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Mediators End another Round of Karabagh Diplomacy

BAKU (RFE/RL) – International mediators gave no indication of progress in the Nagorno-Karabagh peace process on Monday after meeting with the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in a fresh round of regional shuttle diplomacy.

The US, Russian and French co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group met with President Serge Sargisian in Yerevan on Saturday before traveling to Baku for similar talks with his Azerbaijani counterpart, Ilham Aliyev. Official Armenian and Azerbaijani sources gave no details of those talks.

In a joint statement issued in the Azerbaijani capital, the co-chairs said they held further discussions with the parties on “how to implement the commitments” made by Aliyev and Sargisian at their most recent meeting held in Sochi, Russia in January.

The two presidents pledged to “accelerate the achievement of an agreement on



President Serge Sargisian, right, with the OSCE Minsk Group chairs

the Basic Principles” of a Karabagh settlement put forward by the Minsk Group co-chairs in a statement released after the Sochi talks. The mediating troika toured

the conflict zone shortly afterwards to present the parties with a plan of actions meant to help them fulfill that pledge.

The mediators’ latest statement made no specific mention of that plan. It said they also discussed with the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders a possible “mechanism” for jointly investigating ceasefire violations around Karabagh and along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

“The co-chairs expressed their concern over recent incidents along the frontlines and urged the sides to exercise restraint and refrain from retaliation,” the statement said. “The co-chairs welcomed the sides’ reaffirmation of their commitment to seek a peaceful settlement.”

US envoy Robert Bradtke, Russia’s Igor Popov and France’s Jacques Faure added that they plan to hold follow-up negotiations with the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers “in the near future.”

UNDP, Eduardo Eurnekian Team up to Spur Agro Development in Armenia

ARMAVIR (hetq) – Poverty in the rural communities of Armenia is higher than in urban areas due to a lack of economic opportunities and the poor quality of public services, such as healthcare, education and social protection.

The United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP’s) experience worldwide and in Armenia over the past 20 years suggests that poverty is a complex and multidimensional phenomena, which is context specific and addressing it requires concerted and comprehensive efforts across all levels of government and all sectors of the economy. A home grown and effective approach that was spearheaded by the UNDP in an attempt

to improve people’s wellbeing is the Integrated Community Development approach.

Communities’ needs are best addressed when the intervention is holistic, focusing on the three pillars of sustainable development (e.g. social, economic and environmental) and fostering decentralization, good local governance and democracy.

Agricultural activities are the main source of employment and income generation for the residents of Baghramyan, Arevadasht, Artamet and Myasnikiyan rural communities of Baghramyan sub-region (hereinafter, micro-region) in the Armarvir see UNDP, page 2

Tbilisi Armenians Struggle to Save their Churches Crumbling From Official Neglect

TBILISI (ArmeniaNow) – The collapse of the bell tower of the Armenian St. Nshan Church Sunday night again reminded the local Armenian community about the defenseless status that Armenian churches have in Georgia.

While the main reasons for the collapse is considered to be an earthquake that hit the territory a few days before as well as unprecedented showers during the past few days in the Georgian capital, specialists still consider that had repairs been done in time it would perhaps have been possible to avoid such a situation. The Armenian side has long accused Georgians of neglecting the condition of the church and sought to take possession of it in order to make all necessary restoration works.

An estimated 300,000 ethnic Armenians live in Georgia, where there are also more than 300 Armenian churches. Only 40 of these churches, however, are in use. St. Nshan Church is one of the six churches that are part of a dispute between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Georgian Orthodox Church. The others are St. Norashen, Mughnetsots St. Gevorg, Yerevantsots St. Minas, Shamkoretsots Surb Astvatsatsin (St. Mary) and St. Nshan in Akhaltsikhe.

In July, when the status of legal entity was granted to a number of religious organizations in Georgia, including to the diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, it see TBILISI, page 3

Genocide Survivor Areka Der Kazarian Celebrates Centennial

By Nancy Kalajian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

in celebration from as far away as New York, Delaware, Florida, Maine and even Buenos Aires that might be the most memorable. Gathering for lunch on a rainy day in April, the ambiance at the Oakley Country Club was full of bright flowers, warm smiles and happy recollections of a life well-lived.

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Areka Der Kazarian shows her cake with sons Alan, Gregory and Ed DerKazarian.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Azerbaijan to Build Oil Refinery in Libya

BAKU (APA) – The ambassador of Azerbaijan to Libya, Agaslim Shukurov, met with that country’s Oil and Gas Minister Abdulrahman Ben Yezza this past week.

Briefing the minister on the Azerbaijan’s history, the ambassador said the implementation of projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum has an important role in supplying the country’s natural resources to the world market.

Stressing the importance of forming oil-gas ties between Azerbaijan and Libya, Shukurov said he was sure that this would deepen relations between the two countries.

The diplomat conveyed the proposal of Azerbaijan to build filling stations in Libya under the brand of SOCAR and build an oil refinery, either jointly or at the expense of Azerbaijan’s investments.

The ambassador invited the Libyan minister to the 19th International Oil and Gas Fair and Conference on June 5 to 8 in Baku.

Uruguayan Foreign Minister Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Times.am) – Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uruguay Luis Almagro was in Armenia on an official visit, May 4-5.

Almagros visited Tsitsernakaberd and laid a wreath at the memorial to the Armenian Genocide victims. Later, he visited the Armenian Genocide Institute Museum where he was shown the document in which Uruguay recognized the Armenian Genocide. Uruguay was the first country to recognize the Genocide in 1965.

Almagros said that his visit to the institute made a great impression on him.

“Armenian Genocide is a crime not only against Armenian nation but also against the whole humanity. Unfortunately the lessons of the history were not studied well and genocides are going in the world now as well,” he said.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Almagros was in Armenia at the invitation of Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian.

Meetings with Nalbandian, President Sargisian and Catholicos Karekin II also took place.

Farewell to Iran Ambassador

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – On May 12, President Serge Sargisian held a farewell meeting with Iran’s departing ambassador to Armenia, Seyed Ali Sagayan.

Sargisian thanked the envoy for strengthening cooperation and developing bilateral ties, according to Republic of Armenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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Philly Walk

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenia Has New Ambassador in Japan

YEREVAN (news.am) – President Serge Sargsian appointed Hrant Poghosyan, Armenia's ambassador to Japan. His diplomatic residence will be in Tokyo.

And with another decree by the president, Armenia's ambassador to the Czech Republic, Tigran Seyranyan, was simultaneously appointed Armenia's ambassador to Slovakia. His diplomatic residence will be in Prague, the president's press office reported.

Chief of Police's Daughter Flees Scene of Alleged Accident

YEREVAN (Lragir.am) – On April 22, the daughter of chief of police of the Ararat region, Arsen Abrahamyan, was riding in her Ranger Rover in the Mkhchyan village when she allegedly ran down and killed a 4-year-old boy. Police have not yet proceeded with the case. Moreover, Abrahamyan's daughter is currently abroad.

Poetess Calls on People To Be Tolerant

YEREVAN (arminfo) – Armenians have no right to condemn the representatives of minorities, no matter whether they are national or sexual minorities, poetess Violet Grigoryan said at a press conference this week.

"Armenians suffered the Genocide because they were a minority in the Ottoman Empire; consequently, our society should display a tolerant attitude towards the sexual, national and other types of minorities," she said, when speaking about the burning of the DIY pub, which is said to be popular with homosexuals.

On May 8, three young men set a fire at the pub. One broke the window and threw some explosive into the building. Two young men were detained, but they have been released pending a trial.

Human rights activist Lara Aharonyan stressed that Armenia should have a society where everyone should feel free and protected. Therefore, it is necessary to condemn and suppress aggression and intolerance. "Unfortunately, the police did not hurry to find the culprits only because the Armenian mass media openly propagandized hatred against the gays and gave tactless assessments," she said.

Sheikha of Kuwait and First Lady of Armenia Visit History Museum

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Kuwait's Sheikha Fariha Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, during her four-day visit to Armenia with Armenian First Lady Rita Sargsian, toured the Armenian History Museum on May 12.

"With the first lady we discussed issues concerning children, women and families which have special needs. I am very happy for being in Armenia," said Al-Sabah. She stressed the strong friendship ties between Armenia and Kuwait.

Sargsian mentioned that Al-Sabah had many Armenian friends and had a strong wish to visit Armenia. "She feels herself as at home here," Sargsian said.

Sargsian presented Al-Sabah with a carpet, titled "Gandzak," which she said will remind Al-Sabah of Armenia when she returns to Kuwait.

Al-Sabah was touched by the gift and said she would treasure it.

"I am very happy that I am here, our cultures really have similarities," said Sheikha adding that despite the similarities there were obvious differences.

She was impressed by her visit to Matenadaran, especially by the old manuscripts. A staff member there showed Al-Sabah the main exhibition. At the end of the visit the guest was given a book about Armenian manuscripts.

Tekeyan Center Fund Launches Support to School Program

YEREVAN – On April 25, Tekeyan Center Fund (TCF) launched its program "Support to Armenian Schools-2012," which involves a number of projects. Traditionally, the series of projects starts with "Tekeyan Olympiad," an interscholastic competition in the Armenian language, literature and mathematics.

It was the second time that the fund had organized a contest of knowledge where the eighth-graders of Tekeyan schools from Yerevan, Gumri, Stepanavan and Karbi competed with each other for prizes. This year the project had expanded its reach to include Tekeyan students from Berdzor (Karabagh) as well.

The competition was held at Tekeyan Center and was followed with a reception and cultural program. This year, the fund offered all the participants and the teachers a chance to visit the Theatre of Young Spectator where they were welcomed by H. Toumanian's heroes in a musical play.

The award ceremony for the Tekeyan Olympiad took place at the TCF on the same day. Katherine Leach, the UK ambassador to Armenia, attended the ceremony, among other guests.

The ceremony began with a welcome note from London by Vartan Ouzounian, chairman of TCF. In his message the chair thanked the ambassador for her cooperation and extended his deepest congratulations to all the participants of the project and particularly to the winners. Ouzounian's address was followed with the experts' opinion on the results of the competition and Maro Khachatryan, the expert in mathematics, (from Holy See Echmiadzin College, Eornekan) awarded certificates to participants with high marks.

Director of Tekeyan Center Fund Armen Tsulikyan awarded the honorable mention prizes and the third prize. In his speech, Tsulikyan emphasized the significance of education in preserving and strengthening the Armenian nation. Among the guests present were Alan Kutchukian, TCF Board member, who awarded the second prize and also thanked the teachers for their hard work and devotion to

school.

Leach was invited to the podium to award prizes. She then praised the fund's activities and also suggested including English in the list of subjects for competition, which she said would deepen Armenian-British relations.

The principal of Berdzor Tekeyan School, Anahit Kosakyan, thanked the fund for allowing the school in the competition and hoped that one day "Tekeyan Olympiad" would be held in liberated Berdzor.

Principal of Yerevan Tekeyan School, Tsovinar Mardanyan, expressed her gratitude to the TCF and all the benefactors from the diaspora for the realization of the heating project, which used to be a big problem for the school.

The Tekeyan Olympiad award ceremony concluded with a concert, presented by Tekeyan students.

The following students were awarded

certificates and prizes in various categories: Armenian Language and Literature awards: first prize, Mary Mayilyan, Karbi; second prize, Shoghakat Simonyan, Karbi, and third prize, Sylvia Hakobjanyan, Stepanavan; honorable mention prize: Mane Davtyan, Yerevan; certificates: Haykuhi Nersisyan, Yerevan; Anna Martirosyan, Stepanavan; Nelli Vardanyan, Yerevan; Diana Dallakyan, Stepanavan; Lilit Gharibyan, Gumri, and Elen Minasyan, Yerevan; Mathematics: first prize, Abraham Portugalyan, Yerevan; second prize, Nelli Yeshilbashyan, Gumri, and third prize, Eliza Vardanyan, Yerevan; honorable mention prize: Samvel Ghazaryan, Gumri, and certificates: Lilit Sargsyan, Gumri, Arno Movsisyan, Gumri; Anjela Harutyunyan, Yerevan; Viktorya Hakobyan, Berdzor; Nazeli Safaryan, Karbi, and Margarita Ghandilyan, Yerevan.

Disappearing and Damaged Art at the National Gallery: Why No Criminal Charges?

By Edik Baghdasaryan

YEREVAN (hetq) – In 2010, a 19-century sculpture, titled "Satyr with Lyre," by an unknown artist, disappeared from Armenia's National Gallery.

This fact was concealed for one year by the gallery's administration. It later turned out that another 10 artworks had also vanished.

This publication wrote to the police, expecting some answers to the following questions: Have they filed criminal charges in connection with the disappearance of these pieces from the National Gallery? If so, has anyone been arrested? Have any cases been brought and, if criminal charges haven't been filed, then why not?

The reply received from the Republic of Armenia Police says that criminal charges have not been filed against anyone in connection with the disappearance of the above pieces of art from the National Gallery. The police say they will provide an answer as to why no

charges have been brought under separate cover.

In essence, the official reply confirms that the pieces have indeed "vanished" from the gallery and that they are aware of the fact.

Hetq also sent a similar letters to the general prosecutor and the Ministry of Culture and National Gallery Director Paravon Mirzoyan, with no reply as yet.

The National Gallery has been plagued with a number of mysterious vanishings of paintings and sculptures.

In May 2008, the Dutch and French exhibition halls at the gallery became flooded. Water ruined five paintings and an 18th-century Dutch cabinet estimated value of several million dollars. A work, titled "Destroyers of Birds Nests," in the French exhibition hall, was also damaged.

And the reason for the water damage? The day of the flood, a film crew had been shooting in the gallery. Afterwards, there was a party upstairs in the cafe. Somebody forgot to turn off the water faucet.

UNDP, Eduardo Eurnekian Team up to Spur Agro Development

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region. The poor conditions of the irrigation and water supply networks, the lack of agricultural equipment and the obsolete machinery, as well as the lack of knowledge about new agricultural technologies are the underlying reasons

behind the low level of agricultural productivity and high level of poverty in the micro-region.

During recent years investments have been made by Fruitful Armenia in this region in the fields of vineyards, orchards for vegetables and fruits, water reservoirs, drip irrigation and modern cultivation methods, which overall, positively impacted on the socio-economic growth in the micro-region.

Capitalizing on the successful past experience of UNDP and the Fruitful Armenia in local development, Dafina Gercheva, UN resident coordinator/UNDP resident representative in Armenia, and Eduardo Eurnekian, a prominent Argentinean-Armenian businessman, signed an agreement to support agricultural and micro-business activities in the Baghranyan, Arevadasht, Artamet and Myasnikiyan communities. This partnership is aimed at promoting economic revitalization of the micro-region and improving the living standards of the population.

"UNDP's best practices and experience across the world suggest that promoting sustainable development requires an inte-

grated approach which targets social, economic and environmental pillars of development. We are well positioned to proceed rapidly with the implementation of integrated development in these communities, as it has helped to rehabilitate social and economic infrastructure and generate sustainable income in more than 150 rural and urban communities across the country. This approach involves several communities working together in a cluster and focusing on the holistic approach to development, i.e. infrastructure rehabilitation, income generation, institutional capacity development, good governance and environmental protection," said Gercheva.

Within the framework of Armenian Village Revival: A Drive for Employment and Income Generation project, UNDP Armenia aims to create farmers' associations, improve the economic rural infrastructure, establish micro food processing facilities and return non-cultivated arable land into the sowing cycle through distribution and planting of quality seeds and seedlings.

The total cost of the project is \$230,000, from which Fruitful Armenia's share is \$204,000.

Omission

In the article noting the new and expanded publication of Franz Werfel's *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (*Mirror-Spectator* 4/21/12), there was an omission regarding the book's publishing history in the United States. In 1983, Carroll & Graf reissued the Gregory Dunlop translation of the novel in hardcover, and later in 1990 put the title out in paperback with a long introduction by novelist and critic, Peter Sourian. The book was first published in English in 1934 by Viking Publishers.



INTERNATIONAL

AGBU Armeniaca Opens in Capital of Europe

BRUSSELS – These past few months brought hundreds of Belgian and other European citizens here for the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Armeniaca's "The Pioneers of the Study of the Architectural Heritage of Armenia" exhibit, which launched on December 5, 2011 and ran for a full month. More recently, a second showing was held from March 26 to 30. One of the organization's newest European initiatives, Armeniaca, is dedicated to the preservation, digitization and development of archives related to the Armenian architectural heritage and was selected and supported by the

Armenia while emphasizing that, since the Armenian influence has been dispersed across many countries, the preservation and study of its heritage has been particularly difficult.

Bernard Coulie, a professor at the Catholic University of Louvain and a Belgian specialist on the Armenian world, discussed the importance of Armenian architecture, which has helped develop early architectural techniques adopted by the rest of the Christian world. He stated, "If Armenian architecture has so much importance today in the history of art, it has survived in part and bears witness to the art forms of

was screened for the first time in Belgium.

On the heels of such enthusiastic reactions, AGBU Europe presented the exhibition once again, this time at the European Parliament (EP) in Brussels from March 26 to 30. The event was hosted by MEP Michèle Rivasi, in partnership with members of parliament from different political parties, including Frank Engel, Sylvie Guillaume and Dr. Charles Tannock.

