

Serge Sargisian: Armenia Will Not Tolerate Denial of The Genocide

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The first sitting of the state committee for the coordination of events dedicated to the centennial of the Armenian Genocide took place here last week. The committee is headed by President Serge Sargisian.

At the meeting Sargisian thanked those present, including Artsakh President Bako Sahakian, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia Aram I for agreeing to participate.

Sargisian noted in his statement, although 96 years have passed since the launch of the Genocide, the Armenian Genocide remains a subject for discussion.

"It is impossible to understand and accept a policy of the extermination of its own citizens, planned by a state. The consequences of the Armenian Genocide have not been dealt with up till now, with the descendants of Genocide perpetrators sparing no effort to distort the truth behind this crime against humanity. Those who deny the Armenian Genocide view our tragedy as a mere source of inconvenience on the international scene, refusing to repent for the crime perpetrated."

"Armenia is ready to discuss cooperation with neighboring states. However, regardless of everything, we'll never tolerate Armenian Genocide negation and disrespect for the memory of Genocide victims," Sargisian stressed.

According to Karekin II, the committee will play an important role in the proper organization of commemorative events both in Armenia and abroad.

"Over the past decades, many countries, international, religious organizations have recognized the Armenian Genocide, as they believe that recognition of this fact is an important step for establishing justice worldwide," said Karekin II. He added that the Armenian people will continue the struggle for the Armenian Genocide international recognition.

Legendary Singer and Philanthropist Charles Aznavour Is Honored in New York



NEW YORK — Singer Charles Aznavour was feted by the Fund for Armenian Relief. See story on page 11.

Diocesan Assembly Banquet Honors Bedevian, Governor Patrick, Heritage Park Organizers

BOSTON — Some 300 attendees from parishes throughout the Diocese gathered in the Imperial Ballroom of the Boston Park Plaza Hotel on Friday, April

29, to honor several contributors to the Armenian Church and to the greater Armenian community.

Hosted by the Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Cambridge, the Grand Banquet of the 109th Diocesan Assembly was an opportunity to present the 2011 Diocesan awards and celebrate the achievements of the community.

The award for Armenian Church Member of the Year was bestowed upon Sarkis Bedevian of the St. Leon parish of Fair Lawn, NJ, for his lifelong devotion to the betterment of the church in the US and Armenia.

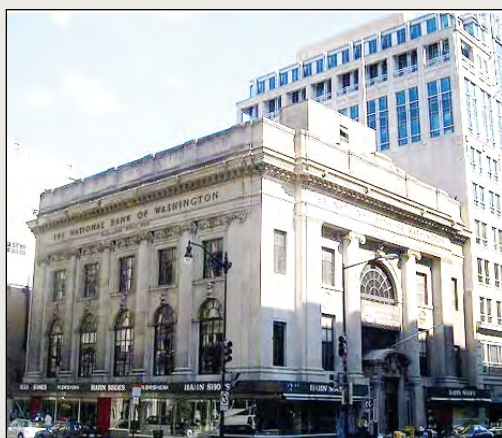
see DIOCESE, page 8



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian expressed his gratitude to Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick, who accepted his award during the opening session of the Diocesan Assembly.

Armenian Assembly Releases Statement On Armenian Genocide Museum Case

WASHINGTON — Earlier this month, a District of Columbia Court ruled that since the museum project was not completed by the December 31, 2010 deadline, it triggered a reversionary clause within the grant agreement requiring the Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial (AGMM) to transfer all of the properties of the museum project to the Cafesjian Family Foundation (CFF). As Cafesjian's attorney, John B. Williams, upon the judge's order to transfer the properties, stated: "The properties have to be transferred to CFF in the next two weeks. That is what we have all been fighting for."



The National Bank of Washington building

Contrary to misinformation in a recent commentary piece reproduced in the Armenian press, the Armenian Genocide Museum litigation was not about the Assembly trying to take control of the properties. The Assembly had duly transferred the properties to AGMM, a separate nonprofit entity, as part of the grant agreement in 2003. Allegations that this see STATEMENT, page 6

Hirair Hovnanian Writes Open Letter To Gerald Cafesjian

(Armenian Assembly of America Board Chairman Hirair Hovnanian issued the following letter this week, addressed to Gerald Cafesjian with regard to the fate of the proposed museum dedicated to the Armenian Genocide, in Washington, DC.)

Gerry:

As I look back to the years wasted by the multiple lawsuits that you initiated against the Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial (AGMM) and the Armenian Assembly, I note that today you are at the same exact point you were in 2006 when you were in control of the project. At that time, the other AGMM Board Members acquiesced to your plan with our votes — you have it in writing.

see HOVNANIAN, page 6

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pepsi Bottling Plant Opens in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Radiolur) — The Pepsi Cola Bottler Armenia Company was officially opened this week in the Kanaker Zeytun community of Yerevan. President Serge Sargisian attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Sargisian toured the building and inquired about the capacity of the plant. They will eventually start production of juices in the future, which will be exported to neighboring countries.

According to Minister of Economy Tigran Davtian, "this marks the entry of another renowned international brand to Armenia."

Charny, Kevorkian Receive Medals

YEREVAN (Radiolur) — Israeli Genocide scholar Israel Charny received the Presidential Award for bringing attention to the Armenian Genocide.

Charny thanked the Armenian people and President Serge Sargisian for the award. He stated that the world must recognize the Armenian Genocide and honor the memory of the innocent victims of this crime against humanity.

"Much is yet to be done for this purpose," the expert stressed, adding, "our struggle is now to be aimed at prevention of new genocides."

Raymond Kevorkian, a French-Armenian historian and director of the AGBU-Nubarian Library in Paris, also received a presidential medal for his work toward the recognition of the Genocide.

Witness Says Two Were With Dink Killer

ISTANBUL (Hetq) — At the Hrant Dink murder trial this week, Emsale Cakmakci, who was shopping at a nearby store at the time of the killing, confirmed the statement of a secret witness that suspect Ogun Samast was accompanied by two individuals right after shots were fired.

Cakmakci stated that she saw a person with a white cap accompanied by two other individuals after the murder at around 3 p.m. on January 19, 2007. The witness described the clothes, height and hair of these three people, but she apparently was not able to see their faces.

The crucial development was the finding by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey that footage from a video camera at a nearby bank had gone missing the day of the murder.

Dink family lawyer Fethiye Cetin noted that, "The part of the Akbank video records of the morning and the afternoon on the day of the incident is missing. The incident happened during the term of office of Selim Kutkan at the Anti-Terror Branch. The footage was lost. We will file a criminal complaint about Kutkan."

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Genocide Exhibits in Oslo, Stockholm and Copenhagen

YEREVAN (Arka) — The Yerevan-based Armenian Genocide Museum will present a temporary exhibit about the Armenian Genocide in Oslo, Stockholm and Copenhagen, Hayk Demoyan, the director of the museum, said this week after the first meeting of a government commission set up to handle preparations for the centennial of the Armenian Genocide to be marked in 2015.

He said commissions have been created in Denmark, Sweden and Norway, which comprise also representatives of local Armenian communities as well as local scientists to present the display that will explain the Scandinavian humanitarian assistance to genocide victims.

He said this exposition has already been displayed in Yerevan on the sidelines of an international conference, titled “Scandinavian Response and Armenian Genocide.”

“During my five-year tenure as director of the museum, I came to see that many people, unfortunately, view the Genocide Memorial and the Museum as a place of death and grief, but my view is that we deal with life and the more we work with the history the more we will love life,” said Demoyan.

Praise and Good Wishes For Dadrian on 85th Birthday

YEREVAN — The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia sent a letter of congratulations to celebrated historian, professor of sociology Vahagn Dadrian, on his 85th birthday.

“With you productive scientific activity of many years, you have become a living legend for the new generation of scientists. Your studies are precious in terms of giving a comprehensive scientific illustration of the historical reality of the Armenian Genocide, which significantly contributed to the international recognition and condemnation of the fact. We are sure that your scientific path is lifelong and you will still present new volumes and studies to the public. We wish you health, long life and further scientific achievements,” the museum’s statement read.

Sargissian to Address PACE Summer Session

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has published the agenda of the summer session to be held on June 20-24.

On that agenda is an address by President Serge Sargissian, who will take part in discussions on co-existing peacefully in 21st-century Europe.

The first day of the session will kick off with the PACE president’s statement. Following this, vice-presidents, with respect to Finland and Ireland, will be elected and the agenda of the summer session will be adopted, according to PACE’s official website.

Moscow Cinema to Screen ‘My Ani’

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — On June 15, Moscow Cinema will host the premiere of “My Ani,” a documentary by AZD Production, produced and directed by Hayk Harutyunyan and written by Temine Hayrumyan. The film presents the history of medieval Armenia’s capital — Ani.

In the film, the temples, palaces and churches of Ani are restored to their original appearance through the assistance of computer animation.

Harutyunyan said there is demand for documentaries about Armenia’s history. “In my opinion, they should be included in the compulsory state program of education, since Armenian youth should know the history of Ani, Cilicia — Western Armenia — since our culture had formed there for centuries,” Harutyunyan said.

Chilean Reformer Shares Experience With Armenian, Georgian Ministers

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A prominent Chilean economist, who helped to privatize his country’s social security system, shared his reform experience with senior Armenian and Georgian government officials as he visited Yerevan at Prime Minister Tigran Sargissian’s initiation on Monday, May 23.

José Pinera, widely recognized as the architect of Chile’s private pension system, discussed details of the world-famous reform with them after a separate meeting with Sargissian.

“Chile’s experience enables us to better understand complications and difficulties that people carrying out such reforms face and the best ways of overcoming them,” Sargissian said, introducing Pinera to participants of the discussion.

The participants included senior Armenian officials dealing with the ongoing reform of Armenia’s pension system as well as Georgia’s Minister of Labor, Health and Social Affairs Andrew Urushadze and one of his deputies. An Armenian government statement said they asked Pinera questions about various aspects of the Chilean reform.

Pinera served as labor minister in the government of Chile’s late dictator General Augusto Pinochet when the reform was launched just over 30 years ago. It involved the introduction of personal retirement accounts with private pension funds that allowed workers to opt out of the state-run social security system.

After years of delay and preparation, Armenia began in January a gradual transition to a similar system whereby the amount of monthly benefits paid to



Prime Minister Tigran Sargissian (right) and Chile’s former Labor Secretary José Pinera at a meeting with Armenian and Georgian officials dealing with pension reform, May 23.

retired citizens will depend on their and their employers’ lifelong financial contributions. The existing pay-as-you-go system essentially does not differentiate between pensioners’ employment histories.

Armenia’s State Social Security Service began keeping track of the social security payments of all officially registered workers in 2005. Each of them has had a personal pension account and social security number since then.

The government says the reform is vital in view of the country’s aging population. According to government data, the 460,000-strong national workforce is already outnumbered by 520,000 or pensioners. This is one the reasons why

the average monthly pension in Armenia is equivalent to less than \$100.

The government’s reform strategy was criticized by opposition deputies from the Armenian Revolutionary Federation during parliament debates last year. They said that the new system would not be more sustainable and fair than the existing one.

Pinera, who now works at a Washington-based libertarian think-tank, the Cato Institute, will meet with economics professors and students of Yerevan State University (YSU) on Tuesday. A YSU statement said Urushadze and Armenian Labor and Social Affairs Minister Artur Grigorian will also attend the meeting.

EU Lauds Armenian Amnesty

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The European Union (EU) praised on Friday, May 27, a general amnesty declared by the Armenian authorities, saying that the resulting release of all opposition members arrested in 2008 will not only ease political tensions but also boost Armenia’s ties with the EU.

“As far as we understand, this will allow Armenia to turn the page of the March 2008 events, together with a new impetus given to the investigation of those events,” Raul de Luzenberger, head of the EU Delegation in Yerevan, said in an interview.

“We believe that this is a very positive political development, which meets one of the demands of the European Union that was formulated immediately after the March 2008 events and has been reiterated for a number of times since then,” he said.

“By fully meeting one of the long-standing open issues between the European Union and Armenia, this amnesty has actually made a very important step forward in our relations,” added Luzenberger.

The diplomat also commended the main opposition Armenian National Congress (HAK) for its “very peaceful and well-organized” political activities. “This is also very important for the country’s political life,” he said.

The amnesty approved by the Armenian parliament on Thursday was the latest in a series of government measures that addressed the HAK’s main demands addressed to President Serge Sargissian. Those also included the lifting of a ban on opposition rallies in Yerevan’s Liberty Square and a renewed official inquiry into the March 2008 unrest in Yerevan.

In a statement last week, the EU described the government concessions as “positive political developments.” The bloc also reiterated its calls for the release of all Armenian oppositionists remaining in jail.

Luzenberger noted the fact that the government overtures to the HAK are paving the way for a dialogue between the two rival sides. “We simply hope that this dialogue will take place and that democracy in Armenia has made a full step forward,” he said.

“By fully meeting one of the long-standing open issues between the European Union and Armenia, this amnesty has actually made a very important step forward in our relations”

Armenia Bans Import Of Vegetables from Europe and Turkey

YEREVAN (ArmeniaNow) — In response to a deadly outbreak of a virulent form of E. Coli bacteria that has killed already 15 people in Europe, Armenian authorities have halted imports of vegetables from all European countries, Arka news agency reported.

The outbreak has also made more than 1,000 people ill in Germany. The E. Coli pathogen has been identified on cucumbers imported from Spain, but it is not clear if they were contaminated there, during transport, or possibly in Germany.

Shushan Ghazarian, a spokeswoman for the State Food Security Service, said Armenia had banned import of cucumbers from Europe a month ago and then have banned import of all vegetables. Other foods from Europe are allowed into Armenia only after a careful examination at border check points, she said.

Babken Liloyan, head of the State Food Security Service’s public relations department, said import of vegetables from Turkey was also banned a month ago.

The German government has identified the disease as hemolytic-uremic syndrome (HUS), a serious complication of a type of E. Coli known as Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC). The WHO said in a risk assessment that the HUS/STEC outbreak is one the largest in the world of its kind. HUS affects blood, kidneys and, in severe cases, the nervous system and can be particularly serious for children and the elderly.



INTERNATIONAL

Iran Touts Armenia's 'Unique Position' in Region

TEHRAN (RFE/RL) — Iran was reported on Tuesday, May 31, to underscore what Foreign Minister Ali-Akbar Salehi described as Armenia's "unique" location in the region and reaffirm its strong interest in the quick implementation of Armenian-Iranian infrastructure projects.

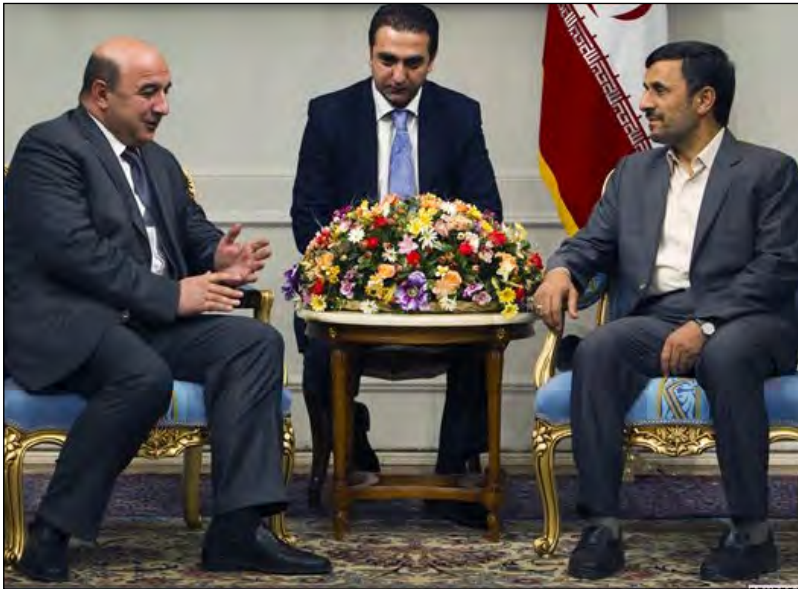
Salehi and Armenian Energy Minister Armen Movsisian stressed the need for much closer economic ties between the two neighboring states, co-chairing a regular session of an Armenian-Iranian intergovernmental commission that ended in its work in Tehran late on Monday.

Reports from the Iranian capital said they signed a memorandum of understanding to boost cooperation on oil, gas and electricity and to expand their commercial and industrial ties.

The meeting came less than a week before Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's official visit to Armenia. Preparations for the two-day trip were apparently discussed by Salehi's deputy Mohammad-Reza Sheibani in Yerevan earlier this month.

"Keeping in mind Armenia's unique position in the region — which can be connected to the Black Sea in the west on one hand and to the Persian Gulf through Iran on the other hand — can bring very positive economic fruits both for our two countries and for the entire region," the official IRNA news agency quoted Salehi as saying after the commission meeting.

The chief Iranian diplomat called for a further rise in Armenian-Iranian trade, which soared by 38 percent to \$270 million last year. He also said that the



President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad meets Armenian Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Armen Movsisian in Tehran.

Islamic Republic can serve as a "reliable source of energy" for its landlocked and resource-poor neighbor.

Iran's energy ties with Armenia are expected to deepen significantly as a result of multimillion-dollar projects devised by the two governments. Those include the construction of two hydro-electric plants on the Arax river marking the Armenian-Iranian border and a pipeline that will ship Iranian fuel to Armenia.

