Cousin Mitch."

There you have the history part now for me the present day Keghetzi. Into the large container I poured the white and whole-wheat flour proportions totaling almost eight pounds and other ingredients, as taught to me by my non-Keghetzi mother. I guess she learned from my dad's Canadian cousins. I forgot to ask.

Pagharch Takes Work

Preparing the dough is not for the faint of heart. The steps are several: Coordinating ingredients, *shagheling*, baking, crumbing with a fork while hot, warming the butter until it is nutty brown, warm, garlicky *tahn*. Practice made it perfectly!

It has to be kneaded for at least 20 vigorous minutes. I got assistance in kneading the stiff dough from my German husband, who in the throes of his duty asked me, "How many young Armenian men ran away to join the army in order to escape *pagharch*-making duties?" I chuckled and so did Mitch when I sent him that message.

My recipe is authentic. Variations exist but do not look the same and have a hard shell. In the end I presented a large round bread-like delicacy soaked with hot melted butter and garlicky *tahn*. Finger-licking good was never truer. Curiosity from on-lookers was plenty. Red, blue and orange plates and napkins for piling it on were ready.

Taking a turn plunging the *sherepp*, pardon me, the large serving spoon, into the warm, succulent crumbs were Mitch and Rose Kehetian, Greg Vartanian, Cathy Harabedian, Michael

Kajoian, Krista and mom-in-law Vergine Tossounian, Bob and Betty Kessel, and a few from outside our Keghi villages. It was big enough for 12-15 people. Applause for the cook and photos of the inflated but sated group followed. Doggie bags went home with Mitch, Mike, and for cousin Rose Vartanian.

Word even got to Dr. Levon Saryan in Wisconsin who contributed this:

"The full references are Matthew 26:17 and Luke 22:1. The references are the same in the classical Armenian Bible and in the 19th-century Riggs modern translation. Both use the term "*pagharchagerats*," for feast of the unleavened bread. This tells us what term was being used circa the fifth century, AD."

Tradition is a wonderful thing. No one has what we Keghetzis have, a special food tribute to the Hittites. Thanks to intellectuals Mitch Kehetian and Dr. Levon Saryan for contributing to this column. I am a lucky girl.



Keghietzies enjoying Betty Apigian Kessel's Pagharch; seated, Betty Apigian Kessel and Mitch Kehetian; standing, Greg Vartanian and Mike Kajoian

MARTUNI REGIONAL HOSPITAL NAMING OPPORTUNITIES

There may be no better way to honor or memorialize someone special to you than to help restore the health of many in need—the residents of Martuni province in Karabakh. With Armenia Fund USA's construction of a new multi-faceted Martuni Regional Hospital, naming opportunities abound for individuals, families and organizations alike, starting at \$25,000. However, various options are available for \$5,000–\$20,000 donations. For more information, please contact Irina Lazarian at 212-689-5307 or email irina@armenianfundusa.org

\$300,000 COMMITTED	First Floor: The new Diagnostic and Imaging center and patient rooms for infectious diseases, including thoracic and pulmonary, will be named after: ARMENIAN MEDICAL FUND USA Donation is made in 3 annual installments of \$100,000
\$200,000 AVAILABLE	Second Floor: Surgical / operation suites A pledge of \$200,000 may be made in 2 annual installments of \$100,000
\$150,000 AVAILABLE	First Floor: Polyclinic outpatient center, adult care A pledge of \$150,000 may be made in 3 annual installments of \$50,000
\$100,000 AVAILABLE	First Floor: Polyclinic outpatient center, pediatrics A pledge of \$150,000 may be made in 3 annual installments of \$50,000
\$100,000 COMMITTED	First Floor: Emergency Room (ER) A pledge of \$100,000 may be made in 2 annual installments of \$50,000
\$50,000 AVAILABLE	Second Floor: OB-GYN, including delivery / neonatal care unit A pledge of \$100,000 is made.
\$25,000 AVAILABLE	Outdoor: Landscaping for the Healing Garden First Floor: Registration and patients' records First Floor: Administration Second Floor: Intensive Care Unit (ICU) Basement: Cafeteria First Floor: Pharmacy Throughout the hospital: Waiting areas Reserve fund for continuous medical education / hospital needs Donations and pledges are accepted on an ongoing basis

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COMMUNITY NEWS

The Armenia Fest Committee of
Metro Detroit is happy to announce...

Armenia Fest 2011

A community-wide event to bring
metro-Detroit Armenians together to
showcase our rich Armenian heritage



Join us for dinner and
a fun-filled evening
with local vendors,
Armenian food, dance
and live music!

Come rain or shine...
large pavillion on site

Saturday, July 16, 2011

5 pm—10 pm

Royal Oak Farmers Market

316 E. 11 Mile Road

(just east of Main Street)

Plenty of parking available

Free

Open to the Public

Bring your family and friends and don't forget your lawn chairs!

Proceeds to benefit Armenian Fund USA humanitarian projects

2011 Armenia Fest Committee

Corinne Khederian, Co-Chair, Hagop Alexanian, Edward Bedikian, Ara Belian, Ray Boujouljian, Ken Khezjarjian, Paul Kulhanjian, Vaughn Masropian, Shirley Sarkisian, David Terzibashian, Madeline Thomasian

Longtime AGBU New England Member Aznavourian Feted

WATERTOWN, Mass. — On Saturday, May 21, the AGBU New England District honored longtime member William Aznavourian for his more than 45 years of service and dedication to the AGBU and the Armenian community.

AGBU New England District Chairman Souren Maserejian welcomed guests with opening remarks and invited the Very Rev. Dajad Davidian to bless the meal. After dinner, AGBU Secretary Tina Panian invited Hasmik Konjoyan to present

Next, Panian introduced the guest of honor and read a letter of recognition from the Knights of Vartan Grand Council Avak Sbarabed Dennis R. Papazian.

The evening continued with several speakers and friends including Jack Medzorian, Davidian and George Murachian sharing a few words about Aznavourian and the impact he has had on them personally as well as the Armenian community in Rhode Island and right here in Massachusetts.



William Aznavourian with the members of the AGBU New England District Committee

a brief musical program. Konjoyan sang three Armenian songs, even leading the guests in singing *Lari Tmbur La La* and *Nubari Boyuh Chinar e*. Following the musical program, guests enjoyed coffee and homemade desserts.

Concluding the evening, the AGBU Director of Central Board Programs Anita Anserian read a letter of recognition from AGBU President Berj Setrakian and presented Aznavourian with a lifetime AGBU membership plaque.

St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Sports Scholarship Committee Holds 42nd Annual Sports Banquet

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Saints Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church Sports Scholarship Committee held their 42nd Annual Sports Banquet on Friday evening, May 6.

This year the recipients of the Charles Yaghoobian Jr. Memorial Award to Rhode Island's Outstanding Armenian Athletes of the Year: Jillian DeSimone, Lincoln High School for Soccer and Emily Papazian, LaSalle Academy for Track and Cross Country.

Special Recognition Award, Glen Nahabedian; Past Great Armenian Athlete, Anthony Chakoian.

Guest speaker was Joseph Kayata, a sportscaster at Channel 10.

The outstanding performance in high school sports prize went to Krikor Bedrosian, Smithfield High School, soccer; Samuel DeBlois, Dighton-Rehoboth Regional High School, hockey; Jenna Derderian, LaSalle Academy, soccer; Madison Bulgarian, St. Andrews School, basketball; Daniel Miner, East Greenwich High School, football; and Gregory Mouradjian, Moses Brown, swimming.

To date, the Sports Committee has awarded

\$138,500 in scholarships and this marks the 31st year in presenting scholarships to deserving young Armenian students to aid in their educational pursuits.

Recipients of the Charles Yaghoobian Jr. Scholarship Grants are: Samuel A. DeBlois, Quunnapiac University; Dalita P. Getzoyan, University of Rhode Island; John K. Kalajian, University of Rhode Island; Melissa D. Megrdichian, University of Rhode Island; Lusine Ovanesyan, Rhode Island School of Design; Christina S. Parnagian, Assumption College; Christine S. Surabian, Villanova University; and Talene Taraksian, University of Rhode Island.

The Vaughn Avedisian Memorial Scholarship went to Robert Nazarian, Susan Chakmakian and Talene Taraksian.

This event is held in memory of First Lt. Charles Yaghoobian Jr., who was killed in October 1967, on the fourth day of his Vietnam tour of duty. He was a graduate of the University of Rhode Island and had a master's degree from the University of Bridgeport.

— Nathalie Yaghoobian

Michigan Armenia Fest 2011



The Tekeyan Cultural Association

and



The Armenian Democratic League

Metro Detroit Chapters

applaud the organizers and
participants of
Armenia Fest 2011

Sisters' Academy 8th Grader Receives Scholarship

RADNOR, Penn. — The Armenian Sisters' Academy (ASA) encourages each child to do his or her best and strive for personal excellence. One such example is eighth-grade student Michael Knudson (son of Dennis Knudson and Kayane Janjigian), who was recently awarded the Rev. Stephen Bendik Quarter-Tuition scholarship for each of the four high school years he will attend Devon Preparatory School. Devon Prep is an all-boys college preparatory high school in the Main Line of suburban Philadelphia.

Bendik was a Piarist priest who taught at Devon for nearly three decades. The Rev. Stephen Bendik Scholarship was established in his memory by many of his former students and is granted on a merit basis to highly-qualified young men who attend Devon Prep. "Michael, you have demonstrated that you are an exceptional young man. As you begin your career at

Devon Prep, I have every confidence that you will continue to foster the gifts God has given you, thus allowing you to achieve your full potential as a scholar and a gentleman," commented Father Jim Shea, headmaster of Devon Prep.

Knudson has had a stellar academic record at the ASA, achieving Academic Excellence each year since the first grade, as well as performing in the 98-99th percentile on standardized tests and the Devon Prep entrance exam. He credits much of his study habits and respect for education to the collaborative efforts between family and faculty at the ASA, as well as its small, interactive class sizes. "I'm honored to have received this scholarship," he said, with delight. "It assured me that the Academy's curriculum didn't just prepare me for high school, but enabled me to succeed among the top candidates in the area." Knudson and his eight classmates will graduate from the ASA on June 17.


New York
M E T R O

'Night over Erzinga' Comes to New York

NEW YORK – “Night Over Erzinga,” a play by Adriana Sevahn Nichols, was presented at the Lark Play Development Center in midtown Manhattan on June 7-12. It was the first play to be created through Middle East America: A National New Plays Initiative, a program created in 2008 to support American playwrights of Middle Eastern descent through a \$10,000 commission.

