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Sargisian Certified As Winner of Presidential Vote

Protests Continue Led by Raffi Hovannisian

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — Armenia's Central Election Commission has officially certified President Serge Sargisian as the winner of the February 18 presidential election.

The commission announced the official election results on February 25.

It said Sargisian was reelected with 58.6 percent of the vote, while former Foreign Minister Raffi Hovannisian came in second with nearly 37 percent.

US Secretary of State John Kerry congratulated Sargisian on the occasion of re-election. "I congratulate you on the occasion of re-election. February 18 presidential elections are an addition to the base of 2012 parliamentary elections and I am glad that press and media ensured balanced coverage of campaign," Kerry said.

Kerry noted that he agrees with preliminary conclusions of OSCE/ODIHR observation mission, that in general elections were well-organized, with protection of fundamental freedoms. He also noted that there is still some work to be done.



Protestors in Yerevan

"Moving forward, I hope, that Armenia will continue to increase transparency, encourage pluralism and active participation of citizens in governance and reforms, as well as resolve other issues raised by OSCE," Kerry said.

He added that he hoped the US and Armenia would cooperate in order to promote democratic and economic reforms.

"I remain committed to support your country, in order to find the peaceful and

negotiated settlement of Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, and I ask you to continue to give your full support to the co-chairs of Minsk Group. We cannot be satisfied with maintenance of the status quo. We should find the moment to ensure visible support in peace process. I look forward to working with you, as well as with Armenian nation in order to strengthen bilateral ties and historical friendship," Kerry said.

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Benefit Concert for Syrian Armenians Planned in Boston

LEXINGTON, Mass. — In response to the plight and predicament of the Syrian Armenian communities, the Greater Boston Armenian Community has organized a benefit concert to provide much needed humanitarian assistance.

Titled "The Benefit Concert for the Syrian Armenian's Relief Fund," and featuring many renowned artists and local cultural organizations, the event will be held on Saturday, April 20, at 7:30 p.m. at the National Heritage Museum of, 33 Marrett Road.

Tenor Yeghishe Manucharyan and his wife, mezzo-soprano Victoria Avetisyan, will perform, joining soprano Knarik Nerkararyan, violinist Levon Chilingirian and pianists Lilit Karapetian-Shougarian and Zaven Parsamian. Hamazkayin's Erebouni Dance Ensemble, Sayat Nova Dance Company, Abaka School of Music's dance group, Zangakner Performing Arts Ensemble, as well as the Arev Armenian Ensemble will also perform.

All proceeds of the concert will be donated to the Syrian Armenian Relief Fund.

Tickets for this event are \$75 and \$35. Seating is limited and early reservation is strongly recommended by writing to sarf.boston@gmail.com.

The Syrian Armenian Relief Fund is a national initiative with the mission to provide immediate assistance to the Syrian Armenians. According to the United Nations, more than 4 million people inside Syria are in desperate need of aid. Some 2.5 million have been displaced by the civil war but remain in Syria while 70,000 have lost their lives. About 850,000 are believed to have fled the country, including an estimated 15,000 Armenians. Armenian communities and businesses have been severely affected: churches and more than 150 private residences have experienced either direct or indirect damage during the fighting.

More information is available at www.SyrianArmenianReliefFund.org.

Artsakh Celebrates 25th Anniversary of National Liberation Movement

STEPANAKERT (PanARMENIAN.Net and Armenpress) — President of the Nagorno Karabagh (Artsakh) Republic Bako Sahakyan issued an address on the 25th anniversary of the National Liberation Movement on February 20.

"Twenty five years ago this day proved to be pivotal for Artsakh and the whole Armenian people. The entire nation stood with a peaceful and legitimate demand in line with the fundamental norms and principles of international law to restore historical justice, defend our violated dignity, rights and liberties," Sahakyan said.

"Our nation's struggle against foreign yoke, nearly seven decades of persistent violence and oppression was at the very basis of the 1988 Movement. Despite all of that, the national liberation outburst did not see ARTSAKH, page 16



The cathedral of Mren

A Cathedral on the Verge of Collapse: The Campaign to Save Mren

An Interview with Dr. Christina Maranci

By Lucine Kasbarian

MEDFORD, Mass. — Dr. Christina Maranci, Arthur H. Dadian and Ara T. Oztemel Associate Professor of Armenian Art and Architecture at Tufts University, has issued a call to save the seventh-century Mren Cathedral of Western Armenia, located in the Kars region of present-day Turkey.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Armenians Escape Injury in Blast

DAMASCUS (Armenpress) — A bomb fell near Saint Rita Church located near the Homenmen Hunchakyan club in the Damascus Bab Tuma Christian district on February 24. A number of Armenians were gathered for a local woman's funeral, but the incident reportedly left no one harmed and the church unscathed.

The bomb blast was the result of recent clashes held in Abbasin Square and adjacent districts during the night. The situation had allegedly calmed by the morning of February 26.

According to United Nations data, more than 70,000 people were killed during 23 months of ongoing clashes, with at least four-dozen Armenian casualties.

Man Kidnapped in Aleppo Released

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Nerses Aghaian, who was kidnapped in one of Aleppo's suburbs last week, has been released after paying the ransom demanded. Aghaian, 60, had been kidnapped in an Aleppo suburb on February 20.

Jirair Reisian, spokesman of the Berio Diocese, said the situation appears calm.

ANC Australia Condemns Genocide 'U-Turn'

SYDNEY, Australia — The Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANC) condemned Foreign Minister Bob Carr for his recent reversed position on the Armenian Genocide. In his remarks at the Lowy Institute Carr called the Armenian Genocide a "historical dispute" and stated that the Australian government "will not take a stand on it."

Australian Armenians have expressed their disappointment at Carr's "u-turn position" on the Armenian Genocide. In 1997, Carr became a champion and leader of the Armenian cause, culminating in a successful motion in the Parliament of New South Wales. That motion called on the federal government of Australia to follow his lead to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

"In this country we never forget what happened to the Armenians between 1915-1923. Let us honor the victims of the Armenian Genocide," Carr had said.

The group has sent a letter to Carr asking him to return to his "moral convictions" on the Genocide.

"Now as foreign minister, with the ability to see through the objective of that motion, you have seemingly decided that this issue is too difficult for you to pursue. You have not only decided that the government doesn't want to 'take a stand' on the issue, but you have also joined the disgraced line of Armenian Genocide denialists by referring to the events as a 'historic dispute,'" the letter stated.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

New Indian Ambassador To Armenia Appointed

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – India appointed Suresh Babu as the ambassador to Armenia on February 26.

President Serge Sargisian congratulated the newly ambassador on his appointment and stated that he is confident that the Armenian-Indian relations will continue to develop.

Both Babu and Sargisian, spoke to the importance of amicable relations between the two countries and the twenty years of cooperation they have already experienced.

Olympic Wrestler to Go On Hunger Strike

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Olympic wrestling champion Armen Nazaryan says he will go on hunger strike if wrestling is removed from the Olympics.

Levon Julfalakyan, coach of the national wrestling team, noted in an interview, Nazaryan told he would go on hunger strike in case of the wrestling removal from the program.

“Nazaryan said he would go on hunger strike, though I am sure wrestling will not be removed from the Olympics program. In case it really is, all possible measures will be taken in order to restore it,” he noted.

According to ESPN.com, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) voted to remove freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling from the Summer Games beginning in 2020. With golf and rugby being added to the program for the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics, the IOC said it needed to make room.

Days of Japanese Culture To Be Held in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Days of Japanese Culture will be held March 1-3. Exhibits of various Japanese decorative arts will be presented.

In addition, a Japanese teatime ceremony will be organized as well.

The series is organized by the Japanese Embassy in Armenia, Armenian-Japanese Hikari Cultural Center and the National Art Center of Armenia.

Karine Piliposyan, the head of Hikari, reported that master classes would be conducted by artist Midori Yamada.

Archbishop Aris Shirvanian to Attend Meetings in Echmiadzin

ECHMIADZIN (Armenpress) – The patriarchal vicar of Jerusalem, Archbishop Aris Shirvanian, attended meetings of the Supreme Spiritual Council, which were held in the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin February 19-21.

Shirvanian was elected as Patriarchal Vicar in October after the death of Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Archbishop Torkom Manoogian.

Shirvanian (baptismal name Armenag) was born on July 23, 1934, in Haifa, Palestine (currently Israel). He is the son of Hovhannes and Lousaper Shirvanian. He received his primary education at the St. Yeghia Primary School in Haifa and the St. Karasoonk Mangantz School in Bourj Hammoud, Lebanon.

In 1952, he entered the Theological Seminary at the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and graduated in 1957, becoming a member of the Brotherhood of St. James.

He was ordained to the diaconate in 1954 by then Locum-Tenens of Jerusalem Archbishop Yeghishe Derderian. He was ordained as a celibate priest in 1957 by then Patriarch-elect of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan and given the priestly name of Aris.

At the invitation of Manoogian, he returned to Jerusalem where he served as the dean of the Jarangavoratz Theological Seminary from 1998 to 1999. In 2006 he was elevated to the rank of archbishop by the Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II.

Hovannisian Becomes Latest Runner-Up to Dispute Election Outcome

By Naira Hayrumyan

YEREVAN (ArmeniaNow) – Almost all presidential elections in the history of independent Armenia were followed by protests, with the second-placed candidate disputing the official outcome and claiming massive fraud in favor of the government candidate. The 2013 election is no exception in this sense.

Heritage Party leader Raffi Hovannisian, who garnered nearly 37 percent of the vote, insists that a considerable number of votes have been stolen from him and that in fact he is the rightful winner and not the incumbent president, Serge Sargisian, whose official result is put above 58 percent.

Thousands of people showing up for post-election rallies in Yerevan agree with Hovannisian, as many people did in 1996 when the single opposition presidential candidate, Vazgen Manukian, was officially “defeated” by the then-incumbent, Levon Ter-Petrosian; in 2003 when then opposition leader Stepan Demirchian challenged president Robert Kocharian and finally in 2008 when Ter-Petrosian, already as an opposition leader, disputed Sargisian’s win of his first presidential term. While in all cases street demonstrations would turn nasty at one point, only the 2008 standoff turned deadly as 10 people were killed in the March 1-2 clashes in central Yerevan when security personnel had been brought in to suppress the demonstrations.

The reasons for the Armenian tradition of electoral fraud have most succinctly been formulated by the US Department of State, whose spokeswoman, Victoria Nuland, citing concerns of international observers, earlier this week talked about “the lack of impartiality on the part of [Armenian] public administration officials and the misuse of administrative resources that resulted in a blurred distinction between the activities of the state and those of the ruling party.” In fact, by highlighting this circumstance, Nuland accused the governing Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) of using the levers of the state to secure its continued hold of power.

In another country such a statement would have been perceived as an accusation of usurping power and would have caused at least a diplomatic row, but the ruling party of Armenia remains

silent on this statement. Though, the RPA itself admits that there were irregularities in the ballot, but “they did not affect the course and the outcome of the election.”

When an athlete is caught using performance-enhancing drugs and other stimulants he or she gets banned from the race and is usually stripped of all

where the political parties at the helm of the state have always opted for reshaping laws to fit their needs, and no code of honor has been formed within more than two decades of formal democracy in Armenia.

The maverick presidential candidate, Andreas Ghukasyan, who was on a month-long hunger strike throughout

the election campaign, demanded from the very beginning that the RPA, which nominated President Sargisian as a candidate in the race, be disqualified, arguing that this party’s participation by itself implied unfair elections. Before calling for the disqualification of Sargisian as an RPA candidate, Ghukasyan first suggested boycotting the elections, urging all candidates to withdraw from the race to leave Sargisian alone, shadowboxing, but to no avail – the elections were held, and their fairness is again being called into question.

Despite the fact that thousands of people have been gathering in the square with a genuine wish for the flawed system of power usurpation to be broken up,

Armenia still lacks mechanisms of appealing the election results: even the proof of a considerable number of violations is likely to be rejected by the Constitutional Court as “not enough to influence the outcome of elections” on the basis of a simple numerical count and with no integrity of the process being taken into consideration.

In conditions like these, election protesters appear to have only a limited number of options to choose from – either to put up with the election results and start preparing for the next elections or make a revolution.

Both options, however, are futile, as in the case with the former there is no guarantee that the protest mood will not fade away in time for the next general election (as it happened to the Ter-Petrosian opposition bloc that regrouped in the wake of the suppressed street demonstrations for purposes of a long-term political struggle) and the latter option will inevitably come up against strong-arm methods of the state with all ensuing consequences.

Under current circumstances it is not excluded that a third option will be offered – a broad-based coalition with the powers of a constitutional assembly that would prepare constitutional amendments primarily regarding liability for electoral violations that will eventually break up the RPA’s monopoly – a goal now being pursued by many opposition and “alternative” political forces in Armenia that feel mostly excluded from public governance and decision-making.

Such an option could allow Hovannisian to take his rightful place in the country’s establishment, lobby the proposal that he himself made last year about the transition to a parliamentary form of government. At the same time, it would allow Sargisian to “clean” his own party, which has constantly been accused of becoming a refuge to oligarchs, and to modernize it for the benefit of the nation.



Raffi Hovannisian in Yerevan

titles. The most recent example is the case of US cycling star Lance Armstrong. The RPA, in fact, has been using “doping” in the form of state levers – schools, social service agencies and facilities, municipal authorities, through which it has put considerable pressure on voters. Besides, the RPA also wields significant influence on the Central Election Commission, which is supposed to remain an independent and impartial body.