The two sides also plan to start building next month a third high-voltage transmission line connecting their power grids, which would allow for a sharp increase in Armenian electricity

supplies to Iran. Much of that electricity is to be generated by Iranian natural gas shipped to Armenia.

According to IRNA, another Iranian official, Deputy Transport Minister Reza Pilpayeh, reaffirmed Tehran's support for the ambitious idea of building a 540-kilometer railway connecting Iran to Armenia. He said Iranian companies are ready to carry out most of the construction work, estimated currently to cost \$2.5 billion.

Movsisian reportedly described the project as "economically feasible." He also indicated that Yerevan hopes the Iranian side will at least partly finance its implementation.

Knesset Speaker Working to Boost Recognition of Armenian Genocide

By Jonathan Lis

TEL AVIV (*Haaretz*) — Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin said on Monday, May 30, that he wanted to convene an annual parliamentary session of the full Knesset to mark the Armenian Genocide of 1915 at the hands of the Turks. "It is my duty as a Jew and Israeli to recognize the tragedies of other peoples," Rivlin said, speaking to an Israel-based Armenian action committee.

Rivlin added: "Diplomatic considera-

tions, important as they may be, do not allow us to deny the disaster [experienced by] another people."

In recent years the prime minister's office and the Foreign Ministry have applied heavy pressure to head off such sessions of the Knesset, out of concern that relations between Israel and Turkey would be harmed. Turkey denies that it committed genocide against the Armenians.

Since 2008, the full Knesset has allowed the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee to hold sessions that have been closed to the media about the

Armenian Genocide. Last week, for the first time, the full Knesset approved the convening of an open, public session on the issue by the Education, Culture and Sports Committee, at the request of Meretz Knesset member Zahava Gal-On. This represents a complete change in approach on the issue.

Between a million and a million-and-a-half Armenians reportedly lost their lives in Turkey, representing about a third of the Armenian people. Armenians have been campaigning for international recognition of the Genocide, but the Turks have been active in countering these efforts. Turkey claims there was no genocide, and that in the course of the Armenian fight for independence between 250,000 and 500,000 Armenians and a similar number of Turks lost their lives.

As part of the Foreign Ministry's attempt in recent years to block pro-Armenian Genocide commemorations, in 2007, ministry staff expressed what was called "dissatisfaction" with plans to hold a session in the Knesset plenum on the issue. The prime minister at the time, Ehud Olmert, intervened to have the session canceled.

In October 2008, in an unprecedented move, the Knesset voted to have a parliamentary committee convene on the Armenian Genocide at the initiative of then-Meretz Chairman Haim Oron, paving the way for the sessions in the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. Over the past two years, however, after relations between Israel and Turkey deteriorated, the Foreign Ministry's opposition to the issue abated, though Rivlin's latest move was at his own initiative.

Armenians of Georgia expect little From political changes in the country

TBILISI (ArmeniaNow) — In Georgia's current state of tense political development, the Armenian community has adopted a neutral and unbiased attitude.

The wave of public protests that started in Georgia on May 21 is led by oppositional People's Assembly political party activists demanding President Mikheil Saakashvili's and his administration's resignation.

Shirak Torosyan, leader of the Javakhk Union of Compatriots, who considers Javakhk-Armenians and the Georgian-Armenians to be two different communities, stated that in both cases the neutral stance is understandable.

"The community could have sided with the opposition, if the opposition had promised solutions to a number of issues Georgian Armenians are facing — Armenian Genocide recognition, a clear-cut legal status of the Armenian Apostolic Church, etc.," says Torosyan.

Torosyan says that if Georgian Armenians hold a neutral position, Javakhk Armenians are being cautious. There isn't one joint position that the two communities have purposely agreed on.

"Ethnic minorities are usually more pro-government unless the opposition offers concrete and serious promises. Georgia has changed governments three times since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and none of them has given solutions to the issues of Javakhk Armenians," he says.

International News

Venice Biennale to Host Armenian Artists

VENICE, Italy (PanArmenian.Net) — The Venice Biennale, a major contemporary art exhibition organized once every two years, got underway on June 1. The 54th biennale will feature works by Armenian artists Harutyun Kalents, Karen Hakobyan and Harutyun Simonyan.

Armenia's participation in the event was made possible through the Art and Cultural Studies Laboratory (ACSL) efforts.

Within the framework of the event, seven partners from Armenia (ACSL), Bulgaria (Art Today Association), Germany (Henrich Boll Stiftung Brandenburg), Germany (Rohkunstbau Marquardt), Georgia (GeoAIR), Moldova (K.SAK) and Slovakia (SPACE Gallery) are connected in the Atlantis network through transnational cultural exchanges and cooperation in the field of contemporary art.

Protesters Attack Turkish Prime Minister's Election Tour Bus

ISTANBUL (PanArmenian.Net) — Protesters attacked Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's election bus in Hopa, Artvin province, on Tuesday, May 31, critically injuring a policeman who fell from the top of the bus after being hit by a stone.

Tensions ran high in Hopa before and after Erdogan's rally. Protesters threw stones at the bus carrying Erdogan, the leader of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party), following the rally he held in the district. Security forces fired in the air and used pepper spray to disperse the crowd. A policeman who was on top of the bus lost his balance, reportedly after being hit by a stone, and fell down. The police officer was immediately hospitalized and is reportedly in critical condition.

Tension was also high in Cumhuriyet Square, the venue of the rally, in the morning before the rally. Police clashed with protestors, who gathered in the square to protest Erdogan. Police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse the crowd, Today's Zaman reported.

Armenian Beaten to Death in Russian Village

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) — The Union of Armenians of Russia spoke out about the vicious beatings of three Armenian citizens here. The incident was reported on May 8 in the village of Novi Bit, where the three were attacked by several nationalists. One, Grigor Usnyan, 22, received such severe head injuries that he died in the intensive care unit of the local hospital on May 15, after one week of clinging to life.

Usnyan worked in Moscow as a builder and was the sole breadwinner of his family. He supported his sister, who had lost her leg in the earthquake in 1988, and his mother.

Transnistrian President Pardons Journalist

TIRASPOL, Transnistria (Tert.am) — The president of the Republic of Transnistria, Igor Smirnov, has pardoned Ernest Vardanyan, a local journalist of Armenian origin sentenced over high treason charges.

According to the Russian-language Rosbalt.ru website, Smirnov announced the pardon personally.

Accused of spying for Moldova, Vardanyan was arrested by the Transnistrian Security Services on April 7, 2010.

On December 16, 2010 a Transnistrian court sentenced him to 15 years in prison according to the Article 271 of the country's Criminal Code (high treason).

Vardanyan has however denied the accusations.

Since his arrest and trial a series of international rights organizations have condemned Transnistrian authorities and demanded Vardanyan's release.

Vardanyan's relatives in their turn took steps to have him released. His mother wrote letters to Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, as well as to the leaders of the rest of G8 countries.



INTERNATIONAL

AGBU Milan Presents Variety of Programs in the First Half of 2011

MILAN – During the months of March and April, AGBU Milan presented two films by director Harutyun Khachatryan, manager of the Golden Apricot film festival: “Border” and “Return to the Promised Land.” The evening was attended by a number of special guests, including the president of the province of Milan and other government officials.

On May 8, AGBU Milan organized a program at the local Armenian House, which jointly marked Mother’s Day and the 40th anniversary of the death of the celebrated poet Paruyr Sevak. With Zarmine Stanbouli-Yenikomshian acting as emcee, AGBU chapter president Gueguel Khatchadourian gave a brief account of the life and works of Paruyr Sevak, including his tragic death with his



Emcee Zarmine Stanbouli-Yenikomshian (left) and AGBU Milan Chapter president Gueguel Khatchadourian



The cutting of the ceremonial Mother’s Day cake by, from left, Armine Serabian, Alice Boranian and Sona Ibishian.

wife in an automobile accident.

Stanbouli-Yenikomshian spoke briefly about the meaning and origins of Mother’s Day.

The artistic portion of the program consisted of recitations, dance numbers, songs, and musical renditions. Tamar Musayelian

recited Sevak’s “Mother’s Hands,” as well as “With My Mother” by Italian-Armenian poet Aramayis Serabian. The Geigenbaum Quartet, one of whose members is Hrachya Galstian, played folk songs of Komitas, arranged by S. Aslamazian. Yenelina Arakelyan, a native of Armenia, sang The

Song of the Warrior, and a dance group under the direction of Arax Antanasian performed three Armenian dances.

A ceremonial Mother’s Day cake was cut by three local Italian-Armenian women: Sona Ibishian and Armine Serabian, both of whom are veteran AGBU members, and Alice

Pro-Kurdish Politician Says One Prime Minister Not Enough for Turkey

ISTANBUL (*Hurriyet Daily News*) – The debate over the Kurdish issue and autonomy for Turkish regions has heated up ahead of the general elections, with a pro-Kurdish politician demanding “more than one” prime minister for the country.

“Turkey is too big of a country to be centrally governed by one prime minister,” former pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) co-leader Selahattin Demirtas said Monday.

Demirtas, who is running as an independent candidate in the eastern city of Hakkari, said local administrations should be given more authority in order to overcome bureaucratic hurdles.

“The democratic autonomy we have been proposing is the solution to all problems,” he said, adding that Ankara “should not run everything.”

The pro-Kurdish figure’s statements came days after Prime Minister Recep Tayyip

Erdogan said at an election rally, “There is no Kurdish issue in this country.”

Demirtas called Erdogan’s statement “a lie.”

“Erdogan says his party ended the Kurdish problem. In fact, the Kurdish problem finished his party,” said Demirtas, arguing that the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) would fail in the eastern and south-eastern provinces in the June 12 polls.

Leyla Zana, a former parliamentary deputy who is now running as an independent candidate in Diyarbakir, made more measured comments on the topic.

“We must not have prejudices, this will be the way to a realistic solution,” she said Tuesday when asked by a reporter in Diyarbakir if a solution to the Kurdish issue is possible.

“The public has been distracted with lies

for years when it came to the Kurdish issue,” Zana added. “Promises ahead of a general election are not enough. The issue is too serious and deep to be sacrificed for the sake of a few votes. All parties should be very careful and responsible when discussing the matter.”

Meanwhile, the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) is expected to release its offers of a solution to the Kurdish issue on Friday.

Turkey Accused of Misrepresenting Monuments

YEREVAN (*ArmeniaNow*) – Armenian experts are warning that in Turkey almost everywhere panels talking about Armenian monuments present distorted information, which shows a consistent attempt by Turks to erase Armenian traces inside what now is

within the borders of their state.

“While generally signs and notices placed near monuments are designed to inform tourists, in Turkey their special purpose is to mislead them and present a totally different history,” says specialist in Oriental studies Raffi Kortoshyan, who works as an expert for Research on Armenian Architecture NGO.

One such outrageous example cited by Armenian experts is the huge information panel near the ruins of Ani that presents the history of the area beginning from the Stone Age and chronologically presents almost everything, except its Armenian period, while the royal Armenian Bagratuni is presented as the Bagratoglu emirate.

“Often we see that when a brazen lie is written on a panel, it only has one variant, in Turkish, while in English this passage is omitted, because they realize that the lie is too blatant,” he says.

Experts at the monuments highlight the importance of the joint initiative of the Turkish government and the World Monuments Fund to restore the St. Savior Church and the Cathedral of Ani, but they believe the results of the restoration work will be questionable unless Armenian specialists are engaged in the projects

NGO head Samvel Karapetyan says that under the guise of restoration work they also distort the original Armenian architectural form.

“They try to restore it, but in reality we see wrong restoration and distortions. A visual image distortion is committed and it seems to me that there is no desire and their professional ability is not enough to implement proper restoration,” says Karapetyan.

He says according to his information there is no desire yet to engage Armenian specialists in the restoration project in Ani.

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Community News

80th Anniversary Of Holy Ascension Armenian Church Commemorated

By Hagop Vartivarian

TRUMBULL, Conn. — On Sunday, May 15, Holy Ascension Armenian Church celebrated the 80th anniversary of its foundation, in the presence of mostly third- and fourth-generation Armenians. This event is an important one in the annals of our history, because the Armenians who came from the old country mainly after the 1915 Armenian Genocide were able to purchase a church building for \$6,000 in the beginning of the last century, after establishing themselves in the area and securing their own survival in this country. And equally importantly, for eight decades they have been able to keep the church in spite of all the economic difficulties and demographic changes.

Nearby industrial city of Bridgeport served as a center for many Armenian workers new to this country. It was here that Alex Manoogian first came to work, when he arrived from Izmir. In the beginning, the city had a small Armenian Club, where the Armenians from Kharper, Sepastia, Dikranagerd, Gesaria, Adana, Bolis, etc., gathered to be with one another, encourage and support one another and play backgammon and cards. It was here that Manoogian offered to teach these mostly Turkish-speaking Armenians the Armenian language, so they too can read, write and speak.



From left, Fr. Untzag Nalbandian, George Krikorian, relatives of George Dororthy and Richard Noreiks, Ambassador Garen Nazarian and Yerezgin Setta Nalbandian.

Very soon thereafter, *Baika*r newspaper reached the community members and two Ramgavar Party members, Hrach Yervant and Antranig Antreassian, with their frequent visits brought new excitement to the Bridgeport-Armenian community. The brothers Hagop and Berj Khachadoorian also played a great role in keeping the community's Armenian character and spirit.

The consecration of the church was done by then Primate Archbishop Ghevont Tourian on Sunday, June 14, 1931, after which and only two years later the archbishop was brutally murdered in Holy Cross Armenian Church in New York.

It has not been easy to keep and maintain the church in this small community. With great sacrifices the parishioners kept the doors of this church open and also had their pastors. Today, that priest is Fr. Untzag Nalbandian, originally from Beirut, who studied at the Melkonian Educational Institute in Cyprus. He and his brother, Fr. Zenob Nalbandian, serve in the Eastern Diocese of the United States.

The day's celebrant was Fr. Martiros Hakobyan, who has come from the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin and who recently was assigned to be assistant pastor.

The church was full during the service, after which all came downstairs, where lunch was served, followed by a program. After the welcoming words of Dr. Robert Badrigian, Parish Council chairman, and Linda McGann, 80th anniversary, see ANNIVERSARY, page 7



The late Col. George Juskalian with his wife Lucine

US Government Honors the Late Col. George Juskalian by Naming Post Office in His Honor

WASHINGTON — Members of the Armenian community of the Greater Washington Metropolitan area, invited guests and elected local officials joined Rep. Frank Wolf, from the 10th congressional district of the Commonwealth of Virginia, on Saturday, May 21, to mark the official dedication of the Sully Station Post Office Building in Centreville, Va. in the name of the late Col. George Juskalian.

By Hovsep M. Melkonian

full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery on October 19, 2010.

Rev. Hovsep Karapetyan, pastor of St. Mary's Armenian Church, offered the invocation before the presentation of colors by guards from the local American legion Post 177, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars post 8469. The Chantilly Academy Air Force JROTC, the Westfield High School Band and Chorus participated in the program befitting the occasion. After their rendition of the national anthem, colonel Juskalian's daughter, Elissa Lucine Juskalian, led the audience in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

"Col. George Juskalian not only was an honorable man and a servant to his country but he was also a devout Christian" said Karapetyan in a short address to the audience assembled before the building. "He was ready to sacrifice his life for his country and its people. This initiative of designating the Centreville Post Office as the Col. George Juskalian building is a great honor and privilege that extends beyond his military career and achievements and goes all the way to his Armenian roots. On behalf of St. Mary's Armenian Church I bring my utmost appreciation to Congressman Frank Wolf and Senator Mark Warner for supporting this initiative and making this to become reality. Our appreciation also goes to those who stand behind this great project and this great endeavor."

Taniel Koushakjian, Assembly grassroots director who was present at the ceremony noted: "This is a historic occasion not only for our veterans but for the Armenian-American community, as Col. George Juskalian becomes only the second Armenian-American to have a US Post Office named after him."

see JUSKALIAN, page 7



An overview of the audience before the postal facility

Harper Honors Students Provide Holiday Gifts for Children at Homeless Shelter

CHICAGO — What began as a service project component for students enrolled in the Harper Honors Program grew into a full-fledged holiday gift collection. Students "adopted" some of the children for the holidays at the Chicago Lydia Home Association, a shelter for abused or homeless children.

Maral Mjukian, president of the Harper Honors Society, organized the gift drive.

"Maral organized everything — she collected the Lydia children's wish lists, she marketed the idea to the other honors students and rounded up participants — mostly students, but also some faculty," said Andrew Wilson, professor, Liberal Arts, faculty advisor to the group. Gifts were collected for about 40 of the children at Lydia Home, ranging in age from 6 to 17.

Mjukian, a resident of Mt. Prospect, is a nursing major and planning to transfer to either the University of Illinois Circle or Northern Illinois University.

"A few weeks ago, I organized an event with the Lydia Home," said Mjukian. "Some students from Honors Society and Phi Theta Kappa spent time with the children at the Lydia home. The Honors Program bought



Maral Mjukian

"After spending time with these children and listening to what they have gone through, it made me think of what I can do for them."

pizza and played board games with the children. Several of the students and I collected money to also buy the children goodie bags. This turned out great."

This success got Mjukian thinking about other possibilities for the children. "After spending time with these children and listening to what they have gone through, it made me think of what I can do for them," she said. "I had never been to a foster home before until we had the pizza and game party event. I just thought about how fortunate I am to have such a loving family and how the holidays bring families together. After that night I knew I wanted to do something special for them."

"Something special" turned into "a small mountain of gifts" with a value of "approximately \$1,000," according to Wilson, who delivered the gifts to Lydia House.

"I'm really happy this worked out," said Mjukian, "and I really want to continue to do events like this."



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Assembly Releases Statement On Genocide Museum Case

STATEMENT, from page 1

litigation was about an attempt to exclude Cafesjian from decision-making powers of AGMM are also patently false.

This litigation was brought by Gerard Cafesjian in April 2007 against the Armenian Assembly, and also the AGMM – after his prior attempt to dissolve AGMM in 2006. It has been, without a doubt, a painful chapter for our community.

The Assembly did not seek litigation and preferred to resolve this matter amicably. On more than one occasion, the Assembly agreed to settlement terms only to have them rejected or changed by Cafesjian at the last minute. The Assembly also took to heart Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly's call in her January 2011 Memorandum of Opinion for the parties to come together to resolve their differences. Unfortunately, the new lawsuit initiated by Cafesjian in January 2011 in Florida on issues that he did not prevail on in the District of Columbia, and the continued attacks against the Assembly in Cafesjian-owned media outlets, did not bode well for reconciliation.

That being said, the Assembly and AGMM have complied with the judge's orders and filed appeals as a matter of right to protect the future of the museum, as the judge decided that Cafesjian had no obligation to use the properties for a museum.

We share the same goal and desire with the community: we want an Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial to be built in our nation's capital. The Armenian nation and the cause of genocide affirmation deserve nothing less.

After all, it was the extraordinary vision of Anoush Mathevossian and with the generosity of so many donors that AGMM was officially launched in 2003, and in so doing, sought to right the injustice of genocide and the consequences of its denial.

That is why the Assembly and AGMM forged ahead in 2006 after Cafesjian resigned his chairmanship. After Cafesjian's resignation, the AGMM developed plans that were, for the first time, approved by the relevant zoning and review boards in Washington, DC. But for the litigation, the AGMM project would be fully underway.

We hope this project becomes a reality and we will continue to defend and protect the interests of the AGMM. As such, there are several issues of concern to the Assembly and AGMM that warrant review on appeal, including among others, the following:

- The fact that the judge, as well as Cafesjian, did not disclose, before or during trial, their pre-existing economic and other ties, including their joint contribution of a glass sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This deprived the AGMM and the Armenian Assembly of a key piece of information in obtaining a fair trial that both the judge and Cafesjian had a duty to disclose. The extent of the relationships still has not been fully disclosed.

- The fact that the judge awarded the properties to CFF without any requirement from the court that CFF build an Armenian Genocide Museum and without regard to reimbursing Anoush Mathevossian's \$3.5 million founding contribution toward the purchase of the historic National Bank of Washington building, the close to \$10 million in contributions by Hirair Hovnanian, as well as other donors to the project; or the appreciated value of the properties; or due consideration of the millions of dollars in property taxes paid by AGMM and the Armenian Assembly since 2000. As a result, Cafesjian is poised to receive more than \$20 million in windfall profits. At trial, testimony was provided that the value of the properties had more than doubled since acquisition and were estimated to be worth at least \$40 million.

- The fact that Cafesjian did not exercise the legally-required "utmost good faith" toward the AGMM or the Assembly by seeking the appreciated real estate and blocking development of the museum in advance of the December 31, 2010 deadline.

Although Cafesjian made claims of ownership with respect to the Armenian National Institute's (ANI) artifacts, research library and Genocide-related materials, they were rejected by the court. ANI will not be impacted by the court's decision. The Armenian National Institute was established in 1997 through a significant contribution by Hirair Hovnanian of over \$1 million. ANI will remain an independent body with an independent board of directors.

Hirair Hovnanian Writes Open Letter to Gerald Cafesjian

HOVNANIAN, from page 1

I chose to write to you in this open forum only after being silent throughout this entire trial, even though you used your media sources to constantly spread false facts and mean-spirited articles about me during the trial.

As I have said many times, the motivation for my involvement with the project is my belief that building a Genocide museum in our nation's capital is a noble endeavor for the Armenian people.

Now that you have fought so hard to have all the properties and thus absolute control over the project, it is my hope that you are truly committed to dedicating these properties to the building of an Armenian Genocide museum, as you had promised the judge and the Armenian people. It is my hope that this project will not

suffer the same fate as did the grand vision you had for your art museum in Yerevan, which remains to this day unrealized, and that you are even more motivated to complete the Genocide museum on the grand \$200-million scale that you have so often spoken about.

Although you were unwilling to guarantee during litigation that these properties will be used solely for a museum, you have an obligation to the Armenian people to build this Genocide museum in accordance with the vision initially espoused and without any conditions. If you had been willing to guarantee this, I may have been able to convince all interested parties to agree not to file an appeal.

Sincerely,
Hirair Hovnanian

Armenian Heritage Park

On the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway, Boston



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Government Honors the Late Col. George Juskalian by Naming Post Office in His Honor

JUSKALIAN, from page 5

In remarks marking the occasion, Rep. Frank Wolf paid tribute to Colonel George Juskalian heroism and dedication to public service: "Col. Juskalian served in the United States Army with great distinction for nearly 30 years, including service in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. He spent 27 months in captivity as a Prisoner of War (POW) during WWII and received numerous awards from



Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA) making his remarks

the US Army for outstanding service including its highest honor, the Legion of Merit. Colonel Juskalian was an example of the best of America, son of immigrants who devoted himself to the preservation of our nation and freedom around the world. Col. George Juskalian was one of the most highly decorated Armenian-American veterans to ever serve in the US Military. He is recognized for his service and his dedication to America."

The House of Representatives had unanimously approved on December 1, 2010 HR 6392, legislation introduced by Wolf (R-VA) and supported by Virginia's entire Congressional delegation, to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 5003 Westfields Boulevard in Centreville as the "Colonel George Juskalian Post Office Building" in honor of his military career and dedication to public service. Swift Senate approval of HR 6392 followed and President Barack Obama signed this resolution as Public Law 111-367 on January 4, 2011.

Friends and neighbors led by Greg Mathieson who knew Juskalian, organized a letter-writing campaign and lobbied Frank and Sen. Mark Warner to sponsor jointly the bill. Representatives from the American Legion Post 1995 and Veterans of Foreign Wars 9469 Post 8469 also wrote to them to help support the idea.

American Legion Post Commander Peter DeFreece wrote that naming the building

after Juskalian was an act that would do much more than to honor one veteran's service: "Although Centreville, Virginia has many residents that have served our nation with distinction, there is no monument, plaque or memorial dedicated to the men and women of the US Armed Forces. Naming the Centreville Postal Facility for Colonel Juskalian would represent a constant reminder to patrons of the service and sacrifices made by the military veterans in their community. By placing Colonel Juskalian's name and a small memorial in the Centreville Post Office, we honor him and all the veterans within our community, past, present and future".

Juskalian was born in Fitchburg, Mass., on June 7, 1914 and was the youngest son of Kevork Juskalian of Kharpert and Maritza Ferrahian of Arapkir. He was raised in Fitchburg, attended the local high school and graduated from Boston University in 1936 with a Bachelor of Science degree in journalism while concurrently earning a commission as a second Lieutenant in the US Army Reserve via ROTC.

Juskalian was called to active duty in November of 1940. During WWII, he saw combat duties in North Africa where he was a prisoner of war for more than 27 months; he was a battalion commander in Korea in 1952-1953; he was military advisor to the Vietnamese Army under combat conditions in 1963-1964 and advisor to the Imperial Iranian Army in Teheran, 1957-1958. Other key assignments included service in General Dwight Eisenhower's secretariat in the Pentagon, 1945-1948 and subsequent postings at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and Fort Benning, Ga. He retired from the United States Army with the rank of colonel in 1967.

In the course of a distinguished military career, Juskalian was awarded a slew of medals recognizing him for courage and gallantry, including, among others, two silver medals, four bronze stars, the Legion of Merit and Army Commendation Medal. The Silver Star is the third-highest military decoration that can be awarded to a member of any branch of the United States armed forces for extraordinary heroism and valor in the face of enemy. On more than one occasion Juskalian risked his life to save the lives of his comrades and to lead them to safety.

He lived in Centreville with his family for more than 25 years and was an active and respected member of St. Mary's Armenian Apostolic Church.

Juskalian devoted as much energy and time to Armenian community affairs as he could. He is a former member of the Armenian General Benevolent Union's (AGBU) Central Committee of America and the Armenian Assembly of America; he served on the Diocesan Council of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America. In recognition of these services to Church and nation, Vazken I, Catholicos of All Armenians, award-



Juskalian Family members with Rep. Frank Wolf after the unveiling of the plaque

ed Juskalian in 1988 the medal of St. Nerses Shnorhali. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors recognized Juskalian for his heroism and honorable service to the United States during a formal session on April 23, 2007.

Recognizing the multi-faceted contributions that the late Juskalian had made to his community and country, Virginia Gov. Robert F. McDonnell issued on this occasion a certificate of recognition bringing to the attention of the citizens of Virginia the significance of "this observation on this day coinciding with the Armed Forces Day." Virginia

State Delegate Jim LeMunyon read the declaration and handed the framed certificate to Kevork Juskalian, the late colonel's son, who has also served in the US Armed Forces. Letters sent by former Senators John Warner and Presidential candidate Robert Dole commending the services of Juskalian were also read before a plaque honoring his services was unveiled jointly by Wolf and members of Juskalian family.

Following the ceremony a reception was held in the post office just named for Juskalian, bringing the proceedings of a memorable day to conclusion.

Armenian Memorial Church Annual Fair on June 4

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Memorial Church of Watertown will hold its Annual Fair on Saturday, June 4, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the church, rain or shine. Armenian dinners will be served under the tent from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. with take out orders also available. This year Armenian vegetarian meals will also be available.

In addition, Armenian pastries and other homemade specialties will be on sale. The women of the church who are famous for their fine cooking have been preparing for months.

The fair also features a silent auction with valuable gift certificates, jewelry and vacation weekends. There will also be tables of gift items for sale.

While this event is its biggest fundraiser, the church designates 10 percent of the proceeds to worthwhile charities. This year's donation will go to a Christian youth conference center in Beirut, Lebanon, and as a result more young people of all ages will be able



Several members of the Armenian Memorial Church Fair Committee gather at a meeting to coordinate plans for the June 4 fair. They are front row, from left, Heidi Shamlan, Danielle Shamlan and Vicky Tomasian; back row, from left, Gregg Ohanian, Adrine Beurklian and Roberta Vanderkyl.

to enjoy a camping experience.

Christine Mekjian of Watertown is chairing this year's fair with a committee, which includes Adrine Beurklian of Watertown, Gregg Ohanian of Woburn, Susan Parseghian of Arlington, Heidi and Danielle Shamlan of Bedford, Vicky Tomasian of Belmont and Roberta Vanderkyl of Watertown. Angel Parseghian of Belmont, president of the Ladies' Aide, is chairing the delicacies table.

The Armenian Memorial Church is located at 32 Bigelow Ave.

80th Anniversary Of Holy Ascension Armenian Church Commemorated

ANNIVERSARY, from page ?

Anniversary Events Committee coordinator, Avetik Topchyan played two pieces from Sayat Nova and Komitas Vartabed on the kemanche. Deacon Thomas Dabakian, who was the master of ceremonies, invited Fr. Untzag Nalbandian, who has been the pastor there for 28 years, to make his remarks. He briefly reflected on the history of the church.

The community had invited Garen Nazarian, the ambassador of Armenia to the United Nations, who in his speech presented the challenges of Armenia. He was able to connect the audience to the victories of Armenia and Artsakh. Edward Gulbenkian, one of our American-Armenian benefactors conducted the question-and-answer portion of the program, when an unexpected number of questions were posed to the ambassador.

Hagop Vartivarian, the chairman of

the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York, also spoke and stressed the importance of keeping alive the Armenian language and culture, especially in America and in the small communities of the Eastern Diocese.

Panos Titizian, who also was present from Los Angeles, similarly underscored the concern.

On this occasion, George Krikorian, 100, was honored and given a rug made in Armenia with the picture of the Mother Cathedral of Holy Echmiadzin. Krikorian, who is the last surviving witness of the church's consecration, received the gift from Nazarian.

Incidentally, this small community has donated about \$300,000 to Armenia during the past 28 years.

The 80th anniversary celebrations will culminate with a visit by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate to the community, on October 23.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Diocesan Assembly Banquet Honors Bedevian, Governor Patrick, Heritage Park Organizers

DIOCESE, from page 1

A video presentation told of Bedevian's journey from his birthplace of Jerusalem to America; his personal story as a self-made businessman and devoted head of a family and of his service and generosity to the Armenian Church – including the construction of a cathedral in Vanadzor, Armenia, which he undertook with his wife, Ruth.

Accepting his award, Bedevian reflected on his life and the influence the church had on him ever since he was a little boy.

"By the age of 5, I was already involved in the St. James Armenian Church in Jerusalem," said Bedevian. "My mother sewed a *shabig* for me and I held her hand as we walked to church on Sundays."

His exposure to the Armenian faith and heritage was not limited to the confines of the church, however. As a student at Jerusalem's Tarkmanchatz School, he, along with his classmates, learned "that our faith and traditions are all one."

Strong, Engaged, Inspiring

Gov. Deval Patrick of Massachusetts, the recipient of the Diocese's 2011 "Friend of the Armenian Award," was applauded as a leader who has reliably supported the Armenian community in Massachusetts – in particular with the founding of Armenian Heritage Park on Boston's Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway.

Patrick accepted his award in person on Thursday afternoon, during the opening session of the Diocesan Assembly, before the assembled delegates. But a video clip of his acceptance speech was screened at the Friday night banquet.

In his remarks, the visibly-moved governor forcefully said he knew how important it was to the Armenian community that the Genocide be called by its rightful name; but he went on to add, "I also know that the Genocide is not all that you are."

He spoke about the "tenacity, resilience



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian presents the "Armenian Church Member of the Year" award to Sarkis Bedevian.

Committee of the foundation, Kalustian called the project a "truly unified effort of our entire community."

"This park will stand as a tribute to the Armenian immigrants and to many other immigrant communities who escaped tragedy and found safety on our shores," he said, before expressing thanks to all the organizations and people involved in helping the park come to fruition.

Kalustian also noted that an endowment associated with Armenian Heritage Park will sponsor an ongoing lecture series on human rights. The series was inaugurated last September with a lecture by Kerry Kennedy.

"God bless America," Kalustian concluded. "For where else but in America could

appreciate his grand spirit and generous soul," said the Primate. "He is a man who feels the hand of God in his life, and who responds out of love and a sense of responsibility."

The Primate reflected on the strength of the New England Armenian community and its ability to support such a significant undertaking as Armenian Heritage Park, despite the challenges it faced.

"The park you have realized is a sign of hope and optimism; and evidence of the power that lay ministry – the 'Ministry of the Faithful' – can have in our lives, and in the broader society around us."

He also expressed admiration for Patrick's strong support of the Armenian-American community in Massachusetts.

"Governor Patrick is himself a man of faith, and our prayers are with him," said the Primate. "We are proud to have such an honorable friend, adding his voice to our own."

The Primate concluded by congratulating the entire Armenian Heritage Foundation Executive Committee: Kalustian, Charles Guleserian, Haig Deranian, Karen Derderian, Lucy Hoosian, Bruce Bagdasarian, Fr. Vasken Kouzouian and Walter Nahabedian; honorary chair and vice chair, Peter Koutoujian and Rachel Kaprielian, respectively, and architect Donald Tellalian.

Mezzo-soprano Victoria

Avetisyan, accompanied by Nune Hakobyan, provided the cultural portion of the evening, beautifully rendering several songs in Armenian.

Remarks during the evening were offered by the Rev. Vasken Kouzouian, pastor of Cambridge's Holy Trinity Armenian Church.

Also speaking on the occasion were Janice Dorian and Nancy Kasarjian, co-chairs of the host parish's Diocesan Assembly Committee.



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian presents a special award to James Kalustian, president of the Armenian Heritage Foundation.

and staunch patriotism" he has witnessed among the members of the Armenian community in Massachusetts. "That is also who you are, and what makes this community so rich, so strong, so engaged and so inspiring for me," Patrick said.

A short film portraying the September 2010 dedication ceremony for the Armenian Heritage Park was also shown at the banquet, as a prelude for a special presentation to the park's Executive Committee members.

The park itself is a gift to Boston and Massachusetts from the Armenian-American community. Diocesan Council Chairman Oscar Tatosian announced the special award as it was presented to James Kalustian, president of the Armenian Heritage Foundation.

Speaking on behalf of the Executive

Armenian immigrants escape persecution, find freedom to worship in their own faith, the opportunity for better lives for their families, and the hope that tomorrow offers endless possibilities?"

Responding out of Love and Responsibility

In his benediction, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), reflected on the individuals and causes honored during the evening.

He commented on Bedevian's leadership in the Armenian Church and community, and praised him and his wife, Ruth, for raising a pious family and passing their heritage down to their children.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

109th Diocesan Assembly Focuses on Lay Ministry

BOSTON — The 109th Diocesan Assembly, hosted in Boston by the Holy Trinity Church of Cambridge, Mass., from April 28 to May 1, introduced the Diocese's new focus on lay ministry and explored ways in which lay members of the Armenian Church could enhance their service to their parishes, and enrich their own contribution to the mission of the church.

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), presided over the meeting of 155 clergy and lay delegates, representing parishes from across the Eastern Diocese.

The assembly got underway on April 28 with a reading of the message of Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

"The theme of the Diocesan Assembly, 'Vocations — The Call to Serve: Ministry of the Faithful,' serves to prompt and urge the honorable delegates and faithful Armenians of your God-nourished Diocese to firmly hold on to their vocation, will, and determination to serve for the glory of God through deeds that support the church," the catholicos wrote. "May the good Lord enlighten the course of your God-nourished Diocese, and help you in all of your endeavors to support our church and our nation."

Delegates then heard reports from the Diocesan organizations, including the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), the Armenian Church Endowment Fund (ACEF), the Ararat Center, the Legate's Committee, St. Nersess Armenian Seminary and the Diocesan Council.

They also held elections for various Diocesan boards, including the Diocesan Council, which will welcome a new clergy member and two new lay members: the Rev. Krikor Sabounjian (of Framingham, Mass.), Howard Atesian (of Southfield, Mich.) and Lisa Esayian (of Chicago, Ill.).

Connecting to Make a Difference

Randy Sapah-Gulian, chair of the Board of Directors of FAR, spoke about the organization's accomplishments since its founding 20 years ago, and the promise of its newest initiatives, including the FAR-ACYOA partnership and the Young Professionals Trip to Armenia, which will include a tour of historic Armenian lands in eastern Turkey for the first time in the program's history.

In the past two decades, FAR has allocated \$285 million in humanitarian assistance and developed more than 220 programs in Armenia, including efforts to bolster education, infrastructure, social services and medicine.

Sapah-Gulian also highlighted the FAR-planned tribute in honor of Charles Aznavour. Held on Friday, May 20, in New York City, the evening marked the 20th anniversary of Armenia's independence and honored this great artist, humanitarian, diplomat, and visionary.

ACEF Board members Haig Ariyan and Tom Garabedian presented their report, in which they stressed that despite economic difficulties, ACEF returns have outperformed the market and the organization's own benchmark since 2000.

ACEF had \$78 million in assets, with a total of 1,400 endowed funds at the end of 2010. A total of \$3.5 million was distributed to beneficiaries in March 2010, and \$3.1 million in March of 2011.

Ariyan, who chairs ACEF's investment committee, also noted that ACEF represents a diverse class of investments to ensure income, appreciation and safety. He added that the organization launched a new website and accompanying marketing materials to help familiarize current and potential beneficiaries with its work.

Ararat Center Board Vice Chair Rose Najarian Kedeshian gave an animated presentation highlighting the different organizations within and outside the Armenian community that have made use of the Ararat Center.

She said the 65-acre retreat and conference center serves diverse needs, and encouraged delegates to consider the center when planning parish retreats and other activities. She also shared information about this year's Ararat Center Festival scheduled for Saturday, July 23,

which will be dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Armenia's independence.

Called to Serve Together

Diocesan Legate Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, director of Ecumenical Relations at the Eastern Diocese, and Legate's Committee members Lisa Esayian and Antranig Garibian spoke about efforts to raise awareness about the Armenian Church among ecumenical and interfaith groups and to advocate for the Armenian community at various levels of government.

In the past year, Aykazian met with members of President Barack Obama's administration to discuss the status of Christians in the Middle East, attended a meeting of religious leaders in Canada and accompanied Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, on a trip to Baku for a World Summit of Religious Leaders. He has also begun serving as the chair of the fundraising committee for the World Council of Churches.

Aykazian has continued efforts to support the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the

and increase exchange programs with seminaries in Armenia and Jerusalem.

During the current academic year, four seminarians have been preparing for ordination at St. Nersess. In the 2011-12 year, the seminary expects to enroll eight full-time students, plus three part-time students who are interested in learning more about the Armenian Church without becoming ordained as priests. In the summer, the seminary will continue its popular conferences for high school and college students, with a total of five sessions planned for the coming months.

Balian said the seminary has improved its financial standing and welcomed new board members who have helped strengthen its efforts to educate future clergy and reach out to the larger Armenian community.

Budget and Development

Delegates heard from James Kalustian, treasurer of the Diocesan Council, about the Diocese's finances and approved revisions to the 2011 budget and a new 2012 budget.



Delegates during a voting session at the 109th Diocesan Assembly

Armenian community in the Holy Land, and to seek action on the Armenian situation in the Republic of Georgia. In addition, he has called for increased outreach to Christians in Iraq and other parts of the Middle East.

He visited parishes across the Diocese throughout the year to inform them about the Diocese's ecumenical efforts, and to encourage them to participate in ecumenical and interfaith activities on a local level.

The Very Rev. Papken Salibyan, vicar of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Georgia, spoke about the importance of supporting Armenian churches and villages in the Javakhk region. He described his own experiences of ministering to Armenians in Javakhk and underlined the need for continued spiritual, financial, and political action to ensure the future of the community.

Another guest speaker, Kathryn M. Lohre, president-elect of the National Council of Churches, addressed the assembly on the message of the Easter story. Drawing on her own research of the Armenian Genocide, Lohre acknowledged this year's rare coincidence of Armenian Martyrs Day and Easter Sunday and placed it in the context of Christ's powerful victory over death.

"Our faith in the risen Christ is a faith in defiance," she said. "We must continue to ask ourselves how we can live this faith together."

Assembly presentations continued with a report from St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, given by its dean, the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan and board member Raffi Balian.

Now in its 50th year, the seminary plans to expand its programs to offer special training for priests traveling to the Eastern Diocese from Armenia, boost engagement with parish clergy

Echoing last year's message, Kalustian emphasized that the Diocese would continue a very disciplined financial course, noting that operating expenses declined in 2010 from the previous year. The revised 2011 budget and the new 2012 budget have outlined further reductions.

Outgoing Diocesan Council Member Sandra Shahinian Leitner spoke about the Diocese's development initiatives. In 2010, the Diocese raised \$720,929 — nearly \$74,000 more than the previous year — and attracted new donors through its Matching and Challenge Grant initiatives.

She also noted that clergy, delegates and others in leadership positions participated in the Annual Appeal at a greater percentage in 2010.

Sam Mikaelian, coordinator of development at the Diocese, announced that in 2011 the Annual Appeal would be dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the ordination to the priesthood of Barsamian.

He launched the drive during the assembly proceedings in Boston, where he was able to raise more than \$20,000 last month. The sum will be matched by an anonymous donor.

Youth Outreach

At the Second General session on Friday, April 29, Kalustian presented an update on the Guidelines for Diocesan Bylaws of the Armenian Church — a constitutional framework for all Armenian Church dioceses, worked out during meetings of a five-member committee at Holy Echmiadzin.

Kalustian offered a comparison of the guidelines to the bylaws of the Eastern Diocese, which was completed by a second committee appointed by the Diocesan Council and Primate three years ago at the request of the Diocesan Assembly.

Following a discussion of the document, delegates voted on the following statement, which the Diocesan Council will communicate to Holy Echmiadzin: "The Diocesan Assembly appreciates and encourages the initiative of His Holiness and the Supreme Spiritual Council in continuing the process of providing guidelines to govern the Armenian Church."

Lydia Kurkjian, chair of the ACYOA Central Council, and Danny Mantis, the council's vice-chair, spoke about plans to offer more leadership workshops and training opportunities for members of the organization.

The ACYOA also plans to spend more time developing the newly-formed FAR-ACYOA partnership.

Mantis also said the ACYOA would focus greater effort on building its 26 chapters and encouraging the formation of new chapters where possible. He asked clergy and lay leaders to support the organization by promoting its activities and offering other forms of assistance at the local parish level.

Deacon Rubik Malian, chair of the Sacred Music Council, said the organization plans to organize regional workshops for choir members and directors in the coming year. He said the Music Council will also work to increase communication with clergy and choir members, improve its organizational structure, and develop new methods to teach the sacred music of the Armenian Church to young people across the Diocese.

Proposals and thanks

The Third General session began on Saturday, April 30, with a sermon by the Rev. Hovnan Demerjian, pastor of St. Hagop Church of Pinellas Park, Fla.

Zita Butler, chair of the Women's Guild Central Council, discussed activities the organization has planned for the coming year, including a symposium in New York City in the fall and a Holy Land pilgrimage next winter.

Diocesan Council Chairman Oscar Tatosian opened the council's presentation with a video reviewing the programs and activities organized in the past year. He said that the Diocese remains committed to supporting programming that will help young people become more familiar with the practices and traditions of the Armenian Church and gain the skills they'll need to assume leadership positions in the future.

Turning to new business items, delegates adopted proposals to install a plaque and photo of the late Rev. Paree Metjian at the Ararat Center in honor of his dedication to the St. Vartan Camp program.

Other proposals adopted include support for the Armenian Patriarchate and the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem, and the extension of role of the Executive Secretary of the ACYOA.

Before adjourning, delegates thanked the Rev. Vasken Kouzouian, pastor of Holy Trinity Church of Cambridge, Mass., and the host parish's Assembly Committee, which was co-chaired by Janice Dorian and Nancy D. Kasarjian. Delegates also expressed their gratitude to Assembly chair Antranig Garibian, Vice Chair Deacon Ara Jeknavorian, Secretary Terry Peterson and Assistant Secretary, the Rev. Hakob Gevorgyan.

The 110th Diocesan Assembly will be hosted by St. Mark Church of Springfield, Mass.

Election Results

The following individuals were elected to Diocesan boards and positions during the 109th Diocesan Assembly. The Diocesan Board of Trustees includes: Janet Mardigian (10-year term), Charles Guleserian (five-year completion of term); Diocesan Council: Fr. Vasken Kouzouian, Fr. Krikor Sabounjian, Howard Atesian, Lisa Esayian, Paul Mardoian, Shake Derderian (alternate); Auditing Committee, Dean Shahinian, Dn. Gregory Krikorian (alternate); Nominating Committee, Fr. Yeprem Kelegian, Fr. Shnork Souin, Edward Brewster, Dn. Ara Jeknavorian, Gary Zamanigian (chair), Anna Marie Norehad (alternate); Proposals Committee, Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan, Tom Ashbahian, Deacon Serop Demirjian, Lisa Kouzoujian (chair), Lisa Manookian and Ed Korkorian (alternate).



New York METRO

New Jersey Benefit for St. Giragos Church of Dikranagerd

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

NEW MILFORD, N.J. — Some 360 Armenians from the greater New York metropolitan area came together on May 14 at the Hovnanian Banquet Hall here to raise funds for the restoration of Saint Giragos Church in Dikranagerd (Diyarbakir), Turkey. This is the first church in the interior of Turkey to be restored by Armenians. Speakers came from Turkey, Los Angeles and other parts of the United States to support this unusual effort which will culmi-



Osman Köker

nate this fall in the reopening of the church with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in Armenian.

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), explained to those present that though most openly Armenian families have left the Dikranagerd area, "I, and I am sure many of you, believe that we must renovate our historical churches so that they remain standing and testify to the fact that Armenians lived and worked, and created Armenian establishments in those cities and regions, so that Armenian life continues." He fervently then declared to great applause, "And why not...we believe that in the future Armenian Christians can still live on those historical lands, because those lands are Armenian lands."

Vartkes Ergun Ayik was the main speaker. Chairman of the St. Giragos Church Parish Council, Ayik began the renovation project three years ago. He has visited the United States, Canada and Europe at his own expense to raise money for the church. Ayik explained that Saint Giragos, with its seven altars, was the largest Armenian Church in the Middle East. Although according to some sources it was built in the early 16th century, a stone bearing the date of 1367 was found among the ruins during the renovations. The church was renovated several times in the 19th century, and finally was built out of stone. It included a small

the Patriarchate through the efforts of the local Dikranagerd-Armenian community. After 1980, however, practically no Armenians were left living in the city.

In 2007, after several visits Ayik noticed that the local situation had changed. New officials in Diyarbakir were willing to cooperate. The municipality promised to pay one-third of all restoration costs, and architects and specialists joined the efforts. Ayik said that they preferred not to ask for any financial support from Armenians in Turkey or abroad until construction began. Only a few Armenians believed in the success of this project, but by now 60 percent of the work has been completed. The construction cost of the buildings and bell tower together altogether is roughly \$3 million. So far, the municipality has provided \$660,000, and \$675,000 has been collected from donations in Turkey. With undeniable evidence of the viability of the reconstruction in hand, Ayik felt the time had come to ask support from Armenians abroad.

Ayik pointed out that the St. Giragos Foundation has some rental income. Furthermore, some important pieces of property belonging to the church are at present occupied by government offices, schools and apartments. Court cases have been initiated to recover these properties, but will take some time. In the program booklet for the evening benefit Ayik is quoted as saying that Ertugrul Gunay, Turkish minister of culture and education, visited Diyarbakir several months ago to see the restoration and promised that the state would provide the equivalent of \$16,000 in funds as a donation, but the St. Giragos Foundation is still awaiting these funds.

St. Giragos will differ from other Armenian churches like that of Akhtamar which the Turkish government renovated as a museum. The Patriarchate will keep St. Giragos open every day, and the Divine Liturgy can be held there any time without government permission. Cultural activities will also be organized there.

Senior members of the East Coast St. Giragos Church Restoration Committee Hagop Uzatmacyan and Bayar Karakashian joined Archbishop Aram Ateshian, vicar general of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, to present a gold medal to Ayik in gratitude for his efforts. Dikran the Great is pictured on one side of the medal, and Mount Ararat on its obverse. The medal was specially created here in the US.

Ateshian, who came especially for the St. Giragos fundraising efforts to the United States, encouraged the audience to give donations for this worthy project. He gave a brief synopsis of the difficult efforts to create a responsible Parish Council for the St. Giragos Church and stressed that it was important to have a church in Diyarbakir as proof of Armenian existence there. He noted that though only two openly Armenian families are left; there are some 70 Armenian families who have converted to Islam out of pressure or who hide their Armenian identity. Ateshian's own sister's children are among them. The restoration of the church gives these Armenians strength to recover their ancestral identity and faith, and so some of his relatives have agreed to be baptized on the day the church is reopened.

Archbishop Viken Aykazian, diocesan legate in Washington, DC, also spoke in favor of the project and stated that the time for donations was now. Armenians had to invest in their own heritage. Ateshian pointed out that the three archbishops present that evening had all come from the provinces to become students together in Istanbul in the Holy Cross Tbrebank or seminary. They then went to Jerusalem to continue their religious education and rose in the ranks of the hierarchy.

Author and journalist Osman Köker, visiting

the US from Turkey to present his book, *Armenians in Turkey 100 Years Ago*, showed the audience slides on the Armenian presence in the Ottoman Empire as well as specifically some pictures of Diyarbakir. He is preparing a special exhibition on the Armenians of Dikranagerd from the same Orlando Calumeno collection he used for his book, and will inaugurate his exhibition when St. Giragos is opened this fall. Köker's work has been important in providing information on Armenians to contemporary Turkish society.

The New Jersey benefit included in the audience the Assyrian Orthodox Church Parish Council from Paramus. Many Assyrians lived in the Diyarbakir area. There were also a number of personalities from various parts of the US present, including representatives of the various Armenian political parties, as well as Ambassador Garen Nazarian, permanent representative of the Republic of Armenia to the



Hirant Gulian

United Nations. Panos Titizian, a veteran member of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party from California, discussed contemporary Turkish politics concerning the Armenians as part of a patriotic speech in Armenian, while Armenian Weekly editor Khatchig Mouradian briefly spoke in encouragement of the project.

The master of ceremonies for the evening was Hirant Gulian, who is one of the active leaders of the restoration committee for the Eastern

US. He exclaimed that "tonight, everybody is Dikranagerdtsi [originating from Dikranagerd]." Indeed, the food that everybody enjoyed that evening was typical of the region and was prepared by Suren Kilerciyan, also a committee member, while the Onnik Dinkjian band played Armenian and regional music. Oudist Zaven Uzatmacyan of Dikranagerd sang, and a Dikranagerd *halay* dance was led by



Archbishop Aram Ateshian

Bayar Karakashian and his friends.

At the entrance to the hall, an embroidered curtain from St. Giragos, lent by Virginia Clark, was on display along with a picture of the St. Giragos bell tower. When Clark and her husband visited St. Giragos in 1995, the latter found the curtain buried in the earth and somehow managed to bring it back to the US.

Fundraising for the effort continued a week later in Toronto. Among the personal donations made so far are 50 crosses made of gold alloy for each of the 38 columns in St. Giragos Church and for the walls, which is being given by Hirant Gulian. He and a group from the East Coast will visit the church in June prior to the formal opening, and the Divine Liturgy will be conducted there.

Contributions towards the reconstruction of St. Giragos may be made out to the Diocese of the Armenian Church and sent to Zakar Dikme (575 Stewart St., Ridgefield, NJ 07657), with the notation "Dikranagerd Church."



Among the guests were Nishan and Margrit Atinizian of Massachusetts, Panos Titizian of Los Angeles, Hagop Vartivarian and Dr. Raffi Hovanesian

chapel, guest house, school, kitchen and other structures around the church. It had a tall bell tower which was bombarded in 1915 and topped by Ottoman cannon fire. The church was converted into a government warehouse sometime in the late 1950s, and Sümerbank used the property. It was only taken back in 1962 by

SUMMER 2011 ARMENIA FUND DONOR TRIP TO ARMENIA

This summer, Armenia Fund USA, U.S. Eastern region in collaboration with the Armenia Fund U.S. Western Region is providing a unique opportunity for our donors to visit Armenia and see with their own eyes where the donations to Armenia Fund go.

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Join us on a 12-day trip to Armenia and Artsakh (10 full days on the ground) from July 13-25. We'll visit some of Armenia's most well-known sites as well as some unique, off the beaten path locations seldom visited by tourists. In addition to sightseeing, we'll also visit a dozen Armenia Fund project locations where work that you generously helped fund is either complete or currently under way.

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New York
METRO

World Famous Singer and Philanthropist Charles Aznavour Is Honored in New York

By Taleen Babayan
 Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK – Only the rare individual can conquer the international music scene while using his renown and resources to improve the lives of people around the world.

Such a man is Charles Aznavour, whose music has bridged two centuries and countless international boundaries, and whose humanitarian efforts have elevated cause of vulnerable people in Armenia and elsewhere.

In recognition of his lifetime achievements – and to mark the 20th anniversary of the Republic of Armenia – Aznavour was honored by the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) at Cipriani's Wall Street Restaurant, on Friday, May 20.

More than 600 people attended the program. During the banquet, guests, dignitaries,



Eric Bogosian serves as the master of ceremonies. (photo credit: Kyle Gustafson)

artists and musicians from around the globe recognized Aznavour for his philanthropy and for his efforts in improving lives in Armenia over the past two decades.

"Our love for Armenia keeps us glued together," said Randy Sapah-Gulian, chairman of FAR, in his welcoming remarks. "And we are here tonight to honor an artist, a visionary, a man of great integrity and Armenia's favorite son: Charles Aznavour."

Aznavour's initiatives in Armenia took place



Armenia's Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian delivers remarks. (photo credit: Edmond Terakopian)

in the immediate aftermath of the 1988 earthquake in Spitak and Gumri, which left death and destruction in its wake. In response to a disaster that claimed 50,000 lives, the singer and his long-time producer Levon Sayan established Aznavour Pour l'Armenie, a foundation that provided a way for the singer to send relief aid to Armenia.



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian presents an award to Charles Aznavour as members of the Fund for Armenian Relief Board of Directors look on. (photo credit: Edmond Terakopian)

Helping shift the world's focus to the suffering of Armenians, he gathered 89 artists in the months after the earthquake to record the pop single *Pour Toi, l'Armenie* (For You, Armenia), an international hit and chart-topper, which sold two million copies in France alone.

Liza's Loving Tribute

Eric Bogosian, the critically-acclaimed actor and author, served as a witty and urbane master of ceremonies. Bogosian spoke of Aznavour's talents, his accomplishments and his philanthropic works.

"Tonight is truly pour toi, Charles," said Bogosian, who had a chance to work alongside Aznavour in Atom Egoyan's 2002 film, "Ararat." "Tonight is the community's tribute to a man who has inspired us and whom we love and respect."

Liza Minnelli, a student and long-time friend of Aznavour, who also chaired the Honorary Committee for the FAR tribute, welcomed her mentor onstage to receive his award.

In a touching short film documenting Aznavour's achievements, Minnelli described her early worship of Aznavour's singing and performing style, which evolved first into a student-teacher relationship and eventually into a series of international artistic collaborations. She recalled his pride in being Armenian and the determination he showed when disaster struck his homeland in 1988.

"When he put all his passion, all his time and stubbornness, into helping Armenia, it was spectacular," she said.

At Minnelli's introduction, the crowd rose to its feet to welcome the evening's honoree, who walked onstage with his famous Gallic swagger and expressed his gratitude for the tribute.

"It is moving to be honored by your own community," said Aznavour, in brief but poignant remarks. "Thank you for honoring me and thank you for our country."

An Enduring Legacy in Armenia

Aznavour's humanitarian efforts in Armenia have outlived the earthquake crisis, and continue to aid the needy and vulnerable as the country develops as an independent republic.

His concerts have raised money for important causes throughout Armenia, including child protection, education, healthcare and especially the care of Armenia's elderly citizens.

Awakened early on to the precarious living conditions of senior citizens in Vanadzor (Armenia's third-largest city), Aznavour Pour l'Armenie estab-

lished the Vanadzor Old Age Home. A decade ago, by agreement with the Aznavour foundation, FAR began overseeing the operations of the home and



Liza Minnelli introduces the evening's honoree. (photo credit: Kyle Gustafson)

receives generous support in this effort from the Kevork and Sirvart Karamanuk Foundation. At present, 55 local senior citizens live at and are cared for by 30 staff members at the Vanadzor Old Age Home.

Aznavour's humanitarian endeavors have also reached beyond Armenia. Following the earthquake in Haiti last year, he collaborated with 40 singers and musicians to record *Un Geste Pour Haiti Cherie* to raise money for victims.

Addressing the honoree at the May 20 event, Armenia's Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian spoke from the heart about the man he had come to know and admire during his earlier tenure as Armenia's Ambassador to France.

"You are 100-percent French and 100-percent Armenian," said Nalbandian, "and you can add 100 percent world citizen. You sow seeds of love in people's souls and in our souls."

Nalbandian went on to highlight Aznavour's strong ties to Armenia. In very personal remarks, he related the inspiration he drew from Aznavour's music and from the singer's devotion to his Armenian heritage.

The honoree's daughter, Seda Aznavour, a talented singer in her own right, sang a song in honor of her father, titled *Voch Mi Dzaghig* (Not a single Flower). Seda Aznavour's lively rendition in Armenian paid homage to her fam-

ily's ongoing commitment to preserve the Armenian culture.

Gift to the World

In addition to his humanitarian work, Charles Aznavour has taken up roles in the diplomatic arena, serving as Armenia's ambassador to Switzerland and Armenia's permanent delegate to the United Nations in Geneva. He has also been a leading voice for Genocide recognition in his native France.

A number of foreign dignitaries were among the distinguished guests at the May 20 gala, including Armenia's Ambassador to the US Tatoul Markarian, Armenia's permanent representative to the United Nations (UN) Karen Nazarian and Switzerland's ambassador to the UN Paul Seiger.

The May 20 tribute also served to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Armenia's independence, and to highlight the many humanitarian outreach programs undertaken by FAR since its founding more than two decades ago.

In the course of its history, the organization grew and prospered under the leadership of its great founding chairman, the late Kevork Hovnanian. Initially, FAR focused on medical and humanitarian assistance to the earthquake-ravaged region. But as Armenia was reborn as a free and independent republic, it was Hovnanian's determination that caused FAR to expand its projects to include housing, food and social programs as well as economic development.

Since its founding, FAR has provided \$285 million in aid to Armenia – making it one of the most effective, respected and honored humanitarian agencies working in the region.

To conclude the tribute evening, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) and president of FAR, spoke of the strength that Charles Aznavour has always found in his Armenian roots. He recalled an occasion in 2001 – during the celebration of the 1,700th anniversary of Armenia's conversion to Christianity – when Aznavour sang *Ave Maria* during a requiem service at the Dzidzernagapert Genocide Memorial, leaving "everyone in tears" – including the visiting Pope John Paul II.

"Charles Aznavour is an internationally loved and respected figure, and is a great example for all of us," said Barsamian. "Charles, your presence among us has been a gift to the world – and a gift to your fellow Armenians."

In addition to the film presentation tracing Aznavour's life and contributions to Armenia, a musical performance of Armenian songs was offered by Nina Stern (on clarinet) and Glen Velez (percussion). Anoush Barclay sang the Armenian national anthem, and Karim Sulayman the anthems of the United States and France, which opened the evening's formal program.

The Honorary Committee for FAR's Charles Aznavour Tribute was chaired by Minnelli, and included Tony Bennett, Celine Dion, Placido Domingo, Atom Egoyan, Arsinee Khanjian, Sir Elton John, David Furnish, Nalbandian, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, New York Sen. Charles Schumer, New Jersey Rep. Frank Pallone, Greek Orthodox Church Primate Archbishop Demetrios, Roman Catholic Archbishop of New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan, Episcopal Church Bishop of New York Bishop Mark Sisk, Appeal of Conscience Foundation President Rabbi Arthur Schneier, France's Ambassador to the US Francois Delattre, France's Ambassador to the UN Gerard Araud, Armenia's Ambassador to the US Tatoul Markarian, Nazarian, Mexico's Ambassador to the US Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana, former US Ambassador Edward Djerejian, Carnegie Corporation President Vartan Gregorian, Carnegie Hall Artistic Director Clive Gillinson, Lincoln Center President Reynold Levy, Juilliard School President Joseph Polisi and President Emeritus of the World Bank James Wolfensohn.



New York METRO

St. Vartan Cathedral Choir Performs Concert In Honor of Armenia's Independence

NEW YORK — A classical concert for the 20th anniversary of the independent Republic of Armenia was performed by the St. Vartan Cathedral Choir under the direction of distinguished artist of the Republic of Armenia, Prof. Khoren Mekanejian and pianist Karen Hakobyan, on Saturday, May 21, at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral.

The program featured the works of Komitas, Ayvazian, Satian, Berberian, Merangulian, Gounod, Bellini, Verdi and Bizet. Beautiful renditions of traditional Armenian songs were played,



Khoren Mekanejian conducts the St. Vartan Cathedral Choir at a concert on May 21.



The St. Vartan Cathedral Choir sang traditional Armenian songs at the conclusion of the May 21 concert.

including Komitas's *Hayastan*, Satian's *Artyok Kides Tou* and Godoian's *Eenchbes Yeraz*.

Soloists for the concert included Anoush Barclay, Anahid Boghossian, Edgar Brutyan, Hasmik Meikhanedjian, Audrey Melikian, Solange Merdinian, Vagharshak Ohanyan, Maro Partamian, Margarita Terzyan and Anahit Zakaryan.

The evening's keynote address was delivered by Garen Nazarian, Armenia's ambassador to the United Nations, who expressed his gratitude to the St. Vartan Cathedral Choir and Mekanejian for "promoting the Armenian spirit and our cultural heritage."

Noting the upcoming 20th anniversary of the independence of Armenia, Nazarian said the concert "gives us yet another opportunity to celebrate our renowned heritage."

He praised the members of the choir, whom he sees each Sunday in church, as they sing the ancient music of the badarak. "Your achievements are enormous sources of pride for the Armenian community and our country," he said.

Delivering the closing remarks, Archbishop Yeghishe Gizirian thanked all the participants in the evening's program. "With

your songs you gave us joy and you sweetened our souls," said Gizirian. "We give praise to the Lord that we have a free and independent Armenia!"

Supporters for the concert included the Dadourian Foundation, Dr. Raffi and Vicki Hovanessian, Dr. Svetlana Amirkhanian and Dr. Levon and Ani Capan.



Pianist Karen Hakobyan



Soloists Hasmik Meikhanedjian and Edgar Brutyan

Ian Gillan and Tony Iommi Come Together again In WhoCares to Benefit Armenian Music School

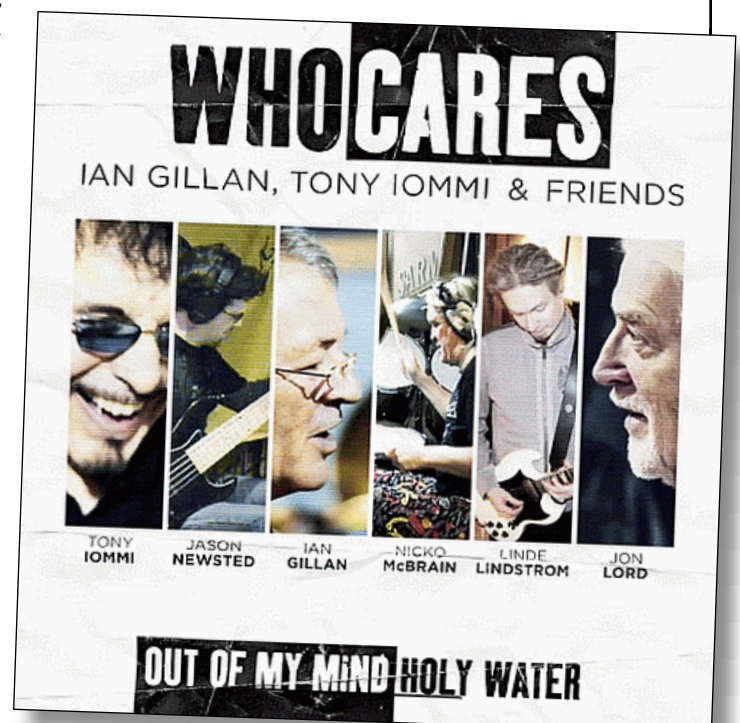
NEW YORK — Black Sabbath lead-guitarist Tony Iommi and Deep Purple lead-singer Ian Gillan have reunited for the first time since working together on Sabbath's 1983 "Born Again" album. The resulting two-man project, WhoCares, with a self-titled CD, features an all-star array of talent. All of the money generated from the digital Internet release of the two-song single on Tuesday, May 10, will benefit the music school of Gumri, Armenia, an area which never recovered from a massive 1988 earthquake.

Out Of My Mind features Deep Purple keyboardist Jon Lord, Iron Maiden drummer Nicko McBrain, bassist Jason Newsted and HIM guitarist Mikko "Linde" Lindström. *Holy Water* features Gillan and Iommi with guitarists Steve Morris/Michael Lee Jackson, drummer Randy Clarke, bassist Rodney Appleby and keyboardist Jesse O'Brien.

Additionally, on June 21, earMusic, in cooperation with Eagle Rock Entertainment, via its subsidiary Armoury Records, will release the two songs plus a 30-minute documentary showing the involvement over the years of Gillan and Iommi with Armenia, on a special CDE (enhanced CD).

Gillan said the idea came when he and Iommi flew back from the area together "after being inspired by the enthusiasm of everyone there to get this thing done," adding, "it was brilliant working with Tony again after all these years. He makes life easy for a singer. The other guys need no introduction, do they?"

"Some 20 years ago," adds Iommi, "when the call came, I thought, 'well, at least I've helped,' but it was going to Armenia and seeing the actual devastation caused by the earthquake that really made me realize that funds were still needed."





New York METRO

Mouradian Named New Bishop of Armenian Catholic Eparchy of US And Canada

NEW YORK — The Armenian Catholic Eparchy of the United States of America and Canada announced on May 20 that the Most Rev. Mikael Mouradian has been appointed new bishop of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of the United States and Canada.

He succeeds the Most Rev. Manuel Batakian, who had presented his resignation, having reached the canonical age prescribed by the Code of Canons of the Eastern Catholic Churches.

The new eparch was born in Beirut, Lebanon, on July 5, 1961. He was admitted first to the seminary of the Patriarchal Clergy of Bzommar in 1973 and to the Pontifical Armenian College of Rome in 1981, attending the Angelicum Pontifical University of Dominican Fathers and being graduated there by the theological and philosophical licenses. He has been specialized in the youth pastoral at Institut Catholique of Lyon, France in 1986.

Mouradian was ordained a priest on October 24, 1987, in Paris, by Bishop Krikor Ghabroyan, as a member of the Institute of the Patriarchal Clergy of Bzommar.



Bishop Mikael Mouradian

After his ordination, Mouradian fulfilled the following missions: assistant rector of the seminary of Bzommar (1987-1988), assistant rector of the seminary of Aleppo (1988-1989), pastor of the Armenian Catholic church of Our Lady of the Universe in Damascus, assistant pastor of the Holy Cross parish in Zalka, Lebanon (1991), pastor of various Catholic communities in the Northern provinces of Armenia (1992-2001), secretary general and executive director of Caritas-Armenia (1995-2001). He has been granted by the Ministry of Culture and Science of Armenia the title of honorary professor in the pedagogical faculty of Armenia in 2000.

Returning to Lebanon, Mouradian had been appointed pastor of Our Lady of Annunciation parish in Beirut, Lebanon (2001-2005), then spiritual director of the seminary of Bzommar and chaplain of the Armenian Catholic youth organization. He collaborated at the same time to the redaction of the patriarchate's official review Avedik.

Mouradian has been nominated rector of the Pontifical Armenian College of Rome in 2005, as well as Armenian Catholic Patriarchate's Procurator to the Holy See, in the Vatican.

On September 5, 2007, the General Assembly of the Institute of the Patriarchal Clergy of Bzommar elected him as the Patriarchal Vicar of the same institute and Superior of the Monastery of Our Lady of Bzommar, a charge that he has kept until his nomination as bishop of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of United States and Canada.

Lucy Ishkanian Honored at Prelacy Ladies Guild Mothers Day Luncheon

NEW YORK — The annual Mothers Day luncheon hosted by the Prelacy Ladies Guild took place on May 2 at the Palace.

Lucy Ishkanian was honored as the Woman of the Year. After conferring this honor upon Ishkanian, Archbishop Oshagan Cholyan, Prelate of the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, made a second announcement and surprise presentation of the Prelacy's Queen Zabel award to Ishkanian. The

community through her support of the education and careers of young artists.

Papazian told the gathering, "As you know, each year an individual is honored during this event. This year we are honoring someone whose name is very familiar to all. Lucy Ishkanian is an internationally-recognized artist, but she is first and foremost very dear to the Armenian American community. The critical acclaim she has received could easily fill a large volume. As a

age 7 she has included at least one Armenian selection in every one of her performances, thus introducing Armenian composers to the concert stage.

"She has performed throughout the world, receiving the enthusiastic critical acclaim of musicians, critics and music lovers for her brilliant technique and musical sensitivity.

"Lucy's artistic talents go beyond her extraordinary musical talent. She also writes — both prose and poetry — she paints, she teaches and she lectures. She is truly a renaissance woman, accomplished on so many different levels.

"For many years she has served as a member of the Prelacy's Musical Armenia Committee that showcases the talents of young Armenian musicians. In 1991, during her concert tour in Armenia she established a scholarship at the Komitas Conservatory for talented and deserving piano students in Armenia and Karabagh. Through her sheer determination she fulfilled a dream by inaugurating a unique friendship program between the Juilliard School in New York and the Komitas Conservatory in Yerevan. And in 1992 she established the Armenian Scholarship Fund at Juilliard. This fund assists exceptionally talented students from the Gomidas Conservatory who have been accepted at Juilliard. In 1997, her Jubilee Concert at Avery Fisher Hall marking the 25th anniversary of her New York debut was a benefit for the Armenian Scholarship Fund.

"No one said it better than the dean of the Juilliard School, Stephen Clapp, who wrote the following to her some years ago: 'With admiration for your tireless work to support young Armenian musicians, I write to send best wishes for your benefit concert on April 27 at Avery Fisher Hall. Knowing that proceeds from the event will be directed to the Armenian Scholarship Fund at the Juilliard School, I write also to extend deep gratitude for your advocacy and generosity. Indeed, these talented Armenian students would not be able to attend without your efforts on their behalf. For those you have helped and for all those who will benefit in the future from the Armenian Scholarship Fund, I extend profound thanks.'

A musical interlude was presented by Juilliard graduates and students: Cecce Pautikian, violin; Alex Sakarellos, violin and Alexander Gurevich, viola.



Honoree, Lucy Ishkanian, seated on the right, with her husband, Hagop Tankian, at the left, with Archbishop Oshagan Cholyan, with the other guests of the head table, including the ADL's Hagop Vartivarian

Queen Zabel award and the Eagle of the Prelacy are the highest awards given by the Eastern Prelacy.

Queen Zabel was the daughter of Levon the Great and upon the death of her father she was designated heir to the throne of Cilician Armenia. In spite of many trials and tribulations, Zabel successfully governed the country together with her husband, Hetoum. She was ahead of her time especially with her attention to social and cultural programs.

In introducing Ishkanian to the attendees, the afternoon's emcee, Iris Papazian, described Ishkanian as an internationally-recognized artist who continues to give back to the artistic

young and promising pianist, Lucy caught the attention of famed Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian who became a mentor to her. Khachaturian described Lucy as a 'gifted artist, endowed with brilliant technical virtuosity combined with deep musical sensitivity.'

"She gave her first recital at the age of 7, two years after becoming the youngest student ever accepted to the Juilliard Preparatory Division. She continued her education in the college division of Juilliard, graduating with both a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees. She also went on to complete requirements for a PhD degree at Columbia University.

"Incidentally, ever since that first recital at

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Arts & Living

Presentation of Opera 'King Abgar' in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES — The Friends of the UCLA Armenian Language and Culture Studies, a university-recognized organization liaising with the Armenian community of Southern California, is co-sponsoring a lecture-performance featuring a world premiere performance of extracts from the most recent Armenian opera completed earlier this year.

The event, to be held on Sunday, June 5, 3-5 p.m., is being organized by the Glendale Public Library.

Since its inception in the 1860s, opera has been one of the most important Armenian musical forms. In contrast to its neighbors in the Caucasus and the wider Middle East, Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora have produced a relatively large number of operas and established a prolific school of operatic vocal training, the graduates of which are now to be found singing on the stages of the most prestigious opera houses of Europe and North America.

This lecture by musicologist and composer Dr. Vache Sharafyan, currently visiting professor of Armenian music at UCLA, will present an overview of the development of the operatic art form in Armenian culture, reviewing the oeuvre of such great operatic composers as Tigran Chukhadjian (1837-1898), Armen Tigranyan (1879-1950) and Aleksandr Spendiaryan (1871-1928), before concentrating on the latest addition to Armenia's operatic repertoire, the opera "King Abgar," completed earlier this year by the lecturer, Sharafyan, based on a libretto by Gurgen Khandjyan, Artashes Aram and Vigen Chaldryan. The subject treats the apostolic origins of Armenia's Christianization according to historian Movses Khorenatsi's account of the rapport between Christ and King Abgar of Edessa and the related mission of the Apostle Thaddaeus in Armenia.

Sharafyan is a professor of composition at Yerevan State Conservatory from where he graduated with distinction in 1990. A prizewinner at the All-Union Composers' Competition in Moscow (1985) and winner of the 2005 MATA Festival Award in New York, he has served as a composer for the renowned Silk Road Project since 2001. His compositions, *The Sun, the Wine and the Wind of Time* and *The Morning Scent of the Acacia's Song*, were performed by cellist Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble at the Cologne Philharmonie, Brussels Philharmonie and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw. In the United States, Sharafyan's works have been featured at Carnegie Hall, the University of California, Berkeley, Stanford University and with the Chicago Symphony at Orchestra Hall. While a professor of music theory and sacred music at the Armenian Theological Seminary in Jerusalem (1992-96), he wrote a *Book of Chants* for use in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Sharafyan's recent successes include the world premiere of his *Viola Concerto* with Yuri Bashmet at the 2007 season opening of the Moscow Philharmonie at the Great Hall of the Conservatory, as well as a major commission from the Boston Modern Orchestra Project for a premiere in Boston in 2008.

The lecture will feature a live performance of some of the arias from the latest opera, which constitutes the world premiere of those portions. These will be performed by solo soprano and baritone to piano accompaniment by the composer.

Refreshments will be served after the lecture. All are invited to attend. For further information, contact The Friends of the UCLA Armenian Language and Culture Studies.



King Arshag II and his courtiers greeted the audience.

TCA Arshag Dickranian School Holds 30th Anniversary Cultural Extravaganza

LOS ANGELES — The Tekeyan Cultural Association's Arshag Dickranian School (ADS) celebrated its 30th anniversary, through a cultural program performed by the students. Among the guests were Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Archpriest Manoug Markarian, benefactors, board members, faculty, parents and friends.

The celebration, held on Sunday, May 22, was jointly organized by Armenian teachers Emma Umroyan, dance teacher Robert Arakelian and music teacher Komitas Keshishian, and collaboratively produced by the staff and students. It was held at the school's Walter and Laurel Karabian Hall.

The event commenced with the welcoming remarks of Student Council Chairperson Morris Sarafian, which was followed by the performance of the national anthem of the United States, by senior Ani Nercessian. Then students, clad in traditional Armenian attire and carrying torches and the flags of the school and Armenia, entered the hall in a procession. The stage décor, depicting the era of fourth-century Armenia, had a beautiful painting of Mount Ararat as its background. On the stage, King Arshag II and his queen were seated on their thrones along with a few court members. This scene was selected in order to reflect the triumph of Armenians in safeguarding their culture and language to this day.

The school orchestra then joined the event singing classic Armenian songs, followed by the Armenian national anthem, the anthem of the ADS and the traditional song, *Sardarabad*. After this, Armenian folkloric dances and dances from other cultures were performed by students intermitted with short speeches and poetry recitations. The kindergartners delighted the audience with an exquisite show in which they acted like they were playing imaginary musical instruments to Brahms' *Hungarian Dances* under the tutelage of their teacher, Anahid Avanesian. Next, the pre-kindergartners charmed the audience with a cowboy dance under the direction of their teacher, Madlena Marikyan.

The keynote speaker of the event was ADS alumna Mariam Danielian. "Here I am today, 10 years after graduating from this school and the homey atmosphere is still there," she said. "Dear students, you must all work hard and remember that the future lies within your hands. You are here to learn and tomorrow to change the world."

Principal Vartkes Kourouyan then took the podium to greet the guests and deliver his remarks. "Today we are gathered here to celebrate the school's 30th anniversary once again and to also show our gratitude to all those who have served the

see EXTRAVAGANZA, page 16



Teachers received their Appreciation Certificates from Board Chairman George Mandossian, right.

Aram Demirjian among Three Winners of MSO Conducting Competition

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Conductors from Hong Kong, Boston and New York took top honors in the first Memphis International Conducting Competition, which ended this week. The three will share \$11,500 in cash prizes as well as the opportunity to conduct the Memphis Symphony Orchestra once more in a concert next October.

First-place prize went to Ken Lam, a native of Hong Kong, who set aside a law career to pursue his love of music and conducting. He is assistant conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

Roger Kalia, a native of New York and music director of the Columbus (Indiana) Symphony, took the second prize, and Aram Demirjian, a conducting student at the New England Conservatory, won third place. The three winners will conduct pieces by Dvorak, Hindemith and Ravel respectively in October.

The winners also won cash awards: \$7,500 for first place, \$3,000 for second and \$1,000 for third. Ten contestants were selected from 236 applications representing 35 countries and 30 states in the US. The competition included three rounds over two days.

"We want to thank all the contestants, who did a fine job, and we congratulate the three



Aram Demirjian

finalists," said Ryan Fleur, president and CEO of the Memphis Symphony. "We wanted to discover new conducting talent and were tremendously successful in doing so."

Argentine-Armenian Poet Ghiragossian Presents New Book

GLENDALE, Calif. — The Beylan Compatriotic Union presents *The Power of Soul DNA* by Dr. Alicia Ghiragossian. The program will include a short film about Ghiragossian, a presentation by the author and a book-signing along with a reception.

The event will take place on Sunday, June 12, at 6:30 p.m. at the Glendale Central Library, 222 E. Harvard St.

Ghiragossian is an Argentine-American poet of Armenian ancestry and a former attorney and actress, who now resides in Glendale.


She received an honorary doctorate from the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia. She has written 63 volumes and created surprising paradoxes and metaphors. She is also the only

see POET, page 15



ARTS & LIVING

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Historical Novel Depicts Waning Ottoman Empire's Turmoil

By Daphne Abeel

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The Winter Thief. By Jenny White
W.W. Norton & Co. 2010. 400 pages
\$14.95 (paperback) ISBN: 978-0-393-33884-3

The Winter Thief, the third novel in the Kamil Pasha series by anthropologist Jenny White, is part detective story, part historical novel. Set in the late 1880s in the Ottoman Empire, during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid, it spins a complicated tale that has, at its core, the sultan's suspicions that a small colony of socialists, who are also Armenian, is planning a coup against the empire.

Gabriel Arti, an Armenian idealist, is indeed the co-founder of a commune, New Concord, in the Choruh Valley, that intends to live by socialist principles. Accompanied reluctantly by his Russian wife, Vera, he is implicated early on in a violent incident that involves the theft of arms from a ship, a violent explosion and a bank robbery. These events set an investigation in motion that involves both Kamil Pasha, the magistrate of Beyoglu, and his sinister counterpart, Vahid, the sultan's chief of the secret police, who is a closet sado-masochist. The novel explores the complexities of the period by means of a panoply of sharply-etched characters, including Elif, a woman artist, forced to flee her native Macedonia, having lost her husband and son. Now, caught up in fabric of events taking place in Istanbul, she is transformed into a fierce and vengeful being, capable of dressing like a man – and killing like one.

Other important players include Vizier Koraslan, who is most eager to convince the sultan that the Armenians are plotting against him, hoping to arouse a counterattack that will stimulate western sympathies and bring the British and the Russians to their side; Omar, the police chief of Istanbul, who eventually partners with Kamil to defend the Armenians and Feride, sister of Kamil, who is married to Huseyin, a pasha, who also becomes sympathetic to the Armenians.

White paints a canvas rife with confusion. At times, the Armenians are called socialists, revolutionaries or nationalists and the Henchak Armenians are a target of particular suspicion regarding their disloyalty to the sultan. The story also paints a portrait of desperate men, vying for power and favor in what are to be the waning days of the Ottoman Empire.

The novel contains several romantic subplots. Feride suspects that Huseyin is conducting an adulterous affair with another woman, Rhea. Vera, although married to Gabriel, is deeply attracted to another socialist idealist, Apollo, an Armenian friend from childhood, who seems more sympathetic than her husband, who thinks only of his cause.

There is a great deal of action in the novel, descriptions of rape, torture, battles and killing. Kamil, who is accused by the vizier of having masterminded the theft of guns and the robbery at the bank, is sent by the sultan to investigate the Armenian commune. But, he is then persuaded by the vizier to unleash an attack on it led by Kurdish mercenaries.

Kamil and his Armenian cohorts are able to

repel it with the aid of some Ottoman gendarmes who remains loyal to him, although there is great loss of life and the survivors become refugees who must be taken back to Trabzon.

Amazingly, Kamil is rewarded by the sultan, who realizes that his vizier has been lying to him. He bestows upon Kamil the High Order of Honor and also a *yali* (villa) on the Bosphorus.

The novel is sometimes confusing, but then it is describing confusing times. And there are passages where plot elements are suddenly explained so quickly by the author that the reader must be exceedingly vigilant to catch all the twists and turns.

Readers can enjoy this novel for its cultural and historical accuracy. The author, Jenny White, is a professor of anthropology at Boston University, specializing in Turkey. She possesses a detailed command of Armenian and Ottoman cultures, customs, food and protocol that lend the novel a believable authenticity.

As her protagonist, Kamil Pasha, is alive and well at the end of the story, it seems likely that another volume in the series may follow. As a character, he seems ready for further definition.

Near the end of the novel, he muses, "He had come face-to-face with an evil greater than lying,



stealing, betrayal, or even, he thought wonderingly, murder. Three months ago, he would have argued on principle that one life was worth the same as many. Every unnecessary death, every killing equally reprehensible. But that was before New Concord, before so many innocents had been trodden underfoot. Hundreds of people killed and for what – as fodder for men's ambitions. Whether that man was Vahid or Gabriel was immaterial. Or Kamil himself. Now he was being honored for all of it, he thought with despair – for his treason, theft, deception, subverting the army and killing the sultan's men, and for the loss of hundreds of lives that he had set out with hubris and naiveté to save, but had failed to do so. He had compromised everything he believed in and failed."

This is a man for whom life still holds some adventures.

For more information on the author and her work, visit www.kamilpasha.com.

Argentine-Armenian Poet Ghiragossian Presents New Book

POET, from page 14
poet in the world who writes in three languages: English, Spanish and Armenian, and the only living one whose work has been illustrated by Pablo Picasso.

Ghiragossian has established and worked on several groundbreaking theories, such as meta-dimensional poetry, wherein she formulates the equation of elements in metaphors.

Moreover, as a student of metaphysics, she dives into powerful concepts outlining the existence of Soul DNA, the Quantum Seed phenomenon and the Teiwas Energy Factor.

In the book, *Alicia G, the Poet Philosopher*

of the *New Millennium*, by Robert Danielak, the author, calls the poet a genius. He considers her theories conscience-changing and believes they will revolutionize the way academicians, poetry lovers and readers will look at poetry and even their own lives. The analysis ultimately joins her work with poets of the stature of Neruda, Rumi, Gibran, Blake and Shakespeare, and philosophers such as Hegel, Kierkegaard and Sartre, among others. He has no doubt that Ghiragossian is one of the premier thinkers of our time.

For more information about the author, visit www.PoetAlicia.com.



ARTS & LIVING

TCA Arshag Dickranian School Holds 30th Anniversary Cultural Extravaganza

EXTRAVAGANZA, from page 14
school, especially our benefactors and board members, without whom the school would not exist. We would also like to thank our teachers for their dedication,” he said. Kourouyan then continued by remembering benefactors, board members, teachers and students, who had passed away, while eighth-grade students Anais Nahapetyan, Armenuhi Goulyan and the orchestra softly sang *Amazing Grace*. Individuals duly memorialized were benefactors Arshag Dickranian, Alex Manoogian, Suren Fesjian, Krikor Asatryan, Krikor Terzian, Dzeron and Esther Hekimian, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Gazaryan, Silva Bzdigian, Dr. Noubar Mkhsi-Gevorkian, Christine Hripsime Meghrigian, Garo Meghrigian, Mkrtich “Mgo” Fidanian, Edward and Helen Mardigian, Armen Kuyumjian, Antranik and Zarminéh Kuyumjian, Jirair Michaelian, Talin Tashjian, Vartkes Balian, Archie Arzooyan, Chris Tonoyan and Alice Baltayan; board members Prof. Avedis Sanjian, Anahid Orchanian, Yervant Yetenegian, Kevork Kupelian, Albert Ouzounian and Dr. Yeghia Taglyan; faculty members: Melkon Arslanian, Kachik Soghomonian and Salvatore Lopiccolo; students: Karen Burmayan, Sevag Mgrdichian, Sarkis Atikyan and Garik Mkrtchyan.

Board Chairman George Mandossian then got to the stage to present separate certificates of appreciation to teachers and staff who have served the school for more than 10 years: Alice Kourouyan for 30 years, Anahid Avanessian for 29 years, Arpy Mazlounian for 26 years, Emma Umroyan for 18 years, Vardan Abramyan for 17 years, Robert Arakelian for 16 years, Sarkis Seferian for 11 years, Komitas Keshishian for 11 years and Ricardo Rocha for 10 years.

Derderian was then invited to the podium where he delivered his closing remarks talking about the importance of preserving the Armenian culture and spirit and offering his prayers and blessings to students and all guests.

For more information visit the school’s website, www.dickranianschool.org.



Seniors performed Armenian folk dances with soloist Ani Nercessian.



Kindergarten students performed Hungarian dances.

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JUNE 4 — Armenian Memorial Church Annual Fair, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. (rain or shine); Armenian meals served all day, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. (beef, chicken or losh kebab dinners with sauce, pilaf, salad and beverages); also Armenian vegetarian meals. Armenian delicacies table featuring paklava, kadayif, cheoreg, manti, koufte and other baked specialties. Silent auction of valuable gift certificates, vacation weekends, etc.; Armenian Memorial Church, 32 Bigelow Ave., Watertown (off Coolidge Square); for more information, call (617) 923-0498.

NEW JERSEY

JUNE 4 — Anniversary-Banquet in anticipation of the 80th anniversary of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator newspaper, the first English language Armenian newspaper in the world, organized by the Friends of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of New Jersey. Saturday, 7 p.m., at Teaneck Marriott at Glenpoint, 100 Franklin W. Burr Blvd., Teaneck. For tickets, call Shoghig (201) 803-0240 or Sirvart (201) 739-7775.

NEW YORK

JUNE 19 — St. Nersess Armenian Seminary’s annual Father’s Day Picnic, from noon to 5 p.m., at Stratton Road, New Rochelle. Delicious kebob meals and desserts, live Armenian music, children’s activities, vendors. Free parking and admission. Visit www.stnersess.edu or call (914) 636-2003.

On June 4, the Armenian Memorial Church will hold its annual fair, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. (rain or shine), with Armenian meals served all day, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Also featured will be an Armenian delicacies table, silent auction of valuable gift certificates, vacation weekends, etc. It will take place at 32 Bigelow Ave., Watertown, Mass. For info, call (617) 923-0498.



COMMENTARY

OPINION

The Oracles Speak in Deauville

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Every time the leaders of major powers meet, they issue statements on topical political problems of the day and the Karabagh conflict has become one of those issues. On the sidelines of G-8 meeting in the French city of Deauville, the presidents of US, France and Russia issued that routine statement which begs for interpretation.

The warring factions or parties to a conflict read into those declarations whatever they would like to see, and the statements are intentionally vague and equivocal in order not to divulge fully the issuing parties' positions and to allow room for interpretation and misinterpretation.

This reminds us of the story of the oracles in ancient Greece. The most important oracle would sit in Delphi and many kings, priests and warriors would make pilgrimages there to learn from the prophecies or sage advice from the oracle, who was supposed to speak on behalf of the god Apollo. The ritual of the prophecies would begin with the sacrifice of a goat to find out if the time and the atmosphere were ripe for the rituals.

The predictions of the oracle were phrased very shrewdly, causing many supplicants to misinterpret the advice.

The interpretations, coming from different quarters, about the May 26 declaration reminds us of the prophecies of the Delphi oracle, and perhaps the sacrifice of the goat may symbolize Karabagh.

The Armenian side hailed the declaration as a positive statement consonant with its position on the issue, especially its emphasis on the "peaceful means," which was officially endorsed also by Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Meindorf declaration. "The statement made today on the sidelines of the G-8 Summit in Deauville by the leaders of OSCE Minsk Group co-chair countries contains important messages and may become an impetus for the settlement of the issue," said Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian.

"Armenia has always been in support of the settlement of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabagh through exclusively peaceful means and has repeatedly proven it in practice. Therefore, it is clear to whom the unequivocal message of the statement in this regard is addressed," added Nalbandian.

The Azeri side gave a completely different interpretation to the joint statement by Presidents Barack Obama, Nicholas Sarkozy and Dmitry Medvedev, indicating that the declaration heightened the pressure on Armenia. "It follows from the statement that Armenia must start the withdrawal of its armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan," the Foreign Ministry statement cited by Azerbaijani news agencies indicated. "Unfortunately...Armenia continues to drag out that process and thereby impede the conflict's peaceful resolution," it said.

In his turn Novruz Mammedov, Ilham Aliyev's chief foreign policy advisor, said, "As a matter of fact, the negotiating process has dragged because of the Armenian side."

All political parties in Armenia commented on the declaration that whoever triggers the war will be the loser.

The ARF representative, Ardsvik Minassian, brought up a subtle and unsettling point in the declaration, which is equally directed at Armenia and Azerbaijan, without any distinction which party is talking about the use of force and actually violating the ceasefire agreement. There is parity in the two parties.

The statement also recommended respective governments to prepare their populations for a peaceful settlement, which calls for mutual compromises. The settlement will be made around the basic agreements of principles, which may be announced at the forthcoming summit in the Russian city of Kazan.

After years of tough negotiations, finally a document has been drafted, which will be put to the test at the forthcoming summit.

Those principles were comprehensively outlined in an article by Thomas de Waal in the National Interest, paraphrased as follows: "The Basic Principles document offers constructive ambiguity. It stipulates gradual Armenian withdrawal from the territories around Karabagh; 'interim status' for Karabagh itself, giving it enhanced international legitimacy but not full independence; and the promise in the future of a popular vote, a 'legally binding' expression of will to determine the future status of the territory."

This sounds like a hopeful start, but public pronouncements have a different tone.

The meeting will be held on June 25 between Medvedev, Sargsian and Aliyev.

The principles advocated by the major powers constitute a square wheel, which will not move forward, unless those powers force that wheel to move or...break. Those principles are incompatible; right for self-determination and territorial integrity, unless a diluted self-determination is imposed on the Armenian side, within the boundaries of Azerbaijan, which Baku is advocating and dreaming.

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Rybakov has sounded a more positive note by indicating that "we are not at the threshold of new conflicts but close to a resolution."

Russia's role is crucial for Armenia, because we know where the US and France stand on the Karabagh conflict.

While Armenians have pinned their hopes on Moscow, Russia's foreign policy lately has become ambiguous, enigmatic and sometimes erratic.

The G-8 declaration in Deauville addressed the conflicts in different hot spots on the globe as well, and particularly in Libya and Syria, when Russian positions came out to be pragmatic, unpredictable and implausible.

When the UN resolution on Libya came to a vote in the Security Council, Moscow abstained and later on mumbled that the resolution was meant "to protect the Libyan people" while NATO took it as a mandate to invade a sovereign country and topple its government.

Russia's position was interpreted that many of its oligarchs had invested in Libyan oil and Muammar Gaddafi had guaranteed their interests. But it turned out that in Deauville Moscow sided with the West, calling for Gaddafi to quit. Russia also abandoned its Syrian ally, where its Mediterranean fleet is anchored in Latakia, thus giving Russia its only access to the Mediterranean. President Bashar Assad was certainly disappointed by Russia's defection.

Based on Russian foreign policy's direction, or misdirection, we cannot count on Moscow to support a Karabagh solution favoring Armenia, the Russian base in Armenia and the rhetoric of "eternal friendship" not withstanding.

Indeed Russia has a military listening post in Azerbaijan, has oil interests and above all it has strategic interests. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's intent to integrate Georgia in the NATO structure has irritated Russia to no end. Until recently Azerbaijan was also playing the NATO card, when Moscow cajoled the Azeri leaders to take a neutral position. Today Baku is refraining from joining to any military block, which pleases Kremlin policymakers.

Russia intends to keep Baku at bay. On the other hand, Armenia has given away to Russia what little it had. Therefore, Moscow does not expect anything more from Armenia, which means it has a free hand to treat Armenia any way it likes, with impunity.

Today, while we are trying to analyze the declaration of the oracles in Deauville, we are reminded of King Croesus of Lydia who solicited the advice of the oracle in Delphi, before attacking Persia, and contrary to the prophecy of victory the Lydian army was defeated.

This should serve as an omen for Armenians not to read too much into the prophecies of the oracles of Deauville.

Notice to Contributors

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* welcomes articles, commentaries and community news from our readers. In order to assure the accurate and timely publication of articles submitted, please note the following policies:

- All articles submitted should be typed, double (or triple) spaced and printed in a type size large enough to be clearly legible (10 point or larger). Submissions that do not conform to these specifications will be assigned lowest priority.
- Articles sent by fax are acceptable, and e-mail submissions are encouraged.
- All submissions should include the name of a contact person and a daytime telephone number.

- Deadline for submission of all articles and advertising is 12 noon on Monday of the week of publication.
- Photos will be published without charge at the discretion of the editors and art director. Photos will be returned only if a self-addressed and stamped envelope is included.
- The *MS* will publish only one article about an upcoming organizational event. For major special events, exceptions may be made only by special arrangement with the editors.
- Telephone numbers, ticket prices and other details (at the discretion of the editors) will not be included in press releases, but should be reserved for calendar listings and advertisements.

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

California to Extend until 2016 Deadline to Sue Insurance Companies

Eleven years ago, the California Legislature extended until the end of 2010, the deadline for filing lawsuits against insurance companies that had failed to pay benefits to heirs of Armenian Genocide victims.

Until the year 2000, these heirs could not sue insurance companies, as the deadline for filing such lawsuits had expired long ago. Under California law, the time limit for such lawsuits is four years.

During the past decade, after the statute of limitation was extended, Armenian-Americans successfully filed lawsuits in US Federal Courts against New York Life Insurance Company and French AXA insurance company.

Additional lawsuits against German insurance companies and banks are still pending. With the support of the Turkish government, which is not a party to these lawsuits, these German firms have unsuccessfully challenged in court the legislature's action by claiming that the reference to the Armenian Genocide in the California bill is an encroachment on the foreign policy prerogative of the federal government.

After the expiration of the December 31, 2010 deadline, the Armenian-American community asked the California Legislature to extend the statute of limitation once again, since several new insurance companies have been identified that had not paid the benefits owed to their genocide-era clients.

To avoid further court challenges by the Turkish government and insurance companies, some have argued that there may not be a need to include a reference to the Armenian Genocide in the new California bill, as the companies were contractually obligated to pay the beneficiaries regardless of the cause of death. The legislators decided, however, not to give in to Turkish pressures and retain the reference to the Armenian Genocide, particularly since the justification for extending the filing deadline for genocide victims was that they lacked the necessary documents – death certificates and insurance policies – to file their claims in a timely manner.

It is noteworthy that the State of California defines the Armenian Genocide in the insurance bill as follows: “The Legislature recognizes that during the period from 1915 to 1923, many persons of Armenian ancestry residing in the historic Armenian homeland then situated in the Ottoman Empire were victims of massacre, torture, starvation, death marches and exile. This period is known as the Armenian Genocide.”

The California State Assembly adopted the new bill (AB 173) on April 14, 2011, extending to December 31, 2016 the deadline for lawsuits against insurance companies by heirs of Armenian Genocide victims. Despite objections by the self-proclaimed “Turkish Peace and Justice Commission of California,” the bill was approved 10-0 by the Judiciary Committee of the California Assembly and 61-0 by the full State Assembly. AB 173, formally supported by the Consumer Attorneys of California and

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, was introduced by Assemblyman Mike Gatto on January 20. Assemblyman Katcho Achadjian was its principal co-author.

The Assembly's Legislative Counsel provided the following digest of the bill: “Existing law authorizes any Armenian Genocide victim, as defined, or the heir or beneficiary of that victim, who resides in this state and has a claim arising out of an insurance policy or policies purchased or in effect in Europe or Asia between 1875 and 1923 from a defined insurer, to bring a legal action to recover on that claim in a court in this state. Existing law also provides that any action, including any pending action brought by an Armenian Genocide victim, or the heir or beneficiary of that victim, whether a resident or nonresident of this state, seeking benefits under the insurance policies issued or in effect between 1875 and 1923, shall not be dismissed for failure to comply with the applicable statute of limitation, provided the action is filed on or before December 31, 2010. This bill would extend the deadline for filing that action to December 31, 2016. This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.”

After the State Assembly's approval in April, the bill was referred to the California Senate Judiciary Committee on May 12. It will then be sent to the full Senate, and submitted to Governor Brown for his signature. This bill would amend Section 354.4 of the California Code of Civil Procedure that was initially signed into law on September 18, 2000. The new bill would extend the deadline to file lawsuits by heirs of Armenian Genocide victims against insurance companies from 2010 to end of 2016 – a year beyond the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, allowing many more lawsuits to be filed against delinquent insurance companies.

Who Cares in the Middle East What Obama Says?

By Robert Fisk

This month, in the Middle East, has seen the unmaking of the President of the United States. More than that, it has witnessed the lowest prestige of America in the region since Roosevelt met King Abdul Aziz on the USS Quincy in the Great Bitter Lake in 1945.

While Barack Obama and Benjamin Netanyahu played out their farce in Washington – Obama groveling as usual – the Arabs got on with the serious business of changing their world, demonstrating and fighting and dying for freedoms they have never possessed. Obama waffled on about change in the Middle East – and about America's new role in the region. It was pathetic. “What is this ‘role’ thing?” an Egyptian friend asked me at the weekend. “Do they still believe we care about what they think?”

And it is true. Obama's failure to support the Arab revolutions until they were all but over lost the US most of its surviving credit in the region. Obama was silent on the overthrow of Ben Ali, only joined in the chorus of contempt for Mubarak two days before his flight, condemned the Syrian regime – which has killed more of its people than any other dynasty in this Arab “spring,” save for the frightful Gaddafi – but makes it clear that he would be happy to see Assad survive, waves his puny fist at puny Bahrain's cruelty and remains absolutely, stunningly silent over Saudi Arabia. And he goes on his knees before Israel. Is it any wonder, then, that Arabs are turning their backs on America, not out of fury or anger, nor with threats or violence, but with contempt? It is the Arabs and their fellow Muslims of the Middle East who are themselves now making the decisions.

Turkey is furious with Assad because he twice promised to speak of reform and democratic elections – and then failed to honor his word. The Turkish government has twice flown delegations to Damascus and, according to the Turks, Assad lied to the foreign minister on the second visit,

baldly insisting that he would recall his brother Maher's legions from the streets of Syrian cities. He failed to do so. The torturers continue their work.

Watching the hundreds of refugees pouring from Syria across the northern border of Lebanon, the Turkish government is now so fearful of a repeat of the great mass Iraqi Kurdish refugee tide that overwhelmed their border in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf war that it has drawn up its own secret plans to prevent the Kurds of Syria moving in their thousands into the Kurdish areas of south-eastern Turkey.

Turkish generals have thus prepared an operation that would send several battalions of Turkish troops into Syria itself to carve out a “safe area” for Syrian refugees inside Assad's caliphate. The Turks are prepared to advance well beyond the Syrian border town of Al Qamishli – perhaps half way to Deir el-Zour (the old desert killing fields of the 1915 Armenian Holocaust, though speak it not) – to provide a “safe haven” for those fleeing the slaughter in Syria's cities.

The Qataris are meanwhile trying to prevent Algeria from re-supplying Gaddafi with tanks and armored vehicles – this was one of the reasons why the Emir of Qatar, the wisest bird in the Arabian Gulf, visited the Algerian president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, last week. Qatar is committed to the Libyan rebels in Benghazi; its planes are flying over Libya from Crete and – undisclosed until now – it has Qatari officers advising the rebels inside the city of Misrata in western Libya; but if Algerian armor is indeed being handed over to Gaddafi to replace the material that has been destroyed in air strikes, it would account for the ridiculously slow progress which the NATO campaign is making against Gaddafi.

Of course, it all depends on whether Bouteflika really controls his army – or whether the Algerian “pouvoir,” which includes plenty of secretive and corrupt generals, are doing the deals. Algerian equipment is superior to Gaddafi's and thus for every tank he loses, Ghaddafi might be getting an improved model to replace it. Below Tunisia, Algeria and Libya share a 750-mile desert frontier, an easy access route for

weapons to pass across the border.

But the Qataris are also attracting Assad's venom. Al Jazeera's concentration on the Syrian uprising – its graphic images of the dead and wounded far more devastating than anything our soft western television news shows would dare broadcast – has Syrian state television nightly spitting at the Emir and at the state of Qatar. The Syrian government has now suspended up to £4 billion of Qatari investment projects, including one belonging to the Qatar Electricity and Water Company.

Amid all these vast and epic events – Yemen itself may yet prove to be the biggest bloodbath of all, while the number of Syria's “martyrs” have now exceeded the victims of Mubarak's death squads five months ago – is it any surprise that the frolics of Messrs Netanyahu and Obama appear so irrelevant? Indeed, Obama's policy towards the Middle East – whatever it is – sometimes appears so muddled that it is scarcely worthy of study. He supports, of course, democracy – then admits that this may conflict with America's interests. In that wonderful democracy called Saudi Arabia, the US is now pushing ahead with a £40-billion arms deal and helping the Saudis to develop a new “elite” force to protect the kingdom's oil and future nuclear sites.

Hence Obama's fear of upsetting Saudi Arabia, two of whose three leading brothers are now so incapacitated that they can no longer make sane decisions – unfortunately, one of these two happens to be King Abdullah – and his willingness to allow the Assad family's atrocity-prone regime to survive. Of course, the Israelis would far prefer the “stability” of the Syrian dictatorship to continue; better the dark caliphate you know than the hateful Islamists who might emerge from the ruins. But is this argument really good enough for Obama to support when the people of Syria are dying in the streets for the kind of democracy that the US president says he wants to see in the region?

One of the vainest elements of American foreign policy towards the Middle East is the foundational idea that the Arabs are somehow more stupid than the rest of us, cer-

tainly than the Israelis, more out of touch with reality than the West, that they don't understand their own history. Thus they have to be preached at, lectured, and cajoled by La Clinton and her ilk – much as their dictators did and do, father figures guiding their children through life. But Arabs are far more literate than they were a generation ago; millions speak perfect English and can understand all too well the political weakness and irrelevance in the president's words. Listening to Obama's 45-minute speech this month – the “kick off” to four whole days of weasel words and puffery by the man who tried to reach out to the Muslim world in Cairo two years ago, and then did nothing – one might have thought that the American President had initiated the Arab revolts, rather than sat on the sidelines in fear.

There was an interesting linguistic collapse in the president's language over those critical four days. On Thursday 19 May, he referred to the continuation of Israeli “settlements.” A day later, Netanyahu was lecturing him on “certain demographic changes that have taken place on the ground.” Then when Obama addressed the American Aipac lobby group (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) on the Sunday, he had cravenly adopted Netanyahu's own preposterous expression. Now he, too, spoke of “new demographic realities on the ground.” Who would believe that he was talking about internationally illegal Jewish colonies built on land stolen from Arabs in one of the biggest property heists in the history of “Palestine”? Delay in peace-making will undermine Israeli security, Obama announced – apparently unaware that Netanyahu's project is to go on delaying and delaying and delaying until there is no land left for the “viable” Palestinian state which the United States and the European Union supposedly wish to see.

Then we had the endless waffle about the 1967 borders. Netanyahu called them “defenceless” (though they seemed to have been pretty defensible for the 18 years prior to the Six Day War) and Obama – oblivious to the fact that Israel must be the

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COMMENTARY

Too Late, Too Ugly

By Yossi Sarid

I have achieved a great success: Finally the Knesset plenum has enabled its Knesset Education Committee to conduct a public discussion of the genocide of the Armenian people. This is the discussion that was prevented for decades. For generations our governments firmly opposed it.

And this, of all governments, is the one that agreed. All the MKs present voted in favor, nobody was opposed, a unanimous decision that exudes a bad smell: too late, too ugly, yuck.

Zahava Gal-On, who returned to the Knesset with renewed strength, made a very nice speech. That is how she assumed her place in the relay race and the mission of her movement, the only one in Israel to avenge the honor of the Armenian people and demand that the historical lesson be learned from an orphaned genocide – victims without murderers. Ahead of time I wished her success where her predecessors – the heads of Meretz – had failed; and my wishes came true.

But it was not my wishes that changed the parliamentary decision, and the reason for the reversal is clear: The Israelis no longer favor the Turks, and are willing even to give up the charms and temptations of Antalya; that is how angry they are. Now we will demonstrate to you what happens to a country that Israel no longer favors – we will seat it in the low chair; revenge against the gentiles. Now we'll show them who is boss.

So we showed them, and how do we look: All the past explanations in favor of the Turks suddenly sank to the bottom of the glass of anger, for which Israel is famous. These, as we recall, were profound explanations from the Sea of Marmara, to which our leaders lent an ethical character, even accompanying them with historical insights.

Eleven years ago, on the 85th memorial day, I went to the Armenian church in Jerusalem, and as “a human being, as a Jew, as an Israeli and as the minister of education of the State of Israel” – that is how I introduced myself – I

spoke about the historical justice that must be done, about the special commitment of the Jewish people to the Armenian people, and about my plan to teach our students the universal significance of genocide.

The scandal erupted immediately. My prime minister objected sharply, and Ehud Barak was swiftly joined by Shimon Peres: “These events,” he said, “should be left to historians and not to politicians.”

He was struck dumb last week, when the right thing was done for the wrong reason, and the voice of Shimon was not heard.

At the time the Turks declared me a persona non grata. They, like me, sometimes get confused between rivals and friends, and I consider myself their friend. Turkey is today a developing world power, an example of economic prosperity, which conducts its affairs in the regional and international arena wisely. It is also proof that an Islamic regime is not necessarily Iranian, and that Europe is bitterly mistaken when it locks the gate to Ankara instead of opening it.

The bad guy – Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan – is good for the Turks, and was reelected by an increasingly large majority. This week he said that he tried to convince Hamas to recognize Israel, and will continue to do so.

It is just because of my admiration for Turkey that I find it difficult to understand its insensitive position on the Armenian issue. After all, it was not this generation that spilled the blood 100 years ago; many countries have accepted responsibility for crimes committed in their name a long time ago. Only this week Queen Elizabeth II visited the Irish Republic and offered her hosts regret and identification with all the Irish people who ever suffered at the hand of England. It is not clear why Turkey alone remains intransigent.

But it is quite clear why Israel supported it all these years. In addition to security and financial interests, there is something else concealed here: If everyone begins to acknowledge the tragedy of the other – his own part in the Nakba – what will become of us?

(This commentary originally ran in *Haaretz* on May 27.)

Congratulations on Upcoming Anniversary Celebration of *Mirror-Spectator*

During the beginning of the 20th century the generation of immigrants to America was already ceding its place to a new American-born generation, a generation which did not have the opportunity to attend Armenian schools. In those days, Armenian schools did not exist in America where one could learn the Armenian language. Although an Armenian-filled atmosphere still existed in Watertown, Worcester, Providence, New York and other towns, the Armenian language was already imperceptibly in retreat.

Baikal, the Boston daily newspaper published by the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL), remained sought-after by the Armenian-speaking generation, but it was

necessary to provide the new generation a newspaper in the English language. In 1932, the leadership of the time, headed by Diradour Dikijian, was audacious enough to begin publication of the weekly *Mirror*. Later,

in 1939, the *Mirror* merged with the *Spectator* in New York in order to better reach the younger generation in particular.

In addition to being the mouthpiece of democratic liberal ideology, the *Mirror-Spectator* became the unofficial organ of all national patriotic organizations, which believed in the creed of the ADL. Only one year after its establishment, the Primate of the day, Archbishop Ghevont Tourian, was martyred. From his demise until the present, the *Mirror-Spectator* has advocated the unity of the Church of Armenia and directed the unvarying respect of the Armenian Americans towards the Mother See of Echmiadzin.

For decades it has chronicled the wide-ranging activities of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, holding high their role in Armenian communities. Similarly, it praised the exemplary work of the brotherhood of the Knights of Vartan and later extensively reported on the activity of the Armenian Assembly of America, which was created as a result of Armenian national demands.

During the sad days of the Cold War, it focused the patriotism of the Armenian-American masses on the homeland, and filled the masses with enthusiasm over the cultural, educational, scientific and architectural successes of Armenia. During World War II, it recorded on a daily basis the heroic deeds of Armenian soldiers serving in the Red Army against Hitler's armies. It championed repatriation to Mother Armenia from 1946 to 1948.

It became the true voice of the Tekeyan Cultural Association and presented its educational, social and cultural life. It connected our communities of the diaspora to Armenia. And it trumpeted our independence, awaited for centuries, with the arrival of the third Republic of Armenia.

(Hagop Vartivarian is the chairman of the New York chapter of the Tekeyan Cultural Association and is the chairman of the ADL Press Committee.)

Who Cares in the Middle East What Obama Says?

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only country in the world to have an eastern land frontier but doesn't know where it is – then says he was misunderstood when he talked about 1967. It doesn't matter what he says. George W Bush caved in years ago when he gave Ariel Sharon a letter, which stated America's acceptance of “already existing major Israeli population centers” beyond the 1967 lines. To those Arabs prepared to listen to Obama's spineless oration, this was a grovel too far. They simply could not understand the reaction of Netanyahu's address to Congress. How could American politicians rise and applaud Netanyahu 55 times – 55 times – with more enthusiasm than one of the rubber parliaments of Assad, Saleh and the rest?

And what on earth did the Great Speechifier mean when he said that “every country has the right to self-defense” but that Palestine would be “demilitarized?” What he meant was that Israel could go on attacking the Palestinians (as in 2009, for example, when Obama was treacherously silent) while the Palestinians would have to take what was coming to them if they did not behave according to the rules – because they would have no weapons to defend themselves. As for Netanyahu, the Palestinians must choose between unity with Hamas or peace with Israel. All of which was very odd. When there was no unity, Netanyahu told us all that he had no

Palestinian interlocutor because the Palestinians were disunited. Yet when they unite, they are disqualified from peace talks.

Of course, cynicism grows the longer you live in the Middle East. I recall, for example, traveling to Gaza in the early 1980s when Yasser Arafat was running his PLO statelet in Beirut. Anxious to destroy Arafat's prestige in the occupied territories, the Israeli government decided to give its support to an Islamist group in Gaza called Hamas.

In fact, I actually saw with my own eyes the head of the Israeli army's Southern Command negotiating with bearded Hamas officials, giving them permission to build more mosques. It's only fair to say, of course, that we were also busy at the time, encouraging a certain Osama bin Laden to fight the Soviet army in Afghanistan. But the Israelis did not give up on Hamas. They later held another meeting with the organization in the West Bank; the story was on the front page of the Jerusalem Post the next day. But there wasn't a whimper from the Americans.

Then another moment that I can recall over the long years. Hamas and Islamic Jihad members – all Palestinians – were, in the early 1990s, thrown across the Israeli border into southern Lebanon where they spent more than a year camping on a freezing mountainside. I would visit them from time to time and on one occasion mentioned that I would be traveling to Israel next day. Immediately, one of the Hamas men ran to his tent and returned with a notebook. He then proceeded to give me the home telephone numbers of three senior Israeli politicians – two of whom are still prominent today – and, when I reached Jerusalem and called the numbers, they all

turned out to be correct. In other words, the Israeli government had been in personal and direct contact with Hamas.

But now the narrative has been twisted out of all recognition. Hamas are the super-terrorists, the “al-Qaeda” representatives in the unified Palestinian leadership, the men of evil who will ensure that no peace ever takes place between Palestinians and Israeli. If only this were true, the real al-Qaeda would be more than happy to take responsibility. But it is not true. In the same context, Obama stated that the Palestinians would have to answer questions about Hamas. But why should they? What Obama and Netanyahu think about Hamas is now irrelevant to them. Obama warns the Palestinians not to ask for statehood at the United Nations in September. But why on earth not? If the people of Egypt and Tunisia and Yemen and Libya and Syria – we are all waiting for the next revolution (Jordan? Bahrain again? Morocco?) – can fight for freedom and dignity, why shouldn't the Palestinians? L lectured for decades on the need for non-violent protest, the Palestinians elect to go to the UN with their cry for legitimacy – only to be slapped down by Obama.

Having read all of the “Palestine Papers” which Al-Jazeera revealed, there is no doubt that “Palestine's” official negotiators will go to any lengths to produce some kind of statelet. Mahmoud Abbas, who managed to write a 600-page book on the “peace process” without once mentioning the word “occupation,” could even cave in over the UN project, fearful of Obama's warning that it would be an attempt to “isolate” Israel and thus de-legitimise the Israeli state – or “the Jewish state” as the US president now

calls it. But Netanyahu is doing more than anyone to delegitimize his own state; indeed, he is looking more and more like the Arab buffoons who have hitherto littered the Middle East. Mubarak saw a “foreign hand” in the Egyptian revolution (Iran, of course). So did the Crown Prince of Bahrain (Iran again). So did Gaddafi (al-Qaeda, western imperialism, you name it), So did Saleh of Yemen (al-Qaeda, Mossad and America). So did Assad of Syria (Islamism, probably Mossad, etc). And so does Netanyahu (Iran, naturally enough, Syria, Lebanon, just about anyone you can think of except for Israel itself).

But as this nonsense continues, so the tectonic plates shudder. I doubt very much if the Palestinians will remain silent. If there's an “intifada” in Syria, why not a Third Intifada in “Palestine?” Not a struggle of suicide bombers but of mass, million-strong protests. If the Israelis have to shoot down a mere few hundred demonstrators who tried – and in some cases succeeded – in crossing the Israeli border almost two weeks ago, what will they do if confronted by thousands or a million. Obama says no Palestinian state must be declared at the UN.

But why not? Who cares in the Middle East what Obama says? Not even, it seems, the Israelis. The Arab spring will soon become a hot summer and there will be an Arab autumn, too. By then, the Middle East may have changed forever. What America says will matter nothing.

(Robert Fisk is Middle East correspondent for *The Independent* newspaper. This commentary appeared in the May 30 issue.)



KOHAR Puts on a Show to Remember in Yerevan

YEREVAN – KOHAR marked its largest concert with Stars of Armenia at Liberty Square near the Opera House on May 28.

The star-studded event brought together the most popular singers of Armenia who performed with KOHAR songs admired by fans and audiences alike.

The concert was broadcast live by Armenia’s Channel 1 TV and for the first time via Internet, streaming live.

More than 10,000 live spectators, in addition to the thousands of TV and Internet viewers from Armenia and the diaspora, were mesmerized by KOHAR’s program, which is thought to be the single-biggest spectacle in Armenia.

KOHAR’s latest production by HAYASA

(Cyprus) and Domino (Armenia) boasted a 3-D mapping and projection on the façade of the Opera House of images that transposed into Armenia’s history from Noah’s Ark to its national symbol Ararat, its rich alphabet and the historic Armenian kingdom of Cilicia.

KOHAR’s 150 orchestra and choir members as well as the 15-member dance ensemble performed in the presence of both presidents of the Republic of Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh Republic. The guest list included the high echelon of Armenia’s political spectrum, including the prime minister and the Speaker of the National Assembly, church representatives headed by Catholicos Karekin II, and many celebrities and artists.

Cyprus-born conductor Sebouh Abcarian



brought on to the stage Armenia’s top entertainers: Hayko, Arsen Safaryan, Shushan Petrosyan, Leyla Saribekyan, André, Aramé, Zaruhi Papaian, Nune Yessayan, Inga and Anush Arshakyan, Roland Gasparyan and Tata Simonyan.

The culmination of the night was the performance of the song Papenakan Cilicia, which has topped the charts in Armenia as the number one song for the past eight consecutive weeks. Together with KOHAR, the audience joined in the performance, waving

more than 3,000 flags of the Kingdom of Cilicia that were distributed by the organizers. A similar enthusiasm from the audience erupted with the song Veraganknir Cilicia, which has become KOHAR’s anthem.

KOHAR is the brainchild of the patron of Armenian culture, Harout Khatchadourian of Lebanon, who sustains all the activities and concerts of KOHAR, in memory of his late father, Aram Khatchadourian, and as a tribute to his mother, Kohar Khatchadourian.

– S. R. Seropian

‘Deported’ a Dream Play by Joyce Van Dyke

By Bethel Charkoudian

I first became aware of the playwright Joyce Van Dyke in 2001 at Boston Playwrights’ Theatre when her play, “A Girl’s War: An Armenian-Azeri Love Story,” was first produced and was named one of the “top 10” plays of the year by the *Boston Globe*, a play about the impact of war on family life, a production I remember to this day.

When Van Dyke and I were talking several years later, she voiced the possibility of writing a play somehow responding to the effort made in the 1970s by the Armenian Library and Museum of America to record the oral histories of survivors of the Armenian Genocide. We talked about the unforgettable stories, so difficult to remember, so difficult to forget, so difficult to relate, and the problems of actually recording such stories, of entering the home and heart of the survivor and asking that survivor to relive the experience long enough to record his/her story on tape.

Based on the lives of her own grandmother and the grandmother of Martin Deranian, playwright Van Dyke has grappled with just this problem in her new play “Deported,” which was presented at the Stanford Calderwood Pavilion in Boston on a recent Saturday night. It was a free staged reading that was minimally publicized; only 100 people would fit into the room (although I think in fact there were many more than 100 in the audience), and most of them non-Armenian. And why do I mention ethnicity here? Because the play was about memory and survival, the Armenian Genocide and the deportation of millions of Armenians from their homeland in Turkey 1915-1923, resulting in the death of 1.5 million Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman Turkish government. The playwright’s grandmother lived to tell the tale.

With no stage props and seven actors in front

of a curtain, this play, in all its starkness, came alive with Victoria’s opening lines... and with those opening lines, the audience remained transfixed.

“Deported,” comes very close to home for any family who has survived a genocide. And as I sat in the audience, I wondered how a non-Armenian, watching this play, would be affected. I scanned the audience. It was clear that Armenian and non-Armenian alike, the play had grabbed them and held them to the very last line.

I asked my daughter Nisha about her reaction to the play, she who knows the story all too well from her grandfather and her grandmother. What she chose to share with me was the following statement made by the Turk involved in the futuristic Turkish-Armenian reconciliation movement (Act Three set in 2015), who stated something akin to the following: “I thought you Americans would be able to understand how the Turks feel about this, because who would want to believe that your country would ever want to do anything so terrible, even if it wasn’t you or your relatives doing the unspeakable.”

Successful it was – so successful that I am having much difficulty writing this post, as the subject of Van Dyke’s new play comes too close to my heart.

Judy Braha directed the reading of Joyce Van Dyke’s “Deported” at the Calderwood Pavillion on May 21, presented by Boston Center for the Arts and The Publick Theater of Boston. Bobbie Steinbach performed powerfully as Victoria, as did Paula Langton as Varter, and Ken Baltin as Harry, with supporting actors Marya Lowry, Elise Manning, Danny Bryck and Mark Cohen. The play is being prepared for performance at Suffolk University’s new Modern Theatre in Boston’s Theatre District, March/April 2012. Don’t miss it.

(Bethel Charkoudian is the daughter of Genocide survivors. She is the proprietor of oldcornerbooks.com online bookshop.)

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