At the inauguration, Rivasi welcomed the public and stressed the importance of Armeniaca, which allows users to discover and rediscover Armenian architecture and its conservation. She noted that when the monuments are destroyed, an important part of the identity of an entire people disappears, as well. After thanking guests and parliament for hosting the exhibition, Nicolas Tavitian remarked on the necessity of organizing this event at the EP. "Armenian monuments are often overlooked or destroyed because they are perceived as national symbols. Europe can encourage countries to consider all historical sites on their territories, regardless of their identity, as part of the host country's heritage and as valuable resources."

Tannock, author of a 2006 resolution relating to the destruction of the Armenian medieval burial ground in the Julfa site of Nakhichevan, a region next to Armenia, shared his own experiences when he visited Armenia and its closed border with neighboring Turkey, as well as his discovery that the formerly Armenian villages and churches there had been destroyed.

The European Commission and members of parliament wholeheartedly supported AGBU's Armeniaca project, indicating a growing interest on the subject by the European institutions, including importance placed on strategies to ensure the education about and preservation of architecture that is of great importance and value, yet has suffered considerably in the last century.

The Armeniaca project was first launched by AGBU Europe in Yerevan in October 2011, with a goal of renewing, preserving and enhancing the archives pertaining to the Armenian architectural heritage and identifying and bringing together evidence of ancient and more recent monuments. A detailed database enables the transmission of knowledge and exchanges between researchers, students, artists and architects around the world, and currently includes 250,000 scanned documents, photographs, drawings, scientific studies, maps and monographs.



AGBU Armeniaca's "The Pioneers of the Study of the Architectural Heritage of Armenia" exhibit, which launched on December 5, 2011 and ran for a full month.

European Commission as part of the Component 1.3. Framework Program, "Culture 2007-2013." The exhibits were organized jointly by AGBU Europe and partners that included Centro Studi della Cultura e Documentazione Armena (CSDCA Italy), Research on Armenian Architecture (RAA) and Inside Europe. Armeniaca debuted in Yerevan last year with stops in Milan and Venice before arriving to Europe's capital.

More than 300 architecture and culture enthusiasts, including representatives of the AGBU Europe District, attended the December event, which was held in the main hall of the Tours and Taxis property, and featured speakers Gayane Casnati, Bernard Coulie, Raymond Kevorkian and Nicolas Tavitian. The Bulletin, the main English-language monthly magazine of Brussels, highlighted the exhibition under its "Best of Brussels" section.

AGBU Europe District committee member Nicolas Tavitian highlighted the rich architectural heritage of

the time, whereas so many others have disappeared from the Near East and from the ancient Roman and Byzantine Empires."

Kevorkian, the AGBU Nubarian library director, who is also the Armeniaca coordinator, introduced the project's new database of photographic archives and documentaries on Armenian architecture and presented scholars and architects who have worked in recent decades on the rediscovery and study of the vast Armenian heritage at risk.

Gayane Casnati, CSDCA Italy researcher and curator of the exhibition, spoke to guests about the pioneers of Armenian architecture studies, whose work now influences the preservation or restoration of hundreds of buildings of great value scattered throughout Europe, Turkey and the Middle East.

To close the premiere evening, the film "Armenian Legacy of Europe," a documentary devoted to the Armenian heritage in Eastern Europe by the Renaissance Foundation of Ukraine,

Tbilisi Armenians Struggle to Save their Crumbling Churches from Neglect

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It seemed that the situation would somehow be settled, however the poor condition of local Armenian churches still remains a matter of contention.

St. Norashen Church built in 1467, in the center of Tbilisi (on Leselidze Street, the old Armenian market, sharing the yard with former Greek Orthodox monastery Jvris Mamis), has been locked already for many years. While the church still stands, the wide cracks on its walls do not bode well for the construction.

The Yerevantsots St. Minas Church, which was built in 1790 in Tbilisi's Armenian Havlabar district is in an even poorer condition. Inside the walls of the half-dilapidated church almost nothing reminds of its former magnificent self. Today this church is more used as storage for residents of the neighborhood. Plastic bags with garbage are dumped on its altar.

"The diocese was registered as a legal entity, but now we must try to register all our churches and get them back in order to maintain them in good order. For this purpose we are drawing up a list of our churches with all historical bases," said Father Vazgen, a local Armenian priest, adding that the matter concerns hundreds of cathedrals that do not function today, are in a half-ruined condition and have been Georgianized.

While the Armenian side is taking steps to recover its historical heritage, two Armenian churches in Tbilisi continue to function for the local Armenian community.

In one of Tbilisi's central squares there is the St. Gevorg Church. Last Sunday it had attracted more people for the service than usual. The liturgy was performed by Fr. Tachat Davidian, who is the spiritual head of the Ararat Patriarchal Diocese's Youth Association. A pilgrimage from Armenia

to Georgia was organized on that occasion (with the author of this article accompanying the group).

"An Armenian always needs spiritual food, and the church, especially for those living outside Armenia, becomes a connecting link. It is very pleasant to guests coming from the homeland," said 52-year-old Tbilisi resident Taniel Mirzoyan, who says he attends church every Sunday together with his grandchildren.

Fr. Samvel Torosyan, the priest at St. Echimadzin Church in Tbilisi, said that in order to strengthen the link between the church and the local Armenian youth, a cultural and educational youth center called "Hayartun" had been established at the Armenian Church's diocese in Georgia. There, he said, young ethnic Armenians can maintain their links to the homeland and keep their ethnic identity through participation in studies of Armenian history, ethnic songs, dances and other activities.

International News

Armenians Medal in Classical Eurovision

VIENNA, Austria (yerkirmedia.am) – *Kanon* player Narek Kazazyan, 15, representing Armenia, won second place in the Classical Eurovision-2012 competition last week. Kazazyan together with pianist Anahit Dilbandyan and Australian State Symphonic Orchestra performed a concerto for *kanon* and orchestra by Khachatur Avetisyan.

Representatives from the Czech Republic, Armenia, Austria, Poland, Germany, Belarus and Norway participated in the finale.

In addition, violinist Emanuel Chknavoryan, representing Austria, was awarded second place. Eivind Holtmark Ringstad from Norway won the Classical Eurovision-2012 competition.

Armenia was participating for the first time in the 16th TV music concert held in Vienna.

Armenian Survivor of Dersim Massacre Demands Apology

ISTANBUL (News.am) – Fatma Yavuz, an 80-year-old Armenian survivor of the 1937-1938 Dersim (renamed Tunceli) Massacres, sent a letter to the Turkish parliament's subcommittee on the massacre, about the suffering she endured and demanded an apology.

Yavuz said that she was given to a Turkish family, during the Dersim Massacres, and this family was very cruel to her.

"I learned only in 1995 that the fact of my being Armenian was kept secret for 57 years, and I learned my real [Armenian] name at the age of 78," Yavuz wrote in her letter, and demanded that their seized lands be returned, her relatives be found and a formal apology be made.

Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan had stated that, if necessary, he would apologize and is apologizing for the Dersim Massacres, on behalf of the state.

The Turkish authorities had quelled the Dersim uprising with bloodshed and eradicated thousands of villages. In line with different sources, up to 100,000 people lost their lives during the Dersim Massacres. Thousands of Armenian Genocide survivors who had found shelter in Dersim's villages, were subjected to a second genocide in 1938.

Armenian Genocide Issue Once again Raised In Australian Parliament

SYDNEY (Armenpress) – John Ajaka formally acknowledged the Armenian Genocide in a speech on the floor of the New South Wales parliament this week and declared that Armenians had been forced out of Western Armenia, according to the Armenian National Committee (ANC) Australia official website.

Ajaka, the Parliamentary secretary for transport and roads, rose in the Legislative Council to place on public record his condemnation of the wholesale massacre and permanent displacement of Armenians from their historical homeland.

"It is recognized that the tragedy began when 250 Armenian leaders and intellectuals were arrested, deported and killed by the then Ottoman Government," said Ajaka.

"By the tragedy's end an estimated 1.5 million Armenians were killed. The Armenian population was also permanently displaced from the lands of Western Armenia."

"This genocide is a true example of the detrimental effects of discrimination," concluded Ajaka.

ANC Australia Executive Director Varant Meguerditchian applauded the legislator.

"While Turkey continues to deny the events of the past and continues to destroy culturally and historically valuable monuments in Western Armenia, a resolution to the Armenian Genocide remains unlikely," he said. "We thank Mr. Ajaka for applying pressure on Turkey so that it may bring about an end to its harmful policies and to instead build a relationship with the Armenian people, based on true understanding and respect."



INTERNATIONAL

Ancient Language Discovered on Clay Tablets Found Amid Ruins of 2,800-Year-Old Middle Eastern Palace

By David Keys

TUSHAN, Turkey (*The Independent*) – Archaeologists have discovered evidence for a previously-unknown ancient language – buried in the ruins of a 2,800-year-old Middle Eastern palace.

The discovery is important because it may help reveal the ethnic and cultural origins of some of history's first "barbarians" – mountain tribes, which had, in previous millennia, preyed on the world's first great civilizations, the cultures of early Mesopotamia, in what is now Iraq.

Evidence of the long-lost language – probably spoken by an unknown people from the Zagros Mountains of western Iran – was found by a Cambridge University archaeologist as he deciphered an ancient clay writing tablet unearthed by an international archaeological team excavating an Assyrian imperial governors' palace in the ancient city of Tushan, south-east Turkey.

The tablet revealed the names of 60 women – probably prisoners-of-war or victims of an Assyrian forced population transfer program. But, when Cambridge archaeologist, Dr. John MacGinnis, began to examine the names in detail, he realized that 45 of them bore no resemblance to any of the thousands of ancient Middle Eastern names already known to scholars.

Because ancient Middle Eastern names are normally composites, made up, in full or abbreviated form, of ordinary words in the relevant local lexicon, the unique nature of the tablet's 45 mystery names is seen by scholars as evidence of a previously unknown language.

The clay tablet text originally formed part of the palace's archive – used by local Assyrian

imperial officials to record their administrative, political and economic decisions and actions.

The 60 women (including the 45 with evidence of the previously unattested language) were almost certainly being deployed by the palace authorities for some economic purpose (potentially a female-associated craft activity like weaving). Indeed the text mentions that some of them were being allocated to specific local villages.

Typical names, borne by the women – the evidence for the lost language – include Ushimanay, Alagahnia, Irsakinna and Bisoonomay.

Now archaeologists and linguistics experts are set to analyze the mystery names in even greater details to try to discover whether the letter-order or letter frequency shows any similarities to previously-attested ancient tongues to which this mystery language could be related.

The 45 women are thought to come from somewhere in the central or northern Zagros Mountains – because that is the only area in which the Assyrians were militarily active at the relevant time where the ancient languages are still largely unknown.

It is likely that the women were compulsorily moved from their Zagros Mountains homeland

and assigned to work near Tushan sometime in the second half of the eighth century BC – probably as a result of conquests carried out in the Zagros Mountains by Assyrian kings Tiglath Pileser III or Sargon.

The excavation of the palace at Tushan is being carried out by a German archaeological team directed by Dr. Dirk Wicke of Mainz University as part of an archaeological investigation into the ancient Assyrian city led by Prof. Timothy Matney of the University of Akron in Ohio. Full details about the discovery of the mystery names are published in the current issue of the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*.

Nalbandian Discusses Iran Nuclear Standoff in Tehran

TEHRAN (RFE/RL) – Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian welcomed the latest "positive" developments in Iran's nuclear standoff with the West as he held talks with top Iranian officials earlier this month.

Nalbandian met with Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi and chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili to discuss bilateral ties and regional security.

According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, Salehi and Jalili briefed him on the Islamic Republic's renewed negotiations with key Western powers as well as Russia and China on its controversial nuclear program.

Those negotiations resumed in Istanbul on April 14 amid growing talk of US or Israeli military strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities. The next round of talks is due to take place in Baghdad on May 23.

A Foreign Ministry statement quoted Nalbandian as hailing a "positive trend," which he said emerged at the Istanbul meeting, and expressing hope that the interested parties will make further progress in Baghdad.

"Positive signals can be seen in solving Iran's nuclear issue and we hope they will result in a settlement of this issue," the chief Armenian diplomat said on Sunday, April 29, at an ensuing joint news conference with Salehi, according to the Fars news agency. He also defended Tehran's right to use nuclear energy for peace-



Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian, right, with Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad

ful purposes.

Nalbandian made clear earlier this month that Armenia is against military action against Iran, one of its few conduits to the outside world and hopes that the standoff will be resolved through "dialogue and negotiations." He spoke after a meeting in Yerevan with Russia's visiting Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. The latter warned that attempts to end the dispute by force would destabilize the entire region.

Armenian-Iranian economic ties and in particular joint energy projects planned by the two neighboring states were also high on the agenda of Nalbandian's talks in Tehran. According to Fars, Ahmadinejad stressed the importance of the planned construction of an Armenian-Iranian electricity transmission line, two hydroelectric plants and a fuel pipeline.

The Iranian president was also reported to call for a free trade agreement between the two countries.

Nobel Laureate Pamuk Opens Physical 'Museum of Innocence'

ISTANBUL (AFP) – Turkish Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk on Friday, April 27, inaugurated a museum based on his last book about an obsessive lover who collects things to remind him of his inamorata and soothe the pain of a doomed affair.

Pamuk said his 2008 oeuvre, *The Museum of Innocence*, which took several years to write, came about while he was "collecting the objects that I described in the book."

The story, which takes place in Istanbul between 1975 and the present, centers around wealthy businessman Kemal Bey, who harbors a 30-year passion for the impoverished Fusun, a distant cousin and shop assistant, who becomes his mistress.

Kemal does not renounce his fiancée Sibel, who breaks off their engagement after learning about Fusun, who herself disappears one day.

Shunned by Istanbul's moneyed bourgeoisie, Kemal becomes an avid collector to satisfy his emotional obsession with his object of desire.

He rediscovers Fusun after almost a year – now married to a fat, amiable man from her old working-class neighborhood – and invites himself to dinner 1,593 times over the next eight years.

The 59-year-old Pamuk said his museum in the working-class district of Cukurcuma was aimed at re-igniting the sentiments one felt while reading the book and not an "illustration" of it.

"The novel is not an explanation of the museum. They are deeply intertwined," he told a news conference.

The museum has 23 display cases, each representing a chapter of the book. The objects range from an earring that Fusun lost to a summer dress, and the display cases end up depicting the bedroom where Kemal recounts his love story to the narrator.

New Discoveries Made by CRD Physicists

FRASCATI, Italy – Last month, the head of Armenia's Cosmic Ray Division (CRD) and director of the Yerevan Physics Institute, Prof. Ashot Chilingarian, was invited to the European Space Agency center here. A conference was devoted to the Italian AGILE space satellite mission, which discovered many unexpected astrophysical phenomena during its five years of scientific exploration. Discoveries included unexpected flares from the Crab Nebula – the debris resulting from the explosion or "supernova" of a massive star, which occurred about 1,000 years ago. The Crab Nebula had always, and apparently wrongly, been assumed to be a constant, unvarying source of radiation which astronomers relied upon to calibrate their measurements. Also discussed at this conference was the recently discovered phenomenon of Terrestrial Gamma Ray Flashes (TGFs) in which thunderclouds emit high-energy radiation previously assumed to originate only from space. Through mechanisms not completely understood, electrons are accelerated from thunderstorms into outer space.

Particle fluxes (radiation of subatomic particles) from thunderclouds are a very important and yet poorly-understood phenomenon, which is intensively researched both from space and from high-altitude mountain research stations. CRD's Aragats research station atop Mt. Aragats has assumed a leading position in this branch of research. Chilingarian presented CRD's latest research results on fluxes of electrons, gamma rays and neutrons measured on Mt. Aragats. Discussed were energy spectra and

physical models of Thunderstorm Ground Enhancements (TGEs) in which high-energy electrons are accelerated both downward towards the earth and upward towards space, from within thundercloud formations. Much of the research on this phenomenon is conducted by young CRD scientists. Recent PhD recipient Bagrat Mailyan's doctoral dissertation characterizing this phenomenon shed a great deal of light on this subject within the international science community.

Numerous particle detectors and electric field meters located on the slopes of mountain Aragats and in Yerevan continuously monitor changing geophysical conditions. A new planned geophysical station near Lake Sevan, with three existing stations on the slopes of Mt. Aragats, will monitor particle fluxes from the sun, thunderclouds and the galaxy as well as magnetic and electrical fields and lightning occurrences. CRD will issue alerts and forewarnings on upcoming dangerous consequences of space weather events and thunderstorms.

In a series of three papers published by the journal of American Physical Society, Physical Review, Armenian physicists reported new phenomena manifested by a number of physical effects. These included large fluxes of electron and gamma radiation, neutron radiation, short microsecond bursts of electron radiation coinciding with negatively charged electric fields near the earth's surface and reduced lightning between clouds and the ground along with

increased lightning within clouds. The most recent paper was published on April 16.

For more information, visit www.crdfriends.org.