“Night Over Erzinga” is an intergenerational story that tells of the Armenian Genocide, its aftereffects and immigrant life in America. The story is given a different twist and parallel intergenerational line through the Dominican husband of the American-born daughter of the Armenian Genocide survivors. Three and even four generations appear, sometimes simultaneously, on stage.

By Aram Arkun
 Mirror-Spectator Staff

Ardavazt Khatchig Oghidanian fled Turkish persecution in Erzinga prior to the Genocide, and industriously working in America, began with various modest jobs, gradually improving his situation. He married Alice Hajian, a Genocide survivor from Shabin Karahisar, and had a daughter, Aghig. Alice was unable to shake off the horrors she witnessed, such as the rape and murder of her younger 8-year-old sister, Anoushig, by Ottoman soldiers, and the butchery of the rest of her family. Despite all of his efforts, Ardavazt was unable to overcome the psychological burdens placed on her, as well as his own trauma caused by the disappearance of his family in Erzinga. He harshly halted Alice's efforts to explore dance as a means of self-expression. Alice descended into mental illness, and had to be institutionalized, with unfortunate results. Their daughter Aghig had to be placed in foster homes and orphanages for some six years.

Aghig as a young woman rejected her troubled Armenian identity, recasting herself as the American Ava, of French ancestry. Rebellious against the excessive protectiveness of her father, Ava becomes a dancer, and chooses to marry a non-Armenian, Bienvenido, who, in a parallel with the Armenians, has come to the United States to escape persecution in the Dominican Republic.

Bienvenido has his name Americanized as Benny Ray, but resists becoming too distant from his Dominican culture. He helps bring Ava back together with her father, but, unable to remain faithful in his marriage, leaves Ava alone to raise their daughter, Estrella. When Ava asked her father how he managed to deal with his wife's condition when Ava was a child, he finally revealed the cause of Alice's mental distress. He had never explained to Ava/Aghig the torments her mother experienced, or the story of his own family, thinking that he could shield his daughter from this burden of pain. Remembering the past helped all generations of the family deal with their lives.

The New York production of “Night Over Erzinga” was performed largely by a cast of non-Armenian background, with the exception of the 11-year-old Mari H. Bijimian, who played the roles of young Aghig, Anoushig, Karine and Estrella. She is a member of Hye Bar, and has performed with Antranig Dance Ensemble. All cast members performed multiple roles in this “barebones” production, in which the minimal background and setting allowed for a focus on the story and text.

As a still-evolving work, perhaps it would not be fair to critique the play, but I can say that it has considerable depth. It tells its story powerfully and holds the interest of the audience. It tells a largely Armenian – and American – story which becomes a universal one. There are a few sections that might need shortening or editing. The pronunciation of Armenian names unfamiliar to most of the actors (and audience) was at times disconcerting to those who knew Armenian (e.g. Aghavni being repeatedly called “Agavni”), but on the other hand many actors did correctly speak various short phrases in Armenian, and one even recited the Lord's prayer. Overall, the actors of varied backgrounds convincingly portrayed their respective characters.

Author Nichols explained for the *Mirror-Spectator* that the play was the result of her search for her identity. She has Armenian, Dominican and Basque ancestry, and the death of



From left, acting coach Lucyn Djirdjirian-Jamgotchian, actress Mari Bijimian, Nayda Vosgeritichian and another supporter

her grandfather Ardavazt when she was 8 years old ended her main contact with her Armenian past. She grew up in New York and Easter service at St. Vartan Cathedral and a few picnics were the extent of her immediate family's Armenian involvement. On the other hand, she was surrounded with Dominicans because there was a large community in New York.

Nichols' parents were performers – her mother danced and her father sang – therefore she grew up surrounded by passion for the arts.

She became a professional dancer, but an injury led her to acting. She had no intention of becoming a writer, but she had a life changing experience following 9/11, which a friend insisted that she write down. This led to her first play, *Taking Flight*, which she performed as a one-woman show. It went on to have seven productions, and won awards, launching her as a writer.

In 2004, she moved to Los Angeles. Living near Glendale, she had a lot of contact with Armenians, and little by little met Armenians in the arts. The Armenians kept on asking her when she would write something for them. She was invited as a performer and artist to an Armenian International Women's Association conference in 2007, and there without conscious forethought she blurted out that she would one day write a play honoring her Armenian grandfather, Ardavazt Khatchig Oghidanian.

The next year she applied for and won the Middle East American Distinguished Playwright Award, which was developed by the Lark Play Development Center with its partners, Golden Thread Productions in San Francisco and the Silk Road Theatre Project in Chicago. Lark Artistic Director John Clinton Eisner

said that they defined the Middle East as widely as possible in order “to help support Americans in understanding more about the kinds of distinctions that exist between people in societies as different as Iraq, Syria, Israel, Afghanistan, Iran, Armenia and Turkey where many cultures, traditions and religions have lived side by side for ages.” They wanted to allow artists who define themselves as diasporan voices the opportunity to “represent” their ethnic and cultural communities through good plays. When asked why Nichols' “Night Over Erzinga” was chosen as the first winner of this award, Eisner responded that “it was the sweeping scope of the story and its particular grappling with change and survival that captured the committee's imaginations.” Furthermore, “the fact that

the bridge of Kemakh, off which the Erzinga Armenians were thrown in 1915. She exclaimed, “The land around Shabin Karahisar was so mystical and biblical that you couldn't speak. Nature was so powerful that it demanded your full attention. For me to have a chance to just quietly experience the beauty and to know that that was where part of my family came from made me very proud.”

Adriana began a class in Los Angeles to learn Armenian, but this required much time so she decided to first finish the play and then learn the language. She was fortunate to have learned Spanish fluently from her Dominican grandmother as a child.

As the play took shape, Adriana was crossing beyond the actual family story. She said she felt she needed to ask permission from her family members to have the freedom to “theatricalize the truth, to make it come to life in such a way that people will sit in the dark and come on this journey with you...In writing this play, I had to make a ritual of this story. I needed the blessing of my family to be able to take all of the ingredients and make something new of it.” She initially “did not set out to tell a story of a genocide. I set out to tell the story of a family.” In this way, it connects with people of all kinds of different ethnic backgrounds.

The play continues to evolve, as does Adriana's knowledge of the past. Each reading or workshop allows her to tweak various elements. There was an initial reading in spring 2009 in Chicago, even before the creation of a formal play, and the first workshop took place in November 2010 in San Francisco. The casts change in the different productions, with the exception of the lead actress Juliette Tanner, playing Alice as well as Jan. The plan is for the play to be devel-

oped by the Lark, and the two collaborating theaters in San Francisco and Chicago to also produce it. Afterwards, *Night over Erzinga* will be submitted to theaters nationally and internationally “to see what life the play has,” as Adriana puts it. She hopes that a Los Angeles production, where there are so many Armenians, and where she made the initial promise to write the play, can take place eventually.

Meanwhile, Adriana just found out where her Armenian grandmother was buried in the US. Nobody had gone to her funeral except her grandfather. As Adriana continues to work on the play, to have its world premiere this fall, she occasionally takes breaks to work on a new play, a romantic comedy called “Running on Rollerskates.”



Playwright Adriana Sevahn Nichols after the June 7 performance of “Night Over Erzinga”



New York
METRO

Real Estate CEO Robert S. Hekemian Honored with the Ellis Island Medal

NEW YORK – Real Estate CEO Robert S. Hekemian was honored to be named a recipient at the 25th Anniversary of the Ellis Island Medal of Honor Ceremony held on Ellis Island on May 7. He is chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Hekemian & Co., Inc., a real estate investment, management and brokerage company. Hekemian has been active in the real estate

numerous civic and community organizations as well as domestic and international endeavors. He is a director emeritus of the Bergen Community College Foundation. He served on the Board of Directors of the Northern New Jersey Council of the Boy Scouts of America and he is a member and Elder Emeritus of the Presbyterian Church, US. He received a bachelor's of science in eco-



The anesthesia equipment is wheeled by volunteers.

Valley Hospital Donates Anesthesia Equipment to AMAA

RIDGEWOOD, N.J. – The Valley Hospital donated a Narkomed 2C Anesthesia Machine to the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), headquartered in Paramus.

The AMAA is shipping it to the Yerevan Medical Center in Yerevan.

The Yerevan Medical Center partners with the AMAA to provide free medical care to the destitute children served by the AMAA. The center, which does not receive financial support from the government, focuses on providing quality medical services at reduced costs to the vulnerable population of Yerevan.



Robert S. Hekemian at the Ellis Island Award Ceremony

industry for close to 60 years. Hekemian & Co. owns and develops assets throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions of the United States.

Hekemian is also chairman of the board and chief executive officer of First Real Estate Investment Trust of New Jersey (FREVS), a publicly-traded REIT. He has held this position since 1991 and has been a member of the Board of Trustees since 1980. In addition, he serves on the Board of Directors of Pascack Community Bank, the Board of Governors for Hackensack University Medical Center and as a director, partner and officer in numerous private real estate corporations and partnerships. He was formerly a member of the Board of Directors of Summit Bank until its merger with Fleet Bank. In addition to his professional responsibilities, Hekemian has served his community through a variety of organizations. Hekemian contributes substantially and is meaningfully involved in

nomics from the University of Vermont.

In 1990 he established the Robert and Mary Jane Hekemian Foundation which, over the years, has contributed to many needy and important projects. Included among the benefactors of this Foundation have been the New York Philharmonic, Hackensack University Medical Center (where the Conference Center bears the family name), Bergen Community College, Boy Scouts of America and the Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCA) of Hackensack and Wyckoff.

Each year since 1986, NECO – whose mission is to honor their diverse past, to advocate for positive change in the present and to build strong leaders for the Future – has honored the nation's diverse past by sponsoring the Ellis Island Medals of Honor. The Ellis Island Medals of Honor annually pays tribute to the ancestry groups that comprise America's unique cultural mosaic. The medals are presented on Ellis Island, in a ceremony, to American citizens of diverse origins for their outstanding contributions to their communities, their nation and the world.

Hekemian is now part of a prestigious group of honorees. Past Ellis Island Medal of Honor recipients include six presidents of the United States, Nobel Prize winners, athletes, leaders of industry, artists and others whose work has made a lasting impact on humanity. They are awarded annually to outstanding American citizens, from all walks of life, who have distinguished themselves through their significant contributions to this country. The Ellis Island Medal of Honor ranks among the nation's most prestigious awards. The US Senate and House of Representatives have officially recognized the Ellis Island Medals of Honor, and each year the recipients are listed in the Congressional Record. To date, more than 1,800 American citizens have received Ellis Island Medals of Honor.