The Armenian legislation contains no provisions that would allow disqualifying a political party from the race if voting violations are committed in its favor. Such provisions exist, however, in the legislations of other countries, besides, in democratic countries there is a so-called code of political honor, according to which a political party itself declares its resignation if at least one similar offense becomes publicly known.

But it is not the case in Armenia,

President Serge Sargisian Certified As Winner of Presidential Vote

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Sargisian received other congratulatory messages from foreign leaders, including Polish President Bronisław Komorowski and German President Joachim Gauck.

Hovannisian Demonstrates

Hovannisian, who has disputed the results, is expected to hold a news conference after the announcement.

On February 24, about 4,000 supporters of Hovannisian demonstrated in Yerevan to protest the initial vote count.

Some 8,000 Hovannisian supporters protested on February 22 in Yerevan. Smaller protests were held in three other cities on February 23.

On February 26, Hovannisian said the revolution of love and welcome will continue.

“I will take that message of peace to all the regions of Armenia – to Armavir, Metsamor, Echmiadzin, Masis, Artashat, Ararat, Surenavan, Areni, Yegheknadzor and Vayk. On February 27, escorted by the police in mutual respect to Agarak, Meghri, Kajaran, Kapan, Goris, Sisian.”

He said that a large, authorized demonstration was scheduled for February 28 (after press time). Stops on that day include Charentsavan, Nor Hajin, Abovyan and then back to Freedom Square.

He boasted that the Armenian Armed Forces would be turned into the most capable in the world and spoke of the sacrifices and tribulations that the Armenian people have experienced.

(RFE/RL, Hetq and Armenpress contributed to this report.)



INTERNATIONAL

Jewish Armenia

By Anna Borshchevskaya

JERUSALEM (*Jerusalem Post*) — Rebecca Miller, a Peace Corps volunteer in Armenia, was skeptical when Bishop Abraham Mkrtchyan approached her about starting a Jewish culture center alongside a medieval Jewish cemetery in the village of Yeghegis.

“I had ... noted that there was not much in the way of diversity in the area and couldn’t imagine what the point of a Jewish cultural center was,” she said.

But after visiting the cemetery, she changed her mind and agreed to work with the bishop to help preserve it. “I talked to anybody who would listen about what it was,” she said.

Prior to the cemetery’s 1996 discovery, there was virtually no evidence that Jews had lived in Armenia in pre-modern times. In a country that does not boast much of an ethnic or religious minority presence, Yeghegis is a fascinating nexus of culture and history.

I visited Yeghegis in December 2012. The village, along the banks of a river by the same name, lies about 96 km. south of Yerevan, against the backdrop of Ararat Valley, and just 112 km. or so north of Iran. When the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict broke out as the Soviet Union was falling apart Yeghegis had a large Azeri population.

The story of the Jewish community in Armenia dates to the early 13th century, when Mongol invaders devastated the region.

But the Orbelian family that ruled the Armenian Kingdom of Saunik — which included Yeghegis, that they later made its capital, and Vayots Dzor — established diplomatic relations with the Mongols.

In return, they granted Saunik a privileged status. As the rest of Armenia struggled, the kingdom — protected by its status and the snow-capped mountains — flourished and became a migration hub, attracting, among others, Jewish immigrants.

Mkrtchyan discovered the cemetery when he and his brother Mayis Mkrtchyan opened the Siranush children’s camp in Yeghegis to provide shelter, food, recreation and education for children orphaned by the war with Azerbaijan.

The bishop heard there was a mineral-water spring in the area.

He wanted to find it for the children and, as he searched, he came across three tombstones, where he saw writing he didn’t understand.

“I thought, maybe Iranian?” he told me when we met in Yerevan. Then one guest staying with him told him the writing was Hebrew, and the bishop approached representatives of the small Jewish community in Yerevan for help.

He also sent photos of the tombstones to Professor Michael Stone of Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who confirmed the bishop’s suspicion that what he had found was indeed a medieval Jewish cemetery. A group of Armenian and Israeli archaeologists and historians excavated the site in 2001 and 2002 and found 64 more tombstones. Many bear Hebrew of Aramaic inscriptions, and some are decorated with motifs of the Orbelian kingdom.

The archaeological team also found three mills, which the bishop says show that the community had a business because one mill could feed several families.

There were also numerous underground tombs without any writing. In one ruin, they found a millstone that had been reincorporated into the house structure, which shows that people lived there for quite a long time. They also found many stones that could have been part of a synagogue, but as in the tels which dot Israel (and Iraqi Kurdistan), much more remains undiscovered in Armenia.

“The Jewish presence in Armenia provides a link between the old, well-established Jewish community in Iran, and other Caucasian and Pontic Jewish communities, and those even further north,” wrote Stone.

“This will, after the necessary research is completed, require us to reassess the relationships between these areas, and it also has implications for economic and commercial history.”

“In the 13th century,” said Mkrtchyan, “At a time when you can’t imagine that a country... in Europe either helped create or didn’t destroy a Jewish settlement... It is fantastic how they could gather cultural, architectural symbolism of Jewish Armenians... and they were connected, and built one of the strongest kingdoms during time of Mongols.”

The bishop’s dream is to build museum, or a culture center about Jews in Armenia, that would focus on education.

“Because these two peoples had very ancient connections... and until now it is one of the few peoples with whom we had no problems,” he said with a laugh.

The bishop wants people to know what connections existed between Armenians and Jews, stories of how they helped each other during the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust, for instance.

“These peoples in this region, I think have to support each other... They ended up having a similar destiny.”

Armenians from Syria Enroll in Lebanon Schools

SIN EL FIL, Lebanon (*The Daily Star*) — The Lazar Najarian-Calouste Gulbenkian School in Aleppo is still in operation despite being frequently suspended due to the violence in Syria.

The school, which has graduated thousands of students since 1954, might see many of its students graduate from Lebanese schools instead as battles engulf the city.

The institution’s high school, built in the city’s Azizieh neighborhood in honor of Armenian businessman and philanthropist Calouste Gulbenkian, has many students fleeing to Armenian communities around the world as the violence in Syria continues.

The school in Aleppo was among many that were built to accommodate the needs of a growing population of ethnic Armenians, whose ancestors had survived the Armenian Genocide less than half a century earlier.

As the schools face an uncertain future in Syria, hundreds of Armenian students are enrolling in Armenian schools in Lebanon while maintaining hope that they will attend college back home despite the continuing violence. “Returning to Syria is on the mind of most of our students from Syria,” said Ara Vassilian, the general director of schools affiliated with the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU.)

Education costs for students coming from Syria to AGBU schools are covered in large part by the nonprofit organization, which relies heavily on donations made by philanthropists and the Armenian diaspora.

AGBU has donated \$1.7 million in relief aid since the conflict began in order to help Syrian-Armenian families exposed to the civil war.

An estimated 120,000 Armenians live in Syria with the majority centered in Aleppo.

Arina, a student in grade 11, said that her journey to Lebanon started while she was visiting her uncle last summer: “I would visit my uncle in Lebanon every summer with my family, but last year we came here and didn’t go back.”

“I like it here, Lebanon is great but Damascus is my city,” she added.

“I want to go back to Syria, but after finishing school here,” said Sarine, a former student of Lazar Najarian-Calouste Gulbenkian School in Aleppo.

At three of AGBU’s schools in the Metn towns of Sin el Fil and Dbayeh, there are at least 100 Syrian-Armenian students. More arrive each week.

Many other students have enrolled in other Armenian schools across the country, but no official numbers have been announced yet.

Although hundreds of Syrian Armenians have fled the unrest and sought refuge in Armenia, many families have preferred to move to Lebanon and other countries with vibrant expat communities with a Western Armenian curriculum and the similarity of the education system to that in Syria.

The Syrian community speaks Western Armenian and Arabic, as in Lebanon, but here, many students say they have found it difficult to study most of their courses in English.

“At my school in Syria, most of the classes were in Arabic, here they are in English,” said Arina.

Arina, who studied at the Looys (Light) School in Damascus, said that even though she faced difficulty in the beginning of the year, she has been gradually improving.

While Lebanon’s educational system offers science courses in either English or French, most of the courses in Syria are taught in Arabic, leaving English as a third language.

AGBU schools have been holding intensive English language classes on Saturdays since the beginning of the academic year to help Syrian students catch up.

Some classes have filled up this year, forcing Vassilian’s administration to open new sections for the same grade. “We had bullying as a topic of discussion this year to help integrate Lebanese and Syrian students together,” Vassilian said.

“The administration anticipated such problems and we warned against any intolerance toward Syrians from the very beginning,” he said.

Students of AGBU’s elementary school also look forward to going back to Syria in the near future. “My school was attacked and I can’t go back there now,” said Ania, a fifth grader. “After the fighting reached where we lived in Aleppo Street in Damascus, my family decided to flee to Lebanon,” she added.

Another Syrian-Armenian student said she was looking forward to seeing her country secure and stable. “The street we lived on was safe before, but growing fear and increased fighting made us leave our home and come to Beirut,” said Karny. “When everything is back to normal, I want to go back.”

The constant thought of return to Syria might distract Syrian students in their studies this year, but the majority remain optimistic and focused on their plans to return to attend college.

“I want to be a lawyer when I grow up,” Ania said.

International News

Lithuania Starts Friendship Group with Artsakh

VILNIUS, Lithuania (Armenpress) — A group of deputies from the Lithuanian Parliament on February 26 adopted a declaration to create a friendship group with Artsakh.

The local Armenian Revolutionary Federation chapter issued the group’s statement, saying, “Taking into account the 25th anniversary of Artsakh movement, when Armenian nation implemented its right of self-determination, and at that time Lithuania greeted that willing and presented its support to the peaceful resolution of the issue; taking into account that in the struggle for the independence Artsakh and Lithuanian people were guided by norms of international law, democratic values and common ideas, to which they remain to be faithful till now; sharing European territory policy, according to which every inhabitant of it has the right of access to basic rights and fundamental freedoms,” among other reasons, has led to the Lithuanian group’s decision to create a friendship group with Lithuania.

Armenian Karate Team Wins 18 Medals

TBILISI (Armenpress) — The Aykikendo Karate Federation of Armenia participated in the Georgian Open Championship of Contact Martial Arts on February 24. According to the federation, the Armenian team took first place overall at the competition.

Armenian team members won six gold, six silver and six bronze medals. Among the Armenian champions were: Tigran Davtyan, Smbat Siravyan, Mikayel Karavarichyan, Artak Balayan, Oksen Vardanyan and Vahan Asatryan.

Federation Executive Director Areg Barseghyan said after the win, “As we have previously stated this tournament became a serious test for our team before the launch of a row of international competitions. We have now discovered [both] our vulnerable and strong points.”

President of Georgia Visits Azerbaijan

TBILISI (Armenpress) — President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili departed for an official visit to Azerbaijan on February 27.

Saakashvili said that Tbilisi Mayor Gigi Ugulava was to join the delegation; however, Ugulava is not technically allowed to leave the country due to the criminal case that has been initiated against him.

Ugulava has been formally charged with two counts of misspending and embezzlement of public funds and one count of money laundering.

Blue Book Sent to Turkish Deputies again

ISTANBUL (*Hürriyet Daily News*) — A group of intellectuals have re-sent copies of Lord James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee’s *The Blue Book*, which relates the Ottoman-era Armenian unrest in Turkey in 1915, to the Turkish Parliament’s 550 lawmakers following a failed attempt to do so four years ago.

The group, which is sending the book to the deputies via the state-controlled postal service PTT, is hoping to draw attention to freedom of speech. “A ban on reading has reached schools,” said Ragip Zarakolu, a publisher, at an Istanbul press meeting on February 19.

Sükrü Elekdag, then-Parliamentary Speaker Köksal Toptan prevented deliveries of the books four years ago when they were sent by cargo, Zarakolu said.

“In a bid to point at a rising ban on books and [overcome what happened four years ago], we find it meaningful to start efforts from this point,” he said.

If the deputies cannot receive the books from the PTT, the group plans to distribute them directly at the gate of the Parliament building.

The book was re-printed by the Gomidas Institute four years ago upon the efforts of historian Ara Sarafian, who was also present at the February 19 meeting.

The Blue Book, also known as The treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire is a compilation of statements by eyewitnesses from other countries including Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland during 1915-1916.



Community News

Central Library to Host Gala Danilova

GLENDALÉ – Gala Danilova from the HALO Trust will lecture on the mine clearance progress in Artsakh, on Tuesday, March 12, 7 p.m. at the Glendale Central Library Auditorium, 222 East Harvard St. The presentation will be in both English and Armenian. Admission is free, but seating is limited. Library visitors receive three hours of free parking across the street at The Market Place parking structure with validation at the Loan Desk.

Gala Danilova, is a graduate of Mesrop Mashdots University in Stepanakert where she studied History and International Relations. She joined HALO in September 2002 as a Mine Risk Education (MRE) coordinator in Stepanakert. After several years in the MRE program she was given responsibility for logistics and then statistics in HALO's Artsakh office. She also supported HALO's MRE team in Abkhazia and HALO's USA office fundraising efforts in the United States during her three trips in 2007-2008. In May 2009 she was promoted to her current assignment as the Director of Finance.

The HALO Trust is a non-political, non-religious organization, which specializes in the removal of the hazardous debris of war. HALO began mine clearance operations in Afghanistan in 1988 and currently works in 11 countries around the world. HALO's programs in the Caucasus started on 1995 in Nagorno Karabagh (Artsakh).