Railway to Airport to Be Constructed

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – In the Ministry of Transport and Communication of Armenia was a signed memorandum about the intention to construct a railway link to Zvartnots international airport on May 4. It was signed by Minister of Transport and Communication Manuk Vardanyan, Director General of CJSC South-Caucasus railway Victor Rebec and Manager General of CJSC Armenia International Airports Marcelo Vende.

Both sides agreed to construct the railway line as soon as possible to handle the increasing volumes of freight and passenger traffic at the airport.

When completed, the project will allow passengers who take the Charbakh station to arrive at the airport.

Community News

City of Peabody Commemorates Armenian Genocide

PEABODY, Mass. — On Thursday, April 26, on the front lawn of Peabody City Hall, Mayor Edward A. Bettencourt led the flag-raising ceremony for the 97th commemoration of the Armenian Genocide.

According to the late mayor, Peter Torigian, who inaugurated the commemoration and whose mother survived the Genocide, “This ceremony is our small way of paying tribute to the martyrs of the Armenian Genocide.”



Mayor Edward Bettencourt

Torigian was first elected mayor in 1979 and served for 23 years until his retirement in 2002. He also served for four terms on

the City Council. He was once voted by his colleagues throughout the state as the Best Mayor in Massachusetts and he ranked as the longest-reigning mayor in Massachusetts history.

Torigian created the Peabody International Festival, the “Pride in Peabody” campaign and numerous cultural and social programs.

Former Mayor Michael J. Bonfanti, Torigian’s widow, Jackie Torigian, and his sister, Mary Torigian Foley, have organized this annual commemoration. And now Bettencourt continues this tradition.

After a flag-raising ceremony and the singing of both the American and Armenian national anthems, the ceremony continued inside.

The Rev. Bedros Shetilian of St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church from Springfield and Deacon Avedis Garavanian of North Andover’s St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church gave the blessing and requiem service to memorialize the victims of Armenian Genocide.

Patrice Tierney represented Rep. John Tierney who was in Washington. Also present was District Attorney Jonathon Blodgett.

Bettencourt then introduced and invited the main speaker, Dr. Pam Steiner, the great-granddaughter of Ambassador Henry Morgenthau. Her book, *Henry Morgenthau’s Voice in History*, will be published this year in English and Greek by the Euxeinos Club of Thessaloniki, Greece.

Steiner is a fellow with the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights of the Harvard School of Public Health and associate of the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, Harvard University. She directs the Inter-communal Trust-Building Project, which aims to contribute to an improvement in the relationship between Armenian and Turkish communities.

Steiner is cofounder of the program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Harvard’s Weatherhead Center of International Affairs (1995-2003).

After the ceremony a light luncheon was served in the Wiggin Auditorium, sponsored by Anahid and Aurelian Mardiros.



Dr. Pamela Steiner



Keynote speaker and Armenian Genocide expert Dr. Taner Akcam delivers his address to the Philadelphia-Armenian community during the program portion of the 2012 Armenian Genocide Walk.

Akcam Is Keynote Speaker At 5th Annual Armenian Genocide Walk in Philly

PHILADELPHIA — On Tuesday, April 24, the Philadelphia Armenian Inter-Communal Committee (PAICC) hosted its annual Armenian Genocide Commemoration at Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church in Cheltenham. With

By Kim Yacoubian

more than 200 guests in attendance, the event began with a requiem service for the souls of the 1.5 million Armenians lost 97 years ago. The cultural program which followed featured songs and recitations by the students of the Armenian Sisters’ Academy; a piano solo by Anahit Sakoian; a recitation by Anton Balasanian and a video presentation by Ara Shakarjian of the 2011 Genocide Commemoration at the Dzidzernagapert Memorial in Yerevan, Armenia.

In his closing address that evening, youth representative Vicken Bazarbashian emphasized the need for unity in the Armenian nation. “As we approach the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide, we are reminded once again of the need to unite as one nation and one people in both our beloved Motherland and throughout our Diaspora. The need for unity is now stronger than ever and is a requirement for the preservation and advancement of our culture, heritage and Armenian identity. Our future can be very bright but we must work together to fulfill this endeavor.”

Four days later, on Saturday, April 28, the Philadelphia Armenian Genocide Walk — “Walk the Walk, Talk the Talk” — took place for the fifth consecutive year with Dr. Taner Akcam serving as keynote speaker. An international expert on the Armenian Genocide, Akcam is a historian and professor of Genocide Studies as well as the holder of the chair of Armenian Studies at Clark University in

see WALK, page 6



Two hundred fifty members of the Philadelphia-Armenian community took to the streets on April 28 as part of the 2012 Armenian Genocide Walk to educate the public on the Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide.

Armenian EyeCare Project Celebrates 20th Anniversary

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — The Armenian EyeCare Project (AECPP) is celebrating 20 years of bringing sight to Armenian men, women and children. The project has come a long way since their first trip to Armenia in 1992, when they treated about 300 patients and performed more than 40 surgeries. Gone are the days when volunteer doctors had to borrow a Swiss Army knife to complete a procedure.

AECPP was founded in 1992, when Armenia was reeling from war, economic hardship and a devastating earthquake that took 50,000 lives and left many with severe injuries, including those to eyes. Countless children who happened across mines sustained critical eye injuries.

Yet, eye care was virtually unavailable in Armenia. Surgical staff was involved with war injuries and ophthalmological equipment was nonexistent or in a terrible state of repair.

Overwhelmed by a country plagued with blindness, the Armenian deputy minister of health reached out for help and Dr. Roger Ohanesian responded. He vowed to return twice yearly on medical missions until the goal of a Western-style eye hospital was established.

“In the beginning, eye-care treatment for Armenians suffering from disease, infection or accidents was minimal,” says Ohanesian, AECPP founder and chairman. “Many Armenians lived with total or partial vision loss because they did not have access to appropriate medical and surgical treatment.”

AECPP has played an important role over the past two decades in Armenia by providing medical equipment and treatment to Armenians suffering from eye disease and vision loss while developing a sustainable ophthalmology program throughout the country.

For the past 20 years, doctors from all over the world have participated in bi-annual medical missions to Armenia where they treat the country’s most difficult cases and help put in place an advanced ophthalmology teaching program for doctors throughout the country.

A new program of the EyeCare Project is the prevention of blindness in infants born prematurely, Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP).

In 2010, the EyeCare Project and Dr. Thomas Lee, director of the Retina Institute in the Vision Center at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles and internationally-recognized specialist in ROP, developed a program in Armenia designed to teach Armenian doctors how to screen and treat the disease. Thousands of infants have been screened since the program was launched and many of those were found to have ROP. As a result, the infants received emergency laser treatment at no cost to their families.

In celebration of the 20th anniversary, Ohanesian and Lee will lead a team of top US doctors on the Project’s 41st medical mission to Armenia. While there, they will initiate the second phase of their ROP program with a regional conference and add a surgical tier to the program. The team will also examine and treat patients along with training their Armenian colleagues.

The EyeCare Project established and continues to operate the only mobile eye hospital in the Caucasus. The hospital stretches 48-feet, is equipped with two examination rooms, an operating room and provides comprehensive eye examinations, laser procedures, surgery, eye-glasses and other treatments at no cost to the Armenian people.

Additionally, the project supports seven specialty clinics in two eye hospitals in Yerevan. The clinics are led by Armenian ophthalmologists who participated in year-long fellowship

see EYECARE, page 6



OBITUARY

Armenian EyeCare Project Celebrates 20th Anniversary

EYECARE, from page 5

training in the United States, sponsored by the Project, and return to teach their colleagues in Armenia.

"Much of the EyeCare Project's success over the past 20 years is due to the loyal and continuing support of its board members and major donors," says Leslie Newquist, executive director of the AECF. "We are very proud of the many supporters from around the world who

have helped the Project. Because of their generosity, the project has been able to establish a comprehensive program that has successfully prevented and eliminated vision loss and has in great part been responsible for Armenians receiving excellence in eye care."

The AECF recognizes some of the people and organizations who have helped build and sustain it over the past 20 years. Corporate supporters include: Abbott Medical Optics, Alcon

Laboratories, Allergan Pharmaceuticals, Bausch and Lomb and Pfizer, Inc. Individuals include Mike Aghajanian, Dr. Anthony Aldave, Vartkes Barsam, Aram Bassenian, Sarkis Bedevian, Dr. George Bohigian, Dr. Sanford Chen, Archie Cholakian, Gov. George Deukmejian, Nish and Ruby Derderian, Lonnie Duka, Gregory Flint, Julian Gangoli, Dr. Richard Hill, Dr. Edward Holland, Dr. John Hovanesian, John Hughes, Dr. Richard Kasper, David Keligian, Ken and Meredith Khachigian, Dr. Bedros Kojian, Kirk Kerkorian, Dr. Barry Kupperman, Lincy Foundation, Jack McHale, Ted Mooschigian, Dr. Larry Najarian, Harut Sassounian, Louise Simone, Dr. James Smith, Dr. Thomas Lee, United Armenian Fund and Nune Yeghiazarian.

EyeCare Project Advisory Board member

Deukmejian has been a dedicated supporter for 20 years.

He says, "It has been an extraordinarily successful project and I have nothing but high praise for the project's physicians for their tireless and unselfish service toward meeting the eye care needs of people in Armenia."

"Without the support of the Armenian Diaspora, as well as others who have contributed to our cause, we would not be able to successfully implement our program," says Ohanesian. "It is truly an honor to be able to help people halfway around the world who are not responsible for their blinding disorders and who often may need modern care to restore their sight."

For more information about the Armenian EyeCare Project, visit www.eyecareproject.com.

Akçam Is Keynote Speaker at Genocide Walk in Philly

WALK, from page 5

Worcester, Mass. Autographed copies of his new book, *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*, were available for purchase the day of the walk.

The afternoon began with a two-mile commemorative walk from the Meher Statue outside the Philadelphia Museum of Art to Christ Church in Old City where the program took place. With the Scouts Troop of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church leading the walk, 250 community members of all ages, including clergy and Akçam, gripped banners and signs, while waving American and Armenian flags to bring exposure to the cause.

Emceed by Walk Committee Co-chairs Bazarbashian and Kim Yacoubian, the program at Christ Church opened with a performance of Armenian music selections by Jampa Jazz with singer Lori Panossian. Introduced by Rev. Nishan Bakalian of Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church, Akçam captivated the audience with his address demonstrating a clear passion for his scholarship. Acknowledging the denial of the Armenian Genocide by the Turkish state, Akçam assured the audience that change is coming. "You can never really kill memory. You can suppress it, silence it for a long time, but when the moment is right, like a volcano, it will erupt. What you are witnessing now is the rebellion in Turkey against the suppressed silence and expression of narrative that was never openly discussed before."

Instilling a sense of hope in the future, Akçam cited examples of Armenian Genocide articles recently published in the media by Turkish scholars, national conferences in Turkey on the Armenian Genocide and the outpouring of support by the Turkish people after Hrant Dink's assassination. With Turkish civil

society now representing a new locus of interest, Akçam underscored that, with political and social figures changing in Turkey, both sides have to change their way of talking about the Armenian Genocide. He concluded, "The history of Anatolia is the history of so much pain, mostly yours. I am ashamed and truly sorry not only as a Turk, but as a human being, of the great injustices that happened to you. I cannot bring back those you lost, but I want to share your pain and your sadness with you."

After a brief question-and-answer period, Akçam was presented with a collage of bicentennial stamps donated by Robert Damerjian, Sr., as a token of the community's appreciation. The program's final speaker, Dr. Ara Chalian, chairman of the Armenian National Committee of Pennsylvania, urged the community to take political action by demanding the passing of House and Senate resolutions for the Armenian Genocide and the restoration of Christian churches in Turkey. Closing the program, Panossian returned with Jampa Jazz to perform a stunning a cappella rendition of the song *Giligia*.

With support from PAICC, the 2012 Philadelphia Armenian Genocide Walk provided an opportunity for the entire Philadelphia community to gather to commemorate the 97th anniversary of the Genocide, while educating the public on Turkish denial of the atrocities committed against the Armenians by the Ottoman Empire. The Armenian Genocide Walk is organized annually on a volunteer basis by a cross-section of youth representatives from local area churches and organizations.

This year's Walk Committee included Angela Aghajanian, Anto Arutunian, Bakalian, Co-chair Bazarbashian, PAICC Chairman Hrant Jilozian, Diana Lulejian, Sevag Shirozian, Nadia Silk, Paul Sookiasian, Krikor Yeremian and Co-chair Yacoubian. For photos and videos of this year's walk, visit www.armeniangenocidewalk.com.

OBITUARY

Harry (Haroutune) Bilazarian

BOYLSTON, Mass. — Harry (Haroutune) Bilazarian, 84, a well-known athlete in his youth, died on April 25.

His parents were the late Haroutune and Agavny (Baronian) Bilazarian, who emigrated from Kharpert, Armenia.

He is survived by his daughter, Lucy Azadig Eller; son-in-law Jeff Eller; granddaughters, Jordyn and Jaelyn Eller; siblings and their spouses, Seth and Tina Bilazarian, Ruth and Robert Haddon, all of Boylston, and Gladys and Nerses Zeytoonian of West Falmouth, Mass.; seven nieces and nephews and 18 grand-nieces and grand-nephews.

He was a star football player and co-captain of his team for Worcester Trade School during the 1940s and recently was inducted into the Worcester Public Schools' Hall of Fame for his outstanding and sportsmanship abilities during his school years. He began his military tour at Fort Monmouth, NJ, where he joined the boxing team and became the light-heavyweight champion. He later volunteered for the 11th Airborne Paratrooper Division, was sent to Osaka, Japan, where he joined the boxing team and soon won the 11th Airborne's light-heavyweight championship title.

Following his discharge from the US Army, Bilazarian became a light-heavyweight professional boxer and fought many opponents, including heavyweight Rocky Marciano, follow-



Harry Bilazarian

ing which he won 13 consecutive bouts. Following his retirement from pugilistic sports, he worked 37 years for ComGas in Worcester, was a member of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour and its choir, was a self-taught student of Armenian history, language and religion and an active volunteer.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Genocide Survivor Areka Der Kazarian Celebrates Centennial

CENTENNIAL, from page 1

Armenian priests present included Fr. Arakel Aljalian and Fr. Arsen Barsamian from her parish of St. James Armenian Church in Watertown, and Rev. Krikor Sabounjian of the Holy Translators Armenian Church in Framingham. Having known Der Kazarian for more than 12 years, Aljalian noted this Genocide survivor "connects the old country to the new country" in carrying on Armenian traditions. In offering prayers, he said, "God bless your God-given life." Though unable to attend, Fr. Dajad Davidian, her former priest, also sent warm wishes.

Family members and friends shared their memories. Gregory Adamian flew up specially from Florida to share her special day and spoke with both humor and sincerity in recalling his memories. Der Kazarian took him under her wings and helped him get his first job, making raincoats at Hood Rubber in Watertown.

Sitting at a nearby table, Virginia Ohanian reminisced about the card group she and Der Kazarian joined years ago, and said, "Areka is a wonderful person."

A film of Der Kazarian's life story, made by filmmaker Roger Hagopian of Lexington, was viewed to the delight of guests and featured a chronology of her life, family outings and special events. Seeing her make *choreg*, one of her Armenian bread specialties, in her Watertown kitchen in the film, and the crowd erupted with chuckles as they recalled fond memories of family holidays filled with dozens of her delicious, freshly-made *choregs*. But the film also explained her tough experiences as a youth dur-



Janikian family posing for family picture at Areka Der Kazarian's 100th.

recalled Alan Der Kazarian. Then they went to Beirut and on to Marseille, staying two years.

A boat journey took the family to Cuba, since her dad thought Cuba was an easy port of entry, but they couldn't get accepted there since one of her brothers had an eye problem and they all had to travel back to Marseille. Finally, Krikor Janikian came from the US to meet his family in Marseille in 1924 and then brought them via Ellis Island into the US.

"My mother said, 'it was one of the best days of my life when my father took us to the US,'" said Alan Der Kazarian. Therefore, at 12, Areka

the same floor in Willow Park in Watertown. Whenever my grandma made something I didn't like, Auntie Areka would give me something I'd like to eat, like steak," shared Takvorian.

George and Jean Righellis have fond memo-

money for the Union of Marash Armenians," said Ed Der Kazarian.

Music lovers are in awe, even today, when mention is made of the blind oud master, Udi Hrant, now deceased. But decades ago, Areka and Harry Der Kazarian met him numerous times when he performed and visited the Boston area. "They became friends. My father would correspond with him; his wife would write the letters," said Ed Der Kazarian. To this day, Areka Der Kazarian holds special a photograph of the couple pictured with Hrant.

She was unique in her own right. At 51, she got her driver's license. Around age 53, she stopped working and became a housewife. In fact, her niece Linda Janikian recalls, "When I was going for my driver's test there was no one that could go with me as they were all working. Auntie Areka was not working at the time and she went with me for my driver's test. Of course I passed the first time and she was very proud to have come with me for this important milestone in my life!"

Ed Der Kazarian feels his mother was ahead of her time. "She was a liberated woman long before it became popular. She was independent, self-sufficient and had courage and stood her ground to tell it like it is. She wasn't afraid to



From left, Dr. Alan Der Kazarian, Areka Der Kazarian and Dr. Gregory Adamian at the party

ing the Genocide.