Some previous medalists include: US Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist; Generals Norman Schwarzkopf and Colin Powell; Sen. John McCain; Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell; Mayor Rudolph Giuliani; US Attorney General Janet Reno; Emilio and Gloria Estefan; Lee Iacocca; Dr. Michael E. DeBakey; Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao; Rosa Parks; Elie Wiesel; Frank Sinatra; Bob Hope; Opera star Renee Fleming; Yogi Berra; Muhammad Ali; Arnold Palmer; Tom Brokaw; Walter Cronkite; Barbara Walters; Mike Wallace; Quincy Jones; Jane Seymour, Siegfried and Roy, Gary Sinise, Sheikhha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, president of the United Nations 61st Session General Assembly (International Recipient), to name a few.

Sponsor a Teacher in Armenia and Karabagh 2011



Since its inception in 2001, TCA's 'Sponsor a Teacher' program has raised over \$477,750 and reached out to 3,700 teachers and school workers in Armenia and Karabagh.



Yes, I want to sponsor teachers in Armenia and Karabagh to continue helping them to educate the children, our future leaders. I would like to have the teacher's name and address.

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New York
METRO

Registration Open for Summer St. Nersess Youth Conferences

NEW ROCHELLE, N.Y. — St. Nersess Armenian Seminary's youth conferences have attracted thousands of teenagers and college-age students over the past five decades. This summer, five conferences will be held on the New Rochelle campus. The two high school conferences are open to students entering grades 9-12 in September. High school session A, to be held July 6-14, will be directed by Rev. Tavit Boyajian, while session B, from August 1-9, will be led by Rev. Hovnan Demerjian. Older students are invited to attend the post-high-school conference taking place August 11-18 and co-directed by Benjamin Rith-Najarian and his wife, Danielle DerAssadourian. Those beginning grades 7 or 8 in September are welcome to attend the junior high school conference July 26-30. This conference will be directed by Rev. Stepanos Doudoukjian, who stepped down last year from organizing and directing the entire summer of conferences for the past 13 years and serving for three years as the seminary's youth and vocations director.

During each session, clergy and lay church leaders instruct the participants in the fundamentals of the Armenian Church's faith and traditions, and they encourage frank discussion about issues important to young people. St. Nersess makes daily worship, Bible Study and Armenian language instruction appealing and fun. In addition, sports, day-trips, home-cooked meals and indescribable St. Nersess traditions

make for a well-rounded and innovative experience where young people make deep, lasting friendships and discover their place in the Armenian Church.

A deacons' training program, directed by Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan, will kick off the summer conferences on June 24 through July 2. This program is tailored for young men who would like to learn to participate in the liturgical services of the Armenian Church as deacons and altar servers.

Through personalized practical workshops and interactive classes, seminary faculty, priests, deacons and other specialists teach participants the deacons' chants of the Divine Liturgy and other services, while they take the mystery out of the rituals, the music, the symbols, and the chants. Students who complete the program return to their home churches with polished liturgical skills, a deeper understanding of the church's worship, stronger faith, and lots of new friends.

Beginners with little or no previous experience serving at the altar focus on the deacons' chants and rituals of the Divine Liturgy, while this year advanced students will learn the hymns, chants and rituals of the sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony.

"I encourage all Armenian youth to participate in a St. Nersess conference where they will discover more about themselves, their faith and the church through open discussions and inter-



Participants of a High School Conference gather to listen to Archbishop Khajag Barsamian.

esting and informative classes," said Findikyan. "I guarantee this will be a most memorable life experience."

A maximum of 25 students will be accepted for each conference. The High school B confer-

ence is already filled to capacity, however, space is still available for all other session. To register or for more information, email info@stnersess.edu. Applications may be found online at www.stnersess.edu.

Mid Atlantic Interlodges-Knights of Vartan Holds 95th Anniversary Dinner Dance

NEW YORK — The 2011 Knights of Vartan Mid Atlantic Interlodge Awards Banquet was held here, at Holy Martyrs' Kalustian Hall on Saturday, May 21, at 8 p.m.

This was also the 95th Anniversary celebration of the Knights of Vartan. There was a big turnout from all of the area's lodges and otyags. Dr. Dennis Papazian, Meline Ouzounian and the members were in attendance. The food and entertainment was magnificent, and everyone danced all night.

Scholarships were given out to two students who have received exceptional marks and shown a great effort in student activities. They are Nirva Aydin and Eric Halejian. Each Tahlij and Otyag picked a member to receive the Man or Woman of the Year Awards.

(Photo Credit: Asbed Armen Kileci)



Anahit Otyag # 3 Jaklin Platyan



Haigazian # 3 Simon Aydin



Avak Sbarabed, Avak Dirouhi, MA GDR's, members, Man or Woman of the Year Award winners; scholarship winners, two students



Scholarship winner Eric Halejian



Scholarships winner Nirva Aydin



Arpi Candan, Meline Ouzounian, Dennis R. Papazian, Tivan Diran Cankulian, Tanya Bukucuyan, Pierre Aykaz and Dr. Edward Sanossian



Echmiadzin # 20 John Kasarjian



Bakradouny # 38 Paoul Kahaumjian



Arts & Living

Raymond Kevorkian's Genocide Study Is Launched in London

By Nora Vosbikian

LONDON – Dr. Raymond Kevorkian's study, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History*, was the focus of a lecture at SOAS (University of London) on June 6.

Kevorkian, who was present at the event, was introduced by Ara Sarafian (Gomidas Institute). The lecture was organized by the Armenian Studies program at SOAS and the Gomidas Institute (London).

In his introductory remarks, Sarafian noted that Kevorkian's work presented a new standard in Armenian Genocide research. This was because Kevorkian managed to combine a variety of eyewitness accounts, more than any other scholar, to corroborate a detailed narrative of the Armenian Genocide. He integrated Armenian-language accounts – the voice of the victims – and re-engaged with an Armenian intellectual tradition that had been lost. This tradition, so vital in any discussion of the events of 1915, was the work of surviving Armenian intellectuals who, after WWI, reflected on the world around them and articulated a critical perspective on Armenian issues. They were well versed in Ottoman and other languages and provided invaluable commentaries on the Armenian issue as it was discussed in Ottoman newspapers and official records, such as the 1918-1919 trials of Young Turk leaders.

Sarafian also pointed out that Kevorkian's work had a cutting analytical element, which started from the build-up to the Genocide, the actual genocidal process itself and the post-Genocide politics of Ottoman Turkey. At the center of his work were a set of regional micro-histories which looked at what happened in different regions of the Ottoman Empire. These detailed accounts allow readers to see both the common genocide policies that were pursued in 1915, as well as the differences across the empire. For example, one could see that most Armenians in the eastern provinces were massacred. The pretence of a "deportation policy" was minimal.

Most of the deportees who actually arrived in the so-called resettlement zones were from central and western parts of the Ottoman Empire. Kevorkian also divided the genocidal killings into two distinct phases. The first was carried out in 1915, when most Armenians were killed. Those who survived deportations and reached resettlement zones remained in camps until a second decision to destroy them in 1916. Within three months, most of these surviving Armenians were also killed.

Kevorkian, in his presentation, elaborated on various aspects of his book. He stressed the organization of the process of genocide, including the confiscation and re-distribution of Armenian properties, in an effort to co-opt different groups into the genocide process, and to create a new Turkish middle class to replace that of Armenians. The overarching ideological context of the killings was the creation of a Turkish state. Religion (Islam) was also exploited in the organization of killings.

Kevorkian's presentation was followed by a lively question-and-answer period. Copies of his book were available for sale at concessionary prices.

The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History, 1,200 pages, was originally published in French. The English translation was released by I.B. Tauris in March and is now available from Garod Books Ltd. RRP £45.00.

To order a copy, write to books@garodbooks.com. Offer valid for the European Union.



Hasmik Papian

2011 Armenian Night at the Pops Features Soprano Hasmik Papian, World Premier by John Sarkissian

BOSTON – The Friends of Armenian Culture Society (FACS) will present the 60th annual Armenian Night at the Pops on Saturday, June 25 at 8 p.m. at Symphony Hall. The evening will feature renowned soprano Hasmik Papian. Music director Keith Lockhart will lead the Boston Pops orchestra in this gala celebration concert.

The program will feature a selection of operatic arias by Puccini, Catalani and Johann Strauss. In addition to the traditional Lord's Prayer (Hayr Mer), a group of Armenian songs will also be performed, including Arno Babadjanian's *Aria-Vocalise* for soprano and orchestra to mark the 90th anniversary of the composer's birth, and the world premiere of a new song, *Drinking Song*, by composer John Sarkissian. Favorite arias will include *O mio babbino caro* from Puccini's "Gianni Schicchi;" *Ebben, ne andro lontana* from "La Wally" by Catalani and *Meine lippen sie kuessen so heiss* from Franz Lehar's Operetta "Giuditta." The concert will also feature works by Suppé, Sousa, E. Bernstein and Newman.

Grammy Award-winner Ricky Skaggs and his Kentucky Thunder band will also perform.

see FACS, page 15



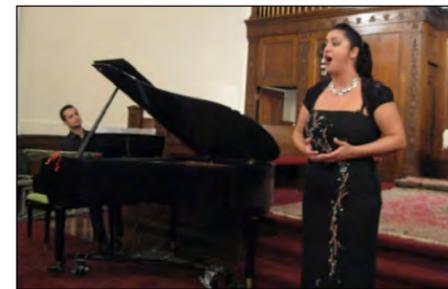
John Sarkissian

AMAA Spring Concert Delights Audience in NYC

NEW YORK – One of the most eagerly-anticipated events sponsored by the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) each year is the Spring Concert held at the Armenian Evangelical Church. Benefiting the AMAA's summer camps in Armenia and Karabagh, the concert was held on May 15 and featured a varied program of classical and Armenian music.

AMAA Board member Peter Kougasian, Esq. gave the opening remarks. Lucy Janjigian, board member and co-chair of the AMAA Summer Camp and Christmas Committee, brought greetings. Levon Filian, executive director of the AMAA, welcomed everyone and thanked the Armenian Evangelical Church of New York for hosting the event.

The young performers included Natalie Zabel Aroyan, an Armenian-Australian soprano, who was awarded first place in the Opera Foundation New York competition; violinist Nazig Tchakarian, an international soloist who made her Carnegie Hall debut in May 2008; violinist Aleksandr Nazaryan, a graduate of the Juilliard School of Music; cellist Benjamin Larsen, an international performer, and pianist Hayk Arsenyan, a native of Armenia who is currently on the faculty of New York University's



Vocalist Natalie Aroyan and Pianist Hayk Arsenyan

Tisch School of the Arts.