The 1992-94 war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Artsakh left behind hundreds of minefields and cluster bomb strikes. It has had profound impacts upon the day-to-day lives of the rural population, significantly inhibiting the incomes of thousands of poor families and causing 268 accidents, with almost 350 people killed or injured. This is amongst the highest per capita civilian casualty rates in the world with a quarter of these victims being children. HALO Artsakh has returned more than 66,718 acres of contaminated land to productive use. More than 67,000 landmines, cluster munitions and other items of unexploded ordnance have been safely located and destroyed. Accidents will continue to happen until the remaining minefields and cluster munition strikes are cleared.

The program is sponsored by the Library, Arts & Culture Department. For more information, contact Elizabeth Grigorian, at egrigorian@ci.glendale.ca.us.

Krekor Karaguezian New Chair of AGBU Western US District Committee

NEW YORK – The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Central Office announced recently that Krekor Karaguezian has been appointed chair of the US Western District region for a term of two years, beginning on January 1.



Krekor Karaguezian

Karaguezian is a life-long member of AGBU who has demonstrated leadership in the global Armenian community. He was active in the AGBU-AYA scouting movement in Beirut, and played an instrumental role in organizing the first scouting movement in California prior to taking on the position of the AGBU Asbeds vice chairman.

The following individuals have been appointed to serve under his leadership: Tom Alexanian, vice chair; Avedis Markarian, treasurer; Aline Yeterian, secretary; and Julia Aghishian, Aram Aginian, Harry Balian, Benjamin Charchian, Silva Nazaretian and Krikor Simonian, members.



AEN president and founder, Ursula Kazarian

Armenian Environmental Network Launches Bay Area Chapter

SAN FRANCISCO – On January 27, the Armenian Environmental Network (AEN) marked the launch of its new San Francisco Bay Area Chapter with an event hosted by the University of San Francisco (USF).

The event, which was attended by 70 people, was organized in partnership with the University's Department of Environmental Science and the Associated Students of USF Sustainability Committee.

The event began with opening remarks from Jerry Manoukian, president of the Armenian Medical International Committee, who served as master of ceremonies throughout the evening. AEN San Francisco Chapter organizer and Bay Area native, Lilit Markosian, also gave a brief introductory speech in which she related her experience and involvement with AEN. Markosian explained, "The purpose of this event is to inspire members of the Bay Area Armenian community to take initiative and join AEN in its fight for Armenia's environment." She continued, "This is everybody's fight. I hope that after you hear about everything AEN has to offer, you will see AEN as an opportunity to get involved and make a difference."

The first speaker of the evening was Dr. Thomas MacDonald, professor of environmental science at USF, who illustrated examples of international and local environmental issues, which have been addressed by means of grassroots movements. MacDonald also expressed USF's support for AEN's new initiative in the San Francisco Bay Area. Next, Areg Gharabegian, Environmental Committee chair of Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America, presented various environmental concerns in Armenia, including deforestation, the poor state of Lake Sevan, and destructive mining.

The last speaker of the evening was Ursula Kazarian, AEN president and founder, who described the organization's history and development since its

see ENVIRONMENT, page 5



Panel of speakers discuss environmental issues at the event.

Syrian Conflict Claims Life of Priest's Friend

By Tom Vartabedian

NORTH ANDOVER, Mass. – The war in Syria has taken a personal toll on Rev. Karekin Bedourian. His best friend from Kessab was listed among the more recent casualties. The victim was identified from DNA reports three months after being listed missing in combat.

"Official figures put the death toll between 70,000-80,000 over these two years," reports the young pastor of St. Gregory Church. "It's probably much higher than that. When you lose someone who was your dear companion, it becomes very personal. I continue to mourn his death and pray for peace."

Recent tolls have counted more than 60 Armenian fatalities, another 10 missing and hundreds of Armenians without homes. Schools and churches in Aleppo are closed due to the violence.

Hovag Kortmosian was serving as an officer in the government's army and became missing after rebel forces invaded his camp. Together they hiked the mountains of Kessab with Kortmosian's brother who had become a priest in Antelias.

Wherever you saw one, you saw the three of them during their Kessab days. They played on the same streets, attended the same schools and kicked soccer balls as young athletes. They were that close.

"You might credit Hovag with saving our lives," recalled Bedourian. "We got lost in the mountains one day and were disoriented for seven hours in the wilderness. All we saw were sky and trees. Hovag found the trail after some very deep concentration and led us to the bottom. We could have died."

Bedourian received the tragic news by telephone from his father. The two had rekindled their friendship during a return home last year to baptize his daughter, Megheti.

"Who knew that would be the last time we would see one another?" he lamented. "The last thing we said to one another was to have this war end and that our people rest in peace and security. My yeretskin (wife) and I, we sat down and cried over the news. That Sunday, I offered Hovag a special prayer, along with the numerous children, adults and soldiers who have died needlessly."

Bedourian presented some sobering accounts of the turmoil during a Merrimack Valley gathering for Syrian-Armenian Relief conducted February 23 at his church by the Lowell ARF. An assortment of people braved an impending snowstorm to donate close to \$1,000 for aid.

The collection was among others conducted in the community by the Prelacy and Armenian Relief Society, raising substantial amounts overall. Thus far, reports show more than \$1 million in aid being transferred to Syrian Armenians from around the world.

"Conditions are rapidly deteriorating in that battered land," he said. "Schools and churches are being destroyed. People are at unrest. We owe it to ourselves to come to their aid and support a necessary cause. My heart goes out every day to the families who have been tormented, including my very own. With all the animosity there, we need a miracle to survive."

Bedourian spoke of kidnappings. He elaborated on the disturbing events that reach him every day from the war-torn zone. He talked of the hunger and the deprivation his people face.

"The hand of evil is trying to destroy the peace and stability of Syria, one of the most peaceful countries in the world," he pointed out. "We cannot remain indifferent and unconcerned about people who are experiencing death and affliction."

see CONFLICT, page 7



COMMUNITY NEWS

AGBU Sister Schools Complete Exchange Program on West Coast

Marie Manoogian Institute Students Return Home to Argentina, Awaiting Angelenos' Visit

LOS ANGELES — Youth from the AGBU Marie Manoogian Institute in Buenos Aires and the AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School (MDS) in Los Angeles may live thousands of miles apart, but they became the closest of friends during this winter's Student Exchange Program. Now in its 14th year, the annual AGBU program recently brought 18 students from Argentina to California, where, for three weeks, they learned, created and explored alongside their peers.

From the moment the Marie Manoogian students stepped off the plane on Friday, January 11, until their farewell party on Friday, February 1, they had a complete cultural immersion experience: they lived with host families, enrolled in MDS courses and ventured out on local excursions. The diverse group was filled with Armenian as well as non-Armenian youth; for decades, the school has attracted families from all across Buenos Aires seeking quality education and the exchange program's integrated curriculum opened every partici-



Exchange students from the AGBU Marie Manoogian Institute in Buenos Aires join their peers from the AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School in Canoga Park on a field trip to California's Getty Museum.

pant's eyes to a new and exciting world abroad.

Accompanied by their English Department coordinator Miriam Boghossian Tabakian — who created the program with AGBU Central Board member Carol Aslanian in 1999 — the exchange students enjoyed a full itinerary. Every school day, MDS teachers welcomed the 10th and 11th graders into their classrooms,

where they studied English conversation, writing and literature, as well as American and Armenian history. The students traded pens for paintbrushes during art classes with their MDS peers, and discovered some of the greatest works from the Renaissance to the 20th century when they joined their new MDS friends on a field trip to the Getty Museum. In between, special class periods helped the youth master the footwork of traditional Armenian dances, skills they displayed during the lunch on the last day of their stay.

When weekends arrived, the exchange students had even more to look forward to — spending time with the 12 host families who generously opened their homes, and visiting tourist attractions. Outings included visiting Universal Studios, where they got a behind-the-scenes look at movie and television sets, as well as a trip to Disneyland.

A gathering organized by the MDS Parent Teacher Organization gave the students and their host families the opportunity to reflect on everything they had learned and experienced prior to their departure. During the event, which drew 60 guests, the students, parents

and educators each took the podium to share highlights from this year's visit and the program's positive impact. As MDS Principal Hagop Hagopian stated, "The intrinsic value of the student exchange program between the AGBU schools in Buenos Aires and Canoga Park lies in the lifelong memories and lasting friendships that have been created among participating students since 1999, as much as the learning experiences and cultural enrichment derived from it. Special thanks to host parents, teachers, administrators, and AGBU leadership for their support and invaluable contributions for the continuing success of this wonderful program."

Hagopian also awarded each student with a certificate of completion officially documenting their participation in the program.

After three weeks, it was difficult for the MDS and Marie Manoogian students to say goodbye to one another. However, they won't have to wait too long before they meet again. This July, the MDS students will travel to Buenos Aires and catch up with old friends.

For more information about AGBU and its worldwide programs, visit www.agbu.org.



Exchange students show off their footwork after weeks of dance lessons.

Massachusetts State House Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide



Friday, April 19, 2013

Free buses will leave St. James and St. Stephen's Armenian Churches at 8:30 a.m. (Courtesy of the Knights of Vartan)

Details to follow

Armenian Environmental Network Launches Bay Area Chapter

ENVIRONMENT, from page 4

nception in 2007, including opening its Yerevan office in 2011. She also highlighted AEN's primary project in Armenia: the Integrated Waste Management Project, which involves a community-based approach to establish the country's first sanitary landfill.

Finally, Kazarian explained AEN's mission, which she described as two-fold. The first step, she said, "is to inform the Diaspora and the international environmental community about urgent environmental issues affecting Armenia, and the second is to develop that heightened awareness and interest in Armenia's environment into meaningful partnerships with development professionals and practitioners on the ground in Armenia to create real and lasting change. To achieve this dual mission, it naturally follows that we should establish chapters in various Armenian communities in order to truly 'think globally and act locally.'" She continued, "AEN is thrilled to find such an active and environmentally informed community in the Bay Area, and we couldn't be happier with Lilit as our energetic and talented chapter organizer."

Following the presentations and question-and-answer period, a reception was held with live music provided by Greg Manoukian and Kyle DeWitt from the local band Libertine Circle. Additionally, a wide array of food and refreshments were donated by two local businesses: La Mediteranee Restaurant and Royal Market and Bakery.

For pictures or a video of the event and to sign up for the AEN San Francisco Bay Area Chapter mailing list, visit <http://www.armenia-environment.org/sf-chapter-inaugural-event/>.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Youth Overcomes Tragic Accident to Become Basketball Coach at Alma Mater

By Tom Vartabedian

CENTRAL FALLS, R.I. — A missing limb did not deter Cory Garabedian from aiming to excel in his life.

The 24-year-old not only landed a coaching job at his alma mater but is working on a business degree at the Community College of Rhode Island.

"Be true to yourself and you'll never be disappointed," he said. "The truth will always set you free."

A horrific auto accident Christmas Eve in 2011 resulted in having a leg amputated. In fact, the injuries were so severe that many members of the clergy regularly visited him at the hospital to pray for him.

People like Steve Elmasian, his coach, never missed a visit and gave him constant encouragement. So did the hundreds who sent out cards and the thousands who read of his determination in the Armenian press.

All of a sudden, he went from a typical young man to a role model for others facing a disability.

"I thought it was all a bad dream at first," Garabedian said. "When you're in a hospital for 50 days with a missing leg, the world around you tends to cave. You begin to feel useless. I was bound to make the best of it because that's what sports taught me. That's what my parents

and friends drilled into me."

At the time, he was headed to Dean College in Franklin, looking toward football after distinguishing himself in high school. He was also a track stalwart, helping his Providence Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) team to two relay championships. Gritty competition appeared to be the young athlete's destiny.

According to Garabedian's physicians, he may never have survived such an ordeal had it not been for his strong physical condition and uncompromising faith.

He received injuries to his liver, elbow, leg and lungs. He was on a respirator and feeding tube for weeks.

He has completed 15 hours of college credits at CCRI closer to home after being hired as an assistant varsity coach at his high school, where he also played basketball.

The junior varsity team is entirely his responsibility. Garabedian coaches with zest, then joins the head coach on the bench for the varsity game. He's made such an impact with the JVs that two freshman were quickly promoted to the varsity level, which is rare in high school sports.

"I'm teaching them the knowledge and wisdom I learned as a young athlete," said Garabedian. "It all begins with the fundamentals. I try to make it a fun experience for the kids."

It is hard to even tell that Garabedian has a prosthetic leg. However, he still cannot jog or



Cory Garabedian coaches his basketball team at Central Falls High School in Rhode Island.

jump with the leg.

"I promised myself I'd be a master at prosthetics," he stressed. "Running is the next

stage. It has become a personal challenge. I see progress every day."

He has come to accept his fate, however gradually. The two-time football All-Stater realizes how easy it is to grow depressed but doesn't want to experience the lows.

He wants to start his own business after college and join the coaching ranks. Last April, he was the main speaker at Cranston City Hall for the annual Armenian National Committee of America flag-raising commemoration.

"It has been a blessing in disguise for me," he confirms. "I always thought people were going to look at me funny with a metal leg. You have to turn your disabilities into abilities."

At this year's Providence AYF Varantian Ball, Elmasian praised his younger colleague for getting his life back together and fulfilling his dreams.

"Cory has gone from an induced coma to coaching at his high school," he said. "I remember coaching him as a 13-year-old. There is nothing more rewarding than to see an athlete follow in your footsteps. Watching him go from where he was to where he is now should be an inspiration to all of us. He certainly is to me."

OBITUARY

Rensselaer County Honors Veteran of Vietnam, Korea, Joseph Manoogian Jr.

TROY, N.Y. (*The Record*) — The late Joseph Manoogian Jr., a United States Navy Veteran whose service included maritime service during both the Korean War and Vietnam War Veteran, was recognized by Rensselaer County's Honor-A-Deceased Veteran Committee and County officials on January 14, during services at the County Office Building.