Born on April 18, 1912, Areka Janikian (her maiden name) was 3 when she left Marash in 1915 with her three brothers and mother, Elmas, on a forced deportation that would eventually bring them to Jerusalem. Der Kazarian recalls living in a tent during part of that time. Krikor Janikian, her father, had left Marash for the US before she was born, after receiving a warning about his safety. The family's ordeals were harrowing. "Twice during the journey to Jerusalem, she was given up for adoption since her brothers couldn't carry her; it was too tough by foot. She was constantly crying for food and water. She was left with Arabs, but her brothers went back after a few days and kept reclaiming her. Her brothers actually reclaimed her twice," shared Alan Der Kazarian, her son. "The Arabs gave her food and a warm place to stay. Though they treated her well, Areka jumped into her brothers arms when she saw them and exclaimed, 'I want to go back with you!' but reclaiming her wasn't easy."

The Janikian family lived in Jerusalem for four years and during that time all members of her family, including young Areka, got *hadjis* on each wrist. Today, one tattoo is still barely visible on her arm and it shows 1918, the year she received it.

Eventually, she, her mother and brothers decided to go back to Marash through Port Said. "They thought it was safe to go back to Marash. They stayed there about two years but the Turks invaded it again and forced them to evacuate again during the siege of Marash,"

Der Kazarian met her father for the very first time. Eighty-eight years later, Areka recalls being a bit timid in getting to know her father. "At home, I hid in the closet. He said, 'I'm your father and don't be hiding on me!'"

Talking about her past seems like an easy task for this spry, smiling individual. During the 1920s and later, more and more Armenians were moving into Watertown. Life for this teenager involved learning English and attending the Hosmer School. Roaming the streets were milk and ice wagons and vendors selling fruit and in the following decades, Charlie the Breadman would deliver huge rounds of *pahtzhatz*, Armenian cracker bread, to local homes.

But at 16, she got a job as a cementer on shoes at Hood Rubber in Watertown and worked there for four years. Soon she met Harry Der Kazarian and they wed in 1932, raising three sons, Alan, Gregory and Ed. In 1941, she went back to work at Hood Rubber for another 13 years.

The connection to food seems synonymous with the Janikians and Der Kazarians. When Areka Der Kazarian first came to the US, her dad had been living in Watertown and worked in a fruit and vegetable store. Not only did her sons, Gregory and Ed, own restaurants, but she and her husband ran the cafeteria at the New England College of Pharmacy on Beacon Hill for 10 years.

Areka Der Kazarian thinks about others, and her kind ways left an imprint on many, including her niece, Linda Janikian Takvorian. "Auntie Areka, Uncle Harry and my cousins all lived on



Linda Janikian Takvorian is surrounded by relatives, Romena and Luciana Akaprahamian, who flew in special from Buenos Aires to help in celebration.

ries of the celebrant enjoying music at Kef dances, especially down at Old Silver Beach in Falmouth. "She's the life of the party," said George Righellis as he put his arms around the honoree in the center of the room and together they clapped, chanting songs of the old country with Armenian and Turkish lyrics in unison.

In the past, she also left her mark at many Cape Cod hotels that drew crowds of Armenians each summer. "She liked dancing at

speaking her mind. I think people liked her spirit. It was rare for people to see these characteristics in the old days. Even at 100, she still has these traits," declared Ed Der Kazarian.

Areka Der Kazarian thanked everyone for sharing her special day and for their loving support, especially her son, Alan, and his wife, Isabelle, and sons, Gregory and Ed. Later, when asked for her secret to longevity, she shared, "My kids brought me happiness. They never



Fr. Arsen Barsamian, Fr. Arakel Aljalian and Fr. Krikor Sabounjian pose with the honoree.

the Pine Tree Inn, Saraf's, Hilltop and at the Sea Crest too," said Ed Der Kazarian. "She was a featured dancer at the Marash picnic at Camp Ararat in Maynard. Every year, every summer, she was asked to dance there. Erika would raise

gave me any trouble. I started with nothing. I worked hard. I was never envious of others."

Alan Der Kazarian added, with the full agreement with his brothers, "She was a great mother. She worked hard to raise three kids."



COMMUNITY NEWS

Holy Translators Holds Golf Tournament

FRAMINGHAM, Mass. – The Armenian Church of the Holy Translators (ACHT) will host its 12th Annual Golf Tournament at the Sandy Burr Country Club, in Wayland, on Monday, June 11. Registration will begin at 8 a.m., and tee-off is at 9:30 a.m. This year's tournament will feature a new format with more than 40 ways to win. Entrants will have a choice of playing a Scramble (four people hit; the best shot is selected for all to play from until the ball is holed) or Best Ball (each member of the four-some will play his/her own ball from tee to green; lowest score serves as the team score). The cost is \$165 per golfer, which includes golf, lunch and dinner or \$200 per golfer for golf, lunch, dinner and 50 raffle tickets.

Funds raised by the ACHT Golf Tournament will help enhance the religious education and cultural programs sponsored by the Sunday School, Armenian School and youth groups. Additional proceeds will help defray the operating and maintenance expenses for the historic building. Donations will also be made to Framingham's Salvation Army Soup Kitchen and several local community outreach programs.

There are several sponsorship opportunities. For more information, including sponsorship levels, visit www.holytranslators.org or contact achtgolf@gmail.net.



Some of the participants from 2011's golf tournament



The Golden Jubilee Gala Committee

Holy Trinity's Golden Jubilee Celebrated with Style

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Party they did on Brattle Street, on Saturday, May 12, as parishioners and friends, young and young at heart, celebrated the 50th anniversary of Holy Trinity Armenian Church in grand style. The Charles and Nevert Talanian Cultural Hall and Johnson Hall were transformed into an elegant setting for the evening.

Guests were sipping the signature Jubilini cocktail, enjoying the feast, dancing the night away and delighting in the company of their Holy Trinity family.

Co-chairmen Aram and Becky Hintlian and Harvey and Valerie Kolligian Thayer and their committee worked tirelessly to achieve a celebration that would make the members of the original building committee proud. The success of the event was also made possible by the contributions from the families of the original building committee.

As Fr. Vasken Kouzouian, pastor of the church, welcomed and thanked everyone for coming, he made note that the culmination of their year-long celebration, that started last September, will be held on Sunday, September 30, at a commemorative banquet celebrating Holy Trinity's past and their visions for the future.

St. David Armenian Church Award Presentation to Archdeacon Nick Potookian

BOCA RATON, Fla. – On Sunday, April 22, St. David Armenian Apostolic Church held an award ceremony and luncheon to honor Archdeacon Nick Potookian for his dedication and commitment to the service of the church. As the pastor of St. David Armenian Church, Very Rev. Nareg Berberian presented the award on behalf of the Parish Council. He expressed his gratitude to Potookian for his service on the Holy Altar every Sunday, noting that he was one of the best deacons at St. David during his pastorate.

Potookian's daughter, Doreen A. McCord, spoke highly of her father expressing how he focused on providing for his family since he came to America from Jerusalem where he was born in 1932. After working at the United Nations in New York City, he moved to Florida in 1994 where he started serving in St. David Armenian Church. He was ordained a deacon by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian. Anna Damirjian, a long-time close friend, also extolled his praises emphasizing his humility and good nature. Sub-Deacons Brian Adamian and

Gregory Merjian gave their testimonies of how Potookian is so helpful on the altar and makes them feel very comfortable. In addition to serving in the church, Potookian is a past master of a Masonic Lodge, Belleville Lodge No. 108, F. and A.M., Belleville, NJ. In Florida, he received the Hiram Award, the highest award in Masonic Lodge.

He is a past commander of the Knights of Vartan. He is also the captain of the Citizens Observer Patrol in the community where he lives.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

College Prep School Trip Takes Students to Armenia

Meetings with US Ambassador, Peers Make For Unique Experience

OAKLAND, Calif. and YEREVAN – Sixteen high-school students from the College Preparatory School in Oakland met with US Ambassador John Heffern to discuss the mission of the US Embassy in Armenia, as part of their recent journey to Armenia. While at the embassy, students also heard from several senior staff about careers in the US Foreign Service.

In addition to being hosted at the US Embassy, the delegation of 16 students and representatives from the school and the Paros Foundation visited the Foreign Ministry and met with Ambassador Vahe Gabrielyan, head of the Armenia's Diplomatic Academy, as well as several historic and cultural sites throughout Armenia, including riding on the aerial tramway to the magnificent Monastery of Tatev.

As part of their visit, the students from the College Preparatory School were introduced to several students from the Manana Youth Center, where they each had an opportunity to interact with one another as peers. During the visit, both groups of students participated in the groundbreaking and clearing of the future site of "Ari's Playground," one of the Paros 100 for 100 Projects for Prosperity initiatives currently underway. Ari's Playground is being built at the Yerevan Children's Home in Nork, Armenia, which houses more than 80 children ages 0-6 years of age. Ari's Playground is named after Ari Spiglanin, who was adopted from the Yerevan Children's Home more than two years ago by Lauren and Tom Spiglanin of California, who have taken the initiative to raise the funds necessary to complete this project.



Students from The College Preparatory School and the Manana Youth Center following the Ari's Playground groundbreaking at the Nork Orphanage.

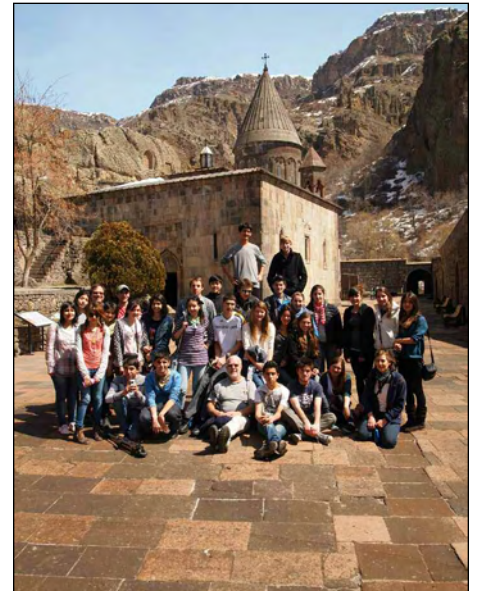
For more information about Ari's Playground visit <http://www.paros-foundation.org/paros100/>.

Formally launched in 2006, the Paros Foundation's goal is to develop high-quality,

high-integrity non-governmental organizations in Armenia by providing guidance and needed resources. This includes providing inspiring office space; free of charge, to three of the six organizations The Foundation works with in Armenia. To honor the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, The Paros Foundation launched The Paros 100 for 100, Projects for Prosperity program to implement 100 special projects, to help grow Armenia stronger and improve the lives of her people.

Founded in 1960, the College Preparatory School is an independent coeducational day school, grades 9-12 for intellectual risk-takers who want to pursue a serious, purposeful education with others who feel the same way. The College Preparatory School has been ranked by the *Wall Street Journal* and by *Forbes.com* as one of the top independent high schools in the nation.

The College Preparatory School delegation was made possible through the support of the Paros Foundation.



Students also visited Geghard Monastery.



Students at the US Embassy with Ambassador John Heffern



Students also visited Geghard Students laid a wreath and flowers at the Armenian Genocide monument.



Students work side by side to help build Ari's Playground at the orphanage in Nork. Ari's Playground is one of the Paros 100 for 100 Project's for Prosperity.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Sisters' Academy Students Participate in MIT's PSFC Outreach Day

By Katrina Menzigan

LEXINGTON, Mass. – Fifth-grade students from the Armenian Sisters' Academy (ASA) were invited to participate in an Outreach Day organized by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Plasma Sciences and Fusion Center (PSFC).

Held on April 26 in the center's Cambridge facilities, the Outreach Day opened the work of this cutting-edge research center to middle and high-school students in Southern New England. The ASA was the only school represented by elementary-age students.

"Each year I bring a select few students

from the ASA to attend this program and see the amazing work of the PSFC," stated Jayanthi Rangan, ASA's science teacher. "This year, I felt I needed to bring the entire fifth-grade class. Students have really been working hard in our classroom to grasp these concepts, so all were ready for this Outreach Day."

Students spent the day at the PSFC, hearing from the center's scientists about their work in plasma sciences and fusion energy, touring the facilities and participating in workshops that demonstrated various principles of electromagnetism. A highlight of the tour was visiting the lab housing MIT's Alcator C-MOD tokamak, one of two working magnetic fusion devices in the United States



Students listen at the MIT lab.



Students receive instruction at the lab.

used for researching future uses of fusion energy.

"My favorite workshop demonstrated how to build a homemade electromagnetic conductor. We saw a cube of metal float and spin above a magnet that was creating a flow of electrical current," said Nishan Glorikian, a fifth-grader at the ASA.

Additional workshops discussed topics such as the light spectrum and how different wavelengths possess different energy and light. One experiment showed how sunblock lotions and sunglasses work to mitigate different wavelengths from the sun and prevent human sunburns. Students and researchers together worked the spectrometer and

watched the results in real time.

"The Armenian Sisters' Academy has always had a strong focus on mathematics and sciences," stated Mayda Melkonian, vice principal. "For several years now we have partnered with MIT on many areas of our curriculum, including in-class instructional material and annual field trips such as this one to the Plasma Sciences and Fusion Center. Our program, led by Jayanthi Rangan, ensures we take advantage of the unique opportunities available to us here in the Boston-area."

The ASA, located at 20 Pelham Road, is currently holding open enrollment for the 2012-2013 academic year.

HMADS Gala Dinner Dance: A Night of Elegance and Entertainment

By Jennifer Chelebi

QUEENS, N.Y. – This year's annual Gala Dinner Dance, to be held on May 19, will celebrate the Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School's (HMADS) 45th anniversary, at the Garden City Country Club, with benefactor

Hratch Arukian as honorary booklet chairperson.

Built in the early 1900s, the Garden City Country Club has undergone a stunning restoration to preserve the historical architecture of its facilities. The main ballroom, with its floor-to-ceiling windows overlooks the championship golf course. The evening's festivities will begin at 7:30 p.m. with a cock-

tail hour, followed by a multi-course dinner at 9 p.m. Musical entertainment is being provided by Kevork Artinian and Friends.

Born in Beirut, Lebanon, Artinian discovered his love of singing in church. At the age of 15, he won the Armenian School Board's prize for "Best Talent," which was organized by the Armenian Prelacy of Lebanon. Artinian established Nor Serount with his

friends after moving to Montreal. Soon the band became popular and performed at many events in Canada and the United States. In 2005, Artinian joined forces with George Tebrejian. Together they have become a col-



Kevork Artinian

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laborative force.

The Friends of HMADS are pleased to have Artinian bring the charisma and excitement that have made him popular at the Annual Gala Dinner Dance. This event is an important fundraiser for the organization, which strives to raise donations and support programs that help foster the Armenian heritage.

For further information on the Gala Dinner Dance call the school office.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Latest Digital Mammography Technology Introduced to Armenia

By Negar M. Joy

WASHINGTON – The women of Armenia received an early Mother’s Day gift this year from the Armenian American Cultural Association, Inc. (AACA). With a value of more than \$1 million, the gift is the latest Three-Dimensional (3D) Digital Mammography System, sent to the Armenian American Wellness Center in Yerevan.

“In March 2012, less than a year after an innovative 3D Digital Mammography technology received FDA approval in the United States, AACA brought this groundbreaking imaging system to Armenia, by acquiring two 3D Digital machines from Hologic Corporation,” said Rita Balian. She is the president and CEO of AACA and founder and co-president of the Wellness Center, along with Hranush Hakobyan, the current minister of diaspora.

Dr. Ani Hakobyan, chief radiologist at the Wellness Center, stated, “This new equipment vastly improves the accuracy of the screening and increases our ability to distinguish between cancerous and non-cancerous cells, thus, detecting breast cancer much earlier.”

Thanks to the Wellness Center, Armenia has made tremendous strides over the past 15 years in improving awareness and public education for early detection. By offering women this latest technology, the Wellness Center further

has now become a state-of-the-art facility with its seven medical departments. “Each visitor from the diaspora or Armenia, who enters the building is amazed at the quality of the work that has been accomplished to date,” added Balian.

Larry Mowat, a biomedical engineer from Hologic USA and a member of the US Medical Advisory Board, coordinated the installation and training process of the 3D Digital systems. Biomedical engineers and trainers from Hologic Europe flew to Armenia to complete the required work. The specialists were impressed at the aptitude and knowledge of the center’s staff. Mowat, who was on the original team that installed the very first mammography machine in Armenia and has since visited Armenia 12 times, stated, “There is no question in my mind that the quality of medical care offered [at the Wellness Center] to the women of Armenia is light years ahead of any care I have seen anywhere else in Armenia. It is a very impressive facility. I am amazed at how, despite construction, you are able to win the battle to keep the department clean. It actually sparkles.”

