

THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

Volume LXXXI, NO. 11, Issue 4653

\$ 2.00

The First English Language Armenian Weekly in the United States Since 1932

Pashinyan Lays Out Long-term Plans on 29th Anniversary of Independence

YEREVAN – On September 21, Armenia celebrated the 29th anniversary of its independence.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan delivered a message of congratulations, adding his long-term vision for the country.

Armenia should nearly double its population, create 1.5 million new jobs, achieve a sevenfold increase in its average wage and eliminate poverty over the next 30 years, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Monday, September 21.

Pashinyan set these and other ambitious targets in a “strategy of transforming Armenia by the year 2050” which he put forward on the 29th anniversary of the country’s declaration of independence from the Soviet Union.

see ANNIVERSARY, page 4



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan prays.



Dr. Zara Pogossian at the Fortress of Smbataberd in the region of Vayots Dzor in the Republic of Armenia in 2018

Study of Medieval Armenian History in Global Context Boosted by Prestigious European Five-Year, 2 Million Euro Grant

By Aram Arkun FLORENCE, Italy – Armenian studies generally is an individual scholarly pursuit in the West, with specialists coming together periodically for conferences and workshops. In Europe, this is suddenly about to change due to a major grant from the European Research Council (ERC), one of the most important funding bodies in the world, particularly vital for the humanities. Dr. Zara Pogossian has won support for a five-year collaborative project under her leadership focusing on medieval Armenian history in a global perspective. This appears to be the first time that a research project with a strong Armenological component has received such a prestigious grant from an internationally recognized body, as opposed to funding from Armenian institutions and sources. This will increase the overall visibility of Armenian studies in academia.

see GRANT, page 14

Biden Campaign Official Issues Statement

By Aram Arkun WASHINGTON – Elvir Klempic is the National

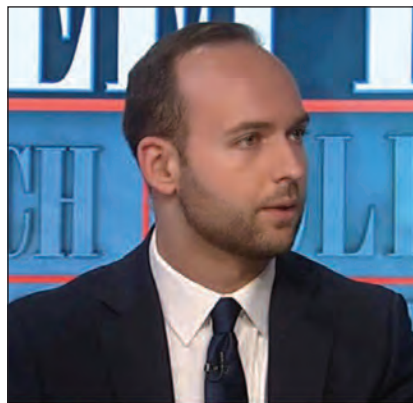
Affinity and Ethnic Engagement Director for the Joseph Biden presidential campaign. He has issued a statement on his role in the Biden campaign and his position on the Armenian Genocide and related issues.

Klempic was born in Bosnia and Herzegovina and as a refugee, came to Iowa, where he graduated Iowa State University with a degree in political science

and international studies in 2014. In addition to involvement in politics through the Democratic Party, and organizing Bosnian Americans, his connection with Turkey has been strong.

Klempic participated in an NGO leadership seminar in Konya, Turkey in the summer of 2013. Prior to his Biden campaign position he worked as executive director of the Turkish Heritage Organization (THO). This organization has been associated with efforts to deny the Armenian Genocide, and THO has promoted the interests of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in many spheres in the US.

This has led to concerns among Armenian Americans about what this



Elvir Klempic

means for the position of the Biden campaign on the Armenian Genocide and other issues important to them.

Klempic’s statement follows.

The Biden for President ethnic engagement operation has become one of the largest in the history of presidential campaigns; one that proudly transverges a plethora of diverse American-ethnic

see STATEMENT, page 20

Arson Guts San Francisco Armenian Church Cultural Center

SAN FRANCISCO (Combined Sources) – The building next to St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church in San Francisco was set on fire at approximately 4 a.m. on September 17.

Police and fire officials confirmed that it was a case of arson.

Though the San Francisco Fire Department immediately responded, the building suffered great damage, with two out of four floors gutted.

The building serves as a community center housing Vasbouragan Hall, an auditorium, as well as offices for the church, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation



Kristapor Chapter, Armenian National Committee of America-San Francisco, and local Homenetmen, Armenian Relief Society, Hamazkayin and Armenian Youth Federation Chapters, according to Asbarez.com.

The fire department as well as the San Francisco Police Department are investigating.

see ARSON, page 20

St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church’s community center (courtesy Facebook site)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkey Warns Armenia To ‘Stop Playing with Fire’

ANKARA (Panorama.am) – Turkey’s National Defense Ministry on September 21 warned Armenia about what it called “playing with fire” after an Azerbaijani soldier died during the cross-border attack.

The ministry in a tweet accused Armenia of violating the ceasefire on the border and allegedly killing an Azerbaijan soldier.

It also wished Allah’s mercy upon the martyred soldier and conveyed condolences to the brotherly country of Azerbaijan.

Turkey’s Foreign Ministry in a tweet also shared support for Azerbaijan, Anadolu reported.

Azerbaijan Should Blame Itself For Stalemate, Official Says

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Armenian Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan reacted to the latest statement of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev that negotiations over Nagorno-Karabakh are “virtually non-existent.”

“If he does not negotiate, then the negotiations do not exist for him,” the defense chief told reporters at Yerablur Military Pantheon in Yerevan on Monday, September 21.

Aliyev had also accused the Armenian authorities of disrupting the process of negotiations.

“He should blame himself instead of blaming the Armenian side,” Tonoyan stressed.

Congratulating Armenians on Independence Day, the minister wished the Armenian people strength and endurance to overcome all challenges.