The son of Armenian Genocide survivors who immigrated to the US in 1920, Manoogian joined the armed forces on March 6, 1950, at the age of 17, one credit shy of receiving his high school diploma. During training, Manoogian got his GED and proceeded to volunteer for submarine duty.

Throughout a Navy career spanning approximately two decades, Manoogian was assigned to sometimes multiple tours aboard a half dozen submarines, including the USS Quilback, the USS Seawolf, the USS Bang, the USS Skipjack, the USS Halfbreak and the USS Sea Leopard. Aboard the world's second nuclear-powered submarine, the USS Seawolf, in 1958, Manoogian participated in a record-setting assignment when the ship continued fully-submerged operations for 60 days and travelling a distance of 14,500 nautical miles.

Additional tours of note include crossing the equator aboard the same ship during 1961 while in pursuit of the cruise ship Santa Maria, which had been seized and was under the con-

trol of Portuguese Pirates, and, when aboard the USS Sea Leopard during 1969 travelling beneath the ice of the North Pole, through the Arctic Circle, while operating in the northern hemisphere.

For his service, Manoogian was authorized to receive five Good Conduct Awards, multiple Bronze Stars, the National Defense Service Medal, received more than a half dozen commendations and participated in official visits by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Secretary of Defense James McElroy and Secretary of the Navy Thomas Gates.

After marrying Patricia Jean Brown on July 4, 1954, Manoogian helped to raise a family that included daughters Debra and Karin in Hoosick Falls while working at the US Postal Service.

"Joseph Manoogian, Jr., dedicated his life to the service of his nation and was highly decorated for his valiant actions," said Rensselaer County Executive Kathleen M. Jimino.

"Joseph Manoogian was a patriot who provided outstanding service to the US Navy, earning assignments to some of the most important and prominent military assignments during the Cold War," said Chairman of the Legislature Martin Reid.

The ceremony honoring Manoogian was attended by Rep. Paul Tonko, representatives of Rep. Chris Gibson and Sen. Kathleen Marchione, among many others.

Berjoohie H. Zakarian

WORCESTER — Berjoohie H. (Berjie) Zakarian of Worcester died on Friday, February 15. Born in Worcester, she was the daughter of the late Hapet and Yougaper (Topjian) Zakarian and sister of the late Asbed "Ozzie" Zakarian.

Zakarian is survived by her sister-in-law, Margaret Zakarian of Worcester; her niece Susan Atamian and husband Edward, grand nephews, Ross and Kirk Atamian of Shrewsbury; niece Melanie Samsel and husband James of Grafton; nephew James Jamgochian and wife Marilynn, grand nephew Rick Jamgochian of Milford, Conn., and grand nieces, Christina Feden and husband Jeff, Liz Beck and husband Ray and Lauren Fletcher and husband Eddy; great grandnieces, Aubrey, Kenley and Elizabeth and great grandnephew Preston; and also several nieces and nephews in the United States and

Armenia.

She was a graduate of Commerce High School, attended the Hairdressing Academy of Worcester and was a hairstylist for almost 40 years. She was an active member of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour, having served 34 years as a dedicated Sunday School teacher, 14 years as a youth advisor and member of the Church Choir and Avaks. She was also a member of AGBU, Daughters of Vartan, Armenian Assembly and the Armenian Library and Museum of America.

Zakarian's funeral was held on Monday, February 18, at the Armenian Church of Our Saviour in Worcester. Interment was at Hope Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Armenian Church of Our Saviour, 87 Salisbury St., Worcester, MA 01609.

Donations

Charles Hovsepian and Ruth and Wilford Swisher, of Newington, Conn, donated \$100 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* in memory of Siranush Hovsepian, Esgouhi and Sirvart Simonian, and Maritza Ohanesian.

In appreciation of the paper, Jirair D. Aghajian of East Elmhurst, NY donates \$ 100 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

John and Hasmik Mgrdichian Foundation Donate \$100,000 to EyeCare Project

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — The Board of Directors of the Armenian EyeCare Project (AECPP) is proud to announce that the John and Hasmik Mgrdichian Foundation has donated \$100,000 to the Project's Initiative, "Bringing Sight to Armenian Eyes." We are most grateful the Foundation joins us in our mission to eliminate preventable blindness in Armenia and for their continuing and loyal support.

The Board of Directors is appreciative of the foundation's gift. Their support is testimony of their confidence in the work of the Armenian

Georgia and then by truck to Yerevan. The Project's hub of regional service delivery, the MEH travels throughout the regions of Armenia delivering quality eye care to children and adults living in the outlying villages who otherwise would not have access to eye care services. The MEH physicians and support staff have traveled to all the provinces in Armenia at least twice providing outreach and education, diagnostic examinations, prescription eyeglasses, medical treatment and sight-restoring surgery as charitable services at no cost to the Armenian people — bringing the gift of sight to thousands.

The John and Hasmik Mgrdichian Foundation's participation in the Armenian EyeCare Project's programs will change lives and directly contribute to the elimination of preventable blindness in Armenia.

For more information visit www.eyecareproject.com



The AECPP launched a program to eliminate childhood blindness from Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) and other childhood diseases. It was named a "Center of Excellence" by USAID and the U.S. State Department.

Syrian Conflict Claims Life of Priest's Best Friend

CONFLICT, from page 4

Bedourian has been in contact with the Prelate of Aleppo and said this is not a matter of revolution or power struggle anymore.

"Unfortunately, it's the ordinary people who are victims now," he said. "We hear different media channels, much of it providing false news unfortunately. I rely on witness accounts from my family and close friends to get a more accurate report."

The Armenian presence in Syria began during the 11th century from the Crusades when people fled Cilicia. By the time of the Genocide in 1915, around 200,000 Armenians had settled in that country.

"Armenians are a vibrant minority group in Syria, always respected for being good citizens working toward the prosperity of that country," said Bedourian. "Especially in Aleppo, Armenians have made an important impact on the city's economy."

The evening was also devoted to a visual presentation on remote Armenian sites by photojournalist Joe Dagdigian. Net proceeds from this affair were added to the collection for Syria.



Children and adults receive examinations and prescription eyeglasses at no cost as part of the AECPP Eyeglass Program.

EyeCare Project and its eye care programs, which have treated more than 600,000 and restored the sight of 50,000 through cataract and other surgeries.

Founded in 1992, and incorporated in 2002, the Armenian EyeCare Project is a California non-profit corporation. Over the past 21 years — with programs that combat the causes of blindness — the project has been able to treat eye disease, restore sight and change lives.

In 2003, the Project's 18-Wheel Mobile Eye Hospital (MEH) traveled by boat from Vermont, where it was constructed, to the country of



The Project's mobile hospital weighs 14 tons, is 48-feet long, 9-feet wide, 14-feet high and has 410 square feet with a state-of-the-art surgical suite and two examination rooms.



Rev. Karekin Bedourian, pastor, St. Gregory Church of North Andover, relays news of the death of his best friend killed in action during the Syrian conflict.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Sisters' Academy Students Pay Tribute to Battle of Vartanantz

RADNOR, Penn. — While the great fifth-century Armenian general, Vartan Mamigonian, is no longer here, and there is no Battle of Avarayr being waged, each of us must wear the leader's badge of honor and advance his cause for victory into the 21st century.

This was Rev. L. Nishan Bakalian's challenge to the students of the Armenian Sisters' Academy of Radnor on Vartanantz Day, Thursday, February 7.

The students accepted the challenge, rallying for the cause of keeping the Armenian language, religion and traditions alive and thriving 1,500 years after the Persian-Armenian confrontation, during which a small but deter-

in the Armenian Christian future.

Clergy in attendance were equally moved by the historic dramatization and delicate but passionate young voices. Honored guests included Archbishop Yeghishe Gizirian, the former Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of England, who offered the blessing; the Very Rev. Oshagan Gulgolian of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church of Wynnewood; the Very Rev. Mikael Bassale of St. Mark's Armenian Catholic Church of Wynnewood; Archpriest Nerses Manoogian of St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church of Philadelphia and the Rev. Nishan Bakalian of Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church of Havertown.

The performances began with the youngest academy students filling the stage with inspirational bilingual song. A chorus of older children, led by Music Director Maroush Paneyan Nigon, then set the scene for the re-enactment of the 451 AD Armenian defense against the force of Zoroastrianism, a pagan religion based on the adoration of fire.

A proud Vartan, played by sixth-grader David Babaian, joined his soldiers to honor their spiritual leader, Catholicos Hovsep, played by sixth-grader Vahe Minasian, as he offered them the body and blood of Christ before their mortal sacrifice. Students depicting the vivid scenes of Armenian bravery with songs and words were Lia Mazmanian, Sofia Mangasarian, Anoush Kojouri, Angelica



Haig Megerian played Persian King Hazgerd, surrounded by schoolmates Xavier Yeremian, Nareg Boghosian and Armen Shirozian.



Sixth grade student Vahé Minasian played Hovsep Gatoghigios, who mourns the loss of Vartan, played by classmate David Babaian.

mined Armenian community was able to hold true to its beliefs in the face of enormous pressure.

A dramatic Vartanantz re-enactment and stirring vocal performance of fourth-through-sixth-graders in the auditorium drew more than 100 guests and instilled a palpable pride and hope

Aghababian, Lena Bardakjian, Rebecca Selverian, Aren Dardarian, Lili Cole, Ani Dardarian, Teni Jehanian, Sona Bardakjian and Ani Avesian. Student Lena Bardakjian gave a moving solo vocal performance of *Blboolun Avarayree* (the Lark's Song of Avarayr). A vibrant Haig Megerian played the Persian King Hazgerd. Vartan's spiritual leader, Ghevont Yeretz, and fellow nobleman, Vasag Souni, Karekin and Dikran, were played valiantly by Armen Dervishian, Armen Shirozian, John Lion and Raffi Pogharian, respectively. Other proud noblemen included Shant Sarkahian, Sevak

Hovannesian, Mike Kaladjian and William Cosgrove. Xavier Yeremian played a soldier, as Sevag Yepoyan played the shepherd Norayr, and Nareg Boghosian, Jack Ajdaharian and Muheer Mardirosyan played magical mages.

Principal Sister Emma commended the students for their lively and meaningful performance. The children took the vocal part of their recital to the Philadelphia Inter-Communal Committee's Vartanantz commemoration at St. Mark's Armenian Catholic Church later that evening.

— Melissa Selverian



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Music, Culture and Food of Keghi Celebrated in Detroit

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. — From the moment that the traditional Keghetzi Pagharch was danced in until the wee hours of morning, some 350 Keghetzis and their friends packed the dance floor to the tunes of 23 Keghetzi and other fellow Armenian musicians. On February 2, at St. John Armenian Church Cultural Hall, Keghetzis reunited for “Kef Time Keghi” with a Pagharch Dinner and the first time performance of the Keghetzi All-Star Band to celebrate the first event organized by the Nor Keghi Association.

When it was announced that the guest of honor had arrived, members of the committee began dancing in the Pagharch to the tune of *Hars Ou Pesah*, whose words were transformed to *Pagharchuh Egav, Egav*, performed by the Keghetzi All Star Band. The excitement was so electrifying and the love of heritage was so abounding among the compatriots that many, if not most, joined in the festive dancing of the Pagharch.

Richard Norsigian, president of the Nor Keghi Association Steering Committee, began the evening festivities by welcoming everyone. He then invited Deacon Rubik Mailian to sing the American and Armenian national anthems and Stephan Karougian to sing *Tzainmuh Hunchetz Erzeroumi Lernerehn*, Erzeroum being the province in which the county of Keghi was located. Both soloists’ beautiful renditions were received with rousing applause.

Norsigian then explained the purpose of the Association and how it came to be — a united group crossing all Armenian political and religious affiliations. After introducing the Steering Committee, he invited Mitch Kehetian who eloquently honored the memory of the Keghetzi forefathers and immigrant settlers in America who furthered the Keghetzi, in particular, and Armenian heritage, in general, in America. He emphasized how the Nor Keghi Association will honor their memory and continue their vision by aiding Nor Keghi in the Republic of Armenia. Kehetian invited fellow

Keghetzis to join the association and aid in its endeavors. Rev. Garabed Kochakian, pastor of St. John Armenian Church, was then invited to offer the blessing.

Gerjekian, Simon Javizian, Michael Kamalian (age 7) and his father Stepan Kamalian (Racine, Wis.), Harry Kezelian, Kirk Kuchukian, Bedros Kudanian, Margaret Lafian, Vaughn Masropian,

including the harrowing experience of David Vartanian who survived the Titanic disaster, were on display in the lobby.

Although a proud Sepastatzi, Gary Reizian of Uptown Catering rose to the challenge of learning how to make Pagharch, based on Zaroohy Norsigian’s recipe. Event co-chairs Karen Nigosian and Barbara Norsigian coordinated the entire event.

A keepsake printed program book was given to each guest. It included a brief history of the county of Keghi, demographic information and a map with a chart of the name of its main town and its 74 Armenian villages to enable individuals to locate their roots. These materials were researched and compiled by Richard Norsigian while Marty Shoushanian provided the layout and printing. A separate printed keepsake of the *History of Pagharch* written by Mitch Kehetian, along with the Norsigian family recipe, was also provided.

According to historical documentation, Keghetzi Armenians reserved their feasting on wheat-based Pagharch for February’s freezing temperatures in the mountainous Keghi region. The tradition dates back to the ancient Hittite empire. Keghetzis took this tradition with them wherever they migrated.