For the past 15 years, the Wellness Center has brought western technological advances to Armenia, as it is for providing opportunities for medical exchanges between Armenian and western health care professionals. For many professionals, the interaction with the Wellness Center’s staff is their first and only exposure to



The Wellness Center’s radiologists and technicians during their training for the operation of the 3D Digital Mammography Systems

detection. Through the vision, dedication and efforts of the Wellness Center’s founders, Rita and Vartkess Balian, assisted by a US medical team, the first two analog mammography units were installed in Armenia in 1997. These two machines were later (in 2009 and 2010) upgraded into three advanced analog systems, and this year in March, they were replaced with the latest 3D Digital models.

Since 1997, close to 200,000 patients have visited the Wellness Center and of these, more than 125,000 have been screened at the Radiology Department. To date, more than 3,000 lives have been saved through early detection. More than 2,500 patients visit each

month, out of which nearly 1,500 women come for their annual mammograms.

“Introducing the latest Digital Mammography Screening Technology to the women and mothers of Armenia, the Wellness Center is once again at the forefront of the fight against breast cancer, which is still the number one cause of cancer deaths among women in Armenia,” said Khachanush Hakobyan, the center’s executive director. “We cannot be more grateful to our founders’ invaluable dedication and to the thousands of US donors for their continued generosity to provide us with the capacity to save lives and bring joy to Armenian families.”



The Wellness Center’s radiologists and technicians during their training for the operation of the 3D Digital Mammography System.

improves its ability to detect breast cancer at a much earlier stage.

“Another big improvement for the patient is fewer call-backs for additional images,” said Dr. Ann Archer, chair of the US Medical Advisory Board of AACA and the Wellness Center. Archer, a radiologist and a breast screening and diagnosis specialist, was part of the first medical team that traveled to Armenia when the Wellness Center was established in 1997. Ever since, she has traveled to Armenia on many occasions to train the Wellness Center’s medical staff, including during her latest visit in mid-December, when she briefed and prepared the center’s radiologists on the transition from the analog to digital mammography system.

Many people contributed to the success and completion of this acquisition. “Not enough can be said about the role of the Hologic Corporation,” said Balian. “The senior leadership of Hologic worked tirelessly to present the best options to AACA and have been very generous with their guidance, insights and resources.”

There are fewer than 100 of such systems installed throughout the United States. Armenia has now two such systems.

“Thanks to grassroots donors and family foundations from the community, as well as the grants we receive from the United States Government [USAID], we are able to pay for such sophisticated equipment,” said Balian.

Since 2004, AACA has partnered with the USAID to expand the Wellness Center’s work and to get the latest technology and expertise to Armenia. Furthermore, USAID grants helped in the construction, renovation and seismic reinforcement of the six-story building, which

the country. “Not only we are saving the lives of Armenian women through high quality healthcare services, one at a time, we are also introducing the world to Armenia, one person at a time,” said Hranush Hakobyan.

The Wellness Center’s efforts have revolutionized the healthcare delivery system in Armenia. Fifteen years ago, there was not a single mammography machine in the country. People had not heard the word “mammography” and the doctors had no notion that mammography screening could be used for early



The Wellness Center’s radiologists during training on the Secure View Systems for accurate reading of the 3D Digital Mammograms. Dr. Ani Hakobyan, the chief radiologist, is seated at the far left.



The Wellness Center’s staff and their executive director, Khachanush Hakobyan (standing in the center), with Hologic Corporation professionals (four seated in the center) at the completion of the installation and training of the 3D Digital Mammography Technology (photo credit: Larry Mowat [seated second from the right])

Arts & Living

Turkish Publisher Ragip Zarakolu Honored by PEN

By Doris V. Cross

NEW YORK – At the annual Literary Gala held by PEN on May 1 at the Museum of Natural History, Istanbul publisher Ragip Zarakolu was the recipient of the annual Association of American Publishers' Jeri Laber International Freedom to Publish Award. Peter Balakian, whose memoir, *Black Dog of Fate: An American Son Uncovers His Armenian Past*, was published in a Turkish edition by Zarakolu's Belge Publishing House, presented the award to his two children, Seref and Zerrin Holle. Zarakolu, who has been repeatedly jailed for challenging free expression restrictions in his country, and was recently released pending trial, was not well enough to make the trip from Istanbul.

In addition to Zarakolu, Eskinder Nega, one of Ethiopia's most courageous journalists, was honored with the Barbara Goldsmith Freedom to Write Award. Nega is currently in prison and standing trial on manufactured terrorism charges. He could face the death penalty if convicted. Nega's wife, Serkalem Fasil, has been jailed herself for her journalism and traveled from Addis Ababa to accept the award on her husband's behalf "at a time when freedom of expression and press freedoms are at the lowest point in Ethiopia."

This year's PEN Literary Service Award was conferred on Edward Albee as "a writer whose critically-acclaimed work illuminates the human condition in original and powerful ways."

In accepting the Freedom to Publish Award on behalf of Zarakolu, his children read a message from their father. Seref Holle began, "I spoke with Ragip a couple of hours before coming over here. He wanted to personally apologize for not being able to make it tonight, and



Seref and Zerrin Holle received the PEN Freedom to Publish Award on behalf of their father Ragip Zarakolu.

he asked my sister Zerrin and I to share this letter with you."

"I want to thank the International Freedom to Publish Committee of the Association of American Publishers for the honor of the Jeri Laber award.

"When I entered the field of publishing in 1977 by establishing Belge International in Istanbul I did not expect to spend the next 35 years struggling for freedom of expression. I assumed it would be accomplished in a matter of years.

"Belge began in response to the undeclared civil war of the late 1970s that resulted in the 1980 military dictatorship in Turkey. Since that time Belge has been dedicated to the open discussion of political and historical taboos. I have always believed that such discussions were necessary for the democratization of Turkey.

"For years, civilian governments have promised this democratization but it is never realized. Unfortunately the current government has continued for nearly a decade to delay the

see ZARAKOLU, page 14



Shooshan (Lorraine Serabian) and Orhan (Andrew Raia)

Herand Markarian's 'Silence' Speaks Loud and Clear About Armenian Genocide

Lorraine Serabian Excels in Powerful Off-Broadway Drama

By George Maksian

NEW YORK – Over the past several decades, Herand Markarian has had such a wide and varied career as an actor, playwright, director, poet, you name it, he has done it.

It would be hard for me to select just one of his many works as one of my own personal all-time favorite experiences.

That is, until Friday, May 4, when I attended the opening night performance of his latest play, "Silence," which is being presented at the Off-Broadway Shell Theater on West 43rd Street in Manhattan, as a Libra-6 production through the end of May.

The play, commissioned by the New York State Theater Institute, is a powerful, well-produced and executed drama worthy of huge accolades and honors. It blew me away for its professionalism and expert performances by an outstanding cast of characters. The story itself is riveting.

It is set in the ancestral Armenian city of Van in Turkey before, during and after the Armenian Genocide in 1915, which resulted in the annihilation of more than 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman Turks.

Most of the action of the play takes place in the luxurious home of an Armenian family in that city (designed by Kyle Dixon). The home is eventually confiscated by the Turks.

The play tells the heart-wrenching story of a relentless Armenian-American



Hagop (David Farrington), Khalil (Charles Karel) and Ihsan (Todd Licea)

woman's search for her long-lost son who was caught up in the Genocide.

The tour-de-force role of the mother is played by the Tony-nominated actress/singer Lorraine Serabian ("Zorba," Maria Callas in "Master Class" and many other Broadway shows).

She plays the role with such skill and perfection, I cannot imagine any other actress filling the role as well as she does. Brava, Lorraine.

Her Armenian husband in the play, portrayed by David Farrington, is a doctor accused of treason and executed in Van on April 24, 1915, the start of the Turkish massacres.

see SILENCE, page 13

Sayat Nova Dancers Keeping Pace with Apo Ashjian

By Tom Vartabedian

BOSTON – One would think that directing a dance company through a rigorous stage production and appearing in most every sequence would take the life out of a choreographer.

Not Apo Ashjian. He seems enamored by it.

The folk dance dynamo is into his 26th year as director of the charismatic Sayat Nova Dance Company and appears as consistent as a pendulum on a clock, except for one thing. He defies gravity and time, with boundless energy and enthusiasm.

Since 1985, when a small group of individuals gathered in a tiny Watertown hall to determine their fate, some 400 dancers have sifted through the ranks, sharing the pride and indomitable spirit of the Armenian people.

If nothing else, Ashjian has created a veritable dynasty with his dancing troubadours, giving some 400 performances over this time while creating a reputation for excellence. The current adult troupe numbers 65 dancers. Moreover, a junior group called Abaka Armenian School for the Performing Arts remains a buoyant look toward tomorrow.



Choreographer Apo Ashjian appears as troubadour Sayat Nova.

Translated literally, Abaka means "future."

"I feel an urge to start training kids from an early age to act as a feeder system for Sayat Nova," he said. "The concept has been a blessing. Children as young as 4 are in a unique dance program, listen and react to beautiful Armenian music and feel the glamour of a stage with their beautiful costumes."

The dividends have paid off in other ways. Through Sayat Nova, more than seven dance groups have been created in different communities, all students and disciples of Ashjian. His talent creates other talent.

Watching him perform, usually front row center, keeps the cadence in step. Other visuals like lighting, props and costumes enhance the moment. No better performance was there ever than those two trips he made to Armenia with his group in 1995 and 2006 for its 20th anniversary celebration.

It is hard to believe that at the age of 18, when most teens his age were just graduating high school, he took over the reins of Sayat Nova after involving himself with the Tekeyan Cultural Association. He began choreographing his own dances while studying the history of his people.

As a teenager, he was too shy to hold

see ASHJIAN, page 15



ARTS & LIVING

AGBU's Vatche and Tamar Manoukian High School Showcases New Production of 'Ara Keghetsig'

PASADENA, Calif. – On March 14 and 15, AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian High School's Elective Armenian Drama class put on a production of Nayiri Zarian's play, "Ara Keghetsig," under the direction of Lora Kuyumjian. Nearly 1,000 people attended over the course of two days to see students from Grades nine to 12 display not only their acting talents, but their knowledge of the Armenian language, as well.

The play's first act takes place in the ancient Assyrian kingdom, depicting a visit by Armenian King Ara Keghetsig (Ara the Beautiful) to King Ninus, played by Deeown Shaverdian, and his devious queen, Shamiram, portrayed by Sareen Habeshian. Queen Shamiram has her husband arrested and beheaded so that she can marry King Ara, played by Armand Yerjanian. The second act covers the Armenian royal family's frantic state



Student performers Ashleen Bagoian (left) and Koko Balian



Student actors, from left, Sareen Habeshian (playing Shamiram), Haig Hogdanian and Deeown Shaverdian (playing King Ninus)

and subsequent chaos in the kingdom. The noble Ara refuses Shamiram's courtship due to his loyalty to his wife and country, which brings about two countries heading to battle in the final act. Although Shamiram commands her officers to bring Ara to her alive, he is killed following a misunderstanding. In the end, the Armenian people did not despair, as they had their king amongst them until his death.

During the matinee performance on March 14, five local Armenian schools – including the AGBU Manoogian-Demirjian School, the St. Gregory A. & M. Hovsepian School, the Sahag-Mesrob Armenian Christian School, C&E

Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School and the Armenian Sisters' Academy – filled the auditorium.

Community members, teachers and students were impressed at the talent and professionalism of the student-actors, particularly because of the dense language and the dialogue, which was very different from the modern Armenian spoken today. With its décor and costumes, lively dancers and theatrical intensity, the production was well-received by both the general public and several reviewers from newspapers, which had nothing but words of praise for everyone involved.

Dr. George Bournoutian Holds Book Tours across US

PASADENA, Calif. – Throughout February, March and April, hundreds of people in six cities across the United States came out to support and listen to historian and author Dr. George Bournoutian, as he discussed his latest work, *The 1823 Russian Survey of the Karabakh Province: A Primary Source on the Demography and Economy of Karabakh in the Early 19th Century*.

Beginning in November 2011, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)

launched a successful tour to promote the new publication, which contains a meticulous and thorough analysis of the Karabagh Province conducted by Russian authorities proving that Armenians formed the overwhelming 95-percent majority of the populations inhabiting the Nagorno-Karabagh territory and the villages of Zangezur in 1822. Lectures took place in Detroit, Montreal, New York and Toronto.

The first 2012 event was held on February

4, in Cleveland, with close to 90 people attending, an impressive gathering for a community that has a relatively small Armenian population. "George is a true scholar who draws big crowds and galvanizes the audience every time he is in Cleveland," said the chairman of the AGBU Cleveland chapter, Dr. Sebouh Setrakian. Books were sold out immediately and following the discussion, a few audience members were so inspired by Bournoutian's words that they came forward and pledged \$3,000 to have his signature publication, *A Concise History of the Armenian People*, translated into Armenian. The printing of this work will be sponsored by the AGBU. The original English publication was commissioned by the organization in 1993. More recently, AGBU Buenos Aires published the Spanish version of the book, a Turkish edition made its debut at the annual Istanbul International Book Fair last November via Aras Publishers and AGBU Cairo has just printed the Arabic version. The book has been adopted as the main text at a number of colleges, universities and high schools teaching Armenian history.

On the heels of the lecture in Cleveland, the author visited Boston on March 1, where AGBU's New England District co-sponsored the book signing and discussion with the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). AGBU Ararat, together with St. Leon Armenian Church and various local organizations, jointly sponsored a similar event on April 13 at the church, located in Fair Lawn, NJ.

From April 19 to 21, the AGBU Western District invited Bournoutian to Southern California, where he began the weekend with a talk at the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Center in Pasadena. Special lectures were arranged at both the AGBU Manoogian-Demirjian School in Canoga

Park and the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian High School in Pasadena. While addressing the students, Bournoutian conducted an educational question-and-answer session concerning Armenians and their history, much to the delight of the young attendees. He also spent time giving advice on the students' futures. Both schools had packed auditoriums and the author received standing ovations.

Bournoutian's tour continued in San Fernando Valley and Orange County through the local AGBU chapters. The Orange County event alone had close to 100 people in attendance, with an audience so captivated that the question-and-answer segment lasted well over an hour.

Although this AGBU-led book tour was academic in nature, the series of talks were brought to life in a unique way due to the lauded historian's lively and charismatic personality. A native of Iran, Dr. George Bournoutian immigrated to the United States in 1964 and received his PhD in Armenian and Iranian History from UCLA in 1976. He is currently a professor of Eastern European and Middle Eastern History at Iona College and is a recipient of the IREX, NDEA and Mellow fellowships. He has taught Armenian and Iranian history at UCLA and Columbia. Moreover, he organized and taught the first Armenian history courses at the University of Connecticut, Glendale Community College, New York University, Ramapo College, Rutgers University and Tufts University. Bournoutian has written more than a dozen other volumes consisting of annotated English translations of primary sources in Armenian, Russian and Persian, with introductions, glossaries and indexes. He speaks several languages, including Armenian, English, Persian, Russian and Polish.

Herand Markarian's 'Silence' Speaks Loud And Clear about Armenian Genocide

SILENCE, from page 12

Her son, portrayed by Andrew Raia, along with 250 Armenian children, is slated to be burned inside a building, but a Turkish doctor friend of the Armenian doctor saves some of the children, including possibly the missing boy.

Being American by birth, the mother is able to escape the massacres and return to the States where she becomes an ophthalmologist. Several years later, she returns to her ancestral homeland in search of her son. She is helped in the search by the Turkish doctor, played ably by Todd Licea.

Ironically, the doctor's father, played superbly by veteran stage actor Charles Karel (Met Opera, "Zorba," "Hello, Dolly," etc.), is seen as an evil Turkish Nazi-like Gestapo who hounds the Armenian family.

He plays the role so well that after the show, I approached him and shouted, "I hate you!" And he shouted back, "That's what we villains like to hear."

The two-hour-plus drama moves along

swiftly, thanks in large part to the excellent work by its director, Kevin Thompson. The background music by Josh Millican is haunting; the massacre scenes are extraordinarily seen behind a meshed-screen curtain. Kudos to the costume designer, Christina Giannini. The mother's outfits fit the period perfectly. Other production credits go to: Iris Checkenian, dramaturge; John Eckert, lighting design; Aime Minassian, make-up; John Cooper, production manager, and Rebecca Perlman, stage manager.

Congratulations to one and all and especially to playwright Markarian for a job so well done. I urge everyone to make every effort to see it. Hopefully, there will be a road tour after its New York run, on May 24.

All proceeds from the play go to aid the schools of Border Villages in Armenia.

For ticket and other information contact: SmartTix.com.

(George Maksian is a former television columnist for the *Daily News*, in New York.)



ARTS & LIVING

New Exhibition at ALMA Celebrates 500 Years of Armenian Printing

WATERTOWN, Mass. — This year marks the 500th anniversary of the first Armenian printed book, published in Venice in 1512, and museums and libraries around the world, including the Library of Congress, are celebrating with exhibits and symposia. Drawing on its extensive collection of antiquarian and modern publications, the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) is hosting the exhibit “Bound for Glory: 500 Years of Armenian Printing.”

The exhibition highlights the creation of the alphabet and literature, handwritten masterpieces, the development of Armenian printing around the world and an examination of the types of books printed. Why were certain books selected for translation or publication? Who were the intended audiences? Where were they printed? What was their impact? These, and other questions, will be addressed in the new exhibit.