ICRC Reps Visit Armenian Captives

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – The representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have visited Armenian captives held in Azerbaijan, the Public TV cited Zara Amatuni from ICRC’s Yerevan office as saying on Tuesday, September 22.

ICRC representatives have also visited officer Gurgen Alaverdyan, who went missing after leaving his post to inspect the checkpoint during bad weather on August 22, according to Defense Ministry spokeswoman Shushan Stepanyan. The Azerbaijani side reported that the Armenian officer was taken prisoner after a failed sabotage, but Stepanyan has refuted the claims as disinformation.

Besides, Alaverdyan, civilians Karen Ghazaryan and Narek Sardaryan, as well as servicemen Arayik Ghazaryan and Arsen Baghdasaryan are currently held in Azerbaijan.

INSIDE

Trump’s Bromance

Page 5

INDEX

Armenia	2-4
Arts and Living	13
Community News.	7
Editorial	18
International	5-6



ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Children's Home Investigated for Abuse Reports

YEREVAN, SEPTEMBER 22, ARMENPRESS. Employees of a children's home in Yerevan are under criminal investigation on suspicion of physically and psychologically abusing the children of the institution, police said in a news release.

Police said they were tipped off about the alleged maltreatment of the children and launched an investigation which gathered sufficient evidence supporting the allegations.

The investigation revealed that the children at the institution "were deprived from minimal living conditions and personal hygiene means" for a lengthy period of time, police said. The authorities said the employees have subjected the children to physical abuse by beating them with sticks as well as by hand.

Other details weren't immediately available.

Hakobyan Leaves City of Smile Foundation

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Anna Hakobyan, the wife of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, announced this week that she is leaving her position as chairwoman of the board of trustees of the City of Smile charitable foundation.

"Dear compatriots, with this statement I suspend my powers of the chairwoman of the board of trustees of the City of Smile charitable foundation," she noted on Facebook.

The City of Smile charitable foundation helps children and young people with oncological and hematological diseases.

Kocharyan Thanks Supporters Outside Yerevan Court

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – A group of supporters of second Armenian President Robert Kocharyan on September 22 held a rally in front of the Shengavit residence of the Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction before the resumption of the court hearings in the case against him and three other former senior officials.

Accompanied by his son, Levon Kocharyan, the former president approached protesters chanting "Kocharyan, hero!" and other slogans.

Supporters greeted them with applause and exclamations.

"I have a few free minutes before the court hearing starts. I have come here to thank you for your active support. It gives me both strength and endurance," he said.

Evidence Collected Against Ex-Police Chief Bullying Reporters

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenia's Investigative Committee revealed a number of circumstances over the case of obstruction of legal activity of a reporter by former police chief Vladimir Gasparyan, the Investigative Committee told Armenpress.

According to the data obtained, on August 8, 2020, former police chief Vladimir Gasparyan, while in his house at Drakhtik village in Gegharkunik province, noticed that a drone was flying and shooting video near the house. In order to find out who was making the shooting, the former official moved in the direction of a drone with his own vehicle. After noticing a reporter from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Robert Zargaryan and his crew, the ex-police chief started insulting the journalists, and threatened to use violence. Upon learning that the reporters were continuing their activity and preparing a report on illegal construction in the Lake Sevan basin, Gasparyan again urged them to stop filming. He forced them to delete the video.

Based on the evidence charges have been brought against Gasparyan for obstructing the legal activity of a reporter. The investigation continues.



Demonstrators from Bright Armenia assembled in front of the Parliament building on September 16, 2020 (courtesy of news.am)

Protestors in Yerevan Demands Resignation of Minister of Education

By Mateos Hayes

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN – It was a hot Wednesday of demonstrations in front of the Armenian Parliament on September 16 as angry demonstrators from the opposition party Lusavor Hayastan [Bright Armenia] protested against Arayik Harutyunyan, Armenia's current minister of education, science, culture, and sport.

Waving signs declaring "Education is our Right!", "Arayik Resign!", and depicting Harutyunyan as an "pandemic for education," demonstrators protested against what they saw as extreme reforms by the Ministry of Education, which "[threatened to] destroy the national values that represent the national identity of the Armenian people."

Protestors at the rally did not mince words in denouncing Harutyunyan, with one demonstrator, Vahagn Chakhalyan, declaring that Harutyunyan "belonged in the trash." Chakhalyan, the head of Kamq, an ultra-conservative activist group which also participated in the rally, was promptly arrested after this statement. Demonstrators allege that personnel in the ministry of education were inexperienced and may be compromised by foreign powers. They accused the Ministry of Education of attempting to institute



A protestor's sign reading "Education is Our Right" (photo Mateos Hayes)

"anti-Armenian" material into the curriculum. This protest formed yet another link in the chain of Bright Armenia's opposition to the Ministry of Education's reforms since 2018.

David Khazhaky, a member of the Council of Elders of Yerevan representing Bright Armenia spoke at the rally, informing reporters that a resolution calling for Harutyunyan's resignation had been presented to the National Assembly. He categorized Harutyunyan's

tenure as a "parade of failures" and argued that the Minister of Education would have resigned several times over "if he had been a non-partisan."

Speaking at a press conference in August, Arayik Harutyunyan categorically denied the allegations made by the opposition, and insisted that claims that his ministry was instituting sex education programs, or historical curricula which erased Armenian historical leaders, were the product of misinformation. Furthermore, Harutyunyan characterized the prospect of his resignation as "not a matter of discussion." Addressing complaints regarding the Ministry of Education's policy requiring that all students wear masks in classrooms, Harutyunyan stated "I listened to parents concerns. The ministry is considering these concerns..." As of this report there has been no official response to the latest bout of protests from the Ministry of Education.