Hrayr Toukhanian filmed the evening’s activities, which also included several oral histories of fellow Keghetzis, who shared their memories of stories told to them by their ancestors as well as their own personal experiences. To view scenes of “Dancing in the Pagharch” from the “Kef Time Keghi” event as well as the printed program and Pagharch recipe keepsakes, and for more information about the association, check out the website: www.keghi.org

The Nor Keghi Association’s mission is to sponsor needed projects for Nor Keghi in the Republic of Armenia. Members of the Steering Committee include Mitch Kehetian, Edward H. Korkoian, Alice Nigoghosian, Sandi Nigoghosian, Greg Nigosian, Karen Nigosian, Barbara Norsigian, Richard Norsigian, Martin Shoushanian, Gregory Vartanian and Esther “Stitch” Vosgerchian.

The committee acknowledged in the keepsake booklet the donations from Keghetzis and friends toward the event and to aid in the association’s mission. Donations are welcome and can be made out and addressed to Nor Keghi Association, 29958 High Valley Road, Farmington Hills, MI 48331.



The Keghetzi All-Star Band featured 23 Keghetzis and other fellow Armenian musicians who performed a continuous medley of Armenian dance music. The “Kef Time Keghi” event was the culmination of a year’s planning by the Nor Keghi Association. (Photo by C.J. Baldwin IV)

The strains of traditional Armenian music provided by the Keghetzi All Star Band were as if these musicians (nearly all Keghetzis) had always performed together. What a tribute to their talent and heritage. Musicians who participated by donating their time included Mark Gavoor (from Chicago), Gerry Gerjekian, Tom

Mike Mossoian, George Nigosian, George Nigosian Sr., Greg Nigosian, Marc Nigosian, Sandi Nigoghosian, Ara Topouzian and John Tosoian. Greg and George Nigosian organized and coordinated the ensemble of musicians.

Playing all evening in the background of the stage were images of historic Keghi, along with silent films of the Armenian community from the 1940s through the early 1960s, filmed primarily in Detroit by the late Israel Nigosian. Grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles and cousins were not only with us in spirit — but many of them could be seen in this DVD — a sight to behold. One could see tears in the eyes of many guests as they watched and reminisced. In addition, pictures and materials of Keghi,

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PARIS — The AGBU Central Board of Directors announced recently that at its meeting on February 1 and 2, Sam Simonian was elected vice president and Yervant Demirjian as treasurer of the organization. The board also re-elected Berge Setrakian as president; Sinan Sinanian as vice president to serve with Simonian; Berge Papazian as secretary and Sarkis Jebejian as vice secretary. Pictured, from left, Vasken Yacoubian, Vice Secretary Sarkis Jebejian, Aris Atamian, Carol Aslanian, Noubar Afeyan, Treasurer Yervant Demirjian, President Berge Setrakian, Joseph Oughourlian, Arda Haratunian, Vice President Sam Simonian, Nazareth A. Festekjian and Vahe Gabrache. Missing from photo: M. Michael Ansour, Joseph Basralian, Ruben Kechichian, Levon Nazarian, Berge Papazian, Sinan Sinanian, Dickran Tevrizian and Yervant Zorian.



Arts & Living

Author Aris Janigian to Speak At NAASR on 'Exile, Memory And Assimilation'

BELMONT, Mass. — Writer Aris Janigian, author of the acclaimed novel, *This Angelic Land*, will give a lecture titled "Exile, Memory and Assimilation: The Armenian Experience as the Essential American Experience," on Thursday, March 14, at 8 p.m. at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), 395 Concord Ave. The lecture is co-sponsored by the AGBU-YP, Boston, and NAASR.

This lecture is given in recognition of Emmanuel P. Varandyan (1902-1988), novelist (*The Well of Ararat*, *The Moon Sails*), professor of English literature at Ohio State University, NAASR Board Member and benefactor and tireless advocate for Armenian Studies.

Janigian is considered one of the most important Armenian-American novelists working today. Each of his three critically-acclaimed novels, *Bloodvine*, *Riverbig* and *This Angelic Land*, places ethnic Armenian characters against the backdrop of the



Aris Janigian

American cultural landscape. The first two novels are set in the Central Valley of California in the early 1960s, and the third, *This Angelic Land*, published last May, is set during the 1992 Los Angeles riots. In tapping themes of exile memory, and assimilation, Janigian uses the Armenian experience as a lens through which to explore the central American experience. In that context, critic D. J. Waldie of the *Los Angeles Review of Books* has called *This Angelic Land*, "Today's necessary book."

Holding a PhD in psychology, from 1993 to 2005, Janigian was senior professor of humanities at Southern California Institute of Architecture. He has published in genres as diverse as poetry, social psychology, and design criticism. Aside from his novels, he is co-author along with April Greiman of *Something from Nothing*, a book on the philosophy of graphic design.

Janigian was a contributing writer to West, the *Los Angeles Times* Sunday magazine, a finalist for the William Saroyan Fiction Prize and the recipient of the Anahid Literary Award from Columbia University. He is a contributing writer for thenervousbreakdown.com, and lives in Los Angeles.

More information about Janigian's lecture may be had by e-mailing hq@naasr.org.



Artist Charles Garo Takoushian, 89, with his eclectic painting of Cher in a Madonna-Child pose

A New Role for Cher as Madonna (The More Modest One)

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Charles Garo Takoushian may be 89, but he has an active, agile and artistic mind, which he exercises regularly. One of his most noted works is titled "Madonna and Child," in which the Blessed Mother has been modeled after Cher, who is cradling the Infant Jesus.

Takoushian happens to be steeped in his Christian faith, especially after surviving a near-fatal mishap nearly 25 years ago.

"As for the image of Cher as a Madonna, I thought — well — she is a Madonna," he explains. "When I first saw Cher's picture on the cover of a magazine, I felt there was a similarity to Madonna. When you get down to the reality of it all, who knew what the Madonna really looked like?"

As an artist, Takoushian says he sees beauty in virtually everything around him, even in dark situations. All that is negative gets turned into a positive at the stroke of a brush.

"In Cher's case, her beauty continues to prevail, despite the years that have befallen her," he points out. "She's accomplished so very much with her life and hasn't forgotten her Armenian heritage. I took some liberties with the painting."

Takoushian completed his Cher painting last April. It shows the actress with her wind-swept hair inside a halo with the Christ child in both hands over a two-toned blue backdrop. The Christ child's arms are outstretched. He has named it "Lady Madonna and Child," despite the Cher look.

Takoushian has been painting since the age of 10 and has amassed quite a portfolio over time. Canvas art ranks up there with his stain glass work and sculpting skills.

The oldest of four children, his father and uncle were both survivors of the Armenian Genocide. A grandfather was killed by a Turkish army firing squad. A grandmother died en route to Der Zor.

After settling in New York, Takoushian attended the Manhattan High School of Aviation Trades, where he learned to repair aircraft.

After graduation, he served as a gunner aboard a B-24 Liberator during World War II. Upon his discharge, he studied art and design at the Pratt Institute while also working as a photoengraver.

In 1982, he and wife, Louise, moved to Arizona. They have been happily married for 66 years and have three children: son Jeffrey, an oud player; another son, Robert, who studied clarinet under Khachig Kazarian, and daughter Susan, a pianist. Two grandsons are helping make guitars.

To help pass the retirement years fruitfully, he continued studying art at Glendale Community College. He has lectured to groups on the history of musical instruments and served on a Police Reserve Pistol Team, where he became a top target shooter.

Takoushian looks over his life with a great deal of pride, taking nothing for granted and everything as a blessing from above.

"Just surviving almost 90 years has been an accomplishment," he maintains.

In 1985, he had been told by a radiologist that he had an 85-percent blockage of his right carotid artery and survived.

As to the Cher painting, it has been offered to the hospital that performed the life-saving surgery. And it served as a focal point during an exhibit at St. Apkar's Armenian Church festivities last November.

Will Cher ever get to see it?

"I offered it to her but never got an answer from her agents," he said.

ALMA Acquires Paintings by Armenian Artists From the Dodge Collection of Soviet Art

WATERTOWN — The last three decades of the Soviet Union witnessed a tremendously rich and productive art movement that stands as a stirring example of the individual's ability to achieve self-expression despite the oppressive constraints of a totalitarian state.

It was due largely to the efforts of one man, Prof. Norton T. Dodge, that world attention was attracted to the movement, support was provided to the artists and a huge collection of the resulting art work was established in the United States.

The Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) has acquired eight paintings by Armenian artists from the collection, thanks to the donation arranged in December by Nancy Ruyle Dodge, Norton Dodge's widow.

The works donated to ALMA were painted slightly later, during the momentous period spanning the period from the last years of the Soviet Union to the early years of the Armenian Republic, from 1988 to 2005. The artists represented are Armen Adikhanian, Felix Eghiazarian, Vartan Gabrielian, Sarkis Hamalbashian, Ashot Kazarian and Samuel Khachikian.

Dodge began to visit the Soviet Union in 1955, soon after Nikita Khrushchev's rise to power, to conduct scholarly research in his academic field, Soviet economics. Contact with one or two of the non-conformist artists there piqued his interest and led him to explore the movement more comprehensively and to purchase paintings. This was not easy in the Soviet Union of the time, when Socialist Realism was the only accepted form of art, and non-conformist artists had to work clandestinely, making it difficult for them to earn a living.

Dodge's crusade to contact these artists without the knowledge of the authorities and with-



Oil on canvas by Vartan Gabrielian (1999), one of the newly acquired works

out endangering the artists themselves, as well as the ingenious means he devised to purchase and ship the paintings — many of them very large in size — make a fascinating story. It has been described in publications such as John McPhee's *New Yorker* articles, subsequently expanded into the book titled *The Ransom of Russian Art* (1994).

Though generally categorized as "non-conformist," the art work produced during this period was rich and eclectic, encompassing different historical, philosophical, religious, and national roots and exhibiting aspects of Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art and other avant-garde movements.

The collection eventually grew to over 20,000 works representing more than 2,000 artists and is widely considered to be the largest collection of its kind in the world. Included are works by

see ALMA, page 11



ARTS & LIVING

ALMA to Host Family Day, Matthew Karanian in March

WATERTOWN — On the occasion of the publication of the third edition of his travel guide for Armenia and Karabagh, author and photographer Matthew Karanian will give a presentation at ALMA on Sunday, March 10 at 2 p.m., speaking about the challenges of creating the book, with anecdotes from his decade of research and illustrated with photographs from the new guidebook.

Karanian depicts through his photographs Armenia's and Karabagh's monasteries and fortresses, taking the reader off the beaten path to ancient sites that are rarely seen by tourists, and to environmental treasures such as Shikahogh, Teghut and Sevan. Images from the historic and ancient Diasporan community of

Jerusalem, which is the subject of a future book by Karanian, will also be shown. Many of the book's photographs were created along with co-photographer Robert Kurkjian.

Karanian is a native of New Britain, Conn. He practiced law for about a dozen years in Hartford, and he now has his own law firm in Pasadena, Calif. Karanian first traveled to Armenia in 1995, to work at the American University of Armenia (AUA). He later served as associate dean of the law program at AUA, and as Director of the university's Legal Research Center. He and his law students founded Armenia's first English-language law journal, the *Armenian Law Review*.

The event is free. Karanian will be available to sign copies of the guidebook.

One week later, on Sunday, March 17, ALMA will host its annual Family Day. Children and their families can participate in a broad range of activities including Armenian dance lessons taught by curators Susan and Gary Lind-Sinianian, arts and crafts, dress-up and a puppet show. This year's Family Day takes place from 2 to 4 p.m. in ALMA's Contemporary Arts Gallery.

The event attracted more than 100 people last year.



Author-Photographer Matthew Karanian in Armenia



Children and their families at the 2012 Family Day at ALMA

Dora Kalajian Tevanian, founder of the Ethnic Arts Center, will present "The Talking Fish," a Puppet Show told in English with some Armenian phrases. "The Talking Fish" folktale was recorded by Hovhannes Toumanian in Historic Armenia and depicts the kindness of an old man whose is repaid for his generosity.

Tevanian created the Ethnic Arts Center in 1978 to bring everyday life in cultures around the world alive for children through the arts. She was awarded the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Award from the City of Somerville in 2009 for her activism. The puppet show is supported in part by a grant from the Watertown Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

The event is free for children under 12, adults with museum admission.



Puppets from the Talking Fish Puppet Show

ALMA Acquires Paintings From Dodge Collection

ALMA, from page 10

artists from throughout the former Soviet Union, including more than 1,000 by more than 100 artists from Armenia.

In 1986, the bulk of the collection was donated to Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ, where it is housed at the Zimmerli Art Museum as the Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Non-Conformist Art from the Soviet Union. The richly-illustrated book, *From Gulag to Glasnost*, edited by Norton Dodge and Alla Rosenfeld (1995), provides a comprehensive description of the collection. Paintings have been donated also to the Davis Center at Harvard University and to the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center.

To amass this large collection, Dodge depended on several associates, prominent among them the Paris art dealer Garig Basmadjian, who specialized in the paintings of Armenian

artists. The association continued until one morning in 1989, when Basmadjian left the Moscow hotel where he had been staying in the company of two young men, never to be seen again. It has been suggested that his disappearance was at the hands of the Russian mafia or the state security forces (or a combination of the two,) but the case has never been solved.


"We feel extremely fortunate to have these wonderful paintings at ALMA, in memory of Norton Dodge and celebrating everything he accomplished for Soviet artists," commented ALMA Vice President Barbara Merguerian. "We are proud of our diverse collections, and these striking works add a valuable new dimension to our holdings."

ALMA is making plans to mount an exhibit of the new acquisitions in September.

The Armenian Library and Museum of America is located at 65 Main St.



Accepting the new acquisitions at ALMA, from left, Assistant Curator Howayda Abu Affan, Director Susan Pattie, Vice President Barbara Merguerian, Dodge representative Charles Fick and Curator Gary Lind-Sinianian.