The exhibition includes more than 60 rare works drawn from the museum’s archives, spanning five centuries. The earliest works predate printing by Armenians themselves, as Europeans developed an early interest in the Armenian language for Bible studies or to train missionaries. Armenian publishers emerged in many diasporan communities, but literacy was usually limited to the clergy and the merchant class. The population of readers was not large enough to support a commercial success and the publishers were dependent on merchant patronage to survive. Despite these impediments, Armenian printers persisted and published a range of religious and secular works. Several of the works on display have never been exhibited before in New England.

The emergence of the modern standard dialects of Eastern Armenian and Western Armenian in the 19th century, coupled with new technologies for mass production, led to an explosion of printing in the 19th century.

The exhibit opening will be on Sunday, May 20 at 2 p.m., with admission free on opening day only.

ALMA is located at 65 Main St.



“Armenian Bible,” oil on canvas by Levon Armenius Mnazakanian

Turkish Publisher Ragip Zarakolu Honored by PEN

ZARAKOLU, from page 12

sary reforms. As long as the 1982 constitution and its supplemental anti-democratic laws and decrees exist the freedom to publish remains threatened.

“Freedom of expression is not a favor to be granted by sultans, dictators or prime ministers; it is a universal right. If in a country the expression of independent thoughts and their publication becomes a matter of courage, that country is in a grave situation.

“While I am fortunate to have been released from Kandira Prison, many other publishers, editors, writers and journalists, including my son Deniz, remain in prisons throughout Turkey. I gratefully accept this award in their honor.

“I also want express my gratitude to both the American PEN Center and the American Association of Publishers for their many years of support. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

Since founding Belge in 1977 with his late wife, Ayse Hur, Zarakolu has defied Turkey’s censorship laws by translating and publishing Turkish editions of works by Armenian, Greek, Kurdish and other writers, dealing with such forbidden subjects as the Armenian Genocide and the repression of Turkey’s Kurdish minority. If Zarakolu is convicted of the present charges against him he faces up to 15 years in prison.

In Balakian’s introductory remarks he recalled first meeting Zarakolu in 1998, at

the Frankfurt Book Fair.

“Ragip was there to receive a prize from the Frankfurt Book Fair on behalf of his wife, Ayse Hur, who was in prison in Turkey. We became friends and he would soon be my Turkish publisher, bringing out a beautiful edition of my memoir, *Black Dog of Fate*, which deals with the Armenian Genocide. Ragip opened up a new world for me – and as my first Turkish friend, he would become a bridge to another side of Turkish society – a more complex and rich Turkey – that many of us had hoped somehow to find. For many of us, who wrote on the Armenian Genocide in particular, had been objects of ridicule from the Turkish nationalists we had encountered.

“When you meet Ragip, you immediately encounter his quiet strength, warmth and gentleness that lets you know that he is at home with himself and his life. His life’s work is an emanation of who he is. He is humble about his work, but he is confident about what his work is and means. He is courageous and he inspires courage.

“He and his late wife Ayse – and now their son Deniz who is also in a Turkish prison at this time for his work as a publisher – have devoted their lives to bringing intellectual freedom and democracy to Turkey. And Ragip’s present wife, Katherine Holle, and children Seref and Zerrin have been sustaining forces to this project in the past decade.

“Ragip’s recent arrest is set in a long con-



Peter Balakian introduced Turkish publisher Ragip Zarakolu’s children, Seref and Zerrin Holle, at PEN awards ceremony.

text of Turkish repression of intellectuals and free expression. Turkey (along with China and Syria) has had consistently one of the worst human rights records over the past decades. And, this year, Reporters Without Borders has noted that the recent arrests of 99 journalists in Turkey is the worst ‘wave of arrests since the military dictatorship.’ Zarakolu was part of that purge.

“Imagine a publisher in Turkey bringing out books year in and year out on the following subjects: the Greek expulsion from Turkey; the tragedy of the Turkish left; torture and capital punishment in Turkey; the status of Turkish prisons; the ‘Kurdish question’; the Armenian Genocide; the ethnic cleansing and genocide of the Pontic Greeks and Assyrians; anti-Semitism and the rights of women in Turkey.

“If you think of the hundreds or perhaps thousands of books that come out each year in the US on parallel or equivalent subjects you realize that Ragip Zarakolu’s publishing company is this entire sector of intellectual life for Turkey, and you get a sense of what he means to his nation.

“And yet, he has been rewarded by his government with endless trials, harassment, persecution and imprisonment. His late wife, Ayse, was in prison or on trial more than 30

times. His publishing company was bombed, destroyed by Turkish nationalists in 1996. At the moment Ragip is out on bail but he will have to stand trial for being accused of that endless false pretext called ‘terrorism’ for supporting and publishing works on Kurdish rights. And through all of this Ragip has proceeded with calm, with patience, with perseverance, with grace and dignity, with great courage and with a love of what he does. Ragip has said, ‘I’m not an activist, I’m just a publisher.’

“He is more than a publisher; he is a force for democracy, intellectual freedom and the very foundation of human society in Turkey over the past 40 years – and he is an embodiment of these realities for all societies, because intellectual freedom is something that can never be taken for granted.”

PEN American Center is the largest of the 144 centers of PEN International, the world’s oldest human rights organization and the oldest international literary organization. The Freedom to Write Program of PEN American Center works to protect the freedom of the written word wherever it is imperiled. It defends writers and journalists from all over the world who are imprisoned, threatened, persecuted or attacked in the course of carrying out their profession.

Composer Hayg Boydjian Turns to Visual Arts

LEXINGTON, Mass. — Grammy Nominee Hayg Boydjian shows his other creative side in the visual arts. The following internet gallery web site has posted some of Boydjian’s drawings and watercolors which can be seen at: www.555c.org – Art is Art is Art – Galleries.

Twenty-six of his art works are on a permanent exhibition in the gallery. A number of his drawings or watercolors are illustrations for the covers of his music scores, two of those are on the website. The watercolor, titled “Vientos,” illustrates the cover of his score for guitar, violin and mandolin. *Vientos* is one of the compositions on Boydjian’s recent solo CD recording issued by Albany Records and is also the title of the CD recording, which received rave reviews in *Fanfare Magazine*, *The Flute Quarterly* and others. Also included in the gallery is the ink drawing for the cover illustration of his composition, *The Three Hornquers*, for horn quartet, a work that had its premiere at the First Parish Church in Lexington by the horn ensemble “Esprit de Cor.” Several other pictures include text excerpts with illustrations from Boydjian’s original story, titled “A Family Saga,” which Boydjian intends to develop into a novel.



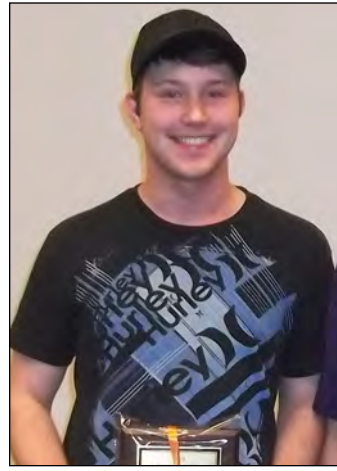
ARTS & LIVING

Hagopian Rugs Holds Inaugural Collaboration with Lawrence Tech

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. — As part of their commitment to community involvement Hagopian World of Rugs initiated a rug design competition for students this year at the Lawrence Technological College of Architecture. The competition offers students a chance to submit their designs based on specific criteria and compete for scholarships.

The criteria, conceived by Suzanne and Edmond Hagopian, asked participants to create a design that would reflect the revitalization and urban renewal efforts in Detroit. Student participation surpassed all expectations with more than 150-plus entries. A panel of three judges from the local design community met to select three winners from a field of inspired entries. Judges were Laura Atkinson, interior designer; Harrell Scarcello, Scarcello Associates and Suzanne Hagopian.

On Thursday, May 4, the award presentations were made by Edmond Hagopian, president of the Hagopian World of Rugs, to the winning students at the Lawrence Tech School of Architecture Honors Exhibition. He also brought the rug that was produced using the first-place design for the students to see how the design concept translated into a rug. Scholarship awards furnished by Hagopian ranged from first



From left: Nichole Davis, Josh Thornton, Rachel Kowalczyk and Tra Page

place to honorable mention. The winners from Lawrence Tech included: Nichole Davis, junior, architecture, first place (\$1,000), with her design that was inspired by "tires left around the city;" Josh Thornton, sophomore, architecture, second place, (\$500), for his design inspired by overlapping grids; third place (\$250) went to Rachel Kowalczyk, sophomore, architecture, for

her design inspired by people reaching out to each other, and honorable mention, (\$100), Tra Page, student, for her design inspired by revitalization in the city.

The Hagopian family are long-time supporters of education and the cultural arts in the metro Detroit area. In addition to this competition, they sponsor an annual rug design com-

petition in collaboration with the College for Creative Studies; an annual design competition for aspiring interior design students in collaboration with the American Society of Interior Design (ASID) and host the Detroit Chamber Winds Nightnotes series bringing fine music to their Birmingham showroom at an affordable cost.

Sayat Nova Dancers Keeping Pace with Apo Ashjian

ASHJIAN, from page 12

hands with a girl in a dance. He would go home and try the steps they were learning until he got it right.

"I learned of the many tragedies that befell my people and their struggle for survival and suddenly, dance had a special meaning for me," he said. "It became a duty to teach dance and promote my culture to both Armenians and non-Armenians."

A recent program in North Andover by the Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee of Merrimack Valley drew fervent applause from the audience. The repertoire

included a tribute to the minstrel Sayat Nova and an eclectic number dedicated to Khor Virab. The performance opened with a "Journey Through Time - Pre-Christian Era," marked by ritualistic movements incorporating Armenia's pagan celebrations.

A 100-year-old survivor seated in the front row was more than pleased with the show, recalling how she had danced in her younger days. She was happy to know the culture was being perpetuated in good hands.

When the final curtain call took place, Ashjian extended his hand to where the woman was seated and passed off any esteem that may

have come his way.

"She deserves the applause for being here," he had said.

It has become a family affair from the onset. His wife, Arlet, was a beautiful dancer and a soloist for 12 years. She is now in charge of costuming.

Both daughters, Alina and Garineh, are Abaka graduates and have been part of the core cast of Sayat Nova for nine years. Son, Vrej, is right behind them.

"I always joke around and tell people that when it comes to Armenian dancing, my family doesn't have a choice," said Ashjian. "It has been a way of life for us."

Sister Sona is a member of the executive committee, maintains membership and oversees the day-to-day operation. Brother Hagop also dances and instructs while his wife Arpie was a dancer, joined by their two children, Araz and Sarine, who are on the verge.

Ashjian's parents hardly took a back seat. His father was a well-known actor in Syria and Lebanon, and helped Sayat Nova with various production roles while his mom was a seamstress during the early years. Several other family members also have ties.

Hagop Ashjian instills strong energy and dance perfection while instructing the men. Shaghig Palanjian is the assistant director and works with the women. Her two children (Sevag and Talar) are also Abaka graduates.

Ashjian is a serious athlete. He runs marathons, including the Boston one more than a dozen times. He is also a cyclist, having studied physical education at Northeastern University and works out regularly in the gym.

He smiles in thought. "Between Abaka and Sayat Nova, I get all the exercise I really need," he said.

If perchance Ashjian crossed paths with Sayat Nova (1712-1795) in a time machine, how would he enjoy the interlude?

"I would die from excitement and go to heaven very satisfied with life on earth," he said with a chuckle. "Then I'd ask him if he were free to play at my kids' weddings."

"If Sayat Nova ever saw our ensemble, he would be both flattered and amazed at what we have created," Ashjian said. "He would be in tears at how well we have depicted his music and his life. Most of his songs are about the beauty of women and so romantically written. We describe them to our dancers and to audi-

ence members. Unless the lyrics are explained, those choreographed dances become meaningless movements."

Those who come under Ashjian's wing call him a "perfectionist" and a "taskmaster." Half-heartedness is not an option. It is total immersion or nothing. Dancers arrange their work schedules, studies and family obligations to make every rehearsal and performance.

"The more I demand perfection, the harder they work," Ashjian said. "When we take the stage, I'm confident that all our dancers have done everything possible to ensure a flawless presentation."

Take it from alumnus Josh Tevekelian. He




Sayat Nova dancers

spent 16 years with the ensemble and saw what it did for him. He is still dancing his way through life with a happy shuffle and holds special gratitude for the likes of Apo Ashjian, Hagop Ashjian and Palanjian.

"The company re-energized me in the community," said Tevekelian. "I walked into that first rehearsal and was greeted by people who found importance in the upkeep of our heritage. We danced not only for ourselves, an audience, but for a nation — our martyrs and those who survived the Genocide. The dancing was important. But the passion and the friendships are what build nations."


In September, the dancers will perform at the Peabody International Festival, something they have done for the past 20 years. Worcester is on the agenda for early October, followed by a return visit to Montreal later that month. The "Journey Through Time" show is also being given some thought for a return engagement in Boston.

"When I look at all the friendships that have been created, even marriages, I begin to realize what a unique mission we're taking," he said. "In our own world, we're creating a little corner of Armenia in the diaspora."




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ARTS & LIVING

Hye Geen Conference Uses Arts and Design to Connect Students with Heritage

BURBANK, Calif. — This spring, Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Hye Geen brought together some of the leading voices in the arts and design industry for its seventh annual interdisciplinary conference series, “The Status of Armenian Communities Living in the United States.” Coordinated by Hye Geen’s Young Circle, the event was held on Saturday, March 10, at Woodbury University in Southern California and was organized under the heading of “Symbolism in Art, Architecture and Design.”

The conference, which was moderated by Cynthia Kossayan, a researcher at the Los Angeles architecture firm Karten Design, explored the ways Armenian heritage has been preserved through the decorative arts for centuries. Subjects ranging from the designs of ancient Armenian churches to modern art were presented by six panelists, including Narineh Mirzaeian, lecturer and architect at Gehry Partners; Aram Alajajian, the Yerevan-born principal of Alajajian-Marcoosi Architects; Haig Messerlian, AGBU Western District Committee chairman; Sona Yacoubian, Hye Geen founder and chairwoman; Hratch Kozibeyokian, a textile specialist and owner of the carpet store Ko’Z’Craft, and Peter Frank, art critic and associate editor of *Fabrik Magazine*.

The conference’s opening remarks were delivered by Ani Khachoyan, a member of Hye Geen’s Young Circle, and Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church. In his welcome, he applauded AGBU Hye Geen for creating forums to discuss the diverse perspectives of Armenian culture and its continuous efforts to connect with youth. This year’s event proved to be no exception, as the various panelists engaged an audience filled with students. The first speaker, Mirzaeian, introduced them to the role of symbolism in design trends and everyday life in Armenia through her presentation, “Random Acts of Design.” Both symbols and geometric shapes were surveyed in the second lecture, “Symbolism in Armenian Architecture – Past and Present,” by Alajajian, who examined the prototype of Karahunj, the oldest known Armenian observatory (circa 7000 BC), and the

ways it inspired his award-winning design of the St. Gregory Armenian Catholic Church in Glendale.

The illustrative presentations underscored the ways AGBU Hye Geen, which was established in 1994 to advocate for Armenian women, has broadened the scope of its work in recent years. Messerlian, the event’s third speaker, praised Hye Geen’s cultural and social projects in Armenia and the US, and commended it for being “an organization that not only focuses on empowering Armenian women, but also sponsors exciting and daring conferences, always speaks with an original voice, and encourages our audiences not only to just look and hear, but also to see and listen, to make a connection and a difference.” Yacoubian, who has led AGBU Hye Geen for almost two decades, pointed to the ways Armenian youth can continue to make a difference in their communities, urging them to learn more about their cultural heritage through design.

In her remarks, she stated, “the Armenian Highlands have inspired our architects and sculptors to design our monasteries and churches and *khachkars*. The landscape and colors of the rich flora of our homeland have inspired our painters. And, Armenian history has influenced our craftsmen, silversmiths, jewelers and rug weavers to incorporate Armenian symbols.” The use of those symbols was detailed by the fifth speaker, Kozibeyokian, whose presentation, “Iconography in Armenian Woven Art,” focused on shapes within textiles and their historical use in sacred Armenian rituals, royal ceremonies and domestic life. Transporting the audience to a more recent period, Frank, the conference’s final panelist, gave his presentation, “Caucasian Standard Time: Armenian-Americans and California Art in the Postwar Era,” which built on, and brought an Armenian perspective to, the recent Getty Center festival



Members of Hye Geen’s Young Circle join the speakers for its seventh annual interdisciplinary conference series, “The Status of Armenian Communities Living in the United States,” at Woodbury University in Southern California.

“Pacific-Standard Time: Art in LA 1945-1980.” He invoked the work of Armenian-American artists such as John Altoon and Paul Sarkissian, who helped usher in a cultural revival in California in the second half of the 20th century.

At the end of the program, Nare Gabrielian, the head of Woodbury University’s Armenian Student Association, announced the winners of the Architecture Department’s recent design competition, which drew submissions from many of the school’s Armenian students.