The concert began with Dvorak's *Piano Quartet Number 1 (Opus 23 in D Major)*. The piece proved to be a perfect vehicle to display the precision and artistic nuance of the ensemble. Next were two Chopin piano études: *Opus 10, Number 6*, a meditative piece that has been described as "full of stifled sorrow," and *Opus 10, Number 5*, also called the *Black Key Étude* because the right-hand part is played entirely on the black keys. Arsenyan executed both études with technical excellence and artistic soulfulness. Aroyan displayed her vocal gifts with moving interpretations of pieces by Massenet and Catalani. Arsenyan then displayed his gift of interpretation for contemporary music by performing the modern, polyphonic *Suite for Piano* by Alan Hovhannes.

In closing, Summer Camp and Christmas Committee Co-chair Elbiz Baghdikian expressed the mood perfectly by saying that the concert, like the closing songs themselves, was "about our faith and giving thanks, and about us not knowing about our world and about our need to love each other. This really spoke about why we are here today – reaching out to each other as good Christians and as human beings."



From left, Natalie Aroyan, vocalist, Ben Larson, cellist, Nazig Tchakarian, violinist, Hayk Arsenyan, pianist and Aleksandr Nazaryan, violinist

Medical Thriller Explores Near-Death Experience, Boundary between Science and Religion

Tunnel Vision by Gary Braver. Forge. Tom Doherty Associates. 2011. 384 pp. \$25.99. ISBN 978-0-7683-0976-1.

By Daphne Abeel

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Bodies galore litter Gary Braver's (Goshgarian) new novel – dead ones, live ones and some in between. And it's the in-between sort that constitute the driving theme of this medical thriller. In this book, Goshgarian, who has written a string of novels with scientific or medical themes, is exploring NDE, or, the near-death-experience, and coincidentally the disputed territory between science and religion.

The novel, set in Boston, opens with a shocker prologue. A man in his 50s is brought to Jordan Hospital, ostensibly in cardiac arrest. EMTs and medical staff at the hospital fail to revive him. He is declared dead. And yet, a short time later, he is seen leaving the hospital, moving under his own steam, although his vital

signs are flat-lined.

Quickly, the central story gets underway. The protagonist, 24-year-old Zack Kashian, a student at Northeastern University, is in a financial pickle. A gambler, he has lost so much money at cards, he can't pay his debts. On his way home from a meeting with friends, he slams his bicycle into a pothole and blacks out.

His mother, Maggie, a widow, has already experienced double tragedies. Her older son, Jack, was beaten to death in a bar brawl several years earlier, and her husband, Nick, after divorcing her and joining a Benedictine order, has also died of cardiac arrest. Whereas Nick embraced religion, Maggie and Zack are both committed humanists and atheists. In any case, she rushes to his side.

Although Zack is in a coma, he begins to babble in Aramaic, a language his religious Christian friend, Damian, identifies. As news of his strange mutterings spreads, he becomes the focus of cultists who believe he is in touch Jesus and the afterlife.

An important subplot of the story involves Roman Pace, a serial killer, a chilling character

who has been bumping off people for a living. Pace, who has recently had a heart attack, is beginning to worry about what may happen to him once he has died as he has committed too many heinous deeds. Raised a Catholic, he decides to go to confession and asks a priest whether he can be saved. To his vast surprise, he is offered a path to redemption by a priest who hires him to kill "one of Satan's doormen.

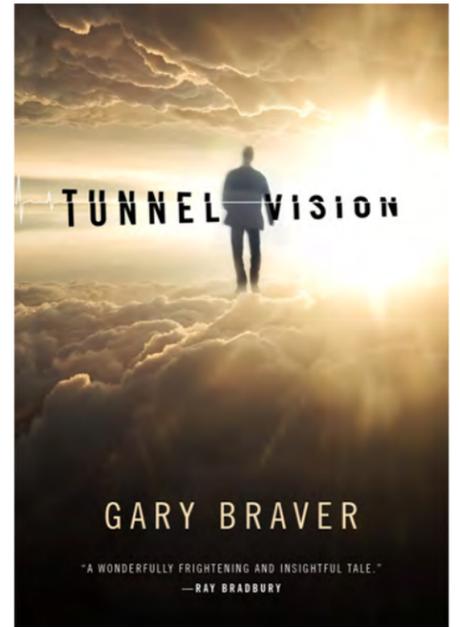
Someone who's blasphemed against the Lord God Almighty." It turns out that Pace's targets are a series of scientists and medical researchers, who are involved in exploring the near-death experience.

Simultaneously, Zack is being touted in the local press as "resurrected from the dead." As a result, Dr. Elisabeth Luria, a professor at Harvard Medical School, whose husband and son were killed in a car accident, has begun to do research and experiments on the near-death experience, in the hope that she may be able to get back in touch with the deceased members of her family. Zack still needs money so when he is given a flyer advertising sleep studies for money, he signs on, and finds himself in the hands of Dr. Luria.

Once Zack agrees to undergo the tests that Luria devises, he finds himself drawn deeper and deeper into the exploration for life on the other side. In the course of the experiments, he forms a romantic relationship with Sarah, one of the researchers.

Another sub-theme of the book is Zack's search for the father who deserted them and who, supposedly, died in a monastery.

While the novel explores a number of technical aspects of near-death experience, the book does not come to a clear conclusion as to whether there is truly life after death. But Braver brings an energetic brio to the twists and turns of the plot. Having been trained as a



physicist, the author is able to infuse the novel with a realism and factuality that commands the reader's attention and keeps him reading.

There is a given audience for this book amongst those interested in near-death experiences and the subject is very much alive in the current culture. There is even a Near Death Experience Research Foundation. Braver's book should appeal to this group and those beyond (not quite literally) who enjoy a quick-moving thriller.

Braver (Goshgarian) will be available at two presentations and book signings in the near future: June 23, 6 p.m., at Stellina's Restaurant, 47 Main St., Watertown, Mass.; and June 30, 7 p.m. at Brookline Booksmith, 279 Harvard St., Brookline, Mass.

Research, Scientific Background Underlie Novelist's Fictions

By Daphne Abeel

BOSTON – Gary Goshgarian has been teaching literature at Northeastern University for many years and is the author of several novels, but it may be his technical and scientific background that provides the basis for the themes that inspire his fiction.

Born in Hartford, Conn., Goshgarian attended Worcester Polytechnic Institute and received a degree in physics, doing further study at the University of Connecticut and the University of Wisconsin.

"Chemistry and metallurgy were sort of my beat, but I always enjoyed my English courses. I worked at Raytheon where we made exotic weaponry that killed people and that sort of turned me off."

He soon found his way to writing and teaching and has been on the faculty of Northeastern University since the 1970s.

He took up the pseudonym Braver some years back when he was finishing his novel, *Elixir*, which was optioned by Hollywood for a film.

"My previous book hadn't sold that well, but my publisher told me they were really going to promote this novel and print 10 times as many copies. They wanted me to change my name so that the big bookstores like Barnes and Noble would think I was a 'new kid on the block.' I went to my family tree and discovered that my grandfather was named Garabed, which means 'braver,' so that was it."

For this novel, Goshgarian did a lot of research.

"I interviewed neurophysicians. I needed to discover a pseudo-scientific mechanism to separate the mind from the brain. You can't literally kill a person and bring them back."

He also talked to people whom he terms "spiritual."

"I asked them about their religious beliefs and whether they had ever sensed the presence of good. I read up on the near-death experience. I certainly have never had one," he said. "The nation is aging and there are more people thinking about death. The terrorists, for example, actually look forward to death. Extreme Christian sects renounce the world and look forward to the afterlife. There are some who have had near-death experiences who think they have glimpsed heaven."

He continued, "Research led me to think we

may be wired to find God. Some people are truly spiritual – they have what might be called a 'god' lobe – the parietal lobe in the brain. Carmelite nuns and Benedictine monks, when they have MRIs, the neurological patterns are identical when they come out of the test."

He said, "Traditionally, the spiritual members in society were the center of their tribe, the leaders. They could project themselves into certain states and convince others that they had been in touch with the other side."

He mentioned the monastic sects who live at Mt. Athos in Macedonian Greece. "Those who go there, and it's only men who are allowed in, induce a trance that they feel puts them in the presence of God."

In practice, it is against the law to flat-line a person. "If you did that, you could be charged with a murder rap," Goshgarian said.

Goshgarian pursued his research to hospitals where he interviewed people who had been declared technically dead.

"Most interviewees say they have had ecstatic experiences," he said.

As for his serial killer character in *Tunnel Vision*, Goshgarian explains, "He was brought up a serious Catholic and he decides he wants to be saved. The priest who hires him to kill the scientists is an extreme Catholic, a literalist who believes no one should be trying to talk to the spirits, because it means you are talking to Satan."

Although Goshgarian's main character, Zack, is Armenian, there is no discussion of Armenian issues as such in the book.

"I didn't want to get involved in that material. I put in some material about Armenian culture, [such as] food in, but getting into questions like the Genocide would feel forced in this sort of book," he said.

As for the title, *Tunnel Vision*, "It really refers to many of the characters, the serial killer, the researchers, the priests. They are all narrow minded in one way or another," Goshgarian said.

The father-son theme is important to him, he said. "My parents were divorced and I really didn't know my father very well. So, there is an autobiographical element in the novel. When Zack is reunited with his father, this echoes something in my own life, something I've wished for."

In the near future, Goshgarian will be involved in promoting this book and is already 100 pages into his next novel. He will also continue his academic schedule at Northeastern, where he teaches an undergraduate course in novel writing and a course in science fiction and horror writing.

"A couple of my students have got published," he said, with some pride.



Gary Goshgarian

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ARTS & LIVING

2011 Armenian Night at the Pops to Feature Soprano Hasmik Papian, World Premier by John Sarkissian

FACS, from page 13

Papian graduated from the Komitas Conservatory in Yerevan first as a violinist, then as a singer. After her debut at the Armenian National Opera as Rosina in Rossini's "Barber of Seville" and as Mimì in Puccini's "La Bohème," Papian started an international career, which has since taken her to the most prestigious operatic stages in the world: The Vienna State Opera, La Scala of Milan, Bastille Opera in Paris and the Metropolitan Opera of New York, to name a few. She has sung with such notable conductors as Riccardo Muti, Plácido Domingo, Valery Gergiev and James Levine.

Sarkissian was born in Iran into a family of Armenian emigrants from Russia. He studied composition and piano at Conservatorio Giuseppe Nicolini in Piacenza, Italy, and later at UCLA and the New England Conservatory of Boston, where he received his undergraduate and graduate degrees, respectively. Among his composition teachers have been Shaheen Farhat, Paul Reale, Ian Krouse, Russell Steinberg, John Heiss and John Corigliano. Sarkissian is the recipient of first prize at the 2010-11 International Garden Music Competition in Poland for his piece for soprano and chamber orchestra.

For more information, contact Friends of Armenian Culture Society, Inc., P.O. Box 87, Belmont, MA 02478-0002 or www.FACSBoston.org.