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ARTS & LIVING



Anush Hovhannissyan

Soprano Anush Hovhannissyan Signs with Royal Opera in London

LONDON – In January the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, made an announcement about “Jette Parker Young Artists 2013,” announcing that the Royal Opera House will join the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme in September 2013, selecting from more than 365 applicants from 50 countries, five artists, Armenian soprano Anush Hovhannissyan, Australian soprano Kiandra Howarth, Russian mezzo-soprano Nadezhda Karyazina, Irish mezzo-soprano Rachel Kelly and Portuguese tenor Luis Gomes.

Hovhannissyan is currently studying at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland under Patricia Hay. In the UK, she has been supported by ABRSM International Scholarships, AGBU, RCS Trust and the Guzelian family. Prizes include the Clonter Opera Prize, the Margaret Dick Award, Ye Cronies Opera Award (RCS) and third prize at Les Azuriales International Singing Competition as well as a Tatevik Sazandaryan special prize and the silver medal in the Delphic Games International Competition in Armenia). She has taken master classes with Jane Eaglen, Lisa Milne, Malcolm Martineau, Michele Crider and Montserrat Caballe. Opera includes “Forester’s Wife,” “The Cunning Little Vixen” and “Clara’s Betrothal in a Monastery” for RCS/Scottish Opera, to be followed by Helena A Midsummer Night’s Dream for RCS/Scottish Opera and Frau Fluth Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor for RCS. Concerts include The Voices of Montserrat Caballe Gala Concert in Zaragoza. She has appeared on In Tune on BBC Radio 3 singing live with Donald Runnicles.

The Jette Parker Young Artists Programme supports the

artistic development of young professional singers, conductors, directors and répétiteurs. The Young Artists are an international group of outstanding professionals at the start of their careers who have undertaken formal training and have already worked with professional companies. They are not students, but contracted, salaried employees of the Royal Opera House, who work here full-time over two years.

There is no age limit for those on the Programme, but when choosing the Young Artists the audition panel take into consideration the stage individuals have reached in their careers and where they will be in terms of career development and age after working for two years on the Programme.

The Young Artists work on productions for the Royal Opera, singing small roles, covering larger roles or joining the music or directing staff. They also receive coaching in all opera disciplines. They work with Royal Opera music staff, a wide range of freelance music and language coaches and visiting singers, directors and conductors. Every facility of the Company is made available to them so that their talents are nurtured through total immersion in the life of the Royal Opera House. For further information, visit www.roh.org.uk/about/jette-parker-young-artists-programme.

According to *Opera Critic* magazine, “Hovhannissyan catches well the prissiness of Clara, also how aghast she is on donning the nun’s veil, while her voice conveys the warmth and sincerity of Clara’s feelings.”

For more information on her, visit www.anushhovhannissyan.co.uk.

A Report From Soviet Armenia

The Red Flag at Ararat by A.Y Yeghenian.
2013. Gomidas Institute. 132 pp. \$22.
ISBN 978-1-909392-02-3

By Daphne Abeel

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The author of this account, Aghavnie Yeghia Yeghenian, was born in Ottoman Turkey in 1895, raised in Constantinople and made her way, at the age of 20, to the United States in 1915, just at the time of the Armenian Genocide. She later studied for degrees in social work and law, specializing in immigration problems, but in 1931, she made a trip to Armenia, to see what was transpiring in the land of her ancestors under Soviet rule.

The Red Flag at Ararat is a record of her experiences and was first published in 1932. It is reissued now with a new introduction by historian, Pietro A. Shakarian, who states that this was the first book to be published about Soviet Armenia in English.

As Yeghenian states in her foreword to the original edition, “This is not an exposition of Marxian theory and its workings. ...This is an account of one traveler’s experiences. It is a personal account and consciously chosen to be such, for I am persuaded that no author, no matter how objective his approach, can be entirely impersonal at the present time in appraising the Soviet experiment.”

Early on, however, she raises fundamental questions about the new regime. Is it possible for a society to be moral without religion? Can a worthwhile culture develop without individual freedom?

She takes the train from Helsinki to Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), journeying on from Leningrad to Moscow and finally to Yerevan. Her first sighting is of a Red soldier and a Red flag. Her first impressions are of the ragged, disheveled crowd waiting in the

Leningrad railway station and pictures of Lenin everywhere. She soon sees the sights of the city. The Nevsky Prospect and the Winter Palace and after a brief visit to Moscow, ultimately separates herself from her tourist group to travel on to Armenia on her own.

On the train, she encounters a lively mix of travelers, an Englishman, two French women, Turks, Georgians and Armenians. All are engaged in a heated discussion about the merits of capitalism versus Marxism. When Yeghenian asks why there has to be so much suffering and deprivation in the course of the imposition of communism, the group answers, “Because we must succeed quickly or the enemy will overtake us. We are isolated, we are surrounded by the capitalistic world and we must be ready before they are ready to attack us.”

She makes a brief stop in Baku, where at the time, there was a large Armenian population, amongst the Tartars, Russians, Turks and Persians, all trying to absorb the doctrines of communism – “the universal brotherhood of the workers of the world” and “racial equality.”

There is also a brief stop in Tiflis (Tbilisi) where she sees an enormous electrification plant, built by the Soviets and also some of the old city.

Crossing the border from Georgia into Armenia is a transcendent experience for this traveler and current American readers may be surprised by her wholehearted embrace of the Soviet system in her ancestral homeland. She exclaims, “The dream of the poets for a free Armenia has at last come into being under Soviet rule. This ancient land is now one of the federated republics of the USSR, and as one link in the powerful chain feels herself as strong as the chain itself.”

The Soviet system, ultimately, proved itself a cruel and repressive one, but for many, if not most Armenians living there, and also for the diaspora, the new Republic of Armenia is seen as a vehicle for opportunity and development.

Yerevan, in the 1930s, is a city in infancy, but Yeghenian sees the master architect, Tasmanian, at work and sees the plans for the new city to be built around the National Theater and the new public buildings already constructed out of the native rose colored and gray stone, tufa.

Everywhere, she is impressed by the emphasis on the role and the importance of the worker.

One issue that concerns her deeply is how the Armenian people can preserve their nation-

al identity in a system of government that stresses international brotherhood. She states, “The scales must be perfectly balanced between devotion to nationality and allegiance to the Union and the international faith of communism.”

Yeghenian is clearly impressed by the Soviet efforts to promote industry and to further education. Much of the education is technical and includes apprenticeships that assist students in obtaining jobs, once they complete their studies. And the students who are most encouraged to seek higher education are the children of the proletariat, not those of the privileged class. All students learn three languages, Armenian, Russian and one European language.

She visits copper mines, even the secret service and villages where she learns that Armenian-Americans are making important donations, for example a brand new Buick to the Armenian Red Cross and other financial gifts.

World Premiere Book Launch for Armenia’s First Travel Guide

LOS ANGELES – Matthew Karanian and Robert Kurkjian presented their book, *Armenia and Karabakh: The Stone Garden Travel Guide*, and were on hand for a talk and book signing on Thursday, February 21, at the Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles.

The Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles is located at 346 N. Central Ave. in Glendale.

The event was the world premiere launch for the new edition of the book, which is Armenia’s best-selling travel guide. This third edition was published this week and contains 320 pages illustrated with 150 color photographs and 30 detailed maps. A never-before published map of historic Armenia, which was created shortly after the Genocide, is also featured in the book.

The Stone Garden Travel Guide is the only guidebook for the region that emphasizes conservation and ecology. The book is also the only photo-based guide to Armenia.

Karanian and Kurkjian have each spent nearly two decades living and working in

To read this book is to see the early years of the Soviet Republic of Armenia through the eyes of a well educated, intelligent, albeit enthusiastic observer. Her overwhelmingly positive impressions are of historical interest, given that the breakup of the Soviet Union, while it has meant true political independence for Armenia, has also brought about hardship. And there are some, no doubt, who miss the Soviet structures and support.

But, in 1931, Yeghenian was unequivocal in her praise and belief. “...there has never been such real equality of the people within a commonwealth anywhere in the world’s history, as is already realized to a large measure within the Soviet Union. It is this feeling of security that has turned a veritable death house where the Armenian people were doomed to perish, into a house of resurrected people with hope written large on their faces.”

The Red Flag at Ararat is available from the Gomidas Institute.

Armenia while researching and writing this and previous editions of the book. Each of them first traveled to Armenia in 1995 to work as professors at the American University of Armenia. Karanian is an attorney, and he served as associate dean of the law program. Kurkjian is an environmental scientist, and he was director of the university’s Environmental Conservation and Research Center. The book is illustrated with color maps produced by AUA’s Birds of Armenia Project.

Their writing and photography about Armenia has also been featured in magazines and newspapers of wide distribution in the US, Europe, and Canada, including in *CNN Traveller magazine*, *Geographical*, *Photo District News* and *Photo Life*. Karanian is also a co-author of *Catching Fire: Containing Forced Migration in a Volatile World*, published by Lexington Books.

The new Armenia travel book is available from Amazon.com and from independent bookstores.



ARTS & LIVING

'Night of the Templar' Released

PROVIDENCE — A dream has become a reality for actor, writer and director, Paul Sampson (Menas Yekhtikian.) On January 22, this former Providence Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) member released his latest film, and directorial debut, "Night of the Templar."

By Steven P. Megrdichian

The film is about a Medieval knight who, after 700 years, resurrects to fulfill his vow and bestow vengeance upon the reanimated spirits of those who betrayed him long ago. In the course of one night, identities are revealed, destinies met and poetic justice is served. The movie portrays passion, loyalty, deceit, betrayal and revenge.

The stage is set for retribution as a group is lured to a secluded European castle under the guise of a promised "fantasy getaway weekend." And as they read from an obscure storybook, a tale of avarice is reenacted for their entertainment. However, they are unaware that they are the cursed and have been gathered for their own executions.

Modern-day vengeance steeped in a medieval act of treachery, "Night of the Templar" combines the horror, mystery, adventure and dark humor genres.

The movie stars Paul Sampson, David Carradine ("Kung Fu," "Kill Bill") in his last film, Udo Kier ("Blade," "Armageddon,") Norman Reedus ("Walking Dead," "Boonocks Saints,") Billy Drago ("Untouchables," "The Hills Have Eyes") and several others.

The film is available for in-store purchase at Wal-Mart locations. For other viewing options and movie details, visit www.nightofthetemplar.com.



Julia and Zerounian Ensemble to Perform at Regattabar on March 21

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Singer Julia and the Zerounian Ensemble perform familiar and exotic songs from around the world at the Regattabar, on March 21, at 7:30 p.m.

With her gorgeous and evocative voice she transcends language and culture to express the music inherent in any language and culture. With a worldwide repertoire of songs, Julia and her ensemble deliver an exciting musical experience with equal parts conviction, authority and heart.

According to the *Boston Globe*, "The soulful vocalist is a one-woman United Nations of Cabaret, singing French, Italian, Armenian, Russian, Persian, Yiddish and Latin tunes in addition to American Songbook classics, with her husband pianist Sarkis Zerounian leading a sextet including violin, saxophone, bass and percussion."

Julia Zerounian began her singing and acting career at an early age in Armenia, later performing with various professional ensembles and theatrical groups throughout the former Soviet Union.

The combination of her soulful singing and mastery of musical styles has not only gained a large and loyal following, but garnered rave reviews from prominent musicians and music critics.

For reservations and information, contact www.regattabarjazz.com.



Julia Zerounian

CALENDAR



WATERTOWN — The ArsenalARTS and Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston present SNDC's production of "Journey Through Time" at the Charles Mosesian Theater in the Arsenal Center for the Arts, 321 Arsenal St. A rescheduled second performance will take place Sunday, March 3, 4 p.m. For tickets, call Garen: 617-930-2921, Arsenal Box Office: 617-923-8487 or visit www.sayatnova.com to buy online. Tickets are \$30 and the event has assigned seating.

Art of John Berberian at ALMA on March 3

WATERTOWN — On Sunday, March 3 at 2 p.m., Providence artist John Berberian will exhibit his drawings at the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA).

Best known for the intense realism of his pencil-drawn portraits of notable public figures, Berberian was a prize winner for his portrait of Lincoln at the Wickford Art Association and was awarded the first prize by the Rhode Island Art education association at the Krauss Gallery in Providence.

In school, Berberian was encouraged by his art teacher, and upon graduation, won awards for his technique. He was commissioned to draw and present the portraits of Julie Andrews and her husband, Blake Edwards, when she accepted an award from the Rhode Island International Film Festival. He similarly drew and presented a portrait of Ernest Borgnine while he received his lifetime achievement award.

Critically, Berberian has been acclaimed for the life-like depictions of his subjects.



John Berberian with his portrait of President Abraham Lincoln

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COMMENTARY

Post-Election Developments in Armenia

By Edmond Y. Azadian

The February 18 presidential election produced a new and unexpected political landscape in Armenia. Based on parliamentary elections of last May, most of the pollsters were forecasting an uneventful presidential election, ranking the incumbent President Serge Sargisian as the uncontested front-runner.

In all, seven candidates were competing but the pollsters had been predicting only single-digit percentage of the votes to every other contender including Raffi Hovannisian, founder of the Heritage Party, which had barely met the 5-percent requirement at the parliamentary elections last May. Literally, they received 6 percent of the votes.

But at the conclusion of the presidential election, the pollsters were surprised to find out that Hovannisian, in fact, had garnered 37 percent of the votes. Perhaps that result even surprised the candidate himself.

This unforeseen outcome will have a far-reaching impact on the political developments in Armenia for a long time to come. To begin with, Raffi's strong showing demotes Levon Ter-Petrosian's HAK (Armenian National Congress) coalition as the major oppositional force. The coalition, lately, was striving to reform itself as a full-fledged political party, after many defections. Therefore, a tectonic shift occurred in the opposition camp.

It is yet too early for Hovannisian to be intoxicated with his election results, because most of the votes cast in his favor are actually votes against the present administration. People are desperate and they don't anticipate any improvement in their plight. The rich are getting richer and they are demonstrating their obscene level of opulence in an arrogant manner, while the majority is sustaining a life below the poverty level, or abandoning the homeland and heading away, towards an uncertain future.

According to the tabulation of one independent pollster, Aharon Adibekian, the Heritage Party, which, in cooperation with Free Democrats, had garnered 5 percent of the votes of the electorate last May, this time around has received votes from the followers of all the parties, including the ruling Republican Party. Thus 6 percent of Republicans voted for him, 36 percent of Gagik Zaroukian's Prosperous Armenia Party, 40 percent of Ter-Petrosian's HAK, 38 percent of the ARF, 29 percent of the Land of Laws Party and 77 percent of the Heritage Party.

Raffi Hovannisian projects a very positive image. He is charismatic, honest and reliable. He can look imposing and authoritative, yet he is mild-mannered and respectful.

Raffi Hovannisian and Vartan Oskanian (through his Civilitas Foundation) have much in common, including the fact that they both served as foreign ministers and that they both were born outside of Armenia. Their most noted similarity is that both introduced a political culture alien to a country recently emancipated from Soviet authoritarian rule. Most of the votes cast in Hovannisian's favor indicate that this political culture has made inroads in the thinking of the Armenian electorate. Also, it seems bias against diasporan representatives is eroding. Perhaps in his mind, Hovannisian has been trying to emulate Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, a US-educated lawyer supported by the US and the West. Although Saakashvili was able to curb corruption and developed the economy at a fast pace, his current predicament is not that enviable; thus, hopefully, the similarity of the two statesmen does not go any further.

Hovannisian has come a long way from the days he made a legitimate claim at the wrong place and the wrong time, which cost him his position as the first foreign minister of Armenia. Indeed, during a visit to Turkey he raised the issue of the Armenian Genocide, without coordinating with the president, who was in the process of negotiating a grain deal with Ankara to forestall the specter of famine in Armenia.

The results of the voting have been rated as the best yet in Armenia since its independence 21 years ago. Kathryn Ashton from the European Union (EU) has given credit to the authorities in Armenia for their efforts to raise the level of electoral process towards European standards. The US State Department spokesperson, Victoria Nuland, has endorsed the evaluation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitors, marking a few dark areas that need to be addressed. The ARF and HAK representatives, however, evaluated the elections as "stolen" through bribes, irregularities, ballot-stuffing and so on.

Although President Sargisian has claimed victory with 58 percent of the vote, Raffi Hovannisian is claiming to be the true president-elect with 80 percent of the votes, without indicating just how he has arrived at that figure. His first reaction was rather Quixotic as he went to Freedom Square and gave an ultimatum to President Sargisian to show up at the rally the next day at 5 p.m. and to surrender to "the will of the people." As expected, no one showed up at the given time, therefore, Hovannisian himself headed to the presidential palace for a one-and-a-half-hour meeting with Sargisian, where he made three requests: 1. Recognize the "people's victory" (meaning that of Raffi Hovannisian). 2.

Hold early parliamentary elections and 3. Punish those responsible for the fraudulent elections.

None of the above requests have been met, although the conversation has been courteous and non-confrontational. People truly appreciate Hovannisian's civil demeanor in all these dealings.

He has returned to the Freedom Square rally and has vowed to continue the struggle through constitutional means until he achieves victory. His slogan is "salute to Armenia" and many people have already begun to characterize his movement as the "Revolution of Salute." This, of course, is reminiscent of the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia and the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine. Both movements were replete with youth trained through the Soros Foundation. They were alien injections in those respective societies and not homegrown movements.

There is no doubt in anyone's mind in Armenia that the Heritage Party is supported by the West and particularly by the US and there are no qualms about that perception. In his original platform Hovannisian had questioned the existence of the Russian military base in Armenia and asked for the revision of the treaty. That statement clearly indicated where he was coming from. During his speeches he has also outlined his foreign policy: He has said that the issue of Protocols is dated. By 2015 either Armenia establishes its diplomatic relations with Turkey without any preconditions or Yerevan presents its claims to Turkey. He has also said that one should not assume that the recognition of Nagorno Karabagh is out of the question, since Kosovo and East Timor have been recognized. This, of course, is easier said than done.

He makes it sound as if these political goals are easily attainable and it is this particular administration which is unwilling or incapable of achieving them.

First of all Armenia may ask to restore diplomatic relations with Turkey without preconditions, but what about the other party, Ankara? Doesn't Ankara have its own preconditions?

Second, the recognition of Karabagh by the Armenian government is equivalent to a declaration of war. Historic justice is on the Armenian side but the other side is the one with the global political might.

Throughout the election campaign the ARF was waiting in the wings. It did not produce its own presidential candidate nor did it extend its support to any of the running candidates. Its election proclamation did not even mention Raffi Hovannisian. Instead, it stated that the party supports the "will of the people," the equivalent of suggesting they like mom and apple pie. But with Hovannisian's success comes a dramatic development: Armen Rustamian, an ARF leader, spoke at the Heritage Party's rally and he began his speech by saying: "the Freedom Square was waiting for the ARF and here we come." It seems once they thought they were behind a sure bet, they threw their weight behind the insurgent. They let Raffi pick the chestnuts from the fire and now they are ready to share in the victory.

Also joining the rally was Nikol Pashinian, who is always present whenever incendiary speeches are needed and insults are needed to be hurled at the president and the current administration.

The elections were not 100 percent honest by any means. Improvements are slow to come but they are already perceptible. Hovannisian's emergence as a credible opposition leader will certainly expedite the improvement process. His presence and daily demonstrations are also a testament to the fact that the opposition can exist in Armenia.

However, those who voted for Sargisian had Armenia's stability in mind. He is not a leader that will throw Armenia into an adventurous course. He is a man of peace and with his reelection there is some assurance that war is not yet an option.

Some pundits even have high hopes and beliefs that Mr. Sargisian is the leader capable of curbing the appetite of oligarchs.

During this post-election turmoil, there is a profusion of advice to Raffi Hovannisian. Die-hard opposition elements would like to see the struggle carried to the bitter end. Others have been advising him to capitalize on his success and negotiate a position of power to bring about change and reform. Two former prime ministers and presidential candidates, namely, Vazken Manoukian and Hrant Bagratian, have been advancing the idea of a coalition government with the ruling party. Some people even believe that Hovannisian is being manipulated and supported by outside forces and consequently he has to take into account their political agenda.

Armenia needs stability. The Turkish news media is already anticipating a crisis in Armenia and Azerbaijan is intensifying cross-border skirmishes, especially in the Tavoush region.

Change is needed, reforms are necessary and the people are desperate. But reforms cannot be achieved without concrete plans. Much of the change also depends on outside factors. No matter who heads the government, Armenia cannot lift the blockade nor can it resolve the Karabagh conflict overnight. What can be changed are the internal factors only: the end of corruption, the intensification of the economic recovery and a rule of law.

At this time, much hinges on Raffi Hovannisian's actions. He can prove to be a spoiler or a true reformer. If he chooses wisely, he will be a part of Armenian history.

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Azerbaijan Slams Turkish President For Congratulating President Sargisian

While Armenia is grappling with the fallout from the February 18 presidential voting and trying to accommodate a newly energized opposition, its two hostile neighbors, Azerbaijan and Turkey, are entangled in a feud with each other over the Armenian election.

A year ago, in a column titled, “Who Rules Turkey: Erdogan or Aliyev?” I expressed my astonishment that Turkey was allowing Azerbaijan to repeatedly interfere in its sovereign policies, as in the case of the Armenia-Turkey Protocols. Now there are two fresh examples of Azerbaijan’s unwarranted interference in Turkish decision-making.

No sooner had Turkish Airlines announced that it would distribute a copy of Agos, a bilingual Armenian-Turkish weekly newspaper to its international passengers, Fikret Sadikov, an Azeri professor and political analyst, objected to its dissemination, calling it an “absolutely absurd and irresponsible gesture.”

Sadikov also complained that Turkish President Abdullah Gul had sent a congratulatory letter to President Serge Sargisian for his re-election. “Such steps would

cause great sorrow both in Turkey and Azerbaijan,” Sadikov told Trend, an Azeri publication. Professor Sadikov’s objection was part of a larger campaign orchestrated by Azeri leaders, accusing Turkey of undermining their efforts to pressure Armenia into making territorial concessions regarding Artsakh (Karabagh).

Here are some of the objections leveled at President Gul by leading Azeri officials:

- “Turkey must clarify the issue of Turkish President Abdullah Gul’s sending congratulations to his Armenian counterpart Serge Sargisian,” stated Novruz Mammadov, chief foreign policy of Azerbaijan President.

- “This hurt us.... It is necessary to pay attention to the fact that no matter how many signs of politeness may be expressed to Armenia, it uses it for other purposes,” stated Oqtay Asadov, Speaker of Azerbaijan’s Parliament.

- “We didn’t expect this.... It is regrettable that the President of Turkey, a strategic partner of Azerbaijan, hastily congratulated Sargisian, who was elected as a result of fraud,” stated Mubariz Gurbanli, member of Parliament and Deputy Executive Secretary of the ruling New Azerbaijan Party.

- “Turkish President Abdullah Gul’s sending of congratulations before the official announcement of the results is the wrong step. This is the continuation of Turkey’s zero-problem policy with neighboring states. But, actually this policy failed. With this policy, Turkey’s relations with most of the states in the region have become tense. Moreover, the Turkish President’s congratulations to Sargisian contradict the interests of Azerbaijan. At a time when the international community is expressing views that an illegitimate government exists in Armenia, the Turkish government sealed the legitimacy of the Armenian leadership. This is wrong and regrettable,” stated Arif Hajili, Central Executive Board Member of Azerbaijan’s Musavat Party.

- “If someone thinks that Armenia and Armenians will

give up the so-called genocide and territorial claims thanks to these steps, they are mistaken,” stated Gudrat Hasanguliyev, Chairman of the United Azerbaijan Popular Front Party.

- “President Gul’s congratulations of Serzh Sargisian was a hasty decision,” stated Nizami Jafarov, Parliament member and head of the working group on inter-parliamentary relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey.

- “This step will not gain Turkey positive assessment by the global community. Turkey can be sure of it. Congratulating Serzh Sargisian was a hasty step. This is not in the national interest of either Azerbaijan or Turkey,” stated Parliament member Fazail Aghamali.

- “Serge Sargisian is Turkey’s enemy. He accuses Turkey of so-called Armenian genocide and makes territorial claims. It is not clear why Abdullah Gul decided to be one of the first to congratulate Sargisian on his re-election. This is unacceptable,” stated Vafa Guluzade, foreign policy advisor to the former president of Azerbaijan.

Rather than lashing back at the undue Azeri interference in Turkey’s decisions, the Turkish Foreign Ministry sheepishly explained that President Gul’s congratulatory letter to President Sargisian was “a diplomatic courtesy and a gesture of goodwill.” Gul had also congratulated Sargisian’s first presidential election in 2008.

How long will the all-powerful Turkish government, which projects its political, economic, and military clout far and wide, tolerate Azerbaijan’s repeated interference in Turkey’s policies? When will Ankara dare to tell Baku to mind its own business and make it clear that Turkey will not subordinate its national interests to Azerbaijan’s self-centered wishes?

Armenia is fortunate that, while it is dealing with the repercussions of the presidential election, its two hostile neighbors, Azerbaijan and Turkey, are busy feuding with each other!

In the End:
Who is Jesus?

By Fr. Bedros Shetilian

I am posing this question intentionally, because I have already mentioned in my previous article in the *Mirror-Spectator*’s December 1 issue, if God the Creator, “God of scientists and philosophers” is relatively easily accepted by the majority of people, then why is there a difficulty for many people to understand the meaning of a personal God.

According to the latest CBS poll in December 2012, nearly eight in 10 Americans believe in God. My personal experience tells me that as well. The majority of people have no problem at least accepting that there is something above, a power, a supreme being. However, when the issue comes to the revelation and most importantly to the content of the revelation — *The Bible* — many people start to ask questions.

What kind of God is one that could be vindictive, such as with Noah’s Ark and the flood? What kind of God allows suffering? I tried to answer to this question in my previous article in *Mirror-Spectator*, “The Existence of Evil and God’s Will,” published in January 2013. I hope my explanation helped answer these questions.

Another question that comes up is: What kind of God considers things that are accepted by many people in today’s society, such as abortion and homosexuality, sins?

Still another popular question is: In the end, how can it be that God was incarnated and became a man in Jesus Christ? For many, Jesus’ story sounds foolish; God became a man, lived as a man and then was executed.

Ernest Renan (1823-1892) was the renowned French writer and philosopher who wrote the first book questioning the divinity of Jesus (*Life of Jesus*, 1863). On his deathbed he said to his family members who were surrounding him that they didn’t believe enough in what he had written in his book about Jesus.

Let us move forward and tackle the questions that pertain to Jesus. It is proven and

well known that there was such a historical person who was crucified. We know this from the Jewish historian Josephus of the first century. The question is whether or not Jesus was only a humanitarian, a revolutionary, a prophet and in the end a good man, or if Jesus was in fact both man and divine at the same time? How could that be possible? Without faith and with only our human understanding, it is really difficult to accept the divinity of Jesus.