Arayik Harutyunyan, the Armenian minister of education, science, culture, and sport (image courtesy of Aysor)

Correction

On the list of donations to Vahan Tekeyan School which was published recently, should have read "Dr. and Mrs. Charles and Manoushag Garabedian, \$100."



ARMENIA

Schools Open in Armenia

By Thomas Toghramadjian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

DEBED – In ordinary times, the start of classes at Debed Secondary School in the province of Lori means a day of celebration, with speeches, recitations, performances and songs. On Tuesday, September 15, the students who came in their best clothes for the first day of classes observed a much less familiar ceremony – standing in masks, one and a half meters apart on red lines freshly painted in the schoolyard, waiting to have their temperature taken by the school health inspector.

After closing schools nationwide in early March and weathering a serious rise in coronavirus cases over the summer, the government of Armenia has elected to resume in-person education for the 2020-2021 academic year. Education Minister Arayik Harutyunyan announced in August that schools would open on September 14, and classes for all grades would begin the following day, two weeks later than the traditional September 1 start date.

Armenia's school reopening puts it on a course ahead of its Transcaucasian neighbors. In-person classes in Azerbaijan are set to resume only in October, while Georgia, facing its first major outbreak after successfully containing the virus for most of the year, has also postponed its scheduled reopening.

The return to school comes with a long list of precautionary measures laid out in a 19-page memo issued by the Ministry of Education. Full-time mask-wearing, temperature checks, and regular hand sanitizing are mandatory for school staff and students of all ages. No class is allowed to exceed 20 students, and every grade is to remain in a single room over the course of the day, including during breaks between lessons. The school day has been shortened to a maximum of six periods between 40 and 50 minutes long, as opposed to the usual eight. All extracurricular groups and after-hours gatherings in school buildings have been suspended. School lunches (generally provided to students up until fourth grade) have been suspended, along with the usual 15-minute afternoon break. To accommodate the shortened semester and school day, the academic week has been extended to six days. While teachers may not be required to come into school so frequently, students across Armenia will have only Sundays free until the end of the semester this December.

Inside classrooms, teachers and students are struggling to adjust to new regulations. Students may no longer use workbooks, as all written assignments must be done on individually distributed handouts and teachers are not allowed to return graded work to students. In cases where written feedback is necessary, the guidelines recommend distributing photocopies – a tall order, given the expense and difficulty of access to printers in smaller communities. It is common practice in Armenian schools to call students to the blackboard, to review homework or demonstrate understanding of a lesson. Under the new regulations, this is not allowed.

Shushan Avetisyan, an English teacher in the village of Kalanavan, cited limits on written assignments and group work as challenges to her lesson process, but particularly emphasized



A classroom arranged for social distancing. According to new government regulations students must sit alone at desks positioned at least 1.5 meters apart.

the pressure the new rules put on students themselves. "It's not pleasant for them to wear masks, and all of the other regulations are unfamiliar to them too. Even during breaks, students basically must always stay in the classroom." On the whole, however, Avetisyan believes that her in-person classes have been "unambiguously more effective" than last semester's distance



Seventh graders gather in the school yard in Debed. To limit the risk of infection, students are not allowed to enter the building until 9:15 in the morning, fifteen minutes before the start of classes.

learning, and described the prevailing mood in the Kalanavan village school as "peaceful and workmanlike."

Some teachers have privately expressed doubt that these measures provide more than cosmetic protection. Especially in smaller communities, where classmates tend to be in close proximity without masks outside of school hours, the benefit of strict classroom practices is open to doubt. The perceived discrepancy between the extent of formal precautions and their practical utility is perhaps best embodied by the new digital infrared thermometers provided by the government as a first line of defense at the school door. While students in Debed have continued to queue up for temperature checks in the morning, the thermometer readings have mostly fallen between 29 to 35 degrees Celsius. (Normal human body temperature is 37 Celsius). The apparent unreliability of the government-issued thermometers has left school staff in doubt of what steps to take in cases where a high temperature is registered.

Potential consequences for failure to comply with anti-disease measures are severe. In cases of violation, school directors may face fines up to 300,000 drams – more than a month's salary – and a school may be closed for two weeks.

Teachers at the Debed Secondary School have been apprised that a police officer has been stationed in the community to conduct random checks for compliance during the school day.

Given these circumstances, the fear of penalties is in some sense more immediate than fear of the virus itself. This is not to say that the danger of a new outbreak has receded from view, as Debed School director Zaven Khachatryan made clear at a staff meeting on September 15.

"We ought to comport ourselves as though we are in a war,"

he said. "We must remember, and continually remind our students, that in the present situation one moment of carelessness may cause great harm to many people."



The hallways of Debed Secondary School, usually bustling before the first morning bell, stand empty – all students are required to remain in their respective classrooms from the time they enter the school until the time they leave.

Students in Debed are likewise doing their part. The majority have been diligent about wearing their masks and remaining at their desks even during breaks, and have even taken opportunities to remind teachers of social-distancing rules.

While the challenges associated with a return to in-person schooling are immense, teachers and students widely agree on one count – considering the alternatives, it is well worth a try. "Having lessons in the school building, even within severe limits, is simply more effective than teaching online" said Ashot Balyan, a geography teacher in the village of Nor Khachakap in Lori. For students who struggled to keep up with online coursework, the return to in-person classes is also a welcome change. "It was hard not to fall behind, especially for the kids without a good phone," said eleventh-grader Artur Matinyan. "I hope they don't close the schools again."

Fourth grader Suren Poghosyan is happy for the return to school as well, particularly because it gives him more time with his friends. "When the school was closed we were a bit cut off from each other," he said. "Now we see each other more."



ARMENIA

Pashinyan Lays Out Long-term Plans on 29th Anniversary of Independence

ANNIVERSARY, from page 1

He said that every major decision of his government will stem from the strategy and will be aimed at achieving its wide-ranging goals. "We hope that as a result of this dream and these mental changes we will manage to achieve galloping development," he said, presenting the document to a large group of university and high school students in Yerevan.

Pashinyan insisted that the document's long time span does not mean that he intends to stay in power for the next 30 years. He said he views its implementation as a "pan-national movement" that should also guide the country's next government.

"It's not that this strategy must remain unchanged until 2050," he said, adding that Armenians could amend it through general elections. He also stressed that his government is ready to consider changes in the text and will organize public discussions for that purpose soon.

Pashinyan already promulgated last year some of the targets contained in the strategy, notably the need to increase Armenia's population to at least 5 million by 2050. Opposition figures and other critics of his administration dismissed the move as a gimmick, saying that he should instead commit himself to meeting more short-term socioeconomic and demographic targets.

The prime minister said that he had planned to unveil the strategy in April but decided to postpone that due to the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic has hit the Armenian economy

or a state. By the way, I consider the recording of individual effort an idea prevailing in Armenia today.

4. Work - Work is the only tool that allows you to realize the accumulated creative potential. The government must be able to pursue a policy so that through education, individual freedoms and development, people have the opportunity to realize their creative potential through work."

According to Pashinyan, by uniting the pan-Armenian potential, it is necessary to understand the equal involvement of women and men in the solution of national and state problems.

"The majority of our population are women, but due to many circumstances today the potential of women in Armenia is not fully included in all spheres; it is not the basis of the development of the society, the state, starting with the Armed Forces, continuing with the economy and the system of state governance. By consolidating the pan-Armenian potential, we must understand not only the Armenians around the world, but also those segments of the Armenians, in particular, women, whose potential can be fully included, but there are no institutional mechanisms or public consent. We obviously do not fully use the potential of women in all spheres, the full involvement of that potential is a strategic issue for us."

"In the near future we will have Armenia 2050 website, which will become a working platform for discussions, suggestions, criticisms. As we entered 2020, I said that we were moving to strategic management. Moreover, we



Armenia's top leadership at Yerablur

hard, ending its robust growth that began in 2017. The Central Bank of Armenia forecast last week that the country's GDP is on course to shrink by 6.2 percent this year. Pashinyan's development strategy says that it should grow 20-fold by 2050.

"We faced many trials throughout the past 29 years: war, socio-economic bottlenecks, renewed tides of emigration, rigged elections, October 27, political repression, March 1, emergency situations and despair. However, these hardships failed to break our people's determination. The non-violent, velvet, people's revolution of 2018 came as a vivid evidence of nationwide optimism, civic stance, which reaffirmed that the Armenian people's will to have a sovereign, free, powerful and happy state was stronger than ever.

"The eternity of our sovereign statehood is at the core of our national agenda, and we must focus all our efforts on the daily service of that agenda," he said.

From the strategic point of view, there are 4 guiding values, Pashinyan said:

1. Armenian statehood - Statehood is the only tool that allows us to make decisions about our destiny. We perceive statehood as a key value, it is very possible to state that the permanence of the Armenian statehood is the practical problem that we must solve.

2. Education - Education is the only tool, the cornerstone, with which we will be able to recognize our problems find their solutions.

3. Individual - The individual is the only entity that forms a family, which we consider a national value, which forms a society, a people

planned to do this performance in April, Citizen's Day, but for well-known reasons it was postponed. "Now we must carry out strategic management through our daily work, so that any decision of a state body must have a logical-practical connection with this strategy," the Prime Minister concluded.

Nikol Pashinyan also answered the questions of the presentation participants.

Messages of Congratulation

The President of the United States of America Donald Trump sent a congratulatory message to Pashinyan.



Armenia's top leadership at Yerablur



An army band performs during the ceremonies at Yerablur.

He wrote, "I am very happy to congratulate you on September 21, the Independence Day of your country.

"For the 29 years since the Republic of Armenia gained its independence, the United States has stood by the Armenian people and supported their efforts to build modern democracy and economic development. We are ready to continue cooperating in the areas of our common interests, including the expansion of bilateral trade and investment, the strengthening of the rule of law, regional stability, and support for your country's sovereignty.

Today's challenges reaffirm the strength of our partnership. The ties between the Armenian and American peoples are undeniably strong and enduring, whether in the face of a new global coronavirus epidemic or in side-by-side international peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan or Kosovo.

"On this special day, we wish you all the best and look forward to strengthening our friendship over the coming year."

The Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Mikhail Mishustin also sent a congratulatory message; "On behalf of the Government of the Russian Federation, I personally congratulate you on the national holiday of the Republic of Armenia - Independence Day.

"I would especially like to mention the friendly, partner-allied nature of Russian-Armenian relations. I am convinced that the further strengthening of trade and economic-investment cooperation, the implementation of promising joint projects in energy, industrial and transport infrastructure, and the deepening of integration cooperation in the Eurasian Economic Union are fully in the interests of Russia and Armenia.

"I wish you, dear Nikol Vova, good health, prosperity, new success in your responsible state activity, and happiness and prosperity to all the citizens of Armenia."

Li Keqiang, chairman of the State Council (Prime Minister) of the People's Republic of China, wrote, "On the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of Armenia, please accept my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes.

"At present, the Sino-Armenian friendly cooperation relations maintain the positive dynamics of development. The political mutual trust of our countries is growing, the cooperation in different spheres is comprehensively developing. Since the outbreak of the new type of coronavirus, China and Armenia have been providing constant support to each other, overcoming difficulties through joint efforts, which reflects the deep friendship between our countries. I am ready to make efforts together with you for the comprehensive development of bilateral relations within the framework of the joint implementation of the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative.

"I wish you good health, all the best, the Republic of Armenia prosperity, and the Armenian people peace and happiness."

And President Vladimir Putin of Russia also sent a congratulatory note: "Please accept my sincere congratulations on the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of Armenia. Russia maintains friendly, allied relations with Armenia.

"I am confident that the constructive dialogue between our countries, bilateral cooperation in various fields, as well as cooperation within the framework of integration processes in the Eurasian space will continue to develop actively. Undoubtedly, it is in the interests of the Russian-Armenian peoples, it is on the path of ensuring regional security and stability.

"I wish you, dear Nikol Vova, good health success, and all the citizens of Armenia - peace and prosperity."

Visit to Yerablur

On the occasion of the 29th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Armenia, Pashinyan and the President of the Republic of Armenia Armen Sargsyan, the President of the Artsakh Republic Arayik Harutyunyan, Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan, accompanied by the top leadership of the republic, visited "Yerablur" military pantheon to pay tribute to the memory of Armenians who sacrificed their lives for the Homeland.

The prime minister laid flowers at the graves of Commander Vazgen Sargsyan and Andranik Ozanyan, and a wreath at the memorial to the fallen freedom fighters.



INTERNATIONAL

Behind Trump's Turkish 'Bromance'

Lev Parnas, Oligarchs and a Lucrative Lobbying Deal

By Aubrey Belford, Adam Klasfeld, Andrew W. Lehren and Dan De Luce

WASHINGTON (NBC News) – It was the day before Donald Trump's inauguration and Turkey's top diplomat was looking to make inroads with the new administration.

At Washington's Watergate Hotel, Turkey's foreign minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, sat down with Brian Ballard, a well-connected lobbyist serving as vice chairman of Trump's inaugural committee.

Also at the table were the two men who set up the meeting: Mübariz Mansimov, a Turkish-Azerbaijani shipping magnate now in a Turkish jail facing terrorism charges, and Lev Parnas, a colorful Florida businessman whose backchannel dealings in Ukraine would, two years later, feature prominently in President Trump's impeachment.

The Jan. 19, 2017, meeting, which has never before been disclosed, marked the start of Turkey's ambitious lobbying of the Trump administration that involved back-channels, Russian-linked oligarchs and Parnas, a key figure in the Ukraine case, according to an investigation by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, Courthouse News Service and NBC News.

Parnas and his former associate Igor Fruman made headlines for their role in the Ukraine affair and now face federal charges that they funneled illegal campaign contributions to Republican Party causes. Both men have pleaded not guilty. Prosecutors filed additional charges Thursday against Parnas, alleging he misled investors in his company. Parnas has denied the charges.

President Trump and his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, soon developed a warm relationship, according to Trump, resulting in decisions by the US president that recast American foreign policy on Syria, causing consternation among US allies and provoking the resignation of Trump's defense secretary, ret. Gen. James Mattis.

"I get along very well with Erdogan, even though you're not supposed to because everyone says what a horrible guy, but for me it works out good," Trump told journalist Bob Woodward in a recently released recorded conversation featured in the new book Rage.

Turkey's sway with Trump was on display last October. After a phone call with Erdogan, Trump abruptly announced he was greenlighting a Turkish incursion in northern Syria. The chaotic US troop withdrawal that resulted from that decision was criticized across the political spectrum, and many saw it as an aban-

donment of America's Kurdish allies.

Trump's former national security adviser, John Bolton, wrote in his recent memoir that the two men had a "bromance," even though Erdogan, an Islamist, appeared at odds with much of America's agenda.

Behind the rapport was a wider effort by Turkey to exert influence with the Trump administration via an international network of businessmen and oligarchs, several of whom are linked to former Soviet republics, according to the investigation. Two are facing crimi-

recounting the meeting. "It was in a little restaurant," adding that Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu "was sitting in the restaurant with a couple of other Turkish dignitaries."

"Mübariz introduced Brian Ballard as 'Trump's number one guy,'" Parnas said of the top Trump fundraiser whom Politico dubbed "The Most Powerful Lobbyist in Trump's Washington."

The lobbying contracts with Ballard Partners were established with the help of both Parnas and the shipping tycoon Mansimov, as well as Farkhad Akhmedov, who has since been listed by the US Treasury as a Russian oligarch closely tied to Russian President Vladimir Putin, according to Parnas, and to screen shots of his text messages



President Donald Trump and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the opening ceremony of the NATO Summit in Brussels on July 11, 2018. Geoffroy Van Der Hasselt / AFP - Getty Images file

nal charges in the United States and one in Turkey.

The reporting for this story is based on a review of court records, government documents and financial statements, as well as a 90-minute video interview with Parnas, who is awaiting trial on federal campaign finance charges.