The conference was one of Hye Geen’s numerous initiatives targeting young adults. On Saturday, May 5, it also organized the presenta-

tion, “Youth and the Search for Fulfillment” at the AGBU Pasadena Center. It featured Cynthia Kossayan, Yeghig L. Keshishian, Virginia Gulesserian and Sarmen Keshishian, all recent graduates or current students, who were joined by Salpi A. Garavaryan and Charles Pilavian, PhD. Together, they discussed some of the challenges facing youth in the diaspora and the importance of living as an Armenian American as opposed to an American Armenian. Praising the prevalence of family values, they also pointed to the key role that education plays in producing strong leadership in the community. The event drew a crowd of close to 100 attendees.

CALENDAR

MASSACHUSETTS

MAY 24 — Celebrating 80 years and beyond, Benefit Gala of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator. Thursday, reception, 6:30 p.m.; dinner 7:30 p.m., Boston Royal Sonesta, Cambridge. Keynote speaker, Vigen Sargsyan, chief of staff of the President of the Republic of Armenia. 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award will be bestowed upon Dr. Gregory H. Adamian, chancellor and president emeritus of Bentley University; 2012 Award of Excellence will be bestowed upon Janet Shamalian, national correspondent for “NBC News” from Texas, and Charles Mahtesian, Politico national policy editor, Washington, DC. For information, call (617) 359-0413./.

JUNE 1-2 — Armenian Memorial Church Annual Fair (rain or shine); open Friday from 5-8 p.m., serving Armenian kebab meals; entire Fair open Saturday 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Armenian meals served all day, Saturday, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.; take out available; also Armenian vegetarian meals; Armenian delicacies table featuring paklava and more; silent auction of valuable gift certificates; sale of new gift and household merchandise; Armenian Memorial Church, 32 Bigelow Ave., Watertown (off Coolidge Square) take Watertown bus from Harvard Square; admission free, wheelchair accessible; for more info, (617) 484-3176.

NEW JERSEY

OCTOBER 28 — Save the date. The Armenian American Support and Educational Center, Hye Doon, celebrates its 35th anniversary. Felician College, Lodi. With the participation of Akh’tamar Dance Ensemble and other talented guest performances. Details to follow.

NEW YORK

MAY 19 — HMADS Gala Dinner Dance. Details to follow. On June 15, HMADS 30th Commencement Exercise at 8 p.m., Kalustyan Hall.

MAY 22 — Poets from metropolitan New York area will gather in celebration of the World Poetry Movement. Hosted by author Nancy Agabian, it includes reading and music by Amir Parsa, Sandra



On Thursday, May 24, the Armenian Mirror-Spectator will celebrate its 80th anniversary with a banquet, starting at 6:30 p.m., with dinner at 7:30 p.m., at the Boston Royal Sonesta, in Cambridge, Mass. Among the Award of Excellence recipients will be Janet Shamalian, pictured above, a national correspondent for NBC News, as well as Charles Mahtesian, Politico national policy editor, Washington, DC; Gregory Adamian, chancellor and president emeritus of Bentley University, will receive the Lifetime Achievement Award.

A. Garcia-Betancourt, Lola Koundakjian, Vasyly Makhno, Alan Semerdjian and Alhaji Papa Susso, at the Nuyurican Poets Café, 236 East 3rd St. \$10 entrance. For more information, visit www.wpm2011.org.

SEPTEMBER 29 — Save the date. Armenia Fund 20th Anniversary Gala, 7 p.m. at Gotham Hall in New York City.

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COMMENTARY

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COMMENTARY

President Gul Is Begging for Sympathy

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Some people believe that with our scattered forces and with a homeland struggling for survival, our efforts toward Genocide recognition are futile against the growing strategic power of Turkey. For many years, we waged our fight for recognition away from Turkey's territory. Today, the issue of the Armenian Genocide is a topic for national discourse within Turkish society itself, and the question has acquired its own life, sometimes independent of Armenian activism.

Turkey is indeed on the defensive and that is the first step towards victory. The wheels of justice will move at a low pace, but there is no way that it will lose momentum.

Contrary to the adage that justice delayed is justice denied, an inexorable course of perseverance will continue, even after the centennial mark of 2015 for the final victory.

The Turkish government has mobilized its resources domestically and internationally to deny or delay that final victory.

Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkey's erudite foreign minister, has been trying to give a human face to Turkey's growing international power. His "zero-problem with neighbors" policy proved to be hollow; Armenia's blockade is still continuing, Ankara is defying NATO to keep Israel out of the organization's forthcoming meeting in Chicago, and freezing negotiations with the European Union for the duration of Cyprus' presidency and even threatening war with Cyprus over the latter's gas explorations in the Mediterranean.

Now Mr. Davutoglu has concocted another trick to deflect the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. He is talking of the "common pain" between the Armenians and the Turks. He had repeated that mantra on April 23, on the 97th anniversary of Ataturk's victory in the Gallipoli campaign, where 25,000 Ottoman soldiers perished, including drafted Armenian youth.

Incidentally, it remains one of history's mysteries why the Australian ANZAC forces, under Winston Churchill's admiralty, could not win that battle. Historians believe that as the allied Russian forces were advancing on the Eastern front, the British subverted Russian plans to overrun Turkey – a scenario which could have prevented the Armenian Genocide.

Now Davutoglu's theme of "common pain" has been borrowed and elaborated on by President Abdullah Gul. In an oblique manner, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan apologized to the Kurds for the Dersim massacres of the Kurds in the 1930s (although his AK party's hands are not clean of Kurdish blood), blaming Ataturk's party for the crime. In the same way, President Gul has taken the theme of "common pain" because, in line with Turkey's Genocide policy, he is trying to equate the Ottoman losses in an imperial war with the murder of 1.5 million people of an unarmed subject-nation and he begs for sympathy and understanding from the Armenian side. This cynical policy has another sinister component, which follows below.

During the ceremonies in Chanakkale (Gallipoli), President Gul answered a journalist's question by stating that he defined the 1915 events as "a common pain," and then he continued magnanimously: "Pain causes happiness to no one. In my opinion it is not right to convert history into an instrument of animosity. If the pain is passed on to the younger generations as a means of animosity and rancor, there will be no end to it."

President Gul's statements have been reported by the journalist Sedat Laciner, who had further discussed the issue the next day on a boat trip with the president. In his comments on the Samanyolu Haber TV network, he elaborated on the issue: "Both sides need solace and understanding. The Turks have to understand that more than a million Armenians were uprooted from their ancestral land, irrespective of the causes. Consequently, the Armenians have to give up the notion that they were the only losing party and they have to understand the pain that the Turks have suffered at the turn of the last century. The Turks fell under the ruins of a crumbling empire. Any Armenian with a human conscience cannot deny the pain the Turks suffered from the end of the 19th century to 1923, especially that Armenian armed gangs were partially responsible for that pain."

It is not clear whether these comments were made by President Gul or they are the interpretations of the journalist. However, they are in the same line of thought that unless Armenians understand the pain that Turks have endured there

will be no reciprocal recognition.

Indeed Armenians seem to be "heartless" people, devoid of "human conscience." How can they not understand how much Turks have suffered fighting an imperial war against an equally powerful empire to maintain the Ottoman rule of slavery? Further, how can they not understand how much the Turkish gendarmes, Teshkileti Mahsusa forces, the army and the irregulars have suffered in murdering one-and-a-half million individuals. Their suffering was further aggravated by the fact that under the rules of frugality, they had to save bullets and resort to more primitive methods to slaughter children, women and the elderly.

Now we can understand why we cannot expect any sympathy from the Turkish official quarters, as long as we observe history in such a "heartless" manner!

While the Turkish president is pleading for sympathy from the Armenians, his government has mobilized massive forces to deny the Genocide. In addition to the millions spent in lobbying foreign governments, Turkey has undertaken the huge task of "educating" its youth on this very sensitive issue.

Realizing that a mountain of scholarly works is piling up in world historiography on the question of the Armenian Genocide, the Turkish government has undertaken a frontal attack by organizing so-called scholarly seminars. Indeed symposia were held in April in two universities with the participation of 75 historians, including some hired guns from the US, Norway, France, Russia, Tajikistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Iran. The first symposium took place at Karatekin University of Changere. We are not sure if the venue was selected intentionally or unintentionally, because Changere happens to be the place where the Turks crushed with rocks the skull of writer and Ottoman Parliament member Krikor Zohrab.

The initiative was undertaken by an organization called The Society of Future Academicians.

In that august gathering, Prof. Galib Chagh made one of the most childish denialist arguments that: "the law of deportations precludes the use of the term 'genocide' because that law protected the properties of the deported Armenians." Never mind that after the Genocide, Talaat Pasha appealed to the foreign banks and insurance companies as the inheritor of those "protected properties."

Another symposium too place at Ataturk University of Erzerum under the title, "First International conference on Turkish Armenian Relations and the Great Powers."

Prof. Halouk Selvi from the University of Sakaria has devised an earth-shaking argument about the Genocide. He has stated that "instead of appealing to the courts, Armenians have been appealing to different parliaments because they don't possess any document that a genocide was perpetrated."

To add insult to injury, the honorable scholar has further stated that the American missionaries had bad-mouthed the Turks, pleading for the suffering Armenians in Anatolia, because they needed to raise money for their own causes.

We are not sure how much these arguments impressed the participants and aspiring young Turkish scholars, but the dean of Turkish journalists, Ali Birand, head of CNN-Turk, does not seem to be impressed at all. In his April 24 commentary, he made scathing remarks about Turkey's denialist historiography. He stated that against the barrage of criticisms and scholarly works: "Turkey, as it has done before, will react harshly. It will utter threats, but they will remain ineffective. Do you know why? It is because the Armenians have gotten a significant part of the world to accept their claims of Genocide."

Then he cites one example and refers to a 1,000-page book compiled by German writer and journalist Wolfgang Gust, published in English, German, Spanish and Portuguese and recently published in Turkey by Belge Publishing House, "in extremely comprehensible and beautiful Turkish."

Birand continues: "Without going into detail, if you read the book and look at the documents, if you are a person who is introduced to the subject through this book, then there is no way that you would not believe in the Genocide and justify the Armenians."

His telling conclusion: "Let us not deceive each other; if you can give correct answers to these questions, then you will be able to clarify some very key facts for us. 'I know you will remain silent.'"

President Gul's verbal gymnastics and then the "scholarly" charades staged at those universities amount to nothing. Perhaps the most honorable position would indeed be to keep silence.

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COMMENTARY

Stealing from One vs. Stealing from a Nation

By Raffi Bedrosyan

If a person murders another person, then takes over the murdered person's property and possessions, he would be living off the proceeds of his crime. And once authorities discover his crime, he would be found guilty, by any court anywhere, sentenced, punished and forced to return the unlawfully-obtained property and possessions. But if a people murders another people and takes over the property and possessions of the murdered people, it seems that different rules apply, and the guilty people can continue living off the proceeds of the crime. And it seems that the successors of the guilty people can continue to threaten the successors of the murdered people with new murders, if they dare mentioning the murder, or if they dare demanding return of the unlawfully obtained property and possessions. This is the case of the evolving saga of the Turkish and Armenian peoples from 1915 to today.

The 1915 murder of a people, or perhaps more correctly, the attempted murder, not only resulted in wiping out the Armenians from their 4,000-year-old homeland within a matter of one or two years, but also initiated an ongoing process of wealth, property and asset transfer from the Armenians to the Turks. This process, started in 1915 by the Ittihadist leadership of the Ottoman Turkey, continued uninterrupted by the successor Turkish Republic state for many decades, using a multitude of legislative decrees, and got completed with the total and legal Turkification of all Armenian assets, properties and economic presence in Anatolia.

This essay will attempt to explain the legal Turkification process, provide examples illustrating the enormity of the assets involved, and explain recent initiatives to reverse this process – some steps taken by the Armenians, and some steps announced by the present Turkish government.

There is a Turkish term called *kilifina uydurmak*, which means to “fit the sword to the sheath.” One would normally expect that the sword is made first, and then the sheath to fit it. But if there is an unacceptable action first, followed by other actions needed to give it the appearance of a proper action, that is, to “make right” the original action, then this term is used to define the situation. The phrase “fit the sword to the sheath” is a perfect description of the legislative process for the Turkification of the Armenians.

The Ottoman Parliament passed the “Deportation Legislation” on May 27, 1915, several weeks after the actual Armenian deportations had started in spring 1915. This was followed by “The Liquidation Legislation,” which tried to give some semblance of legality to the plunder of the Armenian assets resulting from the deportations. This legislation, dated June 10, 1915, further reinforced on September 26, 1915, directed the formation of Liquidation Commissions in the provinces where deportations occurred. The legislation defined the Armenians as “transported persons” and the Armenians’ assets as “abandoned assets,” as if the Armenians had willingly abandoned them.

It provided the first steps to liquidate the assets, giving the state the power to decide to whom the assets should be given, or sold, and for how much, without the approval of the owners but on their behalf.

By January 1916, there were 33 Liquidation Commissions formed, covering all of Anatolia, recording, listing, appraising, holding on deposit some of the assets for future return to the Armenians, but also selling or distributing other assets to Moslem refugees. The legislation also directed that assets belonging to Armenian charitable foundations, such as churches, schools or other lands and buildings, were to be transferred to the State Directorate of Charitable Foundations or the State Treasury. Cash and movable assets of the transported persons were to be collected and kept in a Special Trust account on behalf of the owners. Naturally, thousands of gov-

ernment officials and the members of the Liquidation Commission enriched themselves as they had the pick of any choice assets left behind by the Armenians; but also thousands of local Turks and Kurds seized the houses, farms, orchards, warehouses, factories, mines, hotels, shops, stores, tools or livestock once owned by the Armenians.

The whereabouts of the dossiers belonging to these 33 Liquidation Commissions is a mystery. The Turkish state, which boasts that all their archives are open (and persistently calls for Armenian archives to be opened even though they are in fact open), has kept these crucial records of Armenian assets a secret until today. What is even more interesting, in 2005 when the present Turkish government wished to comply with the European Union modernization initiatives by translating, digitizing and opening up to the public the old Ottoman land registry and deed records, it was prevented from doing so by the August 26, 2005 dated stern warning from the Turkish Armed Forces, National Security Committee, Mobilization and War Readiness Planning Section Head: “The Ottoman records kept at the Land Register and Cadaster Surveys General Directorate offices must be sealed and not available to the public, as they have the potential to be exploited by alleged genocide claims and property claims against the State Charitable Foundation assets. Opening them to general public use is against state interests.”

When the Ottomans were defeated and the Ittihadist leaders fled Istanbul in a German submarine, the newly-elected Ottoman government rescinded the Liquidation Legislation on January 8, 1920, directing the return of all Armenian assets, or equivalent compensation, to their rightful owners. Unfortunately, the Istanbul government itself got liquidated before implementation of this legislation which had aimed to reverse the liquidation process, as the nationalist government gaining strength in Ankara immediately took steps to abolish it. It seems that the Ankara parliamentarians, which were mostly a continuation of the Ittihadists, were more preoccupied with the Armenian assets than the “Liberation War” against the Greeks raging on at the same time. These Ittihadists, gathered around Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, had two strong motives to join the Ankara government: Firstly, to ensure that they held on to the Armenians’ assets that they had plundered and to ensure that they prevented these assets from being returned to any surviving Armenians, and secondly, to escape any prosecution and punishment for “crimes against humanity” by the Ottoman Istanbul government and the Allied forces occupying Istanbul, who were actively searching for them. The Ankara parliament proclaimed annulment of the Istanbul Parliament legislation, and reinstated the Ittihadist Liquidation Legislation on September 14, 1922, and appointed new members for the Liquidation Commissions, thereby enriching local notables. The term “transported persons” was changed to “persons lost or fled from the country.” The legislation stated that if these persons ever returned, they would receive their assets and deposits; otherwise, all assets would be sold with the proceeds to the State Treasury, after verification of courts regarding lost or fled persons.

As the requirement of court verification for lost or fled persons proved to be difficult, the legislation was revised on April 29, 1923, giving “lost or fled persons” or previous owners the deadline of four months if within the country or six months if they were abroad, to claim return of assets. In September 1923, legislation was passed banning the return of Armenians to Cilicia and East Anatolia. With further amendments in a new legislation dated March 13, 1926, the state put a low valuation of 1915 wartime assessment on the assets instead of current values, and sold the assets to local Turkish investors. It is estimated that values would have increased by more than 12 times from 1915 to 1926. It was also specified that any returning Armenians would not receive the actual assets but cash based on the legislated

1915 valuation. This legislation was in effect until 1988, in case any Armenians came to claim compensation, which would have been assessed based on 1915 valuation. In August 1926, legislation was brought in for the state to nationalize any assets left behind and not claimed by the Armenians prior to the 1924 Lausanne Treaty.

Another legislation, dated May 31, 1926, enabled families and heirs of “martyrs,” officials executed by the Istanbul government for their role in the Armenian deportations, or Ittihadists assassinated by Armenians, to receive pensions deemed “Blood Money” from the revenues of the Armenian assets. This legislation was also in effect until 1988.

In addition to Armenian assets held by the Turkish state, the issue of Armenian assets held by individual Turks was the subject of fierce debates at the parliament. Since most of these assets were held without any documentation, there were problems in transfer or sale of these assets. On May 24, 1928, new deeds were prepared for the Armenian assets and on June 2, 1929, a new legislation gave the right to title and deed to possessors of real estate for a specified period. Accordingly, any vacant land such as fields, orchards and farmland held for 15 years since 1914, and any buildings or other real estate held for 10 years since 1919, became the legal property of the individuals who had bought, stolen, occupied or seized those assets.

The legal Turkification of the assets was now complete; however, not all the individuals who had bought the assets from the State Treasury were able to make the required payments. New amendments were brought in 1931 reducing and then canceling debts and mortgages to the Treasury, thereby encouraging growth of the “Turkified” economy as well.

The deposits held by the state treasury on behalf of the deported people was handled by legislation dated May 24, 1928, which legalized straight transfer of these funds to the state budget, starting with the amount of 300,000 Turkish lira in 1928. Based on a proportional increase of the Turkish state budget 920 times from 1928 to 2008, this would be equivalent to 276 billion Turkish lira today or \$150 billion US. There was another 3.9 million Turkish lira transferred to the state budget by 1931 from the Armenian deposits, marked as revenue from the assets or taxes on the assets.

It is difficult to assess the value of the Armenian assets seized by the Ottoman/Turkish Republic governments and individuals, but there are pieces of the puzzle which can provide a glimpse of the enormity of the overall picture. In 1916, the sum of 5 million Ottoman Turkish lira, equivalent to 30,000 kilograms of gold, was transferred by the Ottoman government to the Reichsbank in Berlin. This large sum of money, deposited in wartime, would be the aggregate of Armenian deposits and sums gained from the Liquidation Commissions. There are further unknown gold deposits at the Deutsche Bank. At the US Senate discussions related to the Armenian assets, the figure of \$40 million is mentioned. In terms of real assets, Ittihadist leader Talaat's own records indicate that in 1915, 20,545 buildings, 267,536 acres of land, 76,942 acres of vineyards, 703,941 acres of olive groves, 4,573 acres of mulberry gardens allocated to Moslem settlers out of the assets seized from the Armenians. Based on a population loss of 1.5 million, and 10 persons to a family, the loss of houses alone would be at least 150,000. There were 2,900 Armenian settlements emptied of their population. In these settlements, there were 2,300 churches and 700 schools under the jurisdiction of the Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate and the Apostolic Church. Once the Armenian Catholic and Protestant churches and schools are also added to this sum, the number easily exceeds 4,000. Most of these churches and schools had their own charitable foundations, in order to generate revenue for their upkeep and maintenance. For example, the Surp Giragos Armenian Church in Diyarbakir/Dikranagerd, one of the largest churches in the Middle East with a large parish and community, had owned more than

200 properties in Diyarbakir as part of its charitable foundation. The charitable foundation of the Sanasaryan College in Erzurum/Garin, had owned several shops and houses in Erzurum, as well as the Sanasaryan Office building in Istanbul, to pay for the school expenses. The two Armenian hospitals, the Holy Saviour (Surp Prgitch) and Surp Agop, had vast holdings in Istanbul to pay for the hospital building and staff expenses as well as to provide subsidized medical care to poor Armenians. All of these Armenian assets, except the two hospitals and some of the Istanbul Armenian churches and schools, had disappeared after 1915. If not destroyed outright or left to deteriorate, the church and school buildings were converted to other uses, such as banks, mosques, state schools, community centers, stables or warehouses. The Armenian houses were taken over by local Turks and Kurds, or Moslem refugee settlers from the Balkans. The Armenian economic assets such as farms, orchards, olive groves, stores, factories, mines became the foundation stones of the Turkish economy and the starting capital of most of the wealthy Turkish industrialists of today. The Turkish government continued the seizure of Armenian assets and the legalization of it up until the 2000s. With legislation brought in 1974, more than 1,400 legally obtained assets of the Istanbul Armenian charitable foundations since 1936, were declared illegal and seized by the state.

In the last three years, there have been some steps taken by the Turkish state to reverse the process of nationalizing Armenian assets. After losing several cases taken by the Istanbul Armenian charitable foundations to the European Human Rights Court related to the seizure of assets, the Turkish state recently announced that 162 or about 10 percent of the assets seized after 1974 would be returned to the Armenian charitable foundations. Although this is an encouraging tiny step, there is no mention of any return of assets seized in 1915, and the figure of 162 pales in comparison with the sheer number of hundreds of thousands of seized assets. When the Turkish state decided to restore the Akhtamar Holy Cross Church in Van, it did so only by converting it to a state museum. When the Armenian communities raised funds worldwide to restore the Surp Giragos Church in Diyarbakir as a working church again, the Turkish state refused to provide any funding. The process of re-claiming the 200 properties belonging to the Surp Giragos Church is ongoing through the courts and negotiations with the Diyarbakir City government. The Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate has now decided to go to court to re-claim the Sanasaryan Office building in Istanbul as the first test case related to the return of an Armenian asset seized in 1915. First indications are that the government will vigorously challenge this case, as it may set a precedent for the multiple claims to follow.

The murdered people cannot be reclaimed nor returned. But the assets of the murdered people can and must be reclaimed by their successors. The assets seized by the murderer people can and must be relinquished by their successors. This would be the start of a process, based on dialogue and non-violence, toward facing the past.

(Raffi Bedrosyan is a civil engineer as well as a concert pianist, living in Toronto, Canada. For the past several years, proceeds from his concerts and two CDs have been donated toward the construction of school, highway, water and gas distribution projects in Armenia and Karabagh, in which he also participated as a voluntary engineer. He is involved with the Surp Giragos Dikranagerd Church Reconstruction project in organizing fundraising activities in Canada, as well as promoting the significance of this historic project worldwide to Armenian communities outside Turkey, on behalf of the Church Foundation Board and the Istanbul Patriarchate. His other activities include acting as Advisor to the Zoryan Institute on Turkish-Armenian relations.)



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Armenians in Egypt: Dwindling Yet Resilient in a Country in Turmoil

I just returned from a fascinating trip to Egypt. The Primate of the Armenian Church had invited me on behalf of the Diocesan Council to deliver the keynote address at the annual commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. I accepted the invitation with some trepidation, given the ongoing turmoil in Egypt since the toppling of the 40-year despotic rule of President Hosni Mubarak.

Bishop Ashot Mnatsakanyan had reassured me that the situation in the country was peaceful and that the community was looking forward to my visit, as they have been reading my weekly columns in local Armenian newspapers.

Upon my arrival in Cairo, I visited the Diocesan headquarters and the Armenian Embassy where I encountered a familiar face. Ambassador Armen Melkonian, an old friend, had served as the consul general of Armenia in Los Angeles a decade ago. After a pleasant lunch with the Primate and the ambassador on a restaurant-ship on the Nile, I spent the afternoon at a massive shopping mall in Cairo buying new clothes as my suitcase was left behind in

London by British Airways. I refrained from purchasing items that carried the "Made in Turkey" label.

Cairo is a highly-congested city of 17 million. It takes more than an hour to travel a short distance. Most traffic lights do not work and no police are seen in the streets. The most shocking site in Cairo is the "City of the Dead" – a cemetery where tens of thousands of people live among the tombs. Amazingly, thousands of satellite dishes are perched on the tombs! One wonders how the destitute residents of the cemetery can afford satellite TV?

In the evening of April 28, I spoke at the Armenian Genocide commemoration in Cairo on the topic of "Genocide Recognition or Pursuit of Justice?" The next day, I traveled to the historic city of Alexandria where I delivered similar remarks at the commemorative event organized by the Armenian community.

Returning to Cairo, I participated in a town hall meeting on May 2, during which community members questioned me on contemporary Armenian issues. The inevitable question that almost always comes up during my talks, not surprisingly was also raised in Cairo and Alexandria: "Do Armenians lose their rights for Genocide restitution after 100 years?" My answer was a firm no... There are no statutes of limitation on the crime of genocide under international law!

One of the highlights of the trip was the reception dedicated to the printing of my Arabic book in Cairo, originally published in Beirut, titled *The Armenian Genocide: The World Speaks Out – 1915-2005, Documents and Declarations*. The book-signing ceremony was held at the Armenian Embassy in the presence of representatives from other embassies, members of the Egyptian media, scholars from local universities, Armenian community leaders and members of the clergy. Brief remarks were made by

Melkonian and Prof. Mohammad Rifa'at al-Imam who wrote the introduction to the Egyptian edition of the book, followed by my concluding comments. While in Cairo I gave a number of interviews published in Arabic, English and Armenian in the local press.

I had the pleasure of visiting colleagues at Housaper and Arev, Armenian newspapers. I also paid a heart-breaking visit to the Kalousdian School, which was days away from shutting its doors due to a shortage of students after serving the educational needs of the community for more than 150 years. The Kalousdian School will be merging with the Noubarian School in Cairo.

While the Armenian community is safe in Egypt, it is struggling to cope with the uncertainties of a country slowly transitioning from military to civilian rule. The newly-formed parliament, dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists, may be disbanded and replaced with a more representative body. Later this month, Egyptians have the opportunity to elect a president who could take bold initiatives to begin healing their ancient and glorious country's many ills.

In recent years, a large number of Armenians left Egypt for greener pastures in the United States, Canada and Australia. Yet, those who have remained are doing their utmost to cling to their language, religion and ethnic traditions. Fortunately, local Armenian organizations can benefit from vast real estate holdings bequeathed to them decades ago by Armenians who were wealthy businessmen and high-ranking Egyptian government officials.

It is incumbent on the government of Armenia and Armenians worldwide to extend a helping hand to their compatriots in Cairo and Alexandria and not allow these once-vibrant communities to turn into ghost towns with extensive resources that only a few would enjoy.

Is Former Foreign Minister Oskanian on a Path to Political Self-Destruction?

By Appo Jabarian

There is absolutely no doubt that the May 6 Armenian parliamentary elections were marred by serious irregularities, large-scale bribes and outright fraud. Many political leaders and observers criticized the tainted polls – some with healthy, and some others with ulterior, motives.

Soon after the elections ended, Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) and Prosperous Armenia Party (PAP) came under fire by Armenian former President Levon Ter-Petrosian. Interestingly, former Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian, a ranking member of the rival Prosperous Armenia Party, agreed expediently.

Oskanian's all-too-willingness to appease the former President Ter-Petrosian seems to have back-fired among his fellow PAP members. They questioned Oskanian's allegiance.

Exacerbating the situation for Mr. Gagik Tsarukyan, the leader of PAP, Oskanian arbitrarily declared that he "would strongly object to Prosperous Armenia's establishing a coalition with the ruling Republican Party of Armenia again." Naira Zohrabyan, the spokeswoman of PAP, refuted Oskanian's statement.

Committing one political fiasco after another, he erroneously boasted: "The reason for my leaving the government is that I was discontent with the situation. Do not think that the authorities longed for my resignation, rather, they (President Serge Sargsisian's administration) not only offered me a post, but also begged me to stay."

In reality, in early 2008, Mr. Oskanian had reportedly appealed and reportedly even engaged the lobbying services of second President Robert Kocharian in order to convince President Sargsisian to grant him a cabinet post. Back then, despite President Kocharian's efforts with then newly-elected third President Sargsisian, Oskanian was nixed.

Last week, belatedly speaking out against corrupt oligarchs, he declared: "It seems that people in high echelons of power began to realize that things cannot continue in this way."

Commentators on A1plus.am questioned his honesty: "Some people asked why he did not criticize the authorities when he was holding a high-ranking position in the government?"

Oskanian stated: "When I was the country's foreign minister, I was in no way related to the sectors I am criticizing today."

But many observers are wondering, how come he has now closely associated himself with PAP's Tsarukyan, one of Armenia's top oligarchs?

Can anyone function in Armenia without being closely associated with the oligarchs? Twenty years have passed since Armenia's independence from the former Soviet Union. Yet, unfortunately Armenia has not been able to free itself from the yoke of corrupt leaders and plunderers.

So why is Mr. Oskanian shedding crocodile tears and for whom? Is it because the current powers-that-be refuse to co-opt him?

Now that he is elected as a member of parliament, it is widely anticipated that he will milk to the max his new position by constantly barraging Armenian readers and viewers with endless chains of press conferences fueled by petty personal interests and political vendettas.

As if his dismal popularity both in the homeland and diaspora was not worrisome enough, a few days ago, he himself triggered a new wave of anti-Oskanian criticism. He said to Today's Zaman: "If the problem over the Nagorno-Karabagh could be solved by Armenia and Turkey, then Turkey could open its border with Armenia."

Was he hinting at his 2007 anti-Armenian declarations as foreign minister? Back then he had ignited widespread indignation in Armenia, Artsakh and the diaspora, when he expressed willingness to "hand" the liberated Armenian Karvadjar in Artsakh to Azerbaijan.

Exposing ex-FM's true persona, in late 2011 the whistleblower website Wiki Leaks released a classified cable sent by US Ambassador to Armenia Marie Yovanovitch on February 25, 2010 to report on a meeting with former FM Oskanian.

During the meeting, the cable said, Oskanian accused President Sargsisian of "mis-handling the entire process. In Oskanian's view, the controversy surrounding the protocols has prevented any movement on Nagorno Karabagh. ... Oskanian criticized the manner in which President Sargsisian has handled the entire process. According to him, the President 'put the cart before the horse.'"

"Oskanian did not understand why ... President Sargsisian began the process with Turkey so publicly, and how unprepared he

was for the negative public reaction. ... the president should have expended his political capital with Armenian citizens and the diaspora to persuade them that some of the Nagorno Karabagh territories must be returned to Azerbaijan. ... Oskanian said this had been his plan as Foreign Minister," the cable says.

In response to the ambassador's question on how to move the process forward, Oskanian responded that the "protocols cannot be left in abeyance. ... He truly hopes the protocols will be ratified by both sides."

Going further back, in a May 2000 article, titled "Exchanging Meghri With Karabagh: Good Idea or Political Suicide?" Harut Sassounian, publisher of The California Courier blasted then Foreign Minister Oskanian for the latter's treasonous idea on giving Meghri to Azerbaijan. During a community forum in Glendale, Calif., Oskanian had tried to "sell" the Meghri Plan: "There are many rumors about the resolution of the Karabagh conflict. There are criticisms alleging that the Armenian authorities want to give Meghri to Azerbaijan. In fact, there is a small degree of truth in those rumors. Such a proposal on the exchange of territories has been made to the Armenian Republic, to the president of Armenia. ... It has been rejected... But when people say that it's treasonous to even think about it ... This proposal has a certain logic. ... because this proposal is worth thinking about."

To which Sassounian swiftly responded in his commentary: "There isn't much to think about in this proposal. Armenia is basically being asked to cede to Azerbaijan one of the most strategic parts of its already tiny territory in return for (Artsakh) Karabagh. This would be exchanging one Armenian territory with another. We would be cutting off Armenia from Iran, strategically a very important access to the outside world. By ceding Meghri, we would also be helping the Turks to achieve their age-old dream of Pan-Turkism, linking Turkey through Nakhitchevan and Meghri to the Turkic Republics of Central Asia. ... I am confident that both Iran and Russia would strongly pressure Armenia not to go ahead with it in order to safeguard their interests. ...Armenia has nothing to gain and much to lose from such an exchange."

Why would any sitting president or future leaders re-engage his services fully knowing that during his decade-long tenure as foreign minister, Oskanian has caused considerable

political damage to Armenia?

Oskanian was foreign minister for too long, without having achieved any substantial gains for Armenia. Furthermore, Armenia squandered away many valuable opportunities for diplomatic gains in the international arena and even sustained self-inflicted damages thanks to Oskanian's mishandling of several cases at the United Nations and elsewhere. He repeatedly failed in giving timely guidance to Armenia's ambassadors. On many occasions, Armenia's succeeding permanent representatives at the UN were deprived of effective political orientation because of their incompetent foreign minister's chronic inaction. And as a result, they have missed golden opportunities to cast important votes. Yet they simply abstained from voting causing an Armenian political retreat in the international arena.

It is also absurd that on countless occasions, as the foreign minister of a liberated state – Armenia – Oskanian obstinately mislabeled the liberated Armenian lands as "occupied" territories!

In reference to Oskanian's 2007 championing of the so-called Madrid Principles, David Boyajian, a leading Armenian American activist asked: "Does Oskanian have any guiding principles at all?"

In 2004, when UK Ambassador Thorda Abbott-Watt denied the Armenian Genocide there was total silence at the Armenian Foreign Ministry. When criticized for his timid muteness then Foreign Minister Oskanian claimed that he had given a diplomatic note "strongly criticizing" the British ambassador's denial. But later it became clear that contrary to his allegations Oskanian had simply given a friendly note advising the denialist UK Ambassador to ignore the Armenian Genocide issue.

One wonders if Oskanian is more sensitive to his own personal interests at the expense of the Armenian people. His over-zealous attempts to appease Turkey and its cronies make Armenians wonder if he is qualified to hold any diplomatic or government post. Recently, more than 2,000 students in Turkey were poisoned by toxic milk provided free of charge by Ankara. Is it possible that Oskanian too drank tainted Turkish milk?

(Appo Jabarian is the executive publisher/editor of USA Armenian Life Magazine. This commentary originally appeared in the May 11 issue of the publication.)



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