Donations to FACS are tax deductible.

Soprano Brings Star Power to Pops

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

VIENNA, Austria – Hasmik Papian, as the saying goes, has arrived. She is a darling of the European and American top opera houses, as well as a veteran solo performer. In fact, she will next perform in Boston at the Armenian Night at the Pops on June 25. In a recent interview from her home here, lyric soprano Papian spoke about her spectacular rise in the world of opera.

Papian was born and raised in Yerevan, and almost did not become a singer; she was studying the violin. "The decision [to become a soprano] came very late," she explained. "I always knew I had a voice, but I never thought I would become a professional singer. My friends, for whom I was singing popular songs at parties, they said if I can touch so many people, why should I not try to become a professional singer?"

The instructors for whom she auditioned, clearly agreed. "I started with a jog" rather than small steps. "I was already a musician, so it was easy to sing. It was so natural."

Within three years, she was on the world stage. Her voice, she said, had already been honed by her frequent singing along to the

pieces she was playing, as per the instruction of her violin teacher. In addition, she diligently read about singing technique.

"I won four international competitions and after the first one, the son of the great tenor, Mario Del Monaco, Giovanni, who was the head of Opera Bonn, [in Germany] heard me sing. Bonn, at that time, was the capital of Germany. If you sing well [in a major city like that] it goes around quickly," Papian said. She got a contract and started singing there.

That was back in 1993. She started looking for opportunities at the end of her contract there.

She was soon booked for a debut recital at the Vienna State Opera. "I was there for rehearsals at 11 a.m. There was a big crowd at the artists' entrance. I thought there must have been an accident, but it was only spectators who had come to my rehearsals. They came to wish me good luck. After my debut, I decided if I could not live in Yerevan, this is the place I would love to live," she recalled.

While she called Yerevan her "beloved city," Papian said that Vienna has, hands-down, the "best audiences." In fact, she said, the government does much to promote opera, and the art form is so identified with the city that there are planeloads of Japanese tourists who come for the weekend to attend a single performance.

She added, "I never left Armenia. I almost look at [my absence] as a business trip." She noted that she goes back every year and added she plans to live in Armenia at the end of her career.

As for her favorite stage, she said Metropolitan Opera in New York City "is one of the best stages in the world."

Papian, who specializes in singing *bel canto*, which includes the operas of Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi, among others, said her favorite role is that of Norma, in the opera of the same name



Hasmik Papian as Norma

always find new colors. This music was written 150 years ago, but it is still very contemporary."

Papian combines a soaring international career with a family. "I am blessed to be a mother. It is the most important thing in my life. It is a gift that God gave me. My career is wonderful, but for every woman it is important to be a mother," she said.

She is married to Konrad Kuhn, a dramaturge working for various European theaters, and has one daughter.

Her husband's profession of helping with research and development of operas being staged, Papian said, allows him to provide

tremendous support for her. "Until [my daughter] went to school, we all traveled together. Now she's 10 and in school and we can't travel," she added, noting that she is very grateful to have her mother live with them. "It is very difficult to be away for six or eight weeks and the distances have become great, like the US, Korea, Japan."

"She loves to talk to me on the phone. We speak about an hour every day, but she does not like to Skype," she noted.

Her daughter, incidentally, is taking piano lessons but no one in the family is pushing her into a musical career.

Success on such a stratospheric level carries with it built-in restrictions and prescriptions for maintaining one's voice. Papian explained that when she is in full rehearsal mode, she works about eight hours a day studying and rehearsing. The goal, she said, is to hone one's instrument, in this case, the body, to such an

extent that one's moods and energy level do not affect the performance.

Papian's upcoming schedule includes performing in "La Gioconda" by Amilcare Ponchielli, which is "very rarely performed," at the summer music festival in Split, Croatia, in July. "It is a very good chance for our family to be at the seaside, all together. I will have fun."

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Hasmik Papian and fan, designer Karl Lagerfeld

by Bellini. "I have performed it the most in my career – 150 times, in 26 different productions," she noted.

Papian said singing in an opera such as "Norma" multiple times is exciting. "It's the music which every time sounds like new to me. Every production is different, the staging is different, the set and partners are different. You



ARTS & LIVING

TCA Pasadena-Glendale Presents Program on Levon Zaven Surmelian

PASADENA, Calif. — Tekeyan Cultural Association's Pasadena-Glendale Chapter organized an evening dedicated to the life and literature of the Armenian-American author Levon Zaven Surmelian on Thursday, May 26, at the Beshgeturian Center in Altadena.

Zareh Sapszian, a fiction writer and contributor to *Nor Or*, was invited to deliver the lecture. Sapszian was born in Aleppo, Syria. He graduated from Karen Yeppe High School, and became a teacher of Armenian language and literature at the Armenian Evangelical High School in Ainjar, Lebanon. He then moved to the United States, due to the civil war in Lebanon and settled in Los Angeles. He is married and has one daughter.

Sapszian first presented a biographical sketch of the late Surmelian, who was born in Trabzon, Turkey in 1905. Surmelian's father, Garabed, was a pharmacist and had three other children. He lost his parents during the Armenian Genocide.

When Russia occupied Trabzon in 1916,

Surmelian escaped to Batumi, Georgia. In 1918, he moved to Istanbul, Turkey, which was under the control of the Allied Nations, and studied rural economy at Armash. In 1920, he traveled to Armenia with his classmates, to help improve Armenian agriculture. Disappointed in the Soviet regime, he fled back to Batumi, and then returned to Istanbul.

Finally in 1922, Surmelian immigrated to the United States and settled in Kansas. His first order of business was to study English, then further his studies in rural economy. Two years later, he became infected with tuberculosis and traveled to Los Angeles, where he spent four years in a sanitarium to recover from his emaciating disease. He married Zarmig Geurdjian in 1957, but had no children. His wife passed away in 1992 and only two years later, he died.

Introducing Surmelian, Sapszian noted that first and foremost, he was a poet. His first book of poems, titled *Joyous Light*, was published in 1924. At this point, Sona

Khandjian presented a poetic recitation of some of his most famous poems, leaving a lasting impression on the audience.

Surmelian's first book in English, titled *I Ask You Ladies and Gentlemen*, was published in 1945 by E. P. Dutton. This autobiographical book became a best seller quickly. His second book, titled *98.6*, was published in 1950. The title, *98.6*, refers to the temperature of the human body and it tells the story of a young man suffering from tuberculosis.

In 1968, Surmelian published two more books, *Apples of Immorality* and *Techniques of Fiction Writing*. The latter became a textbook for literature in universities throughout the United States.

It's noteworthy to mention that Surmelian's library and entire wealth was bequeathed to the Armenian General Benevolent Union, which in turn dedicated a state-of-the-art printing facility to honor him in Yerevan, to be used by the writers' union.

— Kevork Keushkerian



Zareh Sapszian and Sona Khandjian

Sibil Pektorosoglu Has Hit with Song Based On Shiraz Poem

ISTANBUL (PanArmenian.net) — Turkish-Armenian singer Sibil Pektorosoglu is set to sing a poem by renowned Armenian writer Hovhannes Shiraz, called "Letter," which has attracted thousands of Turkish and Armenian fans alike. The song was the result of collaboration between Armenian and Turkish artists.

Sibil, who is of Armenian origin, was born in Istanbul and lives there.

The video for the song is aired regularly. According to Hurriyet, this is the first Armenian music video to be broadcast on a major station in Turkey.

In an interview with Ermenihaber.am news website, she said, "I started from St. Vardanants choir. I remember Armenian songs and music were not readily available in



Sibil Pektorosoglu

Turkey, thus I entered the choir in order not to starve for Armenian music. The choir has had a great contribution in the development of my singing," Pektorosoglu says.

Last year the singer released an album called "Sibil," with some Armenian songs, including *Ter Voghormya*, *Cilicia* and *Namak* (Letter).

"This album is the dream of my life. I've always dreamed of releasing an Armenian album. Thanks to my relatives, I managed to implement my dream." To the question if she has any problems in Turkey because of her Armenian origin, Pektorosoglu says, "I've not had any yet. When the video was produced, it was positively assessed. Many people say they listen to Armenian music." Sibil says many listen to *Letter*, though they say they do not understand a single word.

"When we were working on the video, the staff was singing that song. People asked if the song was written in Latin letters in order for me to sing it."

Pektorosoglu visited Armenia in 2001; in her next visit, she plans to perform again for her Armenian fans.

Pektorosoglu's album was arranged by Cenk Taskan, a prominent figure on the Turkish pop music scene, for more than 40 years. Also an Istanbul-Armenian, Taskan's real name is Majak Tosikyan.

Dadoyan Explores Rich Armenian-Islamic History

Book Review

In this first of a massive three-volume work, Seta B. Dadoyan studies the Armenian experience in the medieval Islamic world and takes the reader through hitherto undiscovered paradigmatic cases of interaction with other populations in the region. Being an Armenian, Dadoyan argues, means having an ethnic ancestry laden with narratives drawn from the vast historic Armenian habitat.

Contradictory trends went into the making of Armenian history, yet most narratives fail to reflect this rich texture. Linking Armenian-Islamic history is one way of dealing with the problem. Dadoyan's concern is also to outline revolutionary elements in the making of Armenian ideologies and politics. This extensive work captures the multidimensional nature of the Armenian experience in the medieval Islamic world.

The author holds that every piece of literature, including historical writing, is an artifact. It is a composition of many elements arranged in certain forms: order, sequence, proportion, detail, intensity, etc. The author has composed and arranged the larger subjects and their sub-themes in such a way as to create an open, dynamic continuity to Armenian history that is intellectually intriguing, aesthetically appealing and close to lived experiences.

Kamal Salibi, emeritus professor at American University of Beirut, says, "For the story of the medieval Islamic world to be told in full, the Armenian dimension to it needs to be fully addressed by imaginative scholars having complete command of the Armenian humanities,

and at the same time fully conversant with the Islamic side to the equation. This is the kind of scholar one rarely comes across, but the fact that it can exist is demonstrated by the pioneer work of Seta Dadoyan. [This is] truly comprehensive work — what one may call a *summa*... that brings into relief hitherto unnoticed aspects and unstudied issues, along with a panoramic view of the medieval Islamic world."

Dadoyan was formerly professor at the

American University of Beirut and served as a visiting professor of American studies at Columbia University and the University of

Chicago. She is a specialist in Islamic-Armenian interaction from the seventh to 14th centuries and has done pivotal work on developing criteria for understanding the cultural, political and philosophical penetration of each group. She is

the author of *The Fatimid Armenians: Cultural and Political Interaction in the Middle East*, as well as five other books and

The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World, Paradigms of Interaction — Seventh to 14th Centuries. Volume One: The Arab Period in Armenia. Seventh to 11th Centuries. By Seta B. Dadoyan. ISBN: 978-1-4128-4577-9. Cloth. 214 pp. \$39.95(s) Rights: World First publication

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ARTS & LIVING

Hye Stars Shine in Providence

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church of Providence is well known for presenting many interesting and informative programs through the years.