The Watergate lunch eventually led to multi-million-dollar contracts for Ballard Partners to lobby on behalf of Turkey and Erdogan in the US, according to foreign lobbying contracts filed with the Justice Department.

The 2017 meal at the Watergate Hotel was recounted by Parnas, who also shared text messages with other participants setting up the lunch. Ballard Partners acknowledged the meeting and says it was an introductory, get-to-know-you meeting.

"There was a lot of bodyguards, Turkish bodyguards," Parnas said,

with Mansimov and Akhmedov. Ballard Partners denied that Akhmedov played any role in the Azerbaijan lobbying contract.

Foreign lobbying records show that Ballard Partners' contracts eventually included a \$125,000-per-month deal for the firm to represent Halkbank, a Turkish state bank being prosecuted in the US for fraud, money laundering and violating sanctions on Iran, public records show.

According to Bolton and congressional investigators, Trump has tried to discourage the Halkbank prosecution. Bolton says in his book that he was a witness to Trump more than once promising Erdogan to intervene in the case and that federal prosecutors would soon be more amenable to his wishes.

Members of Congress are investigating the issue and have cited Bolton's

see BROMANCE, page 6

International News

GM Aronian Wins Bundesliga Title with Baden-Baden

KARLSRUHE, Germany (Public Radio of Armenia) – Armenian Chess Grandmaster Levon Aronian won the Bundesliga title with OSG Baden-Baden on September 20.

On Sunday OSG Baden-Baden earned their 14th Bundesliga title in 15 years by winning the round-robin championship tournament in Karlsruhe, Germany. Many players returned to over-the-board chess for the first time in months and seemed quite inspired as lots of great games were played.

The team also features GM Fabiano Caruana (USA), GM Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (France), GM Richard Rapport (Hungary), GM Michael Adams (England), Francisco Vallejo Pons (Spain), Arkadij Naiditsch (Azerbaijan), Etienne Bacrot (France).

For this year, eight teams voluntarily agreed to play a single round-robin in Karlsruhe during September 16-20, with double rounds on three of the five playing days. Top favorite Baden-Baden managed to win yet another title but not without a fight that lasted until the very end.

Yerevan Rounds on Aliyev Over Stalled Karabakh Talks

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The Armenian government has rejected Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's latest statements blaming it for the current deadlock in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process.

Aliyev accused Yerevan of "disrupting the negotiating process" and preparing for war in televised remarks aired over the weekend.

"I have said before that we will not take part in negotiations for the sake of their imitation," he said. "It doesn't mean that we won't take part in negotiations. It means that we won't be joining in Armenia's cunning policy."

Aliyev said that Yerevan "provocative" actions and statements make further peace talks on resolving the Karabakh conflict "meaningless."

The Armenian Foreign Ministry deplored these "baseless and false claims" on Sunday, September 20. "They highlight the neighboring country's leader's inability to perceive the existing reality and his role in the emergence of that reality soberly and without painful emotions," said Anna Naghdalyan, the ministry spokeswoman.

Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan called Aliyev's claims "very emotional" on Monday. He said the Armenian side is ready to unconditionally restart peace talks with Baku as soon as possible.

Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan accused Aliyev of putting "insurmountable" obstacles to the resumption of the peace process spearheaded by the U.S., Russian and French co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

The three mediators met in Paris and spoke by phone with the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers from the French capital on September 14.

Aliyev already threatened to pull out of "meaningless negotiations" with Armenia in early July. A few days later heavy fighting broke out at a western section of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. It lasted for about a week, leaving at least 17 soldiers from both sides dead.

Armenian Troops Participate in Caucasus Exercises

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Troops of an Armenian Armed Forces unit participated on September 19 at the opening ceremony of the Caucasus 2020 strategic command-staff military exercises at the Russian Kapustin Yar training range.

The flags of the participating countries were ceremonially raised at the inauguration.

The drills involve counterterrorism and joint operation scenarios.

Caucasus 2020 involves around 80,000 troops, 250 tanks, 450 infantry vehicles, 200 artillery and rocket systems and other equipment.

Israel's IAI 'Paid \$155m to Two Firms Linked to Azeri Money Laundering'

TEL AVIV (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Israel's largest aerospace and aviation manufacturer transferred at least \$155 million to two companies associated with huge-scale money laundering for the Azerbaijani government, according to leaked bank reports for the period 2012-2014, cited by Israel's Center for Media and Democracy (Shomrim).

The reason for these payments by state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries, which produces aerial and astronaut systems for both military and civilian usage, remains unclear.

The story came to light as part of a huge leak involving thousands of banking documents that ultimately ended up in the hands of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ).

A Shomrim investigation reveals that the funds were transferred shortly after IAI signed one of its largest-ever business deals with the Azerbaijani government. A source familiar with the particulars of the deal claims, however, that to the best of his knowledge, it did not include an agreement regarding pay-

ment to any intermediary. IAI chose not to dispel the fog surrounding the nature of the payments and refrained from responding to questions as to the background of the transfers.

The payments appear in more than a dozen Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) compiled by Deutsche Bank officials and submitted to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, or FinCEN, the U.S. Treasury Department entity responsible for detecting illegal financial activity, including money laundering and funding for terrorism.



INTERNATIONAL

Behind Trump's Turkish 'Bromance': Lev Parnas, Oligarchs and a Lucrative Lobbying Deal

BROMANCE, from page 5

account as well as statements from Treasury officials saying Trump had asked Attorney General William Barr to handle the concerns raised by Erdogan. In 2018, Erdogan said publicly that he had asked Trump to intervene in the case and that talks were underway with US officials.

The White House has denied the Halkbank allegations and declined to comment for this story. The bank has denied the charges and filed a motion to dismiss.

The Halkbank case, which involved laundering billions of dollars out of Iran in violation of US sanctions, is based in part on testimony from a Turkish-Iranian gold trader, who alleged that Erdogan ordered illicit trade with Iran when he was prime minister. Erdogan has rejected the allegations and insisted Turkey did not violate the US embargo.

"Turkish officials were fast learners when it came to dealing with the Trump administration," said Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, who has pushed the White House for more information about how the Halkbank case was handled.

"They hired a favored Republican lobbyist right out of the gate, and pulled out all the stops in their efforts to avoid sanctions for Turkish state-owned Halkbank. Their work paid off, with President Trump doing President Erdogan's bidding in an effort to get Halkbank off the hook for its role in the largest sanctions evasion scheme in US history. It's corruption, plain and simple."

Turkey's ambassador to the US, Serdar Kılıç, said the Ballard Partners contract was one of many avenues the government used to further relations with the United States, and that Ankara's lobbying arrangements were legal and transparent.

"Turkey has been working with a multitude of US lobbying firms for decades. Contracts are naturally being constantly re-evaluated according to evolving needs and requirements," Kılıç said. "Turkey's dealings with US lobbying firms have always been in total agreement with US legal requirements."

Ballard Partners paid Parnas \$45,000 for setting up the deals with Turkey, bank statements reviewed by reporters for this story show.

Ballard Partners acknowledged the payment, but discounted Parnas's role in securing the contracts. Turkey selected the firm for its expertise, the company said, citing one of its partners, Robert Wexler, a former Democratic congressman from Florida whose "knowledge and understanding of the region is deep and rare."

Mansimov, the shipping magnate, was at the time also a business associate of Lev Aslan Dermen, an Armenian-American recently convicted of working with members of a Utah polygamist sect in a billion-dollar tax credit fraud scheme. A federal agent has alleged in

court that Dermen and his accomplices were linked to Erdogan and had bought the protection of Turkey's government.

Parnas said his introduction to shipping tycoon Mansimov came via another figure at the center of the Ukraine impeachment case, Belarusian-born Florida businessman Igor Fruman, who had worked with Trump's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, on efforts to find political dirt on Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden and his family.

Parnas said the encounter with Mansimov happened on Dec. 5, 2016, during a night at the

president's family.

"He used to brag that he was very well connected to Erdogan," Parnas said.

Mansimov did not respond to written requests sent to an executive at his company.

Mansimov now sits in a Turkish jail, facing what he says are trumped up charges of involvement with Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish cleric living in exile in the US who Erdogan's government claims is behind a 2016 coup attempt. Members of Gülen's movement, formerly allied with Erdogan's government, are now accused of belonging to a terrorist organization and hunted by Turkey.

But on that winter night in Kyiv, Mansimov was still an influential figure. His company, Palmali, was a major shipper of oil across the Black Sea, and he enjoyed high-level connections in Turkey, Russia, and his native Azerbaijan.

Parnas said he bonded with Mansimov on their evening out and they later attended a string of V.I.P. inauguration balls around Washington as Trump prepared to assume the presidency.

After the inauguration, Parnas says Mansimov gave him a new assignment related to Turkey: spend time entertaining the Russian oligarch Akhmedov, who had just docked his superyacht, the Luna, at a mooring in South Florida.

"It wasn't a bad gig," Parnas recalled with a laugh. "I mean, 70 people on staff, four chefs, every toy in the book." The yacht is listed in directories at 377 feet.

Like Mansimov, Akhmedov was born in Azerbaijan. But unlike Akhmedov, he rose in Russia to become a top Kremlin-linked oligarch. The Treasury Department later included him on a 2017 list of top oligarchs tied to President Vladimir Putin.

Akhmedov was keen on cultivating ties with Ballard for Turkey as well as for his native Azerbaijan, according to Parnas. Azerbaijan's government would later hire Ballard Partners. According to Parnas, he and Ballard introduced Akhmedov to Steve Wynn, a casino billionaire and G.O.P. megadonor.

Parnas said he made that introduction at a Republican National Committee retreat in Palm Beach, Florida, on March 4. A photo obtained by reporters shows the three men embracing each other at the event. Trump had been there the day before, attending the first day of the retreat.

Akhmedov did not respond to requests for comment.

Even though Parnas had tried to make himself useful, he said he was soon iced out of the Turkey-Ballard relationship.

On May 11, 2017 – just days before an incident in which Erdogan's bodyguards beat protesters on a Washington street – Ballard Partners signed its first Turkey-related lobbying contract, with the Turkish government. The second contract, with Halkbank, was signed in

August. Combined, the two contracts brought in more than \$4 million, according to foreign lobbying records with the Justice Department.

Parnas only learned that Ballard Partners and Turkey had signed a deal after reading a May 2017 article in Politico. A WhatsApp message seen by reporters showed that Parnas questioned Ballard and another of his employees about it in early June. He believed he was due part of the contract because he had helped open the door to the introductions.

Parnas said that Ballard attempted to minimize his role in setting up the contracts. "We got into a heated argument."

Bank records obtained by reporters show Ballard's lobbying firm, Ballard Partners, made two payments of \$22,500 each to Parnas in 2018, over a year after he had helped set up the deal.

Ballard Partners said Parnas was compensated in a "timely manner," and said his payment was a finder's fee for securing Turkey as a client.

Ballard Partners terminated the lobbying contract with the Turkish government on Nov. 15, 2018, a few days after the Trump administration gave sanctions relief letting Erdogan's regime purchase oil from Iran. The firm's Halkbank contract was terminated last October, after the bank was indicted by US federal prosecutors.

Turkey also explored other routes to influence the Trump administration.

During the 2016 presidential campaign Turkey sought out Trump adviser Mike Flynn to help advance Erdogan's agenda, and paid more than \$500,000 in Turkish government money to Flynn's consultancy. The Turkish government wanted Flynn's help in winning the extradition of Erdogan's rival, Gülen, from the US On Election Day 2016, Flynn published an opinion piece in The Hill criticizing Gülen.

Flynn's lobbying partner, Bijan Kian, was later charged with illegally acting as an unregistered agent for Turkey and for lobbying the US for Gülen's extradition. He was found guilty at trial but his conviction was overturned by a judge, who said there was insufficient evidence to convict.

Former CIA Director James Woolsey told the Wall Street Journal he was at September 2016 meeting with Flynn and two Turkish ministers at which the ministers discussed kidnapping Gülen from his home in Pennsylvania and "whisking" him to Turkey to face charges. Flynn has denied the report.

Flynn would briefly serve as Trump's first national security adviser before he was forced to resign on Feb. 13, 2017, for lying about his contacts with Russia's ambassador to the US.

Records filed under the US Foreign Agents Registration Act show that Turkey's government and related agencies spent more than \$7.8 million on five US lobbying firms in 2018 alone. Apart from Ballard Partners, another beneficiary has been the Washington lobbying firm Mercury Public Affairs.

Mercury has contracts with Turkey's government and the Turkish-US Business Council. The council is now headed by Mehmet Ali Yalçındag, a Turkish businessman who partnered with the US president in a Trump Towers Istanbul project. Trump described the development in 2015, without elaborating, as a "little conflict of interest."



A table setting with Donald Trump, Brian Ballard and Lev Parnas seated close together for a Republican fundraising dinner at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Fla. on April 20, 2018. Courtesy Lev Parnas

Buddha-Bar, a flashy nightclub Fruman owned in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv.

Born in Soviet-era Ukraine and raised in Brooklyn, Parnas was at the time a relatively unknown businessman with a string of failed ventures and unpaid debts. During the 2016 campaign, Parnas had managed to raise enough money to become a major donor to pro-Trump causes. When Trump won in November 2016, Parnas found himself with an inside track to the White House.

According to Parnas, his conversation with Mansimov at Buddha-Bar turned to his relationship with Brian Ballard, who was already seen as an influential power broker in Trump's world. That October, Parnas had met Ballard at a Florida function for V.I.P. Trump donors, where the two men "clicked," he said. Mansimov wanted an introduction.

A photograph from the night out in Kyiv shows the men in high spirits and arm in arm. According to Parnas, Mansimov touted his personal links to Erdogan, including his reported gift of a \$25 million oil tanker to the Turkish

Buddha-Bar, a flashy nightclub Fruman owned in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv.

Born in Soviet-era Ukraine and raised in Brooklyn, Parnas was at the time a relatively unknown businessman with a string of failed ventures and unpaid debts. During the 2016 campaign, Parnas had managed to raise enough money to become a major donor to pro-Trump causes. When Trump won in November 2016, Parnas found himself with an inside track to the White House.

According to Parnas, his conversation with Mansimov at Buddha-Bar turned to his relationship with Brian Ballard, who was already seen as an influential power broker in Trump's world. That October, Parnas had met Ballard at a Florida function for V.I.P. Trump donors, where the two men "clicked," he said. Mansimov wanted an introduction.

A photograph from the night out in Kyiv shows the men in high spirits and arm in arm. According to Parnas, Mansimov touted his personal links to Erdogan, including his reported gift of a \$25 million oil tanker to the Turkish

Armenian Embassy in Israel Inaugurated

TEL AVIV (RFE/RL) – Armenia has reportedly inaugurated its embassy in Israel one year after deciding to upgrade diplomatic relations with the Jewish state.

The opening of the Armenian Embassy in Tel Aviv, initially slated for the beginning of this year, was delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

A Russian-language news website, Vesti Izrail, reported that a senior Israeli Foreign Ministry official attended the opening ceremony held on Thursday, September 17. It quoted the official, Itzhak Carmel-Kagan, as saying that the embassy will facilitate a "constructive dialogue" between the two countries.

The Armenian mission located inside a Tel Aviv office building began providing consular services last month. Also, Ambassador Armen Smbat met with leaders of the Armenian community in the Holy Land, including Jerusalem-based

Patriarch Nourhan Manougian.

The Armenian government decided to open the embassy in September 2019, saying that it will not only "give new impetus" to its relations with Israel but also help to secure the Armenian Apostolic Church's continued presence in the Holy Land.

The decision was hailed by Israeli leaders but criticized by some officials in Iran, a key foreign partner of Armenia. The Armenian ambassador to Iran, Artashes Tumanyan, assured a senior Iranian Foreign Ministry official in June that Yerevan remains committed to its "friendly" relationship with the Islamic Republic despite its desire to improve Armenian-Israeli ties.

Armenia and Israel established diplomatic relations in 1992 but have had no embassies in each other's capitals until now. The former Armenian ambassadors to the Jewish state were

based in Paris, Cairo and Yerevan.

Armenian-Israeli relations have long been frosty, reflecting differing geopolitical priