

Governor General Appoints Gundjian, Sarkissian Members of Order of Canada

OTTAWA – The Office of the Governor General of Canada announced on December 28 that Governor General of Canada Julie Payette this past week made a number of new appointments to the Order of Canada, upon the recommendation of the Advisory Council of the Order, chaired by the Richard Wagner, Chief Justice of Canada.

Among these appointees are scientist and Canadian community leader Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, a well-known senior

active member of the Canadian-Armenian community and Armenian Diaspora, founder of the first Canadian Armenian school and several community infrastructures, and Greg Sarkissian, a businessman, and founding member and current president of the Zoryan Institute, which has established the Toronto University Genocide and Human Rights program.

This honor is granted by the governor general of Canada to individuals as a testa-



Dr. Arshavir Gundjian

Armenia's Constitutional Court Head Indicted

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Law-enforcement authorities on Friday, December 27, brought criminal charges against the chairman of Armenia's Constitutional Court, Hrayr Tovmasyan, in what he denounced as a "political process" aimed at forcing him to resign.

Prosecutor-General Artur Davtyan charged Tovmasyan with two counts of abuse of power immediately after the latter was briefly questioned by the Special Investigative Service (SIS) at his office.

In a statement, Davtyan's office claimed that Tovmasyan used his position to privatize an office in Yerevan when he served as

justice minister from 2010-2014. It said that in 2012 he also forced state notaries subordinate to the Justice Ministry to rent other offices de facto belonging to him at inflated prices.

Tovmasyan grinned and struck a defiant note as he talked to journalists shortly after the interrogation.

"I was warned six months ago that one day I will be indicted for not taking X, Y and Z steps," he said. "The X, Y and Z steps are my resignation. So this accusation ... has changed nothing in my life."

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[SOURCE: PAUL ROHRBACH, ARMENIA, STUTTGART, 1919; PHOTO COURTESY OF HOUSHAMADYAN]



Armenian workers in Urfa

Armenian Architecture And Genocide

OSNABRÜCK, Germany – The aim of the Young Turk leaders in organizing the genocide was to rid the country of the Armenians, as a population and a culture. They determined to "Turkify" the land, cleanse it ethnically of the Christian minorities, and erase, to the extent possible, all traces of their existence. Among the myths created at the time of the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923, was the tale

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

that the Armenians had not inhabited those lands; they had "always been Turkish."

In 2011, I had the opportunity to travel with my brother and my husband to Turkey, as part of a group of Armenians from America. Our guide was the indefatigable Armen Aroyan of California, who has accompanied groups of "pilgrims" to the lands of historic Western Armenia for over a quarter century. We were hoping to rediscover the villages where our parents had lived, in the Arapkir province, and were fortunate enough to find them. But signs of Armenian life were nowhere to be found. In other cities and towns we visited, like Kars, we found the remains of Armenian churches turned into mosques; in other localities they had become museums, still others, stables where animals lived.

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ment to their outstanding achievements and service to the nation. According to the Canadian Encyclopedia "The Order of Canada is the highest level of distinction in the Canadian Honours System. It was established on 1 July 1967, the 100th anniversary of Confederation."

Biannually, following a meticulous and confidential review, the Advisory Council of the Order of Canada, based on established criteria, makes a selected number of recommendations to the governor general of Canada, who makes the final decision of appointments.

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Prosecutors to Reopen Probe of 1999 Armenian Parliament Killings

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Law-enforcement authorities have decided to resume a criminal investigation into the 1999 armed attack on the Armenian parliament which left its speaker Karen Demirchyan, Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan and six other officials dead.

They were killed by five gunmen who burst into the National Assembly and sprayed it with bullets on October 27, 1999. The gunmen led by an obscure former journalist, Nairi Hunanyan, accused the government of corruption and misrule and demanded regime change.

They surrendered to police after overnight negotiations with then President Robert Kocharyan. They were subsequently tried and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Some relatives and supporters of the assassinated officials still suspect Kocharyan and his successor President Serzh Sarkisian (no relation to Vazgen), who was Armenia's national security minister in October 1999, of masterminding the killings to eliminate powerful rivals. Both men repeatedly dismissed such suggestions during and after a serious political crisis caused by the killings.

Throughout his and his henchmen's marathon trial Hunanyan insisted that he himself had decided to seize the parliament without anybody's orders.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Sen. Dole Receives Medal from Armenian Government

Yerevan (Mediamax) – On December 17 Ambassador of Armenia to the US Varuzhan Nersesyan presented the Order of Honor to Sen. Bob Dole, bestowed on the former senator for his considerable contribution to the development the friendly relations between Armenian and the US.

The Armenian Embassy in the U.S. said that Nersesyan expressed profound gratitude to Dole for his tireless efforts in 1980-90s for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, which in their turn contributed to the recent adoption of resolutions 296 by the House of Representatives and 150 by the Senate.

Dole noted that he was satisfied with such an impressive outcome of the long fight for justice. He reminisced about his friend, Dr. Hampar Kelikian, who saved his life during the World War II.

St. Minas Church in Georgia on Verge of Destruction

TBILISI (Panorama.am) – The difficult state of St. Minas Church Armenian Church in Georgia has become even sadder, the Armenian Diocese in Georgia reported. On December 20, the fire service received an emergency call from the church and firefighters it from being completely destroyed. The church remains in a critical condition; the people living around are now using the church and its surrounding area into an auxiliary building and leaving the unused spaces to homeless peoples' usage.

As Susanna Khachatryan the coordinator of media relations at the Armenian Diocese wrote on Facebook, following the fire, no actions have been taken by Georgian state bodies to preserve the ruins and prevent further destruction.

Yerevantsots St. Minas Armenian church is located in Avlabari district. In accordance with the preserved data, the church was built in 1790. Initially the church was not large building and in 1870 there was a necessity to enlarge the church building. On January 2, 1883, St. Minas Church was built at the place of the old church. During the Soviet era, the church dome was eliminated and it was used as a workshop. After the collapse of the USSR, Yerevantsots St. Minas Church was determined as one of the "disputed" churches.

The Armenian Diocese in Georgia and the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin had repeatedly appealed to the Georgian Orthodox Church to return Armenian churches to the Armenian Diocese to take care for them. Numerous letters were sent to the Georgian authorities, relevant state institutions, and the condition of the church was represented, but no changes.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenian Ex-Deputy Detained on Bribery Charges

YEREVAN (News.am) — Upon the decision of Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, Gevorg Loretsyan was dismissed from the office of Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, as reported the website of the Government of Armenia.

On December 5, Gevorg Loretsyan, his driver and the president of a football club were arrested after being suspected of receiving bribes.

According to the preliminary information obtained by the National Security Service, the minister was promised a bribe in particularly large amounts, if a specific economic entity won bids.

More than 3 Million Passengers Arrive in Armenia in 2019

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — With the arrival of a Moscow-Yerevan flight, the Zvartnots International Airport's yearly passenger flow exceeded 3,000,000 for the first time in its history, on December 30.

On this occasion, the airport's administration surprised the passengers of the flight with holiday gifts.

In 2018, the total number of passengers was 2,690,000.

Armenia President Approves Visa-Free Regime with China

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian President Armen Sarkissian ratified a visa waiver agreement with China on Tuesday, December 17.

Sarkissian signed the agreement approved by the National Assembly in early December.

Currently, holders of Armenian passport enjoy visa-free access to Hong Kong for 30 days and to Macau for 90 days. Both are Special Administrative Regions of China.

Armenia to Host CSTO Drills in October 2020

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia will host military drills within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in October 2020, lawmaker Andranik Kocharyan told reporters on Thursday, December 26.

Kocharyan is the chairman of the Standing Committee on Defense and Security in parliament.

A meeting of defense committees of the CSTO member states took place in 2019, during which, Kocharyan said, the delegations agreed to hold the next meeting in Yerevan in October and arrange CSTO exercises in Armenia.

PM, Anna Hakobyan and Catholicos Visit Troops

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On the occasion of New Year and Christmas holidays, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his wife Anna Hakobyan visited a border protection base and a military position in the country on December 30.

Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, Minister of Defense Davit Tonoyan and Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures Suren Papikyan were accompanying the premier.

The visit to the base began with a briefing on the modernized command technical measures used in the military, Pashinyan's office said.

Then, the premier met with on-duty soldiers and commanders, toured the combat position and was briefed on the existing situation on the frontline and the service conditions.

Pashinyan awarded a group of officers and soldiers for selflessness and bravery.

He and his wife, Anna Hakobyan, gave the troops presents and wished them a safe new year.

Pashinyan congratulated all members of the

Russian Warplanes Delivered to Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia demonstrated on Friday, December 27, for the first time four Sukhoi Su-30SM fighter jets which it has purchased from Russia.

air-to-ground missions.

Su-30SM can perform a much broader range of military tasks with more long-range and precision-guided

Russian military first commissioned such jets in 2012.

The four warplanes arrived in Gyumri just days after the Armenian military demonstrated new and sophisticated air defense systems also acquired from Russia. With a firing range of at least 15 kilometers, the Tor-M2MK systems are designed to shoot down aircraft, cruise missiles, other rockets and drones. The Defense Ministry in Yerevan said on Monday that they will "considerably" strengthen Armenia's air defenses.

Russia has always been the principal source of military hardware supplied to the Armenian army. Membership in Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) allows Armenia to acquire Russian weapons at knock-down prices and even for free.



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan greets the Russian pilots.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan and other Armenian officials watched at an airbase in Gyumri their test flights carried out by Russian pilots. Pashinyan and Tonoyan then greeted the pilots and sat in one of the jets' cockpits.

"Today is a very important day for us because state-of-the-art multirole Su-30SM planes, considered our main [arms] acquisition of this year, are arriving," Pashinyan said in video remarks broadcast live from the scene.

"This acquisition marks a turning out for the security of Armenia and our people," he added.

A Russian-Armenian contract on the delivery of the Su-30SM jets was signed early this year. The financial terms of the deal are still not known.

Tonoyan said in February that Yerevan plans to buy eight more such aircraft in the coming years. Pashinyan noted on Friday that the Armenian military has received their "first batch."

The Armenian Air Force had no fighter jets until now. It consisted of 15 or so low-flying Su-25 aircraft designed for

weapons. It is a modernized version of a heavy fighter jet developed by the Sukhoi company in the late 1980s. The



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan gets into the cockpit of one of the new Sukhoi Su-30SM fighter jets.

Armenia's Constitutional Court Head Indicted

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Tovmasyan claimed that the indictment is part of strong pressure exerted on him and other Constitutional Court judges by the Armenian government.

"It's no secret to any of you that in the last six and seven months the Constitutional Court has worked under unprecedented pressures," he said. "Those pressures have involved not only insults, threats and warnings about [what happened] today but also concrete calls for violence."

In late October, Armenia's Investigative Committee claimed to have collected sufficient evidence that Tovmasyan abused his powers when he served as justice minister. The committee sent the case to the SIS for further investigation.

Tovmasyan's lawyers categorically rejected the committee's allegations at the time. One of them, Amram Makinian, on Friday described the accusations brought against the Constitutional Court chairman as "political persecution."

The SIS announced its decision to question Tovmasyan on Thursday just hours after President Armen Sarkissian signed into law a controversial government bill giving

Constitutional Court judges financial incentives to resign before the end of their mandate.

The bill, passed by the parliament earlier this month, applies to seven of the court's nine judges who were installed by Armenia's former governments. It was drafted by the Armenian Justice Ministry in August shortly after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan implicitly demanded the resignation of those judges and Tovmasyan in particular.

Pashinyan has repeatedly accused them of maintaining links with Armenia's former leadership and impeding reforms which he says are aimed at creating a "truly independent judiciary." His critics claim that he is on the contrary seeking to gain control over all courts.

Tovmasyan expressed confidence that the six other high court judges will spurn early retirement offered by the authorities. He described them as "heroes" fighting for judicial independence in the country.

"Today's struggle is not about their posts," said Tovmasyan. "Quite the opposite, today's struggle is about what kind of a judicial authority we will have tomorrow and, more generally, what kind of a state we will have tomorrow."



ARMENIA

Looking back at ATP Forest Summit in Armenia

YEREVAN — ATP's Community Tree Planting (CTP) program incorporates various initiatives focusing on village and city greening, environmental stewardship, fruit harvesting, and the Backyard Nursery program. These projects take place in 1,313 rural and urban sites, 70 of which were new sites added in 2019.

Seyran Hovhannisyan, a monitor for the CTP program, remarks, "I was proud at the Forest Summit in October when experts such as Dr. Anthony Davis mentioned the need for community involvement. At ATP, we learned long ago that local community support and involvement is a key to our success."

A majority of the CTP initiatives take place in the regions of Aragatsotn, Ararat, and Vayots Dzor. In 2019, the CTP program planted 52,660 trees and shrubs in Armenia and Artsakh. The total number of trees planted by ATP reached six million this year, including the seedlings planted by ATP's Forestry program.

ATP has targeted the most vulnerable communities in villages, cities, and towns with the greatest need for greenery. The focus and attention that is given to these areas help ATP's trees to grow and flourish, and creates a stronger bond between people and the land they live on. Major greening sites are typically public parks, schools, cultural centers, churches, historical monuments, and other significant landmarks where both the people and environment benefit from the CTP program.

ATP's environmental education team also works with students in these communities, ensuring that future generations will be responsible stewards of the environment.

It is vital to have green areas in cities to protect people against pollutants and dust, and to provide shade and lower temperatures caused by hot summers and the urban heat island effect. ATP has been planting trees throughout the City of Yerevan for the past 25 years, as well as in other major cities and towns. These trees are not only saving lives by cleaning the air, but they're also a major part of the beauty of Yerevan and its monuments and parks.

In terms of environmental stewardship, ATP advocates for responsible, sustainable practices. One such practice is coppicing, a method of woodland management which entails cutting tree stems which grow densely from one stump to near ground level so that the trees can grow to their full potential and thrive.

ATP hires residents of local communities to help with coppicing activities, and later, distributes most of the coppiced wood to village residents to use for cooking and heating. The remainder of wood is turned to mulch and used in ATP's Mirak Family Reforestation Nursery for boosting plant growth, as well as in forestry plantings. ATP has partnered with Armenia's State Forest Committee to help establish the coppicing project.

To raise awareness and promote a culture of environmental responsibility, ATP also organizes trash cleanups twice a year and is a major partner for World Cleanup Day in Armenia.

In terms of food security, ATP provides fruit and nut trees for families to plant in their backyards and on shared community land. These trees provide fresh fruit that families can consume, preserve, or sell as they see fit. These trees boost the community's health, economic independence, and sustainability.

Since ATP began its work in 1994, more than



Parakar village community members helping ATP transform a former sand mine.

9,300,000 pounds of fruit have been harvested from these trees to improve food security at public institutions and in rural villages. For example, the fruit grown at the Sardarabad Memorial is sold and the proceeds are given to employees as Christmas bonuses. At Echmiadzin Kindergarten No. 13, students enjoy the fruit at lunch and take more home to their families. Entire communities benefit from ATP's work.

ATP's Backyard Nursery program enables village residents to earn income by planting trees in their own backyard. ATP provides 1,200-1,500 seeds to families who care for and grow them over a 2-3 year period. ATP trains the landowners, supervises the planting, and monitors the site throughout the process. Once trees reach harvesting stage, ATP pays the Backyard Nursery owner for the trees, which are then replanted in a community site. In 2019, about 40 families harvested 33,490 tree seedlings for ATP, increasing their family income by 30 percent.

Dr. Anthony S. Davis, interim dean of the College of Forestry at Oregon State University, and many other speakers at "Forest Summit: Global Action and Armenia" echoed the importance of community engagement in ensuring the success of tree planting and forestry programs. In short, it's not just about planting trees.

Speaker David Mathenge of Kenya's Green Belt Movement, an organization whose founder was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize, emphasized the importance of addressing specific local needs to best serve the community. The Green Belt Movement empowers communities by educating them about sustainable resource management, conservation, tree planting, and tree care. By giving power to the people, they are

able to spread their positive impact on the environment.