Actually, this became a question right after Jesus’ death and resurrection in the first century. The fourth Gospel of John is different than the other three Gospels. It was not written to record Jesus’ life, but rather to answer those who were questioning His divinity at that time. So why does the Gospel of John start with this famous and powerful chapter, “In the beginning was the Word (that is Jesus), and the Word was with God. He was with God in the beginning?”

Nowadays this issue, the divinity of Jesus, is one of the most controversial questions for many. I have had much experience in talking with non-believers, especially back when I was a lay person, a musician in Russia, because my generation and the previous generation of Soviet people whom I worked with were educated in the Soviet era and many of them were non-believers.

And guess what? Almost every single one of those atheists said that even though they don’t believe in Jesus as God in flesh, they have a big respect for Jesus’ humanitarian message, the message of love. Many of them recognized Jesus as the most important humanitarian of all time — the most moral person of history.

Let us come back to the US. Let us see what non-Christian Einstein says about Jesus: “As a child I received instructions both in the *Bible* and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of

Nazarene...No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life.”

Another quote from non-Christian Gandhi was much the same sentiment: “A man who was completely innocent, offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including his enemies, and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act.” It is amazing that Gandhi also said, “Jesus became the ransom of the world,” because he put Jesus knowingly or unknowingly as the first among the other religious leaders.

I also had such a testimony from a Buddhist monk in Russia, who said to me that God revealed Himself more in Christianity than in any other religion.

If that’s true, if Jesus was a highly moral being, the most moral being of all time, then He couldn’t lie, He couldn’t lie about the main subject of his ministry, about who He was. Actually He was careful not to say that openly from the beginning, even to His closest ones. He did that gradually, He was a good educator, and the first time when He asked to His disciples, “Who do you say I am?” Peter was the one who gave the right answer: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Then He made that clear when He answered the question of the high priest Caiaphas, “Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” He replied, “Yes, it is as you say.”

Now, could such a person, who is accepted by many non-believers as the most moral person of all time, lie about who He was? This is just something to think about. Jesus’ testimony is recorded in the Gospels from people who got to know Him personally. Where is the logic, if we say that Jesus was a high moral person and at the same time we don’t believe in His words?

There is only one way to erase this doubt and that is to say that Jesus was a big liar, a

fake prophet, a charlatan and to not accept Jesus at all, even as a humanitarian. Is that possible? Even non-believers cannot ignore Jesus’ high morality.

For this reason there are two ways to look to Jesus. First is to recognize and believe in Him as He is in the Gospels, as Jesus the Son of God, the second personality of Holy Trinity, God in flesh, God-man, the perfect God and the perfect man at the same time.

The second way is to not recognize Him at all, to not accept His message of love on which western civilization has been based, the message which eventually led to democracy and freedom. Also to not recognize the great masterpieces of art dedicated to Jesus. Is that possible? Could such a charlatan, if Jesus was so, be the cause for the creation of the great masterpieces of arts dedicated to Him, like our *Sharagans* (Hymns), thousand of icons, paintings, sculptures, sacred musical and literary works?

I won’t give my conclusion. I am a Christian clergyman, and it is obvious what I think and in what I believe. I am just sharing my thoughts with you and especially with the ones who still have doubts about Jesus, to think about these questions and on their own come to a conclusion. I know that the acceptance of the divinity of Jesus through logic is only the beginning, after which a growth in the faith can follow, and that experience can lead one to live Jesus, to feel His presence, which is the highest point of happiness. That is my understanding of happiness, to be with Jesus, to feel His presence, and to do things that is in harmony with the grace that is coming from Him, to do good things and to struggle against our weaknesses.

Benjamin Franklin once said, “As to Jesus of Nazareth, my opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think the system of morals and His religion, as He left them to us, is the best the world ever saw or is likely to see.

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 tele-

phone 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.

Artsakh Celebrates 25th Anniversary of National Liberation Movement

ARTSAKH, from page 1
cultivate national hatred and animosity towards the neighboring nation. However, authorities of Azerbaijan responded to our civilized demands and peaceful demonstrations by organizing massacres, exiles and persecution. They once again tried to solve the Armenian issue through already applied policy – genocide,” he said.

“Nevertheless, this time their infernal intensions doomed to failure. The whole Armenian nation came together for the sake of defending Artsakh, the native country and people, its honor and reliable future. At the cost of the best Armenian sons’ blood, due to their heroic deeds and selflessness we succeeded in protecting our independence and freedom as well as gave a worthy rebuff to the enemy establishing peace and

stability in the whole region. Eternal glory and honor to all the martyrs,” Artsakh leader said.

“Valuating the 25-year-long path we can say with honor and dignity that realizing the ideas of the objective of 1988 Movement the Armenian nation restored its statehood, and today due to the unshakable Armenia-Artsakh-Diaspora trinity it has carved its own fate independently, keeps inviolable the native country’s frontiers and develops the land of ancestors. All of us, the whole nation will do everything possible for continuous strengthening of our independent statehood that has been reached at such a high price. It is an exclusive value without which it is impossible to think about the immortality and development of the Fatherland and the native people.

Different events dedicated to 25th anniversary of Artsakh movement were held around the world, including in Lebanon.

An exhibition was organized in Beirut, the opening ceremony of which was conducted by leader of Armenian Prelacy of Lebanon Archbishop Gegham Khacheryan, Armenian Ambassador to Lebanon Ashot Kocharyan, NKR representative in Middle East Karo Kebedjian and Lebanese Minister of Industry Verj Sabounjian. Photos, representing Artsakh everyday life, as well as portraits of martyrs by Seyran Khatlamachyan were presented at the exhibition.

In the US, Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues Co-Chair Rep. Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ) and Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) congratulated the 25th anniversary.

In a letter sent to Sahakyan, Pallone

noted that “Artsakh’s path was challenged by various ordeals and your nation refused to allow these obstacles to break your will and determination. The tragedy of Sumgait and the violence that occurred in other Azerbaijani cities 25 years ago proved the virtue of Nagorno Karabagh’s choice to preserve its people’s unique identity by establishing a sovereign democracy.”

Schiff, who has been a champion of increased US assistance to Artsakh, concurred, noting that “You have my support as you work to strengthen your democracy, and I will continue to stand with the people of Artsakh in their struggle towards international recognition. I join you today in looking forward to the day when Artsakh will achieve the recognition it deserves among the community of nations.”

A Cathedral on the Verge of Collapse: The Campaign to Save Mren

MREN, from page 1

Maranci’s areas of expertise include Byzantine art and architecture, and the art and architecture of the Transcaucasus – principally Armenia.

According to Maranci, “the cathedral of Mren is now in danger of collapse. Constructed circa 638 AD, Mren is a masterpiece of world art and a product of the ‘Golden Age’ of Armenian architecture. Bearing an inscription naming the Roman emperor Heraclius, and a unique sculpted relief image of Heraclius returning Christendom’s greatest relic – the True Cross – to Jerusalem, Mren preserves precious material evidence for one of the most dramatic and yet poorly documented moments in history. It is also the largest domed basilica surviving from

although I have tried to get permission.

LK: Observers say that Mren Cathedral seems to rival in size the Great Cathedral of Ani, and contains bas-reliefs and remnants of frescos not unlike those at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Aghtamar. Is forbidden access the reason why Mren is not as well known as these other two monuments?

CM: Mren and Ani are comparable in size, and Mren probably served as a local model for Ani Cathedral in its domed basilica layout and form, although Ani exhibits typical features of the 10-11th century Armenian architectural tradition. Mren has sculpted bas-reliefs on its portals and over some windows, and preserves fragments of wall painting in the eastern end. However, it bears nothing like the program of figural reliefs at Aghtamar – something that makes this church anomalous even in the Armenian tradition. Aghtamar’s wall painting is also better preserved. But the inaccessibility of Mren surely shaped its scholarly reception and public awareness about it. Toros Toramanyan, known as the father of Armenian architectural historiography, tells us that he himself was only able to visit it for one day.

LK: The website VirtualAni.org describes Mren as being one of four structures similar in design and which were likely built around the same time, the other three being the St. Gayane Church – built between 630 and 641 AD at Etchmiadzin; the church of St. John at Bagavan – built between 632 - 639 AD and north of the Lake Van region but now destroyed; and the Odzun Basilica – probably built in the first half of the 7th century AD in the Odzun region of Armenia. How does Mren compare in historical importance to these other structures?

CM: Gayane is obviously important for its connections to the conversion to Christianity tradition and because of its connections to the Patriarch Ezer, who is thought to have built it. If the church of Bagavan were standing today, it would have been, by far, the largest domed basilica in the region. Odzun is difficult to discuss, because it has been renovated so many times. While it dates to the early medieval period, it is generally thought to have a 9th century phase and perhaps even later ones. Mren is the only one of these monuments that is linked to the broader global world via its epigraphy and sculpture. It speaks directly to the network

of relationships between empire, frontier, and local Armenian nobility. There is much more to say but this is a start, one hopes.

LK: Even as Mren is on the brink of collapse, would you say that it is one of the more intact monuments still standing in the Kars/Ani region?

CM: Well, it is hard to say. So many are in danger, so many have collapsed, and so many have been lost to historical record. But it is remarkable in many ways that a 7th century monument, so isolated and in such a seismic area, has survived as well as it has – so far.

LK: How can readers of this interview help bring attention to Mren Cathedral so that scholars and restorers might conduct important inspection and preservation work and so that Mren may become a protected site?

CM: I am in the midst of contacting UNESCO and, of course, nominating the monument to the World Monuments Fund. I will also be organizing a global petition in the very near future. In the meantime, readers who would like to get involved in the campaign to save Mren Cathedral may signal their interest by contacting me at: Christina.Maranci@tufts.edu



Prof. Christina Maranci

the region, and a key example of the architectural achievements of the seventh century.”

Maranci stressed that Mren may not be standing much longer. “Photographs from the 1990s to the first decade of the 21st century show the progressive collapse of the south façade. Now the entire south aisle lies in rubble on the ground, severely compromising the domed superstructure of the monument and opening the interior and its wall paintings to the elements,” she said. “The prospect of stabilizing what is left is at present doubtful, however, because of Mren’s position within a military zone in Eastern Turkey (Kars province) next to the closed Armenian-Turkish border. Visiting the site is forbidden.”

Maranci is campaigning to raise awareness about Mren’s precarious condition. “Mren has stood for over a millennium, bearing world history on its walls,” she said. “Its collapse would represent a tragic loss to human knowledge.”

The following is an interview with Maranci.

Lucine Kasbarian: For years, scholars and travelers have been unable to obtain official permission to visit this site. When was the last time that architectural experts had access to Mren?

Christina Maranci: The last time anyone was able to do substantial scientific work there was in the 1960s when Nicole and Jean-Michel Thierry visited multiple times. I have never been there

AUA to Change Landscape of Economics Study in Armenia

YEREVAN – The American University of Armenia reaffirmed its commitment to developing the study and practice of quantitative economics in Armenia at a public launch of its new Master of Science in Economics program on Thursday, February 7. The Open House event introduced the program to prospective students, finance professionals and the broader community.

“AUA is proud to do what we can to improve the state of quantitative economics, econometrics, and economic modeling in Armenia,” said AUA President Dr. Bruce Boghosian, stressing the significance of the new program, specifically designed with Armenia’s needs in mind. “It is with these goals in mind that this program has been developed. We see it as a natural priority to build this kind of human capacity in Armenia and a central component of Armenia’s economic future.”

The new program, devised by AUA with the cooperation and encouragement of the Central Bank of Armenia (CBA), will prepare students for careers and advanced studies in a wide range of fields in economics. Career options include sectors such as public and private banking, insurance, consulting, quantitative analysis, and others.

“The Central Bank of Armenia is proud to support AUA’s MS in Economics program, which has come at an ideal time for Armenia, to build human and institutional capacity for conducting cutting-edge economic research and policy analyses,” said CBA Deputy Chairman Nerses Yeritsyan. “The Research and Training Centre of the CBA in Dilijan will serve as an excellent venue for students by hosting some of the MS in Economics program courses.”

The new Dilijan center will also provide internship and job opportunities for students, as well as engage students and graduates in extensive research and policy analyses projects under the guidance of prominent international and senior CBA researchers and policy makers.

“In this way, we will build the next generation of competitive public policy makers and institutions to understand the mechanisms driving the global economy while developing local potential,” Yeritsyan added.

The event also served as an opportunity to welcome Dr. David Blake, the interim dean of AUA’s College of Business and Economics. Blake has joined AUA from the University of California, Irvine, where he previously served as dean of the Paul Merage School of Business.

“The use of economic modeling and ‘big data’ is an integral part of the chain of discovery, innovation, and implementation which the College of Business Administration and Economics is all about,” explained Blake.

Director of Admissions Arina Zohrabian highlighted AUA’s mission. “AUA’s programs combine Armenia’s excellence in higher education with the American ideals of academic freedom, critical thinking, strong faculty and student governance, social responsibility and public service, interdisciplinary study, and the embracing of



Dr. David Blake

modern technologies,” she said.

Zohrabian also presented the targeted learning outcomes of the program and practical applications of a master’s in economics, underscoring the theoretical knowledge, quantitative skills and analytical abilities students will gain.

After a brief reception, prospective students gathered for a detailed presentation about the university as whole, as well as the structure of the Master of Science in Economics program.

AUA’s Financial Aid Coordinator Gayane Davoyan described scholarship opportunities, while Admissions Coordinator Karina Satamyan outlined the application process.

The 15-month program is a division of the AUA College of Business and Economics and is scheduled to begin in the summer. The deadline for applications is April 22.