On May 28, the Cultural Committee, under the direction of conductor Konstantin Petrossian, presented an evening titled “Hye Stars of the Night.”

Featured on the program were: Nuneh Badalyan, soprano, John Paul Norigian, piano and Timothy Aznavourian, guitar and vocalist.

These three performers were so fantastic that they each prompted the audience to give stand-



Nuneh Badalyan

ing ovations again and again.

Badalyan, a native of Armenia, received her education at the Komitas State Conservatory. She has performed as guest soloist with the Armenian Philharmonic and with the National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia. An enthusiastic and active soloist and chamber musician, she has appeared in London, Canterbury Festival, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Fresno, Geneva, Athens, Saloniki, Cyprus, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates and at the Tbilisi Opera in Georgia. She has also given recitals in Hamburg, New York, Boston, Washington and San Diego. The audience showed their appreciation of

Badalyan’s excellence with their continued thunderous applause.

Norigian graduated with a graduate degree in piano performance from the Cleveland Institute of Music. He has won numerous competitions in Rhode Island, including first prize in the College Division piano competition in 2002 and 2004. He also won the University of Rhode Island (URI) Concerto Competition, subsequently performing the Mendelssohn *Concerto No. 1* with the URI Symphony Orchestra in March 2002. Most recently, he was a semifinalist with his trio, the Milhaud Trio, in the 2008 Plowman Competition in Columbia, Mo. Norigian is also a piano teacher at the Rhode Island Philharmonic Music School.

Norigian endeared the audience with his professionalism and style of playing music by Liszt and Babajanian.

Aznavourian is a guitarist and vocalist, specializing in classical and folk music. He began learning to play guitar at the age of 12 by teaching himself. At the age of 17 he began to take formal lessons with Zachary Fenner and further



John Paul Norigian

advanced his music education at Rhode Island College studying classical guitar. His singing of and guitar arrangements of works by classical Armenian composers had the audience tapping and clapping along.

Ella Melik Husian, who was the piano accompanist for Badalyan, graduated from the Komitas State Conservatory Piano Department. She has worked at the State Choir of Armenia as concertmaster. She has worked with the Little Singers of Armenia Chorus with conductor Tigran Hekekian. Husian has traveled to Switzerland, Greece, Cypress, Germany, United Kingdom, France, Lebanon, Russia and the US. She has also accompanied talented children’s concerts in London.

—Irene Eranosian

Five Armenians Pre-Selected to Compete At 2011 Tchaikovsky Competition

By Ara Arakelian

BOSTON — The 14th International Tchaikovsky Competition, one of the coveted international competitions, which has launched the careers of many prominent musicians, including that of the legendary American pianist Van Cliburn, is currently underway in Russia. The newly-revamped competition is now under the artistic directorship of the famed Russian conductor, Valery Gergiev, who has assembled a formidable jury of artists of international stature.

Known as “The Tchaikovsky,” the competition began June 15 and will run through June 30 and includes four disciplines: piano, violin, cello and voice. It is held in two different cities in Russia: the piano and cello categories are held in Moscow, while the violin and the voice categories are conducted in St. Petersburg.

There are five musicians of Armenian descent participating in all four categories. In the piano category, Mamikon Nakhapetov of Georgia is one of the 30 pre-selected competitors. In the violin category, Hrachya Avanesyan of Armenia is one of the 27 contestants. Cellist Narek Hakhnazaryan, of Armenia, an artist diploma recipient at the New England Conservatory who recently performed with the Boston Pops, is among the favorites in the pool of 25 contenders for the top prize in the cello category. Finally, Miran Agadjanyan and Gevorg Grigoryan of Russia will showcase their prowess in the voice category.

Some of the sessions as well as rehearsals will be streamed live at the competition’s website, www.Tchaikovsky-Competition.com.



JAMAICA PLAIN, Mass. — Janet Khalarian was the guest soloist at the recent Mother of the Year Luncheon honoring Naomi Armen, held on May 7 at the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. Born in Yerevan, Armenia, Khalarian attended the Armen Tikranian Musical School, focusing on the viola. She continued her musical training at the Romanos Melikian College of Music. While there, and motivated by her love of singing, Khalarian joined the Yerdasartagan Chorus, conducted by Setrak Der Ghazarian, and was a member of that ensemble when it earned a second-place finish at the International Chorus Festival. After completing her studies, Khalarian immigrated to the United States with her family and currently resides in the Boston area. Her singing is influenced largely by the Armenian troubadour, Sayat Nova. She released her debut CD in October 2004, and in May 2005, she was nominated for the “Best Pop Retro Album” at the seventh Armenian Music Awards. Her next performance will be on September 18, at the 11th Annual Greater Worcester Armenian Choir, where she will be the guest soloist.

CALENDAR

NEW YORK

On June 19, St. Nersess Armenian Seminary will hold its annual Father’s Day Picnic, from noon to 5 p.m., at Stratton Road, New Rochelle, NY, featuring kebob meals, live Armenian music and children’s activities. For more info, visit www.stnersess.edu or call (914) 636-2003.





COMMENTARY

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COMMENTARY

Positioning for the Kazan Summit

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Expectations as well as doubts abound regarding the forthcoming summit in the Russian city of Kazan, which will bring together the presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia June 25-26.

The same presidents have walked the same road in the past, raising hopes for a breakthrough, but disappointment has followed each and every meeting. After issuing declarations and verbal commitments, the Azeri leaders have raised the ante upon returning home. Most significant violations happened especially right after the Meindorf declarations where the parties had agreed to refrain from military solutions and concentrate on the negotiations. But the ink was not yet dried on that declaration, when Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev provoked a border skirmish, claiming many victims.

Based on this kind of checkered background, neither the pundits nor the negotiating parties seem hopeful for a positive outcome. Although the Kazan summit is ostensibly called to negotiate on the basic principles worked out by the co-presidents of the OSCE Minsk Group, symbolism still matters if a positive outcome will be ascribed to Russia whose president, Dmitry Medvedev, will be mediating between President Serge Sargsian and Aliyev. Certainly the other parties do not wish to lose the limelight. The summit has already claimed one casualty, which was Iran's president's visit to Armenia; it was supposed to take place on the eve of Kazan summit, but was mysteriously postponed indefinitely. Although the Armenian government presented the lame excuse that the documents were not ready to be signed, another possibility which may not be ruled out is that should there be any tangible results at the summit, Iran should not share any credit.

The Armenian side is skeptical of the outcome of the summit. The Azeri side is even vocally pessimistic and already gloomy predictions have been issued by high government officials.

Armenia's Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian has announced that Yerevan has positively responded to the basic principles worked out by the OSCE group and has challenged Baku to do the same.

On the Armenian front, the negative voices are heard mostly from the Karabagh leaders.

Recently, Ashod Ghoulian, the speaker of the Karabagh parliament, and Georgy Petrossyan, the foreign minister, addressed a press conference.

Ghoulian's prediction is: "No serious breakthrough is anticipated at Kazan, because preconditions for that breakthrough are non-existent. But a preliminary declaration is possible because the co-presidents of OSCE and the mediators are hard at work to bring some results." But Karabagh leaders also add that any agreement at the summit cannot be considered as final, if the Karabagh government does not give its stamp of approval.

The Russian side is cautiously optimistic, while the spokesman for the Minsk Group Anjei Kasprschik has even divulged some details about the basic principles.

The US government has also sounded a positive note. Indeed in her farewell message, the outgoing US ambassador, Marie Yovanovitch, has expressed her regret that she is leaving Yerevan at a "critical" and "historic" moment, indicating that an impending solution is about to happen to the most intractable problem in the region.

The Russian president of the Minsk Group, Igor Popov, has specified that "the documents which will be discussed at the summit need

more refinement and further deliberation, which are being conducted on the Foreign Ministry level. We do hope that in Kazan the parties will demonstrate some constructive approach."

Even Turkey's Foreign Minister Davutoglu has expressed a glimmer of hope.

The basic principles are composed of six steps, while those steps begin with the evacuation of "occupied territories" for Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Mamedyarov and the expression of the will of the people (referendum) about the Karabagh status, Kasprschik indicates that the interim status of Karabagh cannot be less than what the region enjoys at the present time, but what is crucial is that Azerbaijan will have to acquiesce to that status which eventually win international recognition.

One of the sticking points among the six principles is the composition of the peacekeeping forces in the interim period while agreements begin to be implemented on the ground. It is believed that the Minsk Group negotiating parties will come up with that peacekeeping force.

So much criticism was directed at the Minsk Group negotiations that the pressure is mounting on the opposing parties to move forward.

Russia's Foreign Ministry has, in a way, verbalized that pressure through its official representative, Alexander Loukashevich. He has stated: "There is great hope that the Deauville declaration by the three presidents will help the sides to realize that the process for a peaceful settlement has reached a limit after which they have to come to an agreement to implement them. Any delay beyond that point will indicate a destructive intention."

The French co-president of the Minsk Group, Bernard Fazier, has similarly expressed hope for action by stating: "We are hopeful that the presidents will give their approval at the Kazan summit to the final draft of the documents presented to them. We refer to the documents which were delivered to them in March in Sochi."

While pressure is mounting from all sides and hopeful signs are in the air, Azerbaijan's leaders continue their war threats or negative statements. Thus the Azeri president has visited Serbia and although Baku does not recognize Kosovo's independence but Mr. Aliyev has seized the opportunity to reiterate his eternal refrain: "Serbia, like Azerbaijan, is suffering from separatism. We hope that your territorial integrity will one day be realized."

Two other contradictory statements from Azeri officials indicate that Baku is in the process of using carrot and stick policy, hoping that one of them will work.

Thus the spokesman for Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry, Elbar Sabiroglu, has announced, "The Armenian side, through its actions is contributing to the possibility of a military solution to the Karabagh conflict. Azerbaijan will be liberating its occupied territories from the enemy. We are in the process of getting ready for war."

Any government, prepared to sign a peace agreement, would prepare its population for that situation. These announcements are far from preparing Azeri people for a peaceful solution.

On the other hand, the deputy foreign minister of Azerbaijan has made an contradictory statement, perhaps intentionally, for public consumption as a carrot policy, saying: "We are not interested to renew the war. We still believe that there is possibility to resolve the problem through diplomatic means. Why should we think about war?"

In this chaotic atmosphere where contradictory statements and political pressures are in action, any positive step at the Kazan summit will constitute a miracle and hailed by all parties.

LETTERS

An Open Letter to Hirair Hovnanian

(Editor's note: Two weeks ago, Hirair Hovnanian, chairman of the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA), addressed an open letter to Gerard L. Cafesjian, chairman of the Cafesjian Family Foundation [CFF]. Ross Vartian, board member of the CFF, writes in response. This letter was originally published on June 2.)

Hirair:

In the interest of moving forward with the project, the Cafesjian Family Foundation (CFF) will not respond point by point to your serial misstatements of fact. Anyone interested in an independent and objective judicial assessment of the truth of the past decade should review the 190-page initial verdict of January 26 and the 57-page final verdict of May 9 by Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly.

With regard to your disparaging phase one of the Yerevan Cafesjian Center for the Arts (CCA), you are presumably unaware that the

Center has become a focal point of artistic and cultural life, a visitation destination for foreign dignitaries and a preferred location for official meetings and receptions. Hopefully you will be more supportive of CCA's Phase II plans to significantly expand space for collections of other patrons and more broadly for even greater opportunities for artistic and cultural expression, appreciation and education. The Cascade project will never be complete as it will always be evolving and growing, and the Cafesjian Family Foundation will continue support for CCA as one of its core missions.

Your refusal to acknowledge Gerry's crucial role in securing the site of the future museum and memorial to the Armenian Genocide is inexplicable. You know that Gerry provided 100 percent of the financing and 50 percent of the funds to acquire the bank building, followed by 100 percent of the funds to acquire the adjacent properties. The record clearly shows that Gerry has never wavered in his sup-

port for the exclusive use of these properties for genocide museum and memorial purposes.

Before, during and subsequent to the trial, CFF has repeatedly committed to joining in a pan-Armenian effort to fulfill the dream of the first ever museum and memorial in the Diaspora about the fact and ongoing consequences of the Armenian Genocide. CFF remains convinced that our community will respond generously as soon as it is given an opportunity to do so.

Hirair, you can make an immediate and significant contribution to making this project a reality. Accept that a federal judge has soundly rejected the legal case you authorized and end your appeal. Whether or not you terminate your fruitless appeal, CFF will fulfill its obligation to the community by inviting all to participate. It is, after all, our community that will render the final verdict.

— Ross Vartian
Member of the Board, Cafesjian Family



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Why Pass an Armenian Genocide Resolution for the Third Time?

A new Armenian Genocide resolution is being introduced in the House of Representatives this week.

The first question is why Congress is being asked to pass a Genocide resolution for the third time? As is well known, the House of Representatives twice adopted resolutions acknowledging the Armenian Genocide, in 1975 and 1984. What would Armenians gain by adopting the resolution for the third time? And if it passes this year, would another attempt be made to pass it again for the fourth time next year?

Some may be under the mistaken impression that such resolutions would help Armenians obtain restitution from Turkey for their confiscated lands and stolen possessions. This is simply not true. Commemorative resolutions express “the sense” of Congress and do not have the force of law. Furthermore, if these resolutions had any real benefits, Armenians would have taken advantage of them during the decades since their adoption!

On the positive side, the passage of these resolutions have ethical, psychological and political dimensions. Morality dictates that the mass murder of an entire nation not be forgotten or ignored. Yet, it is the Turkish government’s continued denial of the Armenian Genocide that compels Armenians to present such resolutions to

Congress year after year. Regrettably, successive US administrations also share the blame in this sordid affair by aiding and abetting the Turkish denialists, and playing unethical word games with the extermination of 1.5 million innocent men, women and children.

The psychological advantage of passing such a resolution is the satisfaction received by descendants of Genocide victims when their loss and pain are acknowledged by the legislature of the world’s greatest democracy.

The political rancor, whenever an Armenian Genocide resolution is introduced in Congress, is due to the Turkish government’s scandalous behavior. Dozens of commemorative resolutions on a variety of issues are adopted by the US Congress each year, yet not a single one makes the news. Because Turkish leaders create such mayhem by making threats against the United States, dispatching high-level delegations to Washington, hiring powerful lobbying firms and spending valuable political capital, they end up making millions of people aware of the facts of the Armenian Genocide. While the Turkish intent is to cover up the mass murder of Armenians almost a century ago, their berserk reaction inadvertently succeeds in publicizing to the whole world the dastardly crimes committed by their forefathers.

Hopefully, the Turkish government would once again resort to its normal bullying tactics, thereby attracting the attention of the international community to the Armenian Genocide issue. The newly-introduced resolution can only benefit from such Turkish-generated publicity, since the Republican-dominated House is not likely to act on it anytime soon, not that the more sympathetic Democrats had a greater degree of enthusiasm to bring it to a vote late last year, when they were in power!

Certainly, Turkish officials could be even more helpful should they create unexpected crises with the United States, thus forcing the hand of both the Democratic administration and Republican House leadership to sup-

port the genocide resolution. Meanwhile, the Armenian-American community would keep the issue alive and ready to be triggered at the opportune moment, causing the Turkish side to spend millions of dollars in on-going lobbying efforts.

Such an opportunity may come later this month with a possible bloody confrontation between the second Turkish “humanitarian” flotilla and Israel’s Navy, which could trigger the ire of US and Israeli leaders, compelling them to put the pending Genocide resolutions to a vote in their respective legislatures. While Armenians would resent seeing the Genocide issue used as a political football, they may not have much of a choice, since they have been just as offended when the resolution was not being adopted for all the wrong reasons.

Going beyond the Genocide issue, Armenian-Americans may introduce several other resolutions in Congress this year involving Armenian-Turkish relations:

- Urging Turkey to return the expropriated Armenian churches to the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, allowing them to function as churches, not museums, mosques, or touristic sites;
- Honoring the distinguished jurist Raphael Lemkin who coined the term “genocide,” influenced by the mass murder of Armenians in 1915;
- Advocating the lifting of the blockade of Armenia imposed by Turkey and Azerbaijan; and
- Supporting the protection of human rights of all minorities in Turkey (Alevis, Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks, Jews and Kurds).

With the upcoming congressional and presidential elections, and unexpected developments in the Eastern Mediterranean, we may be facing a hectic and chaotic political season. It is critical for Armenian-Americans and their supporters to remain well informed, active and committed to the pursuit of Armenian interests.

‘The Science of Evil,’ Explaining ‘Evil’ and Human Cruelty

By Simon Baron-Cohen

When I was 7 years old, my father told me the Nazis had turned Jews into lampshades. Just one of those comments that you hear once, and the thought never goes away. To a child’s mind (even to an adult’s) these two types of things just don’t belong together. He also told me the Nazis turned Jews into bars of soap. It sounds so unbelievable, yet it is actually true. I knew our family was Jewish, so this image of turning people into objects felt a bit close to home.

My father also told me about one of his former girlfriends, Ruth Goldblatt, whose mother had survived a concentration camp. He had been introduced to the mother and was shocked to discover that her hands were reversed. Nazi scientists had severed Goldblatt’s hands, switched them around, and sewn them on again so that if she put her hands out palms down, her thumbs were on the outside and her little fingers were on the inside. Just one of the many “experiments” they had conducted. I realized there was a paradox at the heart of human nature –people could objectify others – that my young mind was not yet ready to figure out.

Years later I was teaching at St Mary’s Hospital Medical School in London. I sat in on a lecture on physiology. The professor was teaching about human adaptation to temperature. He told the students that the best data available on human adaptation to extreme cold had been collected by Nazi scientists performing “immersion experiments” on Jews and other inmates of Dachau concentration camp, whom they put into vats of freezing water (see Figure 1). They collected systematic data on how heart rate correlated with duration of time in the water at zero degrees centigrade. Hearing about this unethical research retriggered that same question in my mind: How can humans treat other people as objects? How do humans come to switch off their natural feelings of sympathy for another human being who is suffering?

These examples are particularly shocking because they involve educated doctors and scientists (professions we are brought up to trust) performing unethical experiments or operations. Let’s assume (generously) that these doctors were not being cruel for the sake of it –

that the scientists doing the immersion experiments wanted to contribute to medical knowledge, to know, for example, how to help victims rescued after being shipwrecked in icy seas. Even the Nazi doctors who had sewn poor Goldblatt’s hands back to front may not (I assume) have been motivated to do cruel things for cruelty’s sake: They, too, were presumably following their scientific impulse, wanting to understand how to test the limits of microsurgical procedures.

What these scientists lost sight of, in their quest for knowledge, was the humanity of their “subjects.” It is an irony that the human sciences describe their object of study as “subjects” because this implies sensitivity to the feelings of the person being studied. In practice, the feelings of the subjects in these experiments were of no concern. Nazi laws defined Jews as genetically subhuman and ordered their extermination as part of the eugenics program of the time.

Within this political framework, “using” the inmates of concentration camps as “subjects” in medical research might even have seemed to these doctors to be ethical if it contributed knowledge for the greater good.

Cruelty for its own sake was a part of ordinary Nazi guards’ behavior.

Sadly, there is no shortage of horrific examples, but I have selected just one from the biography of Thomas Buergethal. At just 9, Thomas was rounded up with thousands of Jews and taken to Auschwitz. There he had to watch while an inmate was forced to hang his friend who had tried to escape. An SS guard ordered the inmate to put a noose around his friend’s neck. The man couldn’t fulfill the order because his hands were shaking so much with fear and distress. His friend turned to him, took the noose, and, in a remarkable act, kissed his friend’s hand and then put the noose around his own neck.

Angrily, the SS guard kicked the chair away from under the man to be hanged.

Thomas and the other inmates, watching the man kissing his friend’s hand, rejoiced at that simple act that said (without words) “I will not let my friend be forced to kill me.” Thomas survived Auschwitz (perhaps because his father taught him to stand close to the shed when Dr. Mengele was making his selection of who would die) and described this story in his book,

A Lucky Child. The empathy within the friendship comes through so powerfully in this awful situation, as does the extreme lack of empathy of the guard. If the aim was to punish or to set an example, the guard could have just shot the escapee himself. Presumably, the guard chose this particular form of punishment because he wanted the two friends to suffer.

Today, almost half a century after my father’s revelations to me about the extremes of human behavior, my mind is still exercised by the same, single question: How can we understand human cruelty? What greater reason for writing a book than the persistence of a single question that can gnaw away at one’s mind all of one’s conscious life?

What other question could take root in such an unshakeable way? I presume the reason I find myself returning to this question again and again is because the question of how human beings ignore humanity of others begs an answer—yet answers are not forthcoming. Or at least, those answers that are available are in some way unsatisfying. If the answers were sufficient, the question would feel as if it had been answered and the matter settled. There would be no need to restlessly and repeatedly return to it. Clearly, better answers are still needed.

The standard explanation is that the Holocaust (sadly, as we shall see, echoed in many cultures historically across the globe) is an example of the “evil” that humans are capable of inflicting on one another. Evil is treated as incomprehensible, a topic that cannot be dealt with because the scale of the horror is so great that nothing can convey its enormity. The standard view turns out to be widely held, and indeed the concept of evil is routinely used as an explanation for such awful behaviors:

Why did the murderer kill an innocent child? Because he was evil. Why did this terrorist become a suicide bomber? Because she was evil. But when we hold up the concept of evil to examine it, it is no explanation at all. For a scientist this is, of course, wholly inadequate. What the Nazis (and others like them) did was unimaginably terrible. But that doesn’t mean we should simply shut down the inquiry into how people are capable of behaving in such ways or use a nonexplanation, such as saying people are simply evil.

As a scientist I want to understand what causes people to treat others as if they were mere

objects. In this book I explore how people can treat each other cruelly not with reference to the concept of evil, but with reference to the concept of empathy. Unlike the concept of evil, empathy has explanatory power. In the coming chapters I put empathy under the microscope.

The challenge is to explain, without resorting to the all-too-easy concept of evil, how people are capable of causing extreme hurt to one another. So let’s substitute the term “evil” with the term “empathy erosion.” Empathy erosion can arise because of corrosive emotions, such as bitter resentment, or desire for revenge, or blind hatred, or a desire to protect. In theory these are transient emotions, the empathy erosion reversible. But empathy erosion can be the result of more permanent psychological characteristics.

The insight that empathy erosion arises from people turning other people into objects goes back at least to Martin Buber, an Austrian philosopher who resigned his professorship at the University of Frankfurt in 1933 when Adolf Hitler came to power. The title of Buber’s famous book is *Ich und Du* (I and Thou). He contrasted the *Ich-Du* (I-you) mode of being (where you are connecting with another person as an end in itself) with the *Ich-Es* (I-it) mode of being (where you are connecting with a person or object, so as to use them for some purpose). He argued that the latter mode of treating a person was devaluing.

When our empathy is switched off, we are solely in the “I” mode. In such a state we relate only to things or to people as if they were just things. Most of us are capable of doing this occasionally. We might be quite capable of focusing on our work without sparing a thought for the homeless person on the street outside our office. But whether we are in this state transiently or permanently, there is

no “thou” visible – at least, not a thou with different thoughts and feelings. Treating other people as if they were just objects is one of the worst things you can do to another human being, to ignore their subjectivity, their thoughts and feelings.

When people are solely focused on the pursuit of their own interests, they have all the potential to be unempathic. At best in this state, they are in a world of their own and their behavior will have little negative impact on others.

see EVIL, page 20



'The Science of Evil,' Explaining 'Evil' and Human Cruelty

EVIL, from page 19

They might end up in this state of mind because of years of resentment and hurt (often the result of conflict) or, as we see, for more enduring, neurological reasons.

(Interestingly, in this state of single-minded pursuit of one's own goals, one's project might even have a positive focus: helping people, for example. But even if the person's project is positive, worthy and valuable, if it is single-minded, it is by definition unempathic).

So now we've made a specific move: aiming to explain how people can be cruel to each other not out of evil but because of empathy erosion.

While that feels marginally more satisfying as an answer (it is at least the beginning of an explanation), it is still far from complete.

Empathy erosion as an explanation begs the further questions of what empathy is and how it can be eroded. But at least these are tractable questions, and ones we shall attempt to answer as we proceed through this book.

By the end of our journey, there should be less of a nagging need for answers to the big question of understanding human cruelty. The mind should be quieted if the answers are beginning to feel satisfying. But before we delve into the nature of empathy, let's look at a handful of factual examples from around the world to prove that the awful things the Nazis did were not unique to the Nazis. We have to go through this if only to eliminate one (in my opinion) absurd view, which is that the Nazis were in some way uniquely cruel. As you'll see, they weren't.

Empathy Erosion Around the Globe

Erosion of empathy is a state of mind that can be found in any culture. In 2006 I was in Kenya with my family on holiday. We landed in Nairobi, a massive international city swirling with people. Sadly, Nairobi is home to one of the largest slums in Africa. People sleeping on the streets, mothers dying of AIDS, malnourished children begging or doing anything they can to survive. I met Esther, a young Kenyan woman, one of the fortunate ones who had a job. She warned me to be careful of the rising crime in Nairobi.

"I was in the supermarket," she said. "Suddenly, a woman near me who was queuing to pay for her groceries let out a scream. A man behind her had cut off her finger. In the commotion, the man slid the wedding ring off the severed finger and ran off into the crowds. It all happened so quickly."

This is a shocking example of what one person can do to another.

Formulating the plan to go out into the crowded supermarket to steal is easy enough to comprehend, especially if a person is starving.

Formulating the plan to take a knife along is a bit harder to identify with, since it indicates clear premeditation to cut something.

But for me the key is to imagine the mind of

the person in the seconds just before the act of cutting. At that very moment presumably all that is visible to the thief is the target (the ring), a small object that could feed him for weeks. All that is lying between him and his next meal is the woman's finger that has to be severed. The fact that the finger is attached to a hand is mere inconvenience, and cold logic points to the solution: Detach it. The fact that the hand is attached to a person, with her own life and her own feelings, is at that moment irrelevant. Out of mind. It is an example of turning another person into (no more than) an object. My argument is that when you treat someone as an object, your empathy has been turned off.

This example might suggest that someone capable of this crime had a momentary blip. Could the perpetrator's desperation, hunger and poverty have been so overwhelming that he temporarily lost his empathy for the victim? We have all experienced, or observed in others, such transient states, where afterward one's empathy recovers. I'm guessing that during your transient lapses in empathy, nothing as awful happens as we saw in this example. This suggests that what this man did to this woman was more than a transient lapse. My concern in this book is with this more enduring phenomenon — the result of more stable traits where it is harder, if not impossible, to recover empathy and where the consequences can be extremely serious. We are going to take a close look at people in the population who desperately need empathy but who, for various reasons, don't have it — and probably never will.

But more of that later. For now, I am going to limit myself to four other examples of empathy erosion around the planet because we don't need lots of distressing examples to have proof that this can happen in any culture.

Josef Fritzl built a cellar in his home in Amstetten, in northern Austria. You probably heard about this case, since it made worldwide headline news. On August 24, 1984, he imprisoned his daughter Elisabeth down in the cellar and kept her there for 24 years, telling his wife she had gone missing. He raped Elisabeth — day after day — from age 11 until well into her young adulthood. She ended up having seven children in the basement prison; one died at 3 days old, and her father (the child's father and grandfather) burned the body to dispose of the evidence.

Repeatedly during those 24 years Josef and his wife, Rosemarie, appeared on Austrian television, apparently distressed by Elisabeth's disappearance, appealing to the public to help them trace her. Josef claimed that three of Elisabeth's children mysteriously turned up on his doorstep, abandoned by their mother, and he and his wife (their grandmother) were raising them. The other three children grew up in the basement prison, ending up with major psychological disturbance. How could a father treat his daughter as an object and deprive her and three of his children/grandchildren of their right to freedom in this way? Where was his empathy?

The next example of empathy erosion that stopped me in my tracks was a report on BBC's Newsnight program. On July 24, 2002, rebel soldiers entered the Ugandan village of Pajong. Esther Rechan, a young mother, recalls what happened next:

"My 2-year-old was sitting on the veranda. The rebels started kicking him. They kicked him to death. . . . I had my 5-year-old with me, when the female rebel commander ordered all of us with children to pick them up and smash them against the veranda poles. We had to hit them until they were dead. All of us with children, we had to kill them. If you did it slowly they would beat you and force you to hit your children harder, against the poles. In all, seven children were killed by their mothers like that. My own child was only 5."

What was going through the minds of these rebel soldiers that they could force a mother to batter her own child to death?

Now consider an example from a lesser-known holocaust, one not committed by the Nazis. I heard about this when I went to Turkey last summer. The Turks are renowned for their warm, welcoming, friendly culture, but when they were under Ottoman rule, they regarded Armenians

as second-class citizens. Indeed, as far back as the 1830s, Armenians were not even eligible to give testimony against Muslims in court — their evidence was considered inadmissible.

By the 1870s Armenians were pressing for reforms, and during the 1890s at least 100,000 Armenians were killed. On April 24, 1915, 250 Armenian intellectuals were rounded up, imprisoned, and killed. On September 13 the Ottoman parliament passed a law decreeing the "expropriation and confiscation" of Armenian property, and Armenians were marched from Turkey to the Syrian town of Deir ez Zor. En route and in 25 concentration camps (near Turkey's modern borders with Iraq and Syria), 1.5 million Armenians died. Some were killed in mass burning, others by injection of morphine, and yet others by toxic gas. It is a history that is not often told, and the Genocide of the Armenians is clear proof (if any were needed) the Holocaust was not unique to the Nazis.

Here's my last example of extreme human cruelty, this time from the Congo. Mirindi Euprazi was at home in her village of Ninja in the Walungu region of the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1994 when the rebels attacked. She told her story: "They forced my son to have sex with me, and when he'd finished they killed him. Then they raped me in front of my husband and then they killed him too. Then they took away my three daughters."

She hasn't heard of the three girls since. She

describes being left naked while her house burned. I imagine — like me — you are astonished beyond words by this event. How do rebel soldiers lose sight of the fact that this person was a woman, no different from their own mothers? How can they treat her as an object in this way? How do they ignore that this boy — forced to have sex with his mother — is just a teenager, with normal feelings?

But that's more than enough examples of human cruelty from different cultures to remind us of what humans are capable. If I'm right that such acts are the result of no empathy, then what we need urgently are answers to two basic questions: But that's more than enough examples of human cruelty from different cultures to remind us of what humans are capable. If I'm right that such acts are the result of no empathy, then what we need urgently are answers to two basic questions: What is empathy? And why do some people have less than others?

(Simon Baron-Cohen is professor of developmental psychopathology in the Departments of Psychiatry and Experimental Psychology at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. He is the director of the University's Autism Research Centre, and a Fellow of Trinity College. This column originally appeared in the *New York Times* on June 13.)

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US Stamp Should Commemorate 100th Anniversary

With the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide coming up in the year 2015, I thought it would be appropriate for all Armenian organizations and church groups to unite in getting the US Postal Service to issue a US Commemorative Stamp on the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923. The US Postal Service usually requires at least two to three years of notice to issue a commemorative stamp. Also, the United Nations Postal System should be notified and possibly a joint issue with the Republic of Armenia. An appropriate design should be forwarded, possibly with a picture of Mount Ararat in the background with the inscription, the first Genocide of 1915 of the Armenian Nation. It also could be suggested to have it in a form of a souvenir sheet instead of a stamp.

— Stephen T. Dulgarian