Dr. Maya Nehme, director of the Lebanon Reforestation Initiative, spoke about monitoring, accurate mapping, and tracking forest fires. She also linked seedling survival rates to close cooperation and coordination with the local community, policymakers, and government agencies.

ATP's 25 Years of Monitoring Data is 'Extraordinary'

During a panel at the Summit on the role of technology, Guy Hydrick, GIS Administrator at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council of Boston, emphasized the importance of collaboration with the local community and monitoring long term data. Hydrick is a PhD candidate in Geography at Clark University and has been studying ATP's tree planting and monitoring data. The database includes information about all of the trees planted by the CTP program since 1994.

"The ATP dataset is an extraordinary resource," he explains, "which constitutes a larger sample of tree mortality than collected by any previous study by several orders of magnitude. The data maintained by ATP presents an excellent opportunity for research and collaboration with an exceptional and well-established urban and community forestry program, and in a region not well represented in this body of literature."

Hydrick notes that the data shows that ATP's CTP program has a very good survival rate. "The positive results that we see today are due to the fact that we have a clear understanding of the land, and of the people," explains Operations Manager Arthur Harutyunyan. "We have a team of dedicated experts that guide us

through the science of healthy tree propagation, and we partner with local people wherever we work. Our high tree survival rates depend on local community involvement."

As Armenia renews its efforts to protect and expand its forest cover, ATP will play a major role by continuing to plant healthy trees all over the country, and by providing its expertise about working with people and meeting the needs of the local community. Because it is more than just planting trees.

Sasna Tserer Party to Seek Fresh Elections

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A political party whose members stormed a police station in Yerevan in 2016 said on December 27 that it will no longer support Armenia's current government and will strive for snap elections.

"It is already evident that the current authorities lack the will and capacity to carry out systemic changes," the Sasna Tserer party said in a statement. It said it will therefore be in "radical opposition" to them starting next year.

One of the party's leaders, Varuzhan Avetisyan, said the authorities are "on the wrong track" and "headed toward destruction." "That is why we should also play the role of putting the brakes on that destruction," Avetisyan said at a news conference.

According to their statement, the conduct of the fresh elections must be preceded by the formation of a provisional government that will usher in a "period of tough rule."

Sasna Tserer leaders already stated in the run-up to the December 2018 parliamentary elections that the new parliament will have to be dissolved within two years. Those statements provoked an angry response from Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. He said Sasna Tserer members and supporters will "feel the taste of asphalt" if they attempt to destabilize the political situation.

Sasna Tserer garnered 1.8 percent of the vote in the 2018 elections.

Avetisyan led a 31-member armed group, also called Sasna Tserer, which seized a Yerevan police base in July 2016 to demand that then-President Serzh Sargsyan free his close associate Zhirayr Sefilian and step down. The gunmen laid down their weapons after a two-week standoff which left three police officers dead.

All but two members of the armed group were set free pending the outcome of their trials shortly after Sargsyan was toppled in the 2018 "Velvet Revolution" led by Pashinyan.

Prosecutors to Reopen Probe of 1999 Armenian Parliament Killings

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In 2004, investigators formally stopped looking for other individuals possibly involved in the attack, citing a lack of evidence. Last week, Anahit Bakhshyan, the wife of the slain parliament vice-speaker Yuri Bakhshyan, petitioned Armenia's Office of the Prosecutor-General to overturn that decision.

Bakhshyan lawyer, Zaruhi Mejlumyan, told RFE/RL's Armenian service on Thursday, December 26, that the office has granted the request, meaning that the Special Investigative Service will have to reopen the inquiry. Mejlumyan said the prosecutors have also given her and her client access to materi-

als of the suspended probe.

"There are materials which can be sufficient grounds for continuing the investigation," she said without elaborating.

Some observers expected a renewed probe of the parliament shootings in the weeks leading up to the prosecutors' decision. In October this year, a parliament deputy extremely critical of Kocharyan visited Hunanyan at a Yerevan prison and talked to him for two hours. The lawmaker, Arman Babajanyan, claimed to have received important information from the jailed ringleader but did not publicize it.

Babajanyan's statements fueled specula-

tion that the current Armenian authorities may implicate Kocharyan in the 1999 killings. The former president is already in jail, standing trial on charges mostly stemming from the 2008 post-election violence in Yerevan. He denies the accusations as politically motivated.

Aram Sargsyan, Vazgen Sargsyan's brother and successor who has for years alleged Kocharyan's possible involvement in the attack, cautioned later in October that Hunanyan's potential fresh testimony must not be taken at face value. He said Hunanyan could falsely incriminate the ex-president in hopes of being released from prison.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Turkey Mulls Establishing Naval Base in Cyprus

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Turkey may establish a naval base in Northern Cyprus (TRNC) as a group of experts are surveying the area to determine the location of such a base, reported the Milliyet daily Wednesday, December 25.

The plans to establish a naval base follow the TRNC's approval of the use of Geçitkale Airport as a base for Turkey's unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) operating in Eastern Mediterranean, over a request by Ankara.

The Turkish team of experts, which consists of members of the Turkish Armed Forces, are surveying Gazimagusa (Famagusta), an area 35 to 40 kilometers away from Iskele Strait, the report said.

The plans include the construction of new military quarters and naval facilities, but it does not include an ammunition store, the Turkish military forces in Northern Cyprus reportedly told the TRNC Office of the Prime Minister.

Red Cross Reps Meet with Armenian Prisoners in Baku

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Baku office have visited Armenian captives held in Azerbaijan, including Karen Ghazaryan and Arayik Ghazaryan, ICRC Armenia representative Zara Amatuni said.

"In December representatives of our organization have again visited all persons who have been arrested both in Nagorno Karabakh and in Azerbaijan. During the visit our representatives have inspected the treatment of the persons, the conditions of incarceration and assisted in maintaining communication with family members," Amatuni said.

Karen Ghazaryan is a mentally ill Armenian civilian from the village of Berdavan who accidentally crossed into Azerbaijani territory and was captured on July 15, 2018. He was tried and convicted by a kangaroo court on fabricated charges.

The other man, Arayik Ghazaryan [no relation], is a serviceman of the Artsakh military who crossed into Azerbaijan August 12, 2019 in circumstances yet to be determined. At one point authorities believed the soldier got lost while AWOL.

US Businessman Buys New York-Based Russian-Language broadcaster RTVI

MOSCOW (Reuters) — US businessman Mikayel Israyelyan has bought a majority stake in New York-based Russian-language television network RTVI from its Russian owner and plans to expand it in the United States, the channel said on December 17.

The sale marks the first time the network, one of the biggest Russian-language broadcasters outside of Russia, will be majority owned by a foreign shareholder, a spokesman said.

The network was owned by Ruslan Sokolov since 2012 and Israyelyan, an entertainment industry entrepreneur and chief executive of the Muse Lifestyle Group, has bought Sokolov's entire stake, the spokesman said.

RTVI, which broadcasts in Russian in more than 50 countries including the United States, said it plans to open bureaus in Washington and California, focusing on programming for Russian diaspora communities.

"There are nearly 7 million Russian-speaking people living in the United States today, who are interested in original high-quality content in their native language," Israyelyan, who has Armenian heritage, said in a statement.

"I see further business expansion opportunities on the West Coast, in attracting a new generation of viewers seeking to preserve its ties with the Russian culture and agenda," he added.

Baika Weekly Wins Annual PR Assoc. Diaspora Mass Media Award

YEREVAN — The fourth annual Armenian PR Association Diaspora Mass Media Award was given to the *Baika Weekly*, an Armenian-language sister publication of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, on December 19 at the Armenian General Benevolent Union building in Yerevan. According to the organizers, the goal of the awards is to elevate the role of specialists in public communications and encourage new technology and methods of communications, as well as to note omissions in the field.

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs won the digital PR of the year award.

The 2019 CONIFA European Soccer Cup being hosted in Artsakh was given the image PR of the year award, while two PR initiatives received awards: the field dedicated to the 2,800th anniversary

received political figures of the year award, while Armenia's Health Ministry won the state structure of the year award. Anna Naghdalyan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs won the press secretary award, while the Ararat Challenge of the

Aurora Humanitarian Initiative won the PR technology of the year award. Japanese Ambassador Jun Yamada won the friend of Armenia award.

Astghik Avetisyan, president of the Armenian PR organization (<https://www.armpr.org/>) and director of the PR and Communications Technology master's degree program at Yerevan State University's Department of Journalism, explained to the assembled audience of journalists, intellectuals and political figures that the selection process for the awards had three stages. The award committee was formed of local and international specialists, with German-Armenian speechwriter Dr. Wazrik Basil serving as president. Its members include Hrachuh Mary Poghosyan (Professor, University of California, Los Angeles, Head of the Center for the Promotion of Innovation and Research), Miro Khaznadyan (American-Armenian PR specialist and founder of GlobalHye & Associates), Naira Nazaryan (head of PR for Beeline Armenia), Khachik Galstyan (Doctor of Political Sciences and PR specialist), Ruzanna Ivanyan (Candidate of Political Sciences and Associate Professor, Department of Journalism and Media Technologies, St. Petersburg State University of Industrial Technology and Design) and Astghik Avetisyan.

Baika's award was accepted by Baydzig Kalaydjian, the Lebanese-Armenian member of its editorial team. She spoke briefly about the 97-year his-



Baydzig Kalaydjian receives the Baika PR award from Dr. Khachik Galstyan.

This year there were 16 categories of public relations awards. Nouneh Sarkissian, wife of the current president of Armenia, received the award of Woman of the Year. Singer, composer, actor and public figure Charles

sary of Yerevan donated by the Vardanyan Family Philanthropic Foundation and the "Bavakan E" [That's Enough] campaign against gender-based abortions by the Doping advertisement agency (<http://www.doping.am/>). The Public Radio of Armenia was awarded the Mass Media Award of Armenia for its Komitas 150



The plaque given to *Baika Weekly*

Aznavour was recognized as an Armenian "brand." The Golden Apricot Film Festival won the cultural PR award, while the Minecraft program of

the effectiveness of combat training of the 102nd Russian military base," Aysor.am cited the diplomat as saying.

Kopyrkin noted that there are plans to improve the infrastructure, including the social infrastructure, of



Astghik Avetisyan, president of the PR Association, presents the Japanese ambassador with his award

Years/Minutes program. The World Congress on Information Technology 2019 won the PR event of the year award.

President of the Artsakh Republic Bako Sahakyan and Armenian National Assembly deputy Naira Zohrapyan from the Prosperous Armenia Party both

tory of the publication and its encouragement of ties between Armenia and the diaspora, whether in the Soviet period or the present.

The Hakimyan Band, a group of adolescent musicians led by Irina Gasparyan, provided the musical entertainment for the evening and performed many of Aznavour's famous songs.

Russia to Revamp 102nd Military Base in Gyumri

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Russian Ambassador to Armenia Sergey Kopyrkin has said that Moscow is planning to increase the efficiency of the 102nd Russian military base in Gyumri in coming years. "Steps have been taken to increase

the effectiveness of combat training of the 102nd Russian military base," Aysor.am cited the diplomat as saying.

Kopyrkin noted that there are plans to improve the infrastructure, including the social infrastructure, of

the military base.

The ambassador said at a press conference on Tuesday, December 24 that the year 2019 has been marked with the intensive development of bilateral relations between Yerevan and Moscow.

Community News

NetCost Markets Bring Armenian Cuisine to Tri-State Armenians

By Lucine Kasbarian

NEW YORK — New Yorkers and New Jerseyans may patronize Carmel, Sevan, Olympia or Arenie groceries to buy staples such as Victor's String Cheese, Ohanyan's Basterma or Mediterranean Kitchen's Soujouk, all produced by Diasporan Armenians. But where can Tri-State Armenians go to purchase packaged fine foods from present-day Armenia?

One answer is the NetCost supermarket chain specializing in international food products, particularly from Russia, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics. With locations in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, NetCost carries hard-to-find Armenian products such as Noyan fruit compotes and juices; a wide assortment of fruit and vegetable preserves by Apri, Araks, ArtFood, Nomi and Noyan; and Brinza, Chanakh, Chechil and Lori Armenian cheese varieties. They also carry Sevan, Masis, Sasoon, Shushan and Lav lavash brands from California.

Founded by Sam Shnyder and his son Eduard, NetCost markets were established to serve immigrant communities from the former Soviet states. Later, partners Arthur Gavrilov and Alik Niyazov joined, and today, the markets are flourishing in the New York City boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island, as well as northern and central New Jersey, and Philadelphia.

Compared to American standards, the NetCost environment has an Eastern European flavor. On the social side, shopping there gives one the opportunity to observe interactions among customers that one would not see elsewhere in the US, as well as a little rudeness from patrons and staff.

NetCost markets carry practically everything American supermarkets do. Some products cost less than traditional markets charge while others cost the same or more. NetCost also features enormous and tantalizing hot and cold buffet sections; specialty game, poultry and fish, including smoked, cured and pickled varieties; international cheeses and spreads, and a large pickle selection. The store also has a bakery department and a wide array of European and gift chocolates. Some NetCost locations can also carry Kotayk beer, Jermuk mineral water and a variety of Armenian wines if they receive enough requests.

There have been some complaints about food quality control in the meat and cheese sections. Consumers should know that many food products are marked with a manufacturing date (not an expiration date). Those products are often good for 12 - 18 months from the date they were packaged.

A special promotion was launched in December 2019, "Explore the Cuisine and Culture of the Republic of Georgia." Other promotions have been or will be done for the cuisines of Ukraine and Russia. We encourage NetCost visitors to approach the management to request a similar promotion of Armenian cuisine and to assure them that if this occurs

Shoppers can visit <https://www.netcostmarket.com/netcost-market-locations/>



The Tsaghkashen school children

Knights and Daughters Of Vartan Prioritizing Education

YEREVAN — "If your plan for one year, plant rice. If your plan is for 10 years, plant trees. If your plan is for 100 years, educate children." Confucius.

The saying is what exemplifies the work of the Knights of Vartan since its founding 103 years ago. The very first scholarships were for the American-Armenian communities in the Middle East (Vahan Tekeyan School in Beirut, the Haigazian National School in Aleppo and others) as well as in the US to encourage Armenian youth to return to school after the memories of the horrible genocide of our people.

Since 1982 a new fund has been established to give scholarships each year to 5 or 6 deserving students throughout the US. This has enabled more than 160 Armenian students to have a better opportunity to attain an education.

After the 1988 earthquake, the Knights of Vartan moved their support to Armenia as well and education was put on the top of the list. Various programs were created and supported. Since 1997 the Knights of Vartan have been giving scholarships to 12 students in two major universities in Armenia, Yerevan State University and the National Polytechnic University of Armenia.

From 2018 another major university American University of Armenia (AUA) was added to the list of universities supported by the Knights of Vartan and for the past two years have been fully sponsoring students from the AUA. As Lilit Aветisyan, Knights and Daughters of Vartan 2019 Scholarship recipient mentioned, she aims to create a transparent legal system.

"I am very grateful to the Knights and Daughters of Vartan for making my education possible at AUA. By choosing to study at AUA, I wanted to be part of the great AUA community and take advantage of the opportunities and network that the university offers. I am very proud that in my country there are institutions like AUA. This university has become a real hub for not only education, but also connecting enthusiastic students to a larger community, which see EDUCATION, page 6



The Tsaghkashen school building

City of Miami Beach Officially Recognizes the Armenian Genocide

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. — On December 11, 2019, the City of Miami Beach, Florida passed a resolution officially recognizing the Armenian Genocide, reported FLArmenians.com.

The resolution was introduced by Miami Beach City Commissioner Mark Samuelian and passed unanimously.

"I am extremely proud of my Armenian heritage, and happy to have visited Armenia this summer and seen the wonderful countryside and its people. I commend the U.S. House of Representatives for condemning and recognizing the Armenian Genocide and proud of the City of Miami Beach for adopting this resolution," Mark Samuelian said in a statement to FLArmenians.com. "In addition, I congratulate the Armenian Genocide Committee, Inc. (AGC) for its efforts in commemorating the Armenian Genocide here in South Florida. This is a significant step in honoring the history of the Armenian people and their contributions," Samuelian said.

In 2017, Samuelian became the first Armenian American elected official in Miami-Dade County history.

"The City of Miami Beach is the first city in Miami-Dade County to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide, and I know I speak for the thousands of Armenian Americans in Miami-Dade when I say 'Thank You' to Commissioner Samuelian, Mayor Gelber, and the entire City Commission on this historic occasion," stated AGC Chairwoman Arsine Kaloustian. "As the Armenian American community in South Florida continues to grow, AGC will continue to build on our accomplishments and expand Armenian Genocide awareness, education, and affirmation in the Sunshine State," Kaloustian said.

Head of Armenia's National Science Laboratory to Speak At Ararat-Eskijian Museum

MISSION HILLS, Calif. — Dr. Ani Aprahamian, director of the Alikhanyan National Science Laboratory in Yerevan, Armenia, and Freimann Professor Experimental Nuclear Physics at the University of Notre Dame will give a talk on Sunday, January 12, at 4 p.m. titled "Science, Technology, and Education in Armenia" in the Sheen Chapel at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, 15105 Mission Hills Road.

This special program is presented by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) / Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues and the Ararat-Eskijian Museum.

Aprahamian was appointed director of A.I. Alikhanyan National Science Laboratory (Yerevan Physics Institute) in April 2018. She is the first woman and the first diasporan Armenian to hold this important position.

Aprahamian was born in Lebanon, and is a descendant of Armenian Genocide survivors. She holds a BA and PhD from Clark University, in Worcester, Mass. Aprahamian has given more than 200 invited talks at various national and international conferences and published more than 200 articles in refereed journals, book chapters, etc. She is active in numerous international and national advisory committees in nuclear science. Among the many honors recognizing her achievements, she is an elected fellow of Science Academy of Republic of Armenia, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the American Physical Society.

This event is open to the public and will be followed by a reception. For more information contact the Ararat-Eskijian Museum at Eskijian@ararat-eskijian-museum.com, or NAASR at hq@naasr.org.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Karagheusian Corp. Volunteer Visits Clinics in Armenia

YEREVAN/BOSTON — Dr. Myron Allukian Jr., an internationally-recognized public health expert and a past president of the American Public Health Association, was hosted by the Yerevan office of the Howard Karagheusian Commemorative Corporation (HKCC) from September 8-16, 2019.

During the week-long stay in Armenia, Allukian visited clinics in Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, and another charitable program he had supported recently. Allukian also gave lectures to the graduate students of the American University in Armenia and Yerevan State Medical University. The audience was greatly interested in learning more about current public health challenges, the role of the social determinants of health in our changing societies as well as the impact on the population's well-being by the health care system, new technologies, tobacco control, the internet, social media and big business. He stressed the importance of prevention for a younger, healthier Armenia.

During his meeting with the staff of the HKCC headquarters in Armenia — Children Dental Clinic in Nork district of Yerevan, Allukian shared his expertise and experience in the delivery of care to children and the importance of effective community prevention pro-

grams. "During his visit to the Nork clinic, Allukian took the time to examine and speak to current patients. With his delicate approach and kind personality, he won the trust of our young patients and their parents. Even now, months after his visit, those children still look for him when they stop by at our clinic," mentioned the country director of the Howard Karagheusian Medical Benevolent Social Organization, Dr. Alisa Badalyan.

The Karagheusian dental program provides free dental care to children 12 and under in 5 different Armenian communities — Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, Goris and Stepanakert with over 80,000 patient visits a year. The organization is now working with Allukian in developing and organizing a Children's Prevention Dental Program in Armenia. Within the scope of this new prevention program, schools in the student age group from 6 to 9 years old will first be chosen, and be the beneficiaries of a screening, preventive services and treatment as needed. The program aims at integrating all the possible social groups, professional institutions and state agencies, strengthening the cooperation between teachers, parents, and students over a single goal — improving the oral health of children thus contributing to the overall well-being of the younger generation in our community.

"The uniqueness of this project lies within its mission. Previously the assistance offered by the Nork clinic, was in the form of intervention of the existing health problems. To date, the HKCC retained highly qualified dentists, and provided state of the art treatment. The name of the HKCC is still associated with quality dental care launched nearly 25 years ago.

By launching this long-term prevention program, the HKCC, along with its partner organizations and the support of the Government of Armenia, starts implementing a proactive approach. Beginning in 2020, we will detect the risks and prevent the potential oral diseases among the children. And within a few years, all of us will wit-



Dr. Myron Allukian, Dr. Alisa Badalyan (L. from Dr. Allukian) and Dr. Amalia Daghamajyan (R. from Dr. Allukian) with Gyumri clinic staff.



Dr. Myron Allukian and the HKCC country director Dr. Alisa Badalyan (third from left, top) at a patient visit in Gyumri with Gyumri chef dentist Dr. Amalia Daghamajyan (second from L. top) and staff.

ness a considerable decrease in dental problems among our younger generation so they will have healthier and happier lives," stated Allukian.

"Our nation has a precious resource in the form of a talented Diaspora spread all over the Globe. We shall recognize and make the best of it to develop our tiny land and the communities we have around the world. After the independence of the Republic of Armenia, the Howard Karagheusian Commemorative Corporation founded a local entity, the Howard Karagheusian Medical Benevolent Organization in the capital of Armenia, where it started operations by offering quality pediatric dental care. The Professional Advisory Committee then consisted of three outstanding dental experts of Armenian descent — Dr. Myron Allukian Jr., Dr. Vartan Ghugasian and Dr. Raffi Baghdassarian. We are happy that Dr. Allukian is rejoining us in launching this new project contributing to the development of health care in Armenia. Within the scope of our cooperation, doctors with Armenian heritage like Dr. Allukian will be visiting Armenia and sharing their expertise and knowledge with our local specialists. The Howard Karagheusian Commemorative Corporation, has existed for almost a century serving Armenian children and their family worldwide and is recognized for its high-quality health-care and social assistance. We will continue our mission, and now with a growing number of supporters," stated Irina Lazarian, the Managing Director of the Howard Karagheusian Commemorative Corporation in the City of New York.

Founded in 1921 in New York, the Howard

Karagheusian Commemorative Corporation has a proud mission to assist socially and economically vulnerable Armenian children and their families around the globe, and it does so through providing health, education and economic assistance programs.

Dr. Myron Allukian Jr. is on the faculty of the Schools of Dental Medicine of Harvard, Boston University and Tufts and was elected in 1991 to the National Academy of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences. A Vietnam veteran and former dental director for the City of Boston, he is board certified in dental public health and an Honorary Fellow in the Royal Society of Health of Great Britain. Allukian was also an associate editor of the *Journal of Public Health Dentistry* and a current trustee of the New England College of Optometry. Allukian was also on the Board of Directors of the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA) and was the dental clinical director of the New England AIDS Education and Training Center. He has over 150 publications/abstracts and received over 50 awards including both the Distinguished Faculty and Distinguished Alumni Awards from Harvard, the Alumni Merit Award from the University of Pennsylvania, the Sedgwick Memorial Medal for Distinguished Service to Public Health from the American Public Health Association (He is the first dentist to receive this, APHA's highest award), recognition from the American Dental Association, U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Public Health Service. He received his BS in Psychology from Tufts College, his dental degree from the University of Pennsylvania and his MPH from the Harvard School of Public Health.

Knights and Daughters of Vartan Prioritizing Education

EDUCATION, from page 5

in turn will be the new generation of Armenian professionals and leaders — the backbone of our Armenia!"

The KofV leadership constantly is looking for new educational opportunities and funds. Hopefully more exciting scholarship opportunities will emerge in 2020.

Grand Commander Steven Adams, himself an educator, stated, "Education is the foundation on which the future of Armenia will be built".

To provide fellowships and support scholarly research and publication in the field of Armenian studies the Knights of Vartan established the Fund for Armenian Studies (FAS) in 1986. Since 2007 Knights of Vartan partners with the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) to select, evaluate and monitor these grants and/or fellowships to qualified scholars in Armenian studies.

The Center for Armenian Research and Publication (Armenian Research Center) was

initiated by then Knight, now Past Grand Commander Dr. Dennis Papazian in 1986 at the University of Michigan, Dearborn, and it quickly became one of the largest Knights of Vartan projects. Since then it has published books, research materials and reports; hosted speakers, organized database, produced radio and TV programs and maintains the most comprehensive collection of Armenian genocide resource materials available for researchers.

Not only has the Knights of Vartan supported education but since 1995 has also enabled students to have a better environment in which to study by renovating and building over 250 schools and kindergartens in Armenia. This was implemented through various projects such as the Adopt-A-School and Armenian Schools Support Project via World Bank Armenian Social Investment Fund (ASIF) and Armenian Territorial Development Fund (ATDF).

For more information about the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, visit <http://kofv.org>.



Ararat Lodge Scholarship recipients- 2019

COMMUNITY NEWS

From Garni to Universal to Abovyan: My Connection to the Homeland

By Seda Melkoni

LOS ANGELES – I am on a quest to help make improvements to School #8 in the City of Abovyan. More than 530 children attend this school. The entire school needs to be renovated and I have decided to partner with the Paros Foundation on this project. Here is my story.

In 2014, I traveled to Armenia for the first time to work on an American television mini-series production that would be filming in various parts of Armenia. One of the production days took place at the historic Garni Temple during the very early morning hours before the gates had opened to the public. When we wrapped production and the public was allowed entrance, I noticed several small school field trip groups arriving and one group in particular came all the way to the gates and after some conversation I noticed them preparing to leave, only to find out that they were not aware that there was now an entrance fee to the site and since none of the students or teachers could afford to pay, they had to leave. I offered to pay for the class, they graciously accepted and the students were able to have their field trip. The teachers requested a photo with me and the class to put up at their school in appreciation of what I thought was a very, very small gesture for such gratitude. I kept a copy of that photo and that experience stayed with me for several



Seda Melkoni and students from the school field trip to Garni Temple.



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years as constantly thought about what I could do to actually make an impact to schools, particularly on the grade school level, in the areas of need outside the capital city of Yerevan.

By 2017, I had my second daughter and was further motivated to create a way for them to be inspired and connected to their Armenian culture as well as understand the value of helping others. This was also the time I joined the production planning team at Universal Pictures Home Entertainment, where I met Tatevik Torossian. As we began to work together, I shared my experience in Armenia and learned that for years, Tatevik had been sending donations of school supplies to her childhood friend who was now a teacher at a school in great need of help in the city of Abovyan. Tatevik had also attended that same school as a child. This became the foundation of the project I had been thinking about for years. My husband and I established the ELSO Foundation, named after our daughters Elena and Sofia and began the process in seeking partners for our projects, beginning with me asking Tatevik to provide the introduction to her friend the teacher.

In the fall of 2018, I met with the staff of the Paros Foundation to discuss the Abovyan School project. Their team visited the school, assessed the leaking roofs, broken windows, struggling furnace and agreed to tackle this project. Paros listed the project on their website and we began raising the necessary funds to renovate the roofs over six of the school's buildings. By spring of this year, we had enough funds raised to change the roof on one of the buildings. The Paros team efficiently and effectively replaced the entire roof of this first building.

Moving forward, I plan to continue my appeal to my family and friends to help with the other five roofs needing repair. The students and staff are anxiously awaiting the repairs to solve the school's many leaks. I feel fortunate that I connected that morning with students at Garni and through this effort, I hope to connect others to students and the staff at School #8 in Abovyan.

The Paros Foundation was launched in 2006 and has implemented more than \$6.7 million worth of projects in Armenia through its unique model of philanthropy and community partnership. These projects are located throughout the country-with the majority of work focused in Gyumri and in the Tavush Region, along the border with Azerbaijan. Thanks to the generous support of Paros Founder and Chairman, Roger Strauch, all administrative expenses are underwritten, allowing 100 percent of donor contributions to be allocated in their entirety to the projects. To help support this project, visit www.parosfoundation.org and search for the Abovyan School.



OBITUARY

Sirvart Kaloustian: Custom Dressmaker to Philadelphia Elite

By Wendy Ruderman

PHILADELPHIA (*Philadelphia Inquirer*) — Sirvart “Silva” Kaloustian, a Paris-trained fashion designer who bedazzled her Main Line clientele with custom-made creations, lived on her own terms. And that’s exactly how she died on Christmas Eve — at age 89 of pneumonia — breathing on her own, unaided by a ventilator at her insistence, with a harpist performing in her room at Bryn Mawr Hospital.

By her side were her three children, five grandchildren, and one of her two great-grandchildren.

“It was heavenly,” her 60-year-old daughter Maral said. “With the harp music playing so beautifully, it felt like the angels came and took her away.”

Kaloustian, of Wayne, was indefatigable. Until the previous week, when she became ill, she got up at 5 a.m. each day to walk four or five miles before heading to her Main Line gym to lift weights and then to her clothing design shop, Couture Silva, on County Line Road in Bryn Mawr. She drove herself.

Mrs. Kaloustian was born in 1930 in Aleppo, Syria, where her parents had settled after being forced to leave their village in Armenia during the genocide of 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman Empire.

As a child, she made clothes for her dolls from fabric scraps, and her mother recognized her talent and urged her to nurture it. As a young teen, she traveled alone to Paris to study fashion design.

In Syria, her family lived among Armenians displaced from their village, Malatya. She met her future husband, Krikor Kaloustian, at a community picnic in 1947 when she was 16. “My father saw my mother and he knew right away,” Maral Kaloustian said.

She married at 19 and moved to Beirut, Lebanon, where her new husband had opened a leather shop. Mrs. Kaloustian supplemented the family’s income by making dresses for friends.

When her husband died of pancreatic cancer in 1967, Mrs. Kaloustian was 37 with three children, ages 7, 14, and 17. Her then-17-year-old son, Vatche, wanted to attend college in the United States. “My mother said, ‘OK, we’ll all go together,’” her daughter said. Mrs. Kaloustian had made a dress for the wife of the US ambassador to Lebanon, and that woman helped guide the family through the immigration process.

The family arrived in the Philadelphia area in May 1970, and Kaloustian took a job with a tailor in Ardmore. She saved enough money to buy a home in Drexel Hill. She learned English by watching soap operas on TV while doing alterations from home. She spoke four other languages: Armenian, Arabic, Turkish, and French.

She opened her own design shop in Bryn Mawr in 1972. She catered to Main Line businesswomen, socialites, and entertainers, including an opera singer, although she was careful



Sirvart Kaloustian

not to disclose her client list.

“Many accomplished women would wear her clothing,” said longtime friend Karen Barton, 76, of Bryn Mawr. “I didn’t push her for names, even though I was always curious. She was discreet.”

She displayed a photograph in her shop of one of her clients, a local lawyer, posing with President Bill Clinton. She’s wearing an outfit Kaloustian had made for her to meet the presi-

dent, Barton said.

Kaloustian ordered fine fabrics such as silk and lace from France that cost up to \$1,000 a yard. She made one-of-a-kind ball gowns and wedding dresses, creating her own patterns. She loved seeing photos of her clients wearing her creations in the society pages of the *Inquirer*, according to Barton, who befriended Kaloustian nearly 40 years ago at the Main Line Nautilus in Haverford, where both were members.

Upon visiting her shop, Barton said, she would often find Kaloustian blaring Armenian music from the iPhone that her daughter had bought her. When home, she whizzed around the kitchen, whipping up Armenian dishes.

Mrs. Kaloustian visited Armenia for the first time in 2002. She longed to return and shortly after Maral retired as a vice president at Bryn Mawr Trust, they traveled there in September.

Kaloustian was active in St. Gregory’s Armenian Apostolic Church in Roxborough, where she sang in the choir every Sunday.

In addition to daughter Maral and son Vatche, she is survived by another daughter, Roubina Yeremian; five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Olga Proudian, AIWA Co-Founder

WATERTOWN — Olga Proudian, formerly of Watertown and Westbrook, Maine, died on December 22 at the Meadow Green Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Waltham, Massachusetts. She was 92.

Olga was born in Bucharest, Romania on September 28, 1927 to Gayane and Paruir Levonian. Her father died when she was very young. Shortly afterward her mother married General Dro Kanayan, a well-known figure in Armenian political and military circles who had been exiled by the Soviets following their occupation of the Armenian Republic in 1923. Gen. Dro raised Olga as his own daughter, but in 1943 their family life, which now included her brother, Martin, was shattered as Soviet forces advanced on Bucharest. The family fled to Germany, then a Romanian ally, where they lived out the war.

In 1946, the Kanayans moved to Beirut, Lebanon, where Gen. Dro worked tirelessly to re-build Armenian national identity. In 1947, Olga married Dr. Paul O. Proudian, and the entire family emigrated to America, eventually settling in Westbrook, Maine, where Dr. Proudian’s medical skills and fluent French served a large Franco-American community.

When not tending to the many needs of her growing children, Olga immersed herself in the Portland area’s cultural and intellectual worlds, including the Portland Symphony, Victoria Society, World Affairs Council, and Alliance Francaise. She was regarded as a consummate host, fundraiser, and raconteuse, and her international past and fluency in seven languages made her something of a social and cultural icon. Beautiful, stylish, and bubbly, she was equally at home among European diplomats or her beloved Westbrook neighbors, whose children were regular guests at her dinner table. An outstanding cook, abundant food was always a central feature of any event Olga planned.

In 1984, she moved back to Watertown. The Armenian Church became a central part of her life. In 1990, she co-founded the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA). In

2008, AIWA created a scholarship in her name to fund the education of Armenian women studying international relations.

In 2000, at the invitation of the Republic of Armenia, she and her family accompanied the transfer of General Dro’s remains from Watertown back to his homeland, where he was re-buried with high honors on a hilltop overlooking his most famous battle victory. The recognition and respect bestowed by the Armenian government on the man she knew as her father was one of the most cherished memories of her life.

Olga Proudian is survived by her son John and his partner Sis Oliver, of Nahant, Mass.; her son Paul and his wife Julie, of Gray, Maine; a daughter Nina and her husband Vartkes, of Westford, Mass., and her beloved grandchildren Sonya, Nairi, and Armen. A third son, Dro, passed away in 1995.

Funeral services was held at St. Stephen’s Armenian Apostolic Church, 38 Elton Ave.



Watertown on Friday, December 27. Interment followed at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge.

Harry Terzian

Devoted to Church, Family

DETROIT — Harry Terzian, age 86, passed away on December 19, 2019.

Born in Detroit on August 14, 1933 to Alexan and Gadarinee (Baliozian) Terzian, he leaves behind his wife, Alice (Hovnanian) Terzian, his “brother,” Archbishop Paren Avedikian, his children, Alex, Kim and David Najarian, and Kathy and Tom Steck, and his grandchildren, Alexana and Lance Frahm, Cecile Steck, and Mara, and Myles Najarian.

He was predeceased by his sister, Emily Juliet Terzian.

He was a highly revered and respected member of the community who worked tirelessly for his church and family.

Services were held on December 22 at St. John Armenian Church. Interment followed at Woodlawn Cemetery.

Arrangements were made by the Edward Korkoian Funeral Home.



Mariam Zakarian

WATERTOWN — Mariam Zakarian of Watertown died on December 19, 2019.

She was the daughter of the late John and Sarah Zakarian, sister of the late George, Richard and Elizabeth Zakarian, and aunt of Richard and Charlotte Zakarian. She is also survived by many loving friends and neighbors.

Funeral services were held at the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, 558 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown on Monday, December 23. Burial followed at Ridgelawn Cemetery, Watertown.



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Bazarbashian Family, Paoli, PA \$100
Berdj and Margaret Kiladjian, Winchester, MA \$100
Theodore T. Touloukian, Boston, MA \$100
Stephen Philibosian Foundation, Indian Wells, CA \$100

All best wishes
Edward and Pamela Avedisian
Lexington, MA

*The Bazarbashian Family wishes
you a very Merry Christmas and a
joyous New Year.*
Paoli, PA

Best Christmas wishes
Harry and Janice Mazadoorian
Kensington CT

*Merry Christmas to the Spectator, the
first Armenian weekly.*
Joe and Jill Stein
Indian Wells, CA



Armenian Genocide Education at Major Social Studies Conference

AUSTIN, Texas – At this year’s National Council for the Social Studies Conference (NCSS), November 21 to 23, the Genocide Education Project (GenEd) provided high school history teachers from around the country two training workshops related to the Armenian Genocide.

Led by GenEd’s education director, Sara Cohan, the half-day workshop, “The Fundamentals of Genocide and the Armenian Case,” guided teachers through the history of the Armenian Genocide and how it became the archetype for modern-era genocides that followed. Using the 10 stages of genocide, a formula for how genocide is prepared, carried out and leaves long-lasting repercussions, Cohan demonstrated the parallels with other genocides.

“I was gratified by the strong turnout the teachers’ genuine interest in incorporating these lessons into their world history, genocide



The Genocide Education Project both in Austin, Texas

and human rights curriculum,” Cohan said.

GenEd’s geography-themed workshop, “Mapping Genocide: Historical Geographical Information Systems and the Armenian Case,” showed history and geography teachers a novel way of teaching about genocide, using an online platform, ArcGIS StoryMaps, to allow students to engage more deeply with historical topics by creating their own multi-media maps. Cohan demonstrated how students can plot key locations, events, images and videos related to the Armenian Genocide or other historical events into their own “StoryMap.”

This year, the NCSS conference, the largest and oldest social studies conference in the nation, was combined with the regional Texas Council for the Social Studies conference. “After speaking with Texas teachers over the past several years, we learned that many are introducing the topic of the Armenian Genocide in their geography classes during a curriculum unit on human migration,” Cohan said. “So demonstrating StoryMaps seemed like a natural fit.”

Throughout the three-day conference weekend, GenEd also provided one-on-one consultations about teaching materials and methods in the classroom to scores of high school history teachers at GenEd’s exhibit booth.



Sara Cohan’s workshop



COMMUNITY NEWS

Annual COAF Gala Raises Over

NEW YORK – More than 400 guests from around the world gathered at Cipriani 25 Broadway in support of the 16th Annual Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) Holiday Gala on December 14. This year’s benefit surpassed previous fundraising numbers with more than \$6 million raised in support of COAF’s programs in 51 villages, as well as the cutting-edge SMART Center built in the Lori region of Armenia.

The evening was hosted by Emmy Award-winning anchor Araksya Karapetyan from FOX 11’s “Good Day LA” in Los Angeles. Actress Andrea Martin, known for emceeding most of COAF’s galas, was unable to join this year due

to a special performance. A personal video message from Martin welcoming Karapetyan and guests was shown just before Karapetyan took the stage. In her opening remarks, Karapetyan spoke of being born in Gyumri during the earthquake of 1988 and emigrating to the US shortly after.

In his address, COAF Founder and Chairman Garo Armen touched on today’s Armenia whose leadership is setting a high bar. He spoke of the newfound hope and energy in Armenia, marked by respect and love among the people for their country. Armen emphasized that there is a short window to build on this momentum, making it critical that we invest in the current generation so that they build on the foundations that are rapidly forming.

This year’s Humanitarian Award was presented to Jack and Zarig Youredjian of Los Angeles in recognition of their generous support for various COAF initiatives throughout rural Armenia. Both come from families committed to community life and helping those less fortunate. In addition to supporting Armenia, their philanthropic efforts also help the impoverished in Africa and Southeast Asia, as well as the homeless in Los Angeles. In his remarks, Jack Youredjian recalled how his late mother would visit and live with families who were forced to live in containers in the aftermath of the Spitak Earthquake and how helping those in need is ingrained in his upbringing.

Speakers included Donna Kalajian Lagani, former senior vice president and publishing director overseeing *Cosmo*, *Women’s Health*, *17* and Global Brand Licensing, who currently oversees the Hearst Foundation. She spoke about her Armenian parents teaching her the importance of family, education and giving back to those less fortunate. Her parents wanted her to live her full potential and that is what COAF is doing for the children of



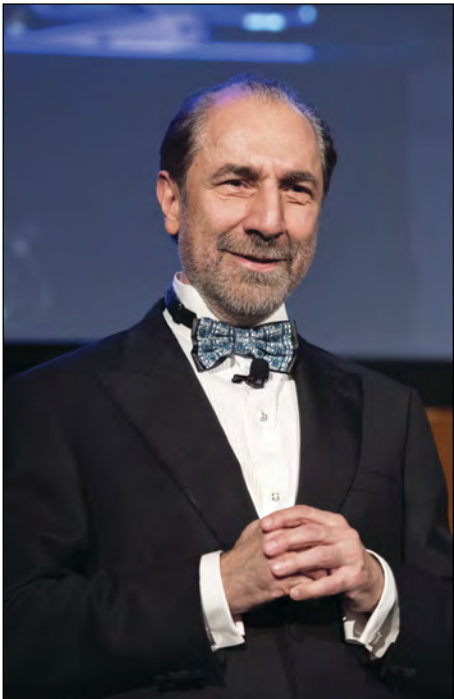
2019 Humanitarian Award Recipients, Zarig & Jack Youredjian

Armenia as well.

Celebrity makeup artist Hrush Achemyan of Los Angeles also spoke on how grateful she is for all that she has accomplished in her career due to the endless opportunities offered in the US. She stressed how COAF’s mission is so vital in providing youth with opportunities for advancement and allowing the new generation of Armenia to reach its full potential.

The evening featured four special guests from Armenia. Seventeen-year-old violinist Polina Sharafyan kicked off the program with a pow-

erful performance, with sixteen-year-old vocalist Kristina Zakaryan performing a heartwarming medley of Komitas songs. Guests also learned firsthand about the impact COAF has made on the lives of two young women from rural Armenia. The first was from eighteen-year-old Sateny Petrosyan from the village of Debet where the COAF SMART Center is located. The teenager, currently participating in a study abroad program in Texas, spoke on how COAF changed her life by teaching her English. She recalled how she would visit the construction



COAF Founder & Chairman Garo Armen



Musicians and COAF youth from Armenia Polina Sharafyan, Manushak Avagyan, Sateny Petrosyan, Kristina Zakaryan



Mark Semerjian, Hasmik Dombalagian, Ani Semerjian, COAF Boardmember Michael Aram and Aret Tikiryan



Daniel and Ludmila Sahakians, COAF Supporters with Founder and Chairman, Garo Armen



Peter Sarkessian and Family

COMMUNITY NEWS

\$6 Million for Rural Armenia



Cipriani 25 Broadway



Emmy Award-winning anchor Araksya Karapetyan, Host of 16th Annual COAF Holiday Gala

communities where COAF launched initiatives. Manushak spoke on how she found inspiration in the two female COAF doctors who would visit Lernagog while she was growing up, along with discovering Garo Armen’s work in immunotherapy. This is what led her to become a doctor specializing in pediatric hematology and oncology.

World-famous pianist Tigran Hamasyan and cellist Artyom Manukyan delivered the grand finale of the evening with a special performance, presenting original compositions influenced by Armenian folk music and jazz traditions.

Famous auctioneer Gabriel Butu conducted both a live art auction as well as a live pledge auction. Every dollar raised at the Gala will go directly towards COAF’s infrastructure, education, health, social and economic programs in villages, as well as the COAF SMART Center.

site of the COAF SMART Center daily after class and dream of the day it would open and change their lives forever. The last speaker from Armenia was Manushak Avagyan from the village of Lernagog, which was one of the first



COAF youth from Armenia Manushak Avagyan with COAF Founder & Chairman Garo Armen



Violinist Polina Sharafyan



Hrush Achemyan of StyledbyHrush



Vahe and Hasmik Dombalagians and Friends



Arts & Living

Soul of Gomidas Shines Through a Glorious Christmas Concert at Saint Vartan Cathedral

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK – “The voice of Gomidas is the undisguised heartbeat of the Armenian people.” Those are the words of one of the most ardent students of the beloved priest-musician, who preserved, shaped, and defined our ancient musical history.

New York’s St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral was aglow on Friday, December 6, with festive spiritual and folk music by the revered master, during a concert by the Gomidas Choir.

The evening went forward under the auspices of Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

The Gomidas Choir celebrated its 61st anniversary with a memorable concert dedicated to the 150th anniversary of Gomidas’ birth. Before a packed audience, artistic director Kris Kalfayan [who has conducted the choir for 38 years] led the current roster of dedicated vol-



Samuel White, left, with Kris Kalfayan

unteer choir singers in a program of masterpieces.

Following the *Hayr Mer*, the concert of Gomidas compositions began with the youngest member of the choir, Andrew Varujan Yenicag, singing the *Hymn* of the “Washing of the Feet” service [Aysor Ganknetzav]. Yenicag is the grandson of longtime Gomidas Choir member Varoujan Arslanian.

Several meditative Christmas hymns followed, including the heart-breaking *Lament Over Judas* [Sird Im Sasani], the soulful *O Amazing Mystery* [Ov Zarmanali], and the majestic *Sanctus* [Sourp Sourp].

In a contrasting mood, the program shifted to songs of joy and celebration, including *King of Goodness* [Takavor Parov], and *En Teezan*.

The New Docta Ensemble took the crowd into the vibrant atmosphere of the Armenian villages with such standards as *Song of the Partridge* [Gakavi Yerkuh], the soulful *The Crane* [Groong] dedicated to the national bird of Armenia, and *It’s Spring* [Karoun Eh].

The ensemble, co-founded in 2013 by singer Solange Merdinian, violinist Sami Merdinian, and cellist Yves Dharamraj, features a group of classical musicians who perform in live concerts to “inspire children of all backgrounds to nurture the next generation of musical talent, and to build cultural bridges.” Past members Suliman Tekalli [on violin] and Angela Pickett [on viola] joined in this performance.

The song of farm labor and its accomplishments *Song of Threshing* [Gali Yerk] was sung

see CONCERT, page 14



Hrair Hawk Khatcherian

Photographer Khatcherian Brings Cilicia, Armenia to Life

ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS, NJ. – The symbolic and mystic lands of Cilicia were brought to life for the Greater New York metro area by international photographer Hrair Hawk Khatcherian on Thursday, December 19, in an event sponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association.

An artist whose photographs vividly capture the Armenian history and heritage, Khatcherian has embarked on fruitful yet risky adventures over the last three decades to reach the heights of Armenia, Artsakh, Jerusalem and most

currently Cilicia, in order to convey these rare images to the rest of the world.

While his Armenian culture connects him to the region, it was a book by Robert W. Edwards, *The Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, that inspired him to venture into Cilicia and commit himself to his latest publication of the once ancient Armenian Kingdom that is now in present-day Turkey. Within its pages, Edwards focuses on the analysis, topography and history of the forts in this significant Armenian settlement, whereas Khatcherian captures his audience through bold and colorful images, inviting a new audience to learn about Cilicia.

“This book is unique in the sense that it spans 22 years of constant travels, research and photography in Cilicia to access fortresses that are very difficult to receive permission to photograph,” said Khatcherian. His upcoming publication dedicated to Cilicia will be his 16th and will also include photos of Armenian coins minted by Armenian kings as well as maps and manuscripts of Cilicia printed throughout the centuries.

Sharing highlights from his photo collection of Cilicia during his video presentation, Khatcherian provided commentary on the challenges of photographing in the region, including the difficulties of reaching the fortresses and churches that are located atop mountains and in areas covered with forests and woods.

“In order to get the best shots, I take risks,” said Khatcherian, who hikes for hours to reach the fortresses, weighed down by two cameras while dodging snakes in slippery and wet weather. He has even endured rocks being pelted at him by locals due to his activity in the region. Nevertheless, he remains focused on his timely mission to photograph the fortresses before the Armenian inscriptions on the edifices are erased.

Khatcherian said he finds that art is a powerful way to connect with his Armenian ancestry and he hopes he will inspire the upcoming generations to learn more about their shared history.

“Visual images like maps, photographs and film are easily absorbed by the human brain,” he said. “As a kid it was almost impossible for me to learn Armenian history because of the lack of images in our textbooks and that the majority, if not all the teachers, had never set foot in the areas they were trying to teach us.”

In order to fully encompass the scope of the ancient Armenian lands, Khatcherian has traveled to Armenia over 150 times to photograph a multitude of

see PHOTOGRAPHY, page 13

By Taleen Babayan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Posthumous Festschrift in Honor Of Academician Barkhudaryan

A Wide Glance to Armenian Worldwide Presence – from Javahk to Oceania

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN – A new anthology of academic papers, *Collection of the Conference Papers Dedicated to the 90th Anniversary of Academician Vladimir Barkhudaryan*, was published recently by the Institute of History, National Academy of Sciences of Republic of Armenia (NASRA). The conference was held at the same Institute on September 27, 2017. The editor of the volume is Academician Ashot Melkonyan, it is designed by Gevorg Stepanyan, Artsvi Bakhchinyan and Elizabeth Tajiryan.

Academician Vladimir Barkhudaryan (1927-2017), historian, doctor of historical sciences, professor, Honored Scientist of the Republic of Armenia, organizer of academic life, was a well-known and esteemed figure among the academic circles of Armenia and Diaspora. He started work at the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR in 1958: as a scientific secretary (1959-1963), senior scientific fellow (1963-1967), and deputy director (1967-1990). At the same time, starting in 1975, he taught at Yerevan State University. From 1990 to 2016, he was the head of the department of Armenian communities and Diaspora of the Institute. Barkhudaryan occupied high position at NASRA: member of the Presidium, academic secretary of the NASRA, vice president and academic secretary, vice president and academic secretary of the Department of Armenology, Humanities and Social Sciences. The main areas of his research were the history of Armenian communities, Armenian-Russian relations, Armenian historiography and Armenian culture in Middle Ages. Barkhudaryan was the author of more than 100 scientific works, including school textbooks on the history of the Armenian people, as well as monographs on various Armenian communities of Russia.

Eighteen articles in the volume are in Armenian, but there are also three articles in French and one in Italian. The majority of the contributors are researchers of the department of Armenian communities and Diaspora of NASRA. They all have English summaries; some are with illustrations.

The volume opens by the words of appreciation of armenologist, philosopher, Archbishop Levon Zekian, entitled “A bouquet of Flowers on your Grave, Dear Valodia,” an appreciation of the academic and personal qualities of the late historian. Archbishop Zekian, a lifelong close friend of Barkhudaryan, shares his personal memories about his “older brother.”

The first article, “Pages from the History of Aghkyorpi Village, the Birthplace of the Academician Vladimir Barkhudaryan” by Armen Asatryan, covers the partial history of the Aghkyorpi village in Marneuli in Georgia, on the northern side of Lalvar Mountain. The village is an ancient Armenian settlement which used to

see ANTHOLOGY, page 15



Prof. Vladimir Barkhudaryan



COMMUNITY NEWS

Battle of Marash Is Topic of Book by Author Ellen Chesnut



Ellen Sarkisian Chesnut

ALAMEDA, CALIF. — Now residing in Alameda, author Ellen Sarkisian Chesnut's second non-fiction book, *We Armenians Survived! Battle of Marash 1920*, is available for purchase at the Amazon Kindle Store. The book consists of eye-witness accounts of civilians caught between the opposing forces of Turkish combatants against the French army.

"I knew my mother's people, the Shamlians, Topalians and Berberians of Marash, Turkey lost relatives to heartless torture before being summarily killed but luckily they survived as did an adolescent, Lydia Bagdikian, not a family member, whose memoir is featured in the book."

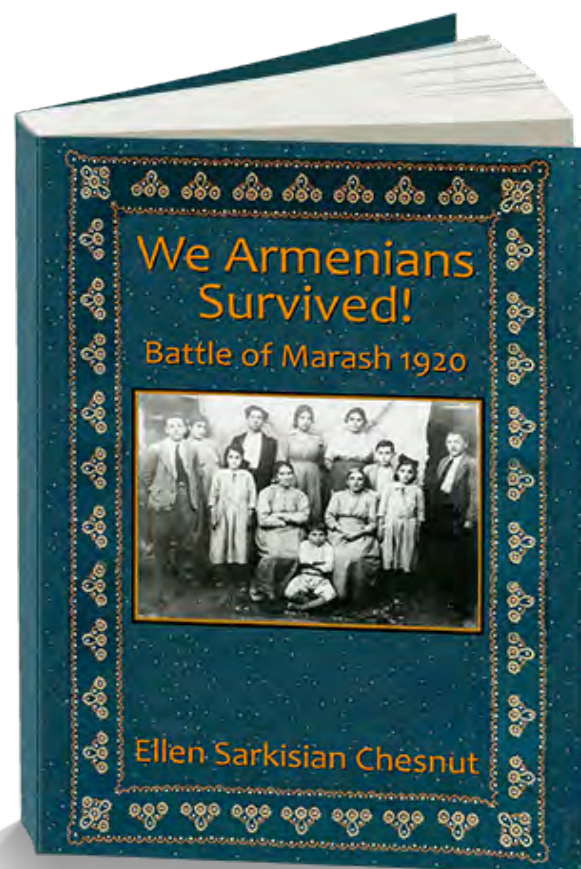
Chesnut first learned of her family's experiences during the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923 when she was an adolescent. She always wanted to let readers of history know the truth of what happened. Chesnut succeeded in this with the publication, to overwhelmingly positive reviews, of her first book about her father published in 2014.

Coincidentally, the United States House of Representatives on Tuesday, October 29, overwhelmingly passed legislation (RES 296) by a 405-to-11 vote officially designating the 1915 mass killings of an

estimated 1.5 million Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman Empire as a genocide.

Her previous book was *Deli Sarkis: The Scars He Carried, A Daughter Confronts The Armenian Genocide and Tells Her Father's Story*.

Readers can purchase Chesnut's book at the Amazon Kindle Store and learn more about Chesnut on her website: <http://ellensarkisianchesnut.com/>.



Photographer Khatcherian Brings Cilicia, Armenia to Life

PHOTOGRAPHY, from page 12
regions, during all four seasons, from the picturesque mountains of Artsakh to the biblical Mount Ararat to the honey and fruits throughout the Lori region. Dormant volcanoes, lakes, and significant sites, such as the Arax River, and all its accompanying natural beauty, have propelled his work.

Khatcherian's title of "Captain," that he earned as a pilot has come in handy during his travels, particularly to Cilicia, since he had to journey through Georgia down into Kars to step foot on the soil. He also used his skillful navigation skills to access hidden and out of reach sites.

"I love adventure and discovery," he said. His long-term goal is to upload his entire photo library, estimated at one million, so the public can conduct research online in order to access

this "treasure trove" of fortresses, monasteries, churches, villages, coins, needlework and manuscripts, among many other objects.

In addition to his photographs, Khatcherian presents in exhibitions and gives lectures around the globe. Other acclaimed books from his collection include, *Artsakh: A Photographic Journey*, *Karabakh: 100 Pictures*, *Yergir, 100 (1915-2015)*; *Khatchkar*, and *Armenia: Heaven on Earth*.

Born in Beirut, Lebanon from descendants who hailed from Zeitoun, Khatcherian moved to Canada in 1984 where he was an active participant in Diasporan activities, particularly in relation to the Artsakh liberation movements in the late 1980s. A turning point in his life occurred 30 years ago when he was diagnosed with terminal cancer. As a way to ease his pain during his illness and subsequent treatment, he plas-

tered the walls of his hospital room with photos of Armenia and Artsakh. Since his full recovery, Khatcherian has dedicated his life to snapping photos he could share with the world.

"I want people from Japan to Antarctica to understand what kind of a nation we are," he said.

"Hrair's unwavering commitment to documenting a wide range of Armenian treasures is a testament to our heritage's rich history," said Hilda Hartounian, chair of the TCA Greater New York Executive Board. "This event marked Tekeyan Greater New York's fifth collaboration with him, and we look forward to building on our legacy of supporting similar cultural endeavors in the future."

TCA Greater New York Executive Secretary Shoghig Medzadourian said she was "impressed by Hrair's courage and perseverance to visit Cilicia and take photos of our Armenian landmarks."

"I was mesmerized by the quality and clarity of the photographs projecting the beauty of Cilicia," said Medzadourian, who was moved by the images and wondered how life was once led behind those fortresses. "These photos serve as proof and document our powerful Armenian Kingdom that existed in Cilicia, reflecting our rich culture and history."

Upcoming events on the cultural calendar for TCA Greater New York include a Children's

Song & Dance Show starring Joelle from Montreal, Canada in her debut show in New Jersey on Saturday, January 11, 2020 at the Hovnanian School in New Milford, NJ. Tickets are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door (children ages 2 and under are free). Light reception



Hrair Hawk Khatcherian addresses the crowd.



Photographic Exhibition and Book Presentation For Samvel Sevada

Organized by
TCA, Pasadena-Glendale Chapter

Thursday, January 9, 2019
7:30 p.m.

At TCA, Beshgeturian Center
(1901 N. Allen Avenue, Altadena, CA 91001)

The Exhibition will be open on
Friday, January 10, from 5-10 p.m.
And on Saturday, January 11, from 10:00-12:00 a.m.

Everyone is invited Reception will follow



TCA Greater New York Executive Board members with Hrair Hawk Khatcherian (l-r) Vartan Ilanjan, Hrair Hawk Khatcherian, Hilda Hartounian, Barkev Kalayjian and Shoghig Medzadourian

Soul of Gomidas Shines Through a Glorious Christmas Concert at Saint Vartan Cathedral

CONCERT, from page 12
with joyous understanding by Samuel White. Solange Merdinian offered a lilting Oror: a tender song to lull an infant to sleep. Zevart Balikjian, with heartfelt passion, shared Baruyr Sevag’s “Unsilenceable Belfry,” a powerful poetic tribute to Gomidas which she had translated. She brought many in the audience to tears as she recited the verse: “You are the sacred pool that purified our souls, a priest of our lyrical poems, magus of our Armenian notes: Our constantly and permanently awake belfry that will never cease to ring.”

A ‘Jazzical’ Revelation
Two of the most renowned Armenian composers, Aram Khachaturian and Alan Hovhanness, stated that the “foundation of Armenian music rests with Gomidas.” Indeed, no one has evoked the raw beauty of Armenian village life like Gomidas, whose legacy will live on for the ages. His adaptability to all styles of music was exemplified in an amazing segment of the concert featuring acclaimed pianist, producer, and arranger Joel A. Martin. Martin, who has collaborated with such luminaries as Broadway’s Alan Menken and the Metropolitan Opera’s Kathleen Battle, presented a pianistic evocation of Gomidas’ folk music, titled “Jazzical Gomidas: Fire of Passion.” The



Solange Merdinian

December 6 concert marked its world premiere. In a nuanced performance which garnered a standing ovation, Martin seamlessly connected several Gomidas folk melodies with superb artistry and understanding. His innovative blending of traditional and jazz styles is certain to attract a wider audience to the incomparable genius of Gomidas.



Suliman Tekalli on the violin

One of Gomidas most soul-searing and universal songs, *Homeless* [Andouni], was sung by Alvard Mayilyan with raw powerful emotion. Ruthann Turekian softly sang *Come Breeze* [Hov Arek] – with both singers accompanied by Martin.

Awesome Power of Music
Among the concert soloists were Alyne Corrigan, Milagros Albrecht, Anoush Givlekian, Berdj Feredjian, Garabed Koroglu and Talar Minoyan. A joyous *Hoy Nazanim*, accompanied by Joel Martin and the New Docta Ensemble, concluded



Members of the Gomidas Choir

the inspirational Christmas concert, compelling the listeners to rise in a sustained ovation for the Gomidas Choir, its talented and hard-working director Kris Kalfayan, and all the participants. In his message, Findikyan called the concert “exuberant,” expressing his appreciation to all the who took part in the special event. “Tonight,” he stated enthusiastically, “we have experienced an awesome power of music, stirring us at the deepest level, just as the church lifts us to our highest level. Gomidas, the unsurpassed priest, has given us the possibility to be agents of that power.” The concert was also a time to recall the devoted founders of the choir, including Isahag Aprahamian, Dr. Ara Bohcalian, and Onnig Hepshen, all of whom were members of the Gomidas Choir in its birthplace of Istanbul. During a splendid post-concert reception in the Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium, 99-year-old Dikran Cherchian – who has sung with the Gomidas Choir for 64 years – declared that Samuel White’s rendition of Gali Yerk was “heavenly.” Cherchian noted that “it is a very



Conductor Kris Kalfayan



Cellist Yves Dharamraj



ARTS & LIVING

A Wide Glance to Armenian Worldwide Presence – from Javakhk to Oceania

ANTHOLOGY, from page 12

be part of Armenian Gugark province. In the early Soviet times the village was part of Armenia, but at the beginning of the 1930s, according to the decision of the Georgian-Azerbaijani minor authority of the Transcaucasian SFSR, along with the neighboring Armenian village of Chanakhchi, it was given to the Republic of Georgia. These Armenian villages have been severely suffering because of Stalin's illegal redrawing of that part of the border. Barkhudaryan was born in this village, and nowadays there are representatives of the Barkhudaryan family living in Aghkyorpi.

Gevorg S. Stepanyan's "Cultural Contribution of the Artsakh Armenians to the Development of Shirvan and Apsheron (A Short Review)" shows how the Armenians being ancient inhabitants of the left bank of the Kura River, contributed to the social, political, economic, educational and cultural life of the region. Historical sources testify that Armenian influence on the cultural developments of Shirvan and Apsheron was mostly spread from Great Armenia's north-eastern provinces Artsakh and Utik.

"Tumanian's Understanding of the Literature of Diaspora" by Susanna Hovhannisyanyan (Institute of Literature of NAS of RA) touches the insights of poet Hovhannes Tumanyan's about Armenian literature in Armenia and Diaspora. Before Tumanyan no one spoke clearly about the peculiarities of the literature of Armenian communities and the motherland; the poet was convinced that it was necessary to understand the literature of communities in the context of the same national culture.

Ani Fishenkian's "The Armenian Red Cross of Aleppo (Historical Review)" sheds light on the history of the Armenian National Red Cross of Aleppo, founded in 1919 due to the efforts of several national figures of Aleppo, the main goal of which was to support all needy people (in the fields of education and health), along with other humanitarian organizations. The article is based on archive materials preserved at the Armenian Prelacy of Peria.

"Three Armenian-Latin Funeral Inscriptions of the 18th Century From Three Churches in Rome" (in Italian) by Anna Sirinian (University of Bologna, Italy) presents three Armenian-Latin funerary inscriptions that were composed during the 18th century and have been preserved in three different churches in the heart of Rome. In addition to the transcription and translation of their texts, an attempt is made to discern the reasons why the three individuals named in these inscriptions were buried in these places rather than in the church of St. Mary the Egyptian, which was the center of the Armenian nation at Rome in that period.

"The Armenian Presence in Oceania" by Artsvi Bakhchinyan presents random facts about temporary and permanent presence of Armenians in Oceania. The first Armenian who appeared in the region was musician Yervant Hagopian, who lived in Papua New Guinea the beginning of the 20th century and recorded 26 Guinean songs. The Hawaiian Islands are the only place in Oceania where there is an Armenian community. In the 1920s, Hawaii's Armenian Committee collected over \$200,000 for the Near East Relief. Honolulu-based artist Arman Manookian (1904-1931) was called the "Hawaiian Gauguin." There were also several Armenian inhabitants in French Polynesia, like, Rouben Mirimanoff, whose three half-Tahitian daughters live in Polynesia until today.

Gerard Dedeyan (University of Montpellier, France) in his French-language paper "Armenians and Crete (912-1669). A Review" points the early Armenian presence on that Greek island: their role was great during the conquest of Crete by the Armenian emperor of Byzantium Nikepor Pokas and during the Byzantine and Venetian rule. For the final study of the issue, the academic examination of the Armenian manuscripts related to the relevant period may play an important role.

Another paper in French, "Armenian-French Relations For Centuries (Historical Overview)" by Claude Mutafian (France) outlines the centuries-long relations between two cultures, dividing them into four periods: a) before the Crusades (4-12th centuries), b) during the Crusades (12-14th centuries), c) from the Crusades to the Armenian Genocide (15-20th centuries), d) post-Genocide period (end of 20th

century - beginning of 21st century). The author briefly touches upon the relatively important political, historical and cultural events from the chronological point of view of the Armenian-French relations.

The same author's "Armenian vojvodes from Moldova" (in French) presents the 16th-century Moldovan state figure Ion Voda, who according to the 17th-century Moldovan chronicler Urechi, was of Armenian descent. He held the post of Vojvod for a short time, from 1572 to 1574, however, the period of his rule was known for its extreme cruelty to the local boars, the clergy and the Turkish-Tatar invaders.

The "hero" of Elizabeth Tajiryan's paper, "Marquise Gregorio D'Agdollo (1707-1789)" is Gregorio Agdollo, a merchant from New Julfa, owner of art galleries in Venice and Florence, who had a special role among the Armenian traders of Venice of the first half of the 18th century. The written heritage of the era reveals the close ties of Agdollo's family with the Mekhitarist Congregation of Venice and its Abbot Mkhitar Sebastatsi.

Hovhannes Aleksanyan's "Armenians in Poland and Baltic States in Modern Stage" informs how after the collapse of the USSR tens of thousands of Armenians arrived in Poland and Baltic states, where they were actively engaged especially in trade. There are also many renowned public, arts, cultural figures who have established themselves in the

societies of these countries.

Seta Ohanian's "National Schools of Christian Communities of Baghdad in the Second Half of the 19th Century" pays attention on education history of the Iraqi Armenians: native Christian communities in Baghdad had their own national schools, two of which belonged to the followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church. After the liberation of Iraq from the Ottoman yoke at the hands of Allied forces, these two schools were united into one co-educational institution.

Vahe Sarkisyan's "Javakhk Armenians' Position on a Referendum on the Future of the Soviet Union on 17 March, 1991 (A Document Story)" discusses a matter from the newest period of the history of Javakhk, the Armenian-populated region in Georgia, specifically how its population decided to not participate in a nationwide referendum on the preservation of the USSR on March 17, 1991. The call of "Javakhk" and "Parvana" public movements to inhabitants of Javakhk says that "the USSR is the empire whose existence in itself is antidemocratic and it conducts policy of absolute power."

Vahram Gharakhanyan's "On the Issue of Armenian-Jewish Relations (A Historical Overview)" is a brief report on early contacts between the two ancient peoples, which sometimes had military and political manifestations, yet were mainly of cultural, commercial and economic character. It is noteworthy also that

Jewish communities have been formed in Armenia since ancient times.

Vartan Matiossian (USA) presents "The Immigration Policy of the United States and the Formation of the Armenian Communities in Latin America." It is a well-known fact that the USA has passed a series of immigration laws by the Congress between 1882 and 1924. This legislation accomplished the main goal pursued by immigration groups: the almost complete ban of so-called undesirable foreign immigration to the US, which was essentially enforced until 1965.

Knarik Avakian's "The Armenians of USA in the Context of the 20-21st Century Armenian-Russian Political Relations" notes, that if in the past positive Armenian-Russian relations were directly proportional to the positive Diaspora-Armenia relations, then in the 21st century world arena the sweeping political and social-economic processes taking place in Russia and Armenia have created a political barrier between the relations of Armenia (consequently also of Russia) and some Diasporan (particularly Armenian-American) organizations.

The current Festschrift has been published in a very limited number, yet it is an important contribution in the field of Armenian communities and Diaspora studies, enriching our insights from geographical and historical to cultural, geopolitical and other aspects,

Recipe Corner

Guest Recipe

by Christine Vartanian Datian



Candied Quince

This quince recipe was contributed by Robyn Kalajian at thearmeniankitchen.com. Like olives, quince is not edible when first picked. Cooked quince, however, has been savored throughout Asia and the Mediterranean region for more than 4,000 years. Quince is native to rocky slopes and woodland margins in Western Asia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey, Georgia, northern Iran to Afghanistan, although it thrives in a variety of climates and can be grown successfully at latitudes as far north as Scotland. California grown quince are harvested in the fall and winter. Armenians have a particular fondness for quince that's candied, jellied or cooked in stew to lend its sweetness to meat.

As quince cooks, it turns from gold to dusty rose; and eventually glow a vivid, sunset red. "Because of the high pectin in the pulp, the fruit is rarely eaten out-of-hand," says Barbara Ghazarian, author of the highly praised cookbook *Simply Quince*, which won the North American Booksellers Best Cookbook award as well as two other national awards. "Slow cooking releases the pectin strands from the cell walls. Once released, the cooked fruit becomes supple and good eating," Ghazarian adds.

INGREDIENTS:

2 large ripe quince
Juice of 1/2 lemon
1 1/2 cups water
1 cup granulated sugar
1 small cinnamon stick
Dash of salt

PREPARATION

Peel skin and core and cut into 1/4 inch slices. It is a hard fruit and requires strength to dice, so use caution. Take care not to cut your hands when slicing quince.

Place slices in a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan. Cover with water and lemon juice to prevent quince from turning brown, and stir. Bring to a boil over high heat. Cook for 10 minutes and drain. Return quince to pot, add the sugar, 1 1/2 cups water, stick of cinnamon and salt. Bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally. Cook for 1 to 1 1/2 hours, or until syrupy, and quince turns a slightly pinkish color. Remove pot from heat and discard cinnamon stick.

Store, refrigerated, in a container with tight-fitting lid. This recipe should keep for up to 2 months. Serve topped with plain, unsweetened, thick yogurt, clotted cream or crème fraîche, as a topping for ice cream and granola, or as a spread on toast, baked breads, or on cake slices. It can also be used as a condiment for chicken, turkey, lamb, beef or pork.

*Pairings: Quince matches perfectly with marbled cheeses with a strong and aromatic taste such as Roquefort: a classic pairing for a cheese board to share with family and friends.





ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

FLORIDA

FEBRUARY 2 — Banquet Celebration welcoming our newly consecrated Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan for his first pastoral visit, in conjunction with the 32nd Anniversary of consecration of St. David Armenian Apostolic Church on Sunday following the Holy Badarak at the Mardigian Hall – 12:30pm. For further information, please call St. David Church office – Christine 561-994-2335 Or Sonig Kradjian 607-727-8786”

MASSACHUSETTS

JANUARY 12 — Sunday Cultural Series, 2-4 p.m., Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown, Adele & Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor. On the second Sunday of every month, join experts Gary and Susan Lind-Sinianian for a workshop on Armenian dance! Gary and Susan have collected more than 100 village dances and shared these with the community for the last 42 years. Learn Armenian dances performed at American picnics and traditional dances from the old country. Members FREE. Non-members \$12. NOTE: The Museum’s elevator is in the process of being upgraded and is currently out of service. Register online (<https://www.armenianmuseum.org/classes>) or call Education Coordinator, Garin Habeshian at 617.926.2562 ext. 103.



On January 11, the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York will present a children’s concert, “A Children’s Song and Dance Show,” featuring Canadian-Armenian singer Joelle. The program will be at the Hovnanian School, 817 River Road, Milford, NJ, 2-4 p.m. A light reception will follow. For tickets see calendar entry at right.

FEBRUARY 9 — A cappella concert by Boston Jazz Voices to Benefit the Armenia Tree Project. 5 pm at the Jenks Center, 109 Skillings Road, Winchester, MA. The venue has plenty of free parking. Event will feature an a cappella performance, refreshments, raffle, and silent auction. Tickets are \$30 each and a family four-pack of tickets is available for \$100. Tickets available via Eventbrite at www.armeniatree.org/acappella

NEW JERSEY

JANUARY 11 — Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York presents “A Children’s Song and Dance Show,” starring Joelle. 2-4 p.m., Saturday, the Hovnanian School, 817 River Road, New Milford. Tickets \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door. Children 2 and under free. Joelle of Montreal will perform her first children’s show in New Jersey. Light reception to follow. For tickets text or email Talia, 917-238-3970, rsvptaliab@gmail.com or Salpie 516-413-4178, Salpimegerian@gmail.com.

Calendar items are free. Entries should not be longer than 5 lines. Listings should include contact information. Items will be edited to fit the space, if need be. A photo may be sent

Armenian Architecture and Genocide

ARCHITECTURE, from page 1

Yet, the evidence of Armenian life and culture could not be totally eradicated; the very stones, albeit in ruins, could bear testimony to the story of the people who once lived there, with their homes, their shops and factories, their schools and churches—above all, churches, chapels and monasteries. Ani, the ancient capital of an Armenian kingdom, with its legendary 1001 churches, is the most eloquent example. What was most painful, as I wrote in a report on our visit, was to witness the attempt to eradicate memory itself. (See <https://mirrorspectator.com/2011/07/29/opinion-the-stones-will-cry-out/>)

A Story of Cultural Genocide

Now Germans have the opportunity to make a similar journey through parts of historic Armenia, albeit not in person, but through images and words. On December 5, an exhibition opened in Osnabrück, which documents precisely this history. “1915-2015. Armenische Architektur und Genozid” is the title of the exhibition organized by the Erich Maria Remarque-Friedenszentrum (Peace Center) in cooperation with the German-Armenian Society (DAG). The venue of the show is particularly significant. The Erich Maria Remarque Peace Center, founded in 1996 by the city and university of Osnabrück, is dedicated to the life and works of the author best known for his “All Quiet on the Western Front.” The center has an archive open to researchers, and organizes regular activities including exhibitions, lectures, film showings and symposia. Among them have been two events on Armin T. Wegner. For Dr. Raffi Kantian, president of the DAG, it is especially appropriate to hold the exhibition at this center; he stressed that whereas Remarque in his world famous book, “described the horrors of World War I on the Western front,” the exhibition presents the “consequences of the extermination of the Armenians on the Eastern front.”

After greetings by Dr. Thomas F. Schneider, from the Osnabrück University and an opening address by Mayor Birgit Strangmann, Dr. Kantian introduced the large audience to the events of 1915 and the theme of the exhibition, which will run until January 19.

The question that the display poses and seeks to illustrate, is: “What impact has the genocide had on the cultural legacy of the Armenians in Turkey?” Twenty-two huge panels (six-feet high) present in text and photographs the main stations in the drama: first, Armenian life before 1915 is depicted, in its multifaceted forms, through family photos, as well as scenes of



Johannes Lepsius (Photo courtesy of Wikipedia)

towns and cities where Armenians lived and worked, studied and prayed. Accompanying the pictures are texts providing background information for visitors who may be unfamiliar with the subject.

The deportations and massacres are illustrated, with explanatory texts based on accounts by American Ambassador Henry Morgenthau and survivor Pailadzo Captanian. The next section depicts the “Destruction of Armenian Lebensraum,” literally, the elimination of the physical basis for continued existence. Here, as we saw on our travels through eastern Turkey in 2011, entire communities were wiped out, and with them, all the physical structures, whether homes or workplaces, buildings for manufacture or commerce, and, of course, the schools and places of worship. “Before” and

“After” photos of the same location, for example in Sivas, show the complete replacement of Armenian architecture by modern shopping centers.

The fate of the cloisters and churches deserves special treatment. Here the panels show historic photographs of the majestic churches before and after the destruction, Surp Garabed in Mush, for example. The image that symbolizes the tragedy and stands as emblematic for the entire exhibition, is a 1900 photograph of the magnificent Khtzkonk monastery, a complex of five edifices in Tekor, which was blown up in 1964, leaving one lonely church standing in ruins against a devastated landscape. Other monasteries, a hand-out for the exhibition explains, “were razed (Karmavor Monastery Surp Asdvadsadsin), destroyed and used as building material for houses and mosques (Surp Garabed in Mush).” Worse still, some churches were degraded to function as barns, stalls, storage rooms or even prisons.

The exhibition highlights the Mush-Sasun-Van region for the important role it plays in Armenian history. As early as the fifth century, monasteries were vibrant centers of cultural activity, which produced valuable manuscripts and miniatures; literary and spiritual life flourished in the region which boasted up to 250 churches, cloisters (as on the island of Lim) and fortresses among other architectural monuments. One exception to the rule of destruction is the Surp Khach on the island of Aghtamar, a jewel of Armenian church architecture which has escaped ruin and even been renovated. Though reclassified as a museum and allowed only one church service a year, this majestic structure, with its unique bas relief sculptures, is a treasure to behold.

Although many cities through the genocide were deprived of their Armenian character, some, like Sivas, managed to maintain traces of community life. Here, the exhibition presents

the example of the Shahinyan family as testimony to the city’s history. The respected family hails from a member of the first Ottoman parliament in 1877, Agop Shahinyan; many photographs record images of his family and their home (built in 1877), officially recognized as an outstanding example of Ottoman architecture – without mention of its Armenian origins.

What’s In a Name?

It was a deliberate policy, pursued by the Turkish authorities since the genocide, to eradicate the Armenian identity of the land, its history and its culture, as embodied in its architecture. Thus, the very name “Armenian” was erased from written records, whether they be texts for school children or place names in geographical locations or maps. In Kars or Ani, if reference is made to the Bagratids, there is no hint that the name might refer to Armenians.

Urfa is yet another example of a city deprived of its people and identity. Once it was home to 38,000 Armenians before the genocide; skilled craftsmen who worked as goldsmiths and carpet weavers, they lived in a community with functioning schools and an active Protestant parish. During the Hamidian massacres, 3,000 Armenians who had sought refuge in their church, were burned to death in the Surp Asdvadsadsin. This was the city where the German humanitarian and pastor Johannes Lepsius set up his rug factory, to provide refuge and employment to Armenian orphans. Today, one learns at the exhibition, the location hosts a hotel.

This important and timely exhibition was made possible through the efforts of many persons and institutions, among them, the Armenische Unternehmerverband e.V., Hasmik Hagopian, the two sponsoring associations, and a long list of individuals and organizations, which made the photographic material available.

(Material for this article has been taken from an article by Giorgio Bavaj and Alfrant Bedrosian, “1915-2015. Armenische Architektur und Genozid. Eine Ausstellung.” The article, which is a handout for the exhibition, has been published on the website www.remarque.uni-osnabrueck.de/aktuell.html).



COMMENTARY

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COMMENTARY

The Caucasian Triangle Strangling Armenia

By Edmond Y. Azadian

In his heyday, Georgia's former president, Mikheil Saakashvili, made a hostile statement impacting Armenia during an official visit to Baku, the Azeri capital. He said, "Azerbaijan's enemy is Georgia's enemy."

No official retraction has ever been issued by any Georgian representative, at least, none publicly. And yet, that antagonism continues towards Armenia, if not in word, certainly in deed.

Rocky relations between Armenia and Georgia have continued throughout the independence years, mainly because of latent jealousy of Georgians towards Armenians, but also because of Georgian hostility towards Moscow, Armenia's primary strategic ally.

After Armenia's Velvet Revolution, Yerevan's overtures towards Tbilisi yielded nothing but some cosmetic changes. In 2018, the ministers of defense of three countries – Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia – signed a military pact as a prelude for Georgia's ambitions to join NATO. That pact has placed Georgia squarely in the enemy camp. Thus far, that military pact has been kept on the back burner. However, economic cooperation and treaties between the three countries in the Caucasus are equally threatening towards Armenia, as Ankara and Baku intend to isolate Armenia in the region.

The main thrust of the agreements is economics, particularly in the integration of their respective power grids, as Azerbaijan plans to export more electricity to Europe. Transportation is also on the agenda, as initiatives have been taken to increase the use of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars highways and to integrate them into China's transportation routes extending the country's land reach to Europe.

The foreign ministers' agreement calls for the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia on Georgian terms. Conversely, the settlement of the Karabakh conflict is proposed to be on Azerbaijani's terms of territorial integrity. No reference is made to the right of self-determination of Karabakh.

Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkiani signed the agreement without a second's hesitation.

Therefore, it behooves Armenia to respond in kind by recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. But that move will not be deemed politically correct, because Georgia remains the last route for Armenia in relation with the outside world, as Iran, the other transit route, is suffering under US sanctions.

There are many flies in the ointment when it comes to this trio's cooperation. In the first place, the Turkification of the Georgian economy is viewed as a trap for many in Tbilisi. Specifically the region of Ajaria is integrated more with Turkey's economy than Georgia's. Another irony is that Georgia has been running away from Russia, while Ankara is getting close to Kremlin, creating an odd situation for



Turkey has not abandoned yet its pan-Turanic ambitions, extending from Ankara to Central Asia. There are two Christian nations in that virtual empire's path: Armenia and Georgia. The latter has willingly given up its historic mission in the region, leaving Armenia to bear the brunt of Azeri President Ilham Aliyev's and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's fury. Aliyev's recent outburst against Garegin Nzhdeh's memory stems from the fact that the Armenian hero fought tooth and nail in 1921 to keep Zangezur as an integral part of Armenian territory, blocking the Turkic drive towards Central Asia. The same resentment was expressed by President Erdogan at a recent conference of Turkish-speaking nations in Baku.

Another milestone was marked in the economic cooperation between the three nations, when the foreign ministers of the three countries met in Tbilisi on December 23 to sign agreements on trade and transportation. The agreements have also a political component which concerns the settlement of outstanding disputes in the region.

political planners in Tbilisi.

On a different dimension, Azerbaijan is a thorn in Georgia's side, because of an intractable territorial dispute between them regarding the David Gareja Monastic Compound, 80 percent of whose territory lies in Georgia, with the rest in Azerbaijan. Except, the latter fully claims the compound as part of its national heritage. Indeed, Azerbaijan has manufactured a fake history for all the Christian churches and monasteries built by Caucasian Albanians on its lands. That claim also affects Armenians, whereas historians know that Caucasian Albanians had no ethnic relations with Central Asian Tartars who settled in the Caucasus in the 10th century.

Georgian hatred of Russian may rise to unreasonable levels, causing some self-inflicted wounds.

Armenia's relations with Georgia remain at arm's length; Yerevan has to navigate these treacherous waters prudently and mind its own survival every minute of every day.

LETTERS

Complicated History of Garegin Nzhdeh

To the Editor:

I read your editorial today on Garegin Nzhdeh ("A Deadly Dilemma," December 7 issue). I find it brilliant! I am hoping that contributions such as your editorial will help to desacralize Nzhdeh's personality and to treat him neither as eternal hero nor as eternal traitor and Nazi collaborator. Right to the point! I loved the parallels with [Philippe] Petain and [Andrey] Vlasov.

Vahe Sahakyan
Detroit, Mich.



COMMENTARY

The Last Bastion Of Rule of Law Under Siege



By Philippe Raffi Kalfayan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On the eve of 2020, Armenia is facing political chaos: the executive power is eliminating all institutional components of an effective system of checks and balances; the fight against corruption is selective and retroactive while new corruption schemes and actors are not all yet apparent. One political group, once supportive of current prime minister, is declaring it will start a radical opposition next year. The diplomatic situation over Nagorno-Karabakh is deadlocked while regional powers are restructuring their alliances in a direction which may force Armenia to make substantial concessions over Artsakh's independence and controlled territories. The diaspora is totally left out of the management of Armenia's affairs and just invited to make more donations, while the fundraising in the diaspora is obviously decreasing.

It must be noted meanwhile that the economy is experiencing a dynamic shift in sectors like agro-food, tourism, mining and IT, thanks to the strategy and measures decided and implemented by former Serzh Sargsyan's team. Indeed, the visible outcome today is the result of past initiatives and cannot be rooted in the measures adopted in the last 18 months, since such achievements rely upon longer cycles.

Therefore, one must wonder why there is such obstinacy by the current leadership to consecrate a one-party rule over all institutions, without safeguards to check their activities; we have witnessed already some forced resignations of young "post-revolution" officials because of their temptation to make advantage of their functions to generate quick and illegitimate revenues.

Reasons of State and National Interests

More perilous for the country's security is the insistence of some people to reopen the judicial case of the assault on the Armenian Parliament in 1999. People familiar with state management, in whatever country, including the most liberal and free ones, know perfectly the doctrine of the "raison d'état" (reasons of state). It must be used judiciously and very rarely and for that reason it has some safeguards in place such as the principles of proportionality, strict necessity, non-discrimination and the protection of fundamental rights. In other words, to reopen the case of October 1999, the pros and cons of such a move must be weighed very thoroughly and the key question must be whether the consequences may be more serious than the concealment of the truth. I personally don't know the truth, but such are the rules for a sensitive case, and a real statesman must be aware of them.

National interests are thus rarely reasons of state. In the context of the incredible pressure put on the judges of the Constitutional Court (CC) to accept the early retirement scheme adopted by the Parliament on December 11, 2019, President Armen Sarkissian, who has the authority to apply to the Constitutional Court for an assessment of the constitutionality of the law proposing such a scheme, made a very ambiguous statement to justify his decision to not take that action. He declared that he made his decision to protect "national interest." What does it mean? Does it mean that he knows about the constitutional weaknesses of the law but prefers to avoid conflict with the executive branch or does it mean that he is not totally free and independent to make his decision?

Law as Political Coup

The circumstances and the clearly-stated objectives of the draft law by both the government and the Parliament make this law an exclusively politically-grounded one. It aims at the surrender of the last bastion of resistance to a monolithic political power. Indeed, 7 out of 9 judges are presumed opponents to the current executive, due to their appointment by former rulers and parliaments. But, there is no serious shred of evidence to sustain the allegations that their performance has been compromised. The executive and the parliament political majority base their presumption on the alleged perception of CC judges by the public. When talking with the Council of Europe Venice Commission, the executive, short of argument, justifies the law by the necessity to achieve institutional revolution in the context of 2018 post-revolution.

The presumption of guilt is against the general principles of law, which impose on the contrary a presumption of innocence. In the present case, it amounts to a crime of opinion, which is

a strictly prohibited. Freedom of opinion is a universal fundamental right.

Basing a presumption on "public perception" is nonsense. It is quite difficult, even somewhat impossible, to seriously measure public opinion. Indeed, public opinion considers all officials in general as suspects, especially if hired or appointed by former rulers. Then, should all of them be forced to retire early?

There is confusion between the anti-corruption policy and the necessity to control all levers of power, while they are autonomous processes, and the assaults against the rule of law are prohibited by the Constitution.

The anti-corruption policy is the best guarantee for the normal functioning of the judiciary, including that of the CC. There is no necessity to remove the judges, especially because there is no guarantee that the new ones, surely less experienced and chosen by the current parliament, will be independent.

Controlling all segments of power is a violation of the fundamentals of a democratic country. Rule of law necessitates the separation of powers. Now, we are back to sovietisation.

In Armenia, as well as in all post-Soviet countries, the system of checks and balances has to be real and operating for the sake of democracy and freedoms.

In a healthy democracy, political space has to be given to the opposition, and the Constitution is made for that purpose: to secure political alteration without restructuring the whole and without removing the members of the CC each time there is a new occupant leading the executive branch. The most extreme example is that of the US Supreme Court, where judges are appointed for life. If a Democrat president was to be elected in 4 or 8 years from now, he/she might face a conservative Supreme Court. In France, similarly, the nominations of members of the Constitutional Council don't reflect the political party in power.

Promulgating this law, while there are similar attempts in Poland, where everyone may witness the negative reaction of European Union, means more problems with EU institutions as

THERE IS CONFUSION BETWEEN THE ANTI-CORRUPTION POLICY AND THE NECESSITY TO CONTROL ALL LEVERS OF POWER, WHILE THEY ARE AUTONOMOUS PROCESSES, AND THE ASSAULTS AGAINST THE RULE OF LAW ARE PROHIBITED BY THE CONSTITUTION.

far as Armenia's standing and future aid programs, although, I must admit, the European Commission has never understood the realities of post-Soviet countries. They actually prefer to spend their budgets than understand those realities.

The CC turbulence is happening because of the ambition of one person. Although elected to the CC, Vahe Grigoryan is not participating in the CC sessions and instead orchestrates manoeuvres outside the court in order to topple the seven judges and become, if successful, the president of the court.

The law was unnecessary and a constitutional amendment was preferable.

The law passed by the RA Parliament respects one aspect of the opinion provided by the Venice Commission, which says that voluntary early retirement must be clearly true.

In fact, considering the law adopted and the publicly admitted political objectives by the Parliament and the Executive (Ministry of Justice), as well as all the judicial and political harassments made on CC Chair Hrayr Tovmasyan and his family, the law and its aims are manifestly contravening the criteria imposed by the Venice Commission. They exclude: any undue (political or personal) pressure on the judges concerned by the offer and any on-purpose design of the law to influence the outcome of pending cases (i.e. Robert Kocharyan's case). Moreover, they warn about the potential risks of simultaneous retirement of several judges and even as many as seven out of nine justices that might hamper the effective functioning of the Court.

As a conclusion to this question, considering the threat over the separation and independence of powers, ignoring the recommendations of the Venice Commission, this law is an assault on the rule of law. It would have been preferable to suggest the modification of the Constitution through a public referendum.

Foreign observers, including those on the Venice Commission, as well as many domestic analysts and journalists, explained the obvious: we cannot change the judges of the CC each time there is a new political leadership in the country. The Venice Commission says: "Immobility is designed to shield the constitutional court judges from influence from the political majority of the day. It would be unacceptable if each new government could replace sitting judges with newly elected ones of their choice" (para 58 of their opinion). It is common sense!

Does it mean that the current political majority exclude any idea of political alternation in the future?

The Law Is Unconstitutional

A review of the Constitution and the Law on Constitutional Court shows quite clearly that this law violates the Constitution and its law on the Constitutional Court.

The separation of powers is secured in the Constitution: there is no provision for special circumstances or context to violate the balance of powers.

We may consider also the violation of the constitutional article which provides that: "any influence on a judge of the CC with respect to her/his functions shall be impermissible and shall be prosecuted by law." Due to the clear objective of the Executive and Legislative, which is to get rid of the judges who may presumably oppose them, the law violates this article.

Popular comments talk about "bribing": we are not far from reality. We shifted from the reign of hidden bribing to transparent bribing. We may indeed consider this advantageous retirement scheme as a "gift" in violation of the constitution. The scheme may be considered a favor or a benefit.

More clearly, this law is a violation of the principle of equality of citizens before the law. What other public officials are offered by law the same benefit for early retiring? None, not even judges from other courts. It may be counter-argued that they are the only Armenian officials to benefit from a life tenure. But this is not true anymore in the New Constitution. Even, if this argument were the valid, the Constitution must specify this exception and the remedy against it in the transitional provisions. This is not the case.

In respect to the claim by the Executive and Legislative branches that judges on the Constitutional Court hold opinions in opposition to the current political leadership, we may also consider that this is a violation of article 29 of the Constitution, which prohibits any discrimination against citizens based on political views. Judges of the CC are citizens like others. They should enjoy the same rights and freedoms. They are only bound to respect strict rules of confidentiality and not express publicly personal opinions on subjects and topics which are related to cases reviewed by them.

Conflict of Interest

The CC is supposed to verify the constitutionality of any single law, without any restriction as to the content of the law submitted to it. There is nothing in the Constitution which may have prevented the CC judges to analyse and to deliberate on this law, which concerns themselves. It means that nothing in the Constitution or in the Law on the CC prevents them from being consulted on that law.

The matter is then not legal, but is more of a perception by the public. This is probably what the promoters of this law are betting on. This was a trap not only for the CC judges but also for the president of the republic, if he were to apply to the CC.

One way for the CC to establish credibility regarding their decision could have been to submit their opinion, once formed, to the Venice Commission before releasing it in Armenia.

This did not happen as the president decided to not apply the CC for an opinion about constitutionality.

President Sarkissian revealed himself to be a wise moderator in the political landscape and a good representative in the promotion of Armenia to attract foreign investors. He has been doing a very good job since his coming into power. However, his hands are tied as it relates to domestic politics stakes.

I had anticipated in March 2018 (<https://mirrorspectator.com/2018/03/15/new-constitution-the-promised-democracy-is-yet-another-defeat/>) that the doubts over the compliance of Armen Sarkissian's eligibility for the post of president, precisely regarding the citizenship conditions, may hamper his ability to manoeuvre.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, former Minister of Justice Artak Zeynalyan and his shadow advisor Vahe Grigoryan, have since gotten proof that his citizenship conditions, as required by the Constitution for being a candidate for president, were not fully compliant.

Did this fact influence the president's decision? It is difficult to say, but he was eventually backed into a trap. If he were to apply to the CC, he would have been in open conflict with the Prime Minister. If he decided, like he did, to not apply, he would benefit from the good will of future CC members, if Vahe Grigoryan succeeds in getting the post of court president. In both options, there is no margin to manoeuvre when someone is at the mercy of others' good will or blackmail. The "national interests" in this case, may have a personal element.

Therefore, the seven judges of the CC targeted by all those shameful and dirty manoeuvres are left alone in their defence of the last bastion of the rule of law in the Republic of Armenia. They must be supported by the political forces and society in order to reject the offer and prevent this Machiavellian scenario from succeeding.

[Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, based in Paris, is a Lawyer, Lecturer in International Law and a former Secretary General of FIDH (International Federation of Human Rights). He is a regular columnist for the *Mirror-Spectator*.]



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

President Trump is not Worthy of Recognizing the Armenian Genocide

After both Houses of Congress, one overwhelmingly and the other unanimously, adopted two Resolutions in recent weeks recognizing the Armenian Genocide, many were hoping that this would lead President Trump to also recognize it in his upcoming April 24, 2020 statement, even though he is not obligated to do. After all, a total of 505 members of both Houses of Congress had supported both Resolutions with only 11 opposing them, which placed over 94 percent of the US Congress in favor.

However, President Trump disappointed the vast majority of the world, except for Turkish and Azerbaijani denialists, by having the State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus announce last week that “the position of the administration has not changed. Our views are reflected in the president’s definitive statement on this issue from last April.”

The State Department’s announcement snubbing the two Resolutions was made after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened to expel US troops from two airbases in Turkey and to ask the Turkish Parliament to adopt a Resolution recognizing the killings of Native Americans as genocide.

In the last three years, President Trump has not used the term “Armenian Genocide” to refer to the intentional mass killings of Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire in 1915. President Trump has thus followed the precedent of Presidents Obama, Bush Junior, Bill Clinton, and Bush Senior, all of whom had refrained from describing the Armenian mass killings as genocide. The only exception was President Ronald Reagan who had issued a Presidential Proclamation on April 22, 1981, referring to the Armenian murders by the Ottoman Empire as genocide.

In his April 24, 2019 statement, President Trump used various euphemisms to refer to the “Armenian Genocide” with-

out using that term: “Beginning in 1915, one and a half million Armenians were deported, massacred, or marched to their deaths in the final years of the Ottoman Empire.” President Trump added, “We welcome the efforts of Armenians and Turks to acknowledge and reckon with their painful history.” Furthermore, President Trump used the Armenian term “Meds Yeghern” (Great Crime) to avoid using the words “Armenian Genocide.” President Trump simply copied the same term used by President Obama. Regrettably, President Trump, who regularly rejects most of President Obama’s policies, has decided to follow his predecessor’s rejection of using the term “Armenian Genocide.”

Some of President Trump’s supporters were irritated that a few newspapers had referred to President Trump by name as rejecting the term “Armenian Genocide.” Even though President Trump had not made a personal announcement on this issue, the State Department, as part of the Trump administration, would not have made such a statement without the approval of its “Big Boss!” Besides, the State Department’s spokeswoman herself referred to President Trump’s statement of last April. The only point in favor of President Trump is that he had not made a campaign promise to recognize the Armenian Genocide, as opposed to his four predecessors. While he does not have the obligation to keep a campaign promise he had not made, he should not have been gagged by the dictator of Ankara and pursue his personal financial interests as John Bolton, the former National Security Advisor, has indicated.

Even though April 24, 2020 is still ahead of us, and given the unpredictable nature of President Trump, one cannot be sure if he would use the term “Armenian Genocide” at that time, I for one have no expectation of him facing the truth and abandoning his private interests.

Last week, there was a major development that may weigh heavily on the prospects of President Trump’s reelection. On December 19, 2019, Mark Galli, editor-in-chief of Christianity Today, an influential evangelical magazine, wrote an editorial titled: “Trump Should Be Removed from Office.” Christianity Today was founded by Rev. Billy Graham. This is an important editorial given the fact that the overwhelming majority of white evangelicals support President Trump.

Here is how the editorial justifies the removal of President Trump from office:

1) President Trump’s attempt to coerce the Ukrainian leader to investigate his political opponent (Joe Biden) is “not only a violation of the Constitution; more importantly, it is profoundly immoral.”

told them, “I will today call it the Armenian Genocide” because “it is unbecoming of us as Americans to play word games.”

It was an honest admission of America’s 90-year-long recognition of Turkey’s extermination (1915-23) of 1.5 million Armenian Christians. But the State Dept. disliked Evans’ use of the word “genocide.” Turkey cried foul too.

At Turkey’s insistence, the State Dept. tells American diplomats and presidents to avoid the G word (genocide) regarding the Armenian extermination. Such spinelessness, while typical of the State Dept.’s traditional obsequiousness towards Turkey, is a disgrace.

Yet Ambassador Evans was simply echoing, as but one example, President Reagan’s Proclamation 4838 in 1981 which cited “the genocide of Armenians.”

Regrettably, post-Reagan presidential statements commemorating the Genocide have avoided the G word. They employ euphemisms such as “annihilation,” “forced exile and murder,” “infamous killings,” “terrible massacres,” and “marched to their death.”

However, House resolutions in 1996 (Res.3540), 1984 (Res.247), and 1975 (Res.148) affirmed the Armenian “genocide.”

Perhaps more significantly, a US filing in 1951 with the International Court of Justice (“World Court”) cited “the Turkish massacre of the Armenians” as “genocide.”

Use of the G word remains important for legal reasons because it is defined in the UN Genocide Convention/Treaty of 1948 which most countries have signed.

Ambassador Evans Punished

Ambassador Evans was nevertheless forced to issue a clarification in late February of 2005 for uttering the G word. But the State Dept. didn’t like its wording. So it wrote a clarification of the clarification and ordered Evans to sign it. Though Evans bravely toiled on, his 33-year career was in jeopardy.

The American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) has over 16,000 current and retired Foreign Service members. In 2005, after Ambassador Evans had uttered the G word, AFSA announced he would receive its prestigious “Constructive Dissent Award.”

The award recognizes “initiative, integrity, intellectual courage and constructive dissent” and diplomats who “question the status quo and take a stand no matter the sensitivity of the issue or the consequences” and “stick his/her neck out.” Perfect descriptions of Ambassador Evans.

But Turkish anger and Bush II’s State Dept. bullied AFSA into withdrawing the award. AFSA’s excuse: Evans’ “genocide” dissent hadn’t gone through official channels. Had Evans done

2) “This president has dumbed down the idea of morality in his administration. He has hired and fired a number of people who are now convicted criminals. He himself has admitted to immoral actions in business and his relationship with women, about which he remains proud. His Twitter feed alone – with its habitual string of mischaracterizations, lies, and slanders – is a near perfect example of a human being who is morally lost and confused.”

3) “We believe the impeachment hearings have made it absolutely clear, in a way the Mueller investigation did not, that President Trump has abused his authority for personal gain and betrayed his constitutional oath. The impeachment hearings have illuminated the president’s moral deficiencies for all to see. This damages the institution of the presidency, damages the reputation of our country, and damages both the spirit and the future of our people. None of the president’s positives can balance the moral and political danger we face under a leader of such grossly immoral character.”

4) “Whether Mr. Trump should be removed from office by the Senate or by popular vote next election – that is a matter of prudential judgment. That he should be removed, we believe, is not a matter of partisan loyalties but loyalty to the Creator of the Ten Commandments.”

5) “To use an old cliché, it’s time to call a spade a spade, to say that no matter how many hands we win in this political poker game, we are playing with a stacked deck of gross immorality and ethical incompetence. And just when we think it’s time to push all our chips to the center of the table, that’s when the whole game will come crashing down. It will crash down on the reputation of evangelical religion and on the world’s understanding of the gospel. And it will come crashing down on a nation of men and women whose welfare is also our concern.”

Armenian Americans and their supporters should continue to shame anyone who does not recognize the Armenian Genocide, starting from President Trump, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and the 11 Republican members of the House of Representatives who voted against the Armenian Genocide Resolution on October 29, 2019. They are: Greg Pence, Larry Bucshon, James Baird, and Susan Brooks of Indiana, Mike Rogers of Alabama, Andy Harris of Maryland, Virginia Fox and Mark Meadows of North Carolina, Tom Cole of Oklahoma, and Mac Thornberry and Kevin Brady of Texas.

No Armenian-American should vote for President Trump in next year’s Presidential election nor for the 11 Republican members of Congress who voted against the Armenian Genocide Resolution!

What the US House’s Impeachment Inquiry Wouldn’t Ask Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch

By David Boyajian

TURKEY, the increasingly wayward NATO member, has been making more national and international headlines than usual.

On October 29, for instance, the US House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed (405-11) Resolution 296. It recognized the Armenian, Assyrian, Greek, and other Christian genocides committed by Turkey.

A contentious, widely criticized White House meeting involving President Trump, Turkey’s autocratic President Erdogan, and Republican senators then took place on November 13.

Two days later, Marie L. Yovanovitch, dismissed by President Trump in May of 2019 as US Ambassador to Ukraine, testified on national TV before the House Select Committee on Intelligence’s impeachment inquiry. Her dismissal, she alleged, occurred because Trump attorney and confidant Rudy Giuliani, Donald Trump Jr., Fox News hosts, and others had been slandering her as disloyal to the president.

There are intriguing links among the House’s Genocide resolution, the Trump-Erdogan-Senators meeting, and Yovanovitch who was President George W. Bush’s (“Bush II”) Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia.

What no Democratic or Republican committee member dared ask Yovanovitch – and what she didn’t wish to discuss – was her apparent 13-year-long failure to criticize the scandalous dismissal and forced early retirement of a fine American diplomat, John Marshall Evans.

Evans was Bush II’s ambassador to Armenia (June 2004 to September 2006). Yovanovitch followed him in that post (September 2008 to June 2011).

Due to senators’ revulsion at Evans’ dismissal, the ambassadorship stood empty for two years.

Armenian American communities always host US ambassadors to Armenia. In February of 2005, Ambassador Evans

so, though, his entreaty would surely have wound up in a shredder.

Cong. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) blasted the AFSA for setting “a terrible example.” The award “was taken from [Evans] because of politics and denial.”

Compare Evans’ courage with Yovanovitch’s publicly bemoaning her recall from Ukraine. Still a State Dept. employee, she’s now a Senior State Dept. Fellow at Georgetown University’s Institute for the Study of Diplomacy.

Her predecessor Ambassador Evans, in contrast, was driven into early retirement in 2006 by the White House. “Born-again Christian” Bush II kowtowed to Turkish pressure over the genocide of a Christian nation.

In 2008, Bush II nominated Yovanovitch as Ambassador to Armenia. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee conducted her confirmation hearing.

Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) and others were upset that neither Yovanovitch nor Bush II would acknowledge the annihilation of Armenians as “genocide.” She also incorrectly testified that no president had cited the killings of Armenians as “genocide.” As we know, Pres. Reagan did so in 1981.

After a brutal battle, the Senate nevertheless confirmed her in August of 2008.

As ambassador to Armenia, Yovanovitch was reportedly asked whether she’d acknowledge the Armenian Genocide if the president were to do so. One would assume she’d simply say yes. Instead, she dodged the question.

An “ambassador serves his president and may be recalled at any time and for any reason [emphasis added],” she replied. “It fully depends on the president.”

If Yovanovitch really believed that, why is she grumbling about being recalled from Ukraine?

Indeed, newly-elected presidents including Obama and Trump usually require current ambassadors to submit their resignations. Perhaps Obama-appointee (Aug. 2016) Yovanovitch should be grateful that Trump kept her on for 28 months.

Yovanovitch visited Armenian American communities in 2009. She again frustrated them with evasive answers about the Genocide and the conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijan over Armenian-majority Karabagh/Artsakh. I attended one such visit in Arlington, Mass.

And, apparently, Yovanovitch has never commented on Ambassador Evans’ dismissal.

The largely unheralded John Evans stands head and shoulders above Yovanovitch, a media darling.

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Governor General Appoints Gundjian, Sarkissian Members of Order of Canada

GUNDJIAN, from page 1

In the past, from 1967 to 2015, only 6,530 people from all walks of life have been appointed to the Order. The official press release that appeared in the Canadian press on December 28 names 120 distinguished recipients who have been appointed or promoted to the different ranks of the Order on this date for their respective exceptional lifetime accomplishments.

Governor General Payette will invest the new recipients at Rideau Hall in Ottawa soon at an official investiture ceremony, where individual official citations will be made for each recipient.

Since the establishment of the Order of Canada Honours System in 1967, there have been only a handful of recipients of this high honor of Armenian descent. These include Companions of the Order, the late photographer Youssouf Karsh, C.C. (1990) and film director Atom Egoyan, C.C. (2015), and Officer of the Order, the late Charles Aznavour, O.C. (2008).

Dr. Gundjian provided his reflections upon receiving this distinction:

“The news of this high honor award was conveyed to me first a few weeks back, by

a telephone call. I saw on the screen that the call was coming from the office of the gg.ca, the office of the Governor General of Canada. That certainly does not happen often...it looked unusual. As I answered, the person identified herself and added, ‘Dr. Gundjian, I am happy to inform you that you have been recommended to be appointed by the governor general of Canada a Member of the Order of Canada. Do you accept the appointment?’ I was stunned, obviously surprised, and somewhat emotional. I instantly felt profoundly honored and vindicated. This was the country’s highest level of recognition...I immediately replied, ‘Yes, thank you Ma’am very much, I accept!’

“Indeed, the process of selection being highly confidential, I was not ready for such news.

“I was then detailed the consideration of the different components of my five decades activities, professional, but most particularly those related to the Armenian community within Canada and the diaspora which had led the prestigious Advisory Council to make its recommendation.

“The whole 50-year story often runs,

indeed, before my eyes. Our Canadian community has started from a large crowd of many talented newcomers in a state of a very flimsy community infrastructure and it grew very quickly to become one of the best organized vibrant communities in the world. It would be false modesty to deny that my share in that process was truly crucial, often at the expense of my own personal interests.

“With many dedicated members of the community, I indeed had ended up leading the first successful efforts for the realization of Church, school, Diocese, publications and other structures. But then, all of that had to be further developed and maintained over the years. Simultaneously, our community had to become a meaningful component of the entire Armenian world and a useful contributing part of the Diaspora-Armenia network.

work. There are So many issues, so many lines of thoughts, different and competing approaches. All of that has to be dealt with.



Greg Sarkissian

It is a never-ending process.

“Well, that telephone call from Canada’s Governor General Secretariat was gratifying. I felt indeed vindicated and gratified. I was happy. The meaning of all of the above was, after all, receiving the seal of approval at the highest level of my beautiful country, Canada.”

What the US House’s Impeachment Inquiry Wouldn’t Ask Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch

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Obama and Other Flip-Floppers

As a presidential candidate in 2008, Senator Obama and his soon-to-be National Security Council member and UN Ambassador Samantha Power promised Armenian Americans to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide if he became president. Power’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *A Problem from Hell* (2002) devoted chapter 1 to the Armenian Genocide.

Yet President Obama and Power later avoided the G word.

When Hillary Clinton became Obama’s Secretary of State (2009-13), she flip-flopped too. She avoided the G word that she’d used as a New York senator and 2008 presidential candidate.

In 2010, Sec. Clinton laid flowers at Armenia’s Genocide Memorial. She stressed, however, that her stealthy visit was merely “private,” not official.

Yet she and Presidents Clinton, Bush II, and Obama have officially paid their respects at the Kemal Ataturk mausoleum/memorial in Ankara, Turkey. Ataturk was the Turkish leader who continued the Genocide against Armenians and Christian Greeks and Assyrians from 1919 onwards.

While they avoid the G word for the Armenian Genocide, these top American leaders are comfortable honoring a Turkish genocidist.

The Armenian Genocide is nearly universally accepted by expert historians, despite Turkey’s absurd denials. Indeed, for one hundred years, historians have possessed Turkish telegrams that explicitly ordered mass murder. These have been proven, yet again, to be absolutely genuine.

Like his immediate predecessors, Pres. Trump has avoided the G word. But he has called the Armenian Genocide “mass atrocities” and (as did Obama) “Medz Yeghern” (Armenian for Great Crime).

Some impeachment inquiry members knew all about Yovanovitch’s failure to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide and Evans’ dismissal and coerced retirement. Had they brought it up, however, they would have been walking through political minefields.

Political Minefields

Republican committee members could easily have damaged Yovanovitch’s credibility. They could have revealed her evasions regarding the Armenian Genocide in her 2008 confirmation hearing and her apparent ongoing failure to express dismay at Evans’ dismissal from the post she inherited. Yet they failed to bring any of this up.

After all, it was Bush II, a Republican, who dismissed Ambassador Evans, appointed Yovanovitch, failed (as has Trump) to recognize the Armenian Genocide, and pressured AFSA to rescind its award to Evans. Plus, Republican Speaker Dennis Hastert of Illinois withdrew an Armenian Genocide resolution in 2000, partly at the behest of former Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

As for Democrats, committee Chairman Adam Schiff (D-CA) represents a sizeable Armenian constituency in Los Angeles. He knows Yovanovitch’s record very well. But Democratic presidents Clinton and Obama themselves avoided the G word. So Schiff said nothing. Moreover, in 2007 Democratic Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) withdrew an Armenian Genocide resolution.

Hence, the impeachment inquiry committee didn’t broach the Yovanovitch/Evans issue even though Turkish and Armenian issues were simultaneously swirling around Washington.

And, of course, had questions about Evans led to the hypocritical roles of the Jewish lobby and Israel in denying/diminishing, and defeating resolutions on, the Armenian Genocide, Congress would have been highly embarrassed.

US Senate Resolution

The Senate has a pending Genocide resolution (Res.150) identical to that the House just passed.

But GOP Senators Lindsay Graham of South Carolina, David Perdue of Georgia, James Risch of Idaho, and Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky have blocked a vote on it.

President Erdogan is undoubtedly threatening the White House over the resolution and other issues. It doesn’t help that President Trump’s investments in Turkey constitute, in his own words, “a little conflict of interest.”

On May 11, 1920 the Republican majority Senate passed Resolution 359 on the “massacres and other atrocities from which the Armenian people have suffered.” The resolution couldn’t use the G word because it was coined only in 1944 by Raphael Lemkin. He recognized Turkey’s extermination of Armenians as a seminal genocide and drafted the UN Genocide Convention/Treaty.

Few Americans know that Presidents Cleveland, Harrison, McKinley, Teddy Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson, Harding, and Hoover also condemned the atrocities Turkey perpetrated against Armenians and others over decades.

Why It Matters

Does any of this matter?

Aside from moral and humanitarian considerations, yes.

The Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia – remains a geopolitical hotspot and a major flash point between the US and Russia. Much is at stake.

Turkey has threatened Armenia, sometimes with genocidal memes, since the latter’s independence in 1991.

Armenia’s 2 million or so Christians are trapped between hostile Turkey and Azerbaijan with their combined 90 million populations. Turkey and Azerbaijan are allies. Moreover, Israel and the powerful Jewish lobby are allies of Azerbaijan and unfriendly to Armenia.

Armenia’s existence, therefore, is continually in peril. It’s a major reason why Armenia allies itself with Russia, the nearest major Christian power.

Armenia has also excellent relations with the US and Europe.

But when American presidents and the State Dept. play word games with the Armenian Genocide, this does not reassure Armenia, which must draw negative conclusions about America’s trustworthiness and intentions.

That, in turn, is not in America’s interests.

In 2008, Cong. Jim Costa (D-CA) wrote the following to Yovanovitch:

“Denying a traumatic event such as genocide, one cannot create, nor implement, honest and effective diplomacy.”

Those words ring truer than ever.

(Many of the author’s articles can be found at http://www.armeniapedia.org/wiki/David_Boyajian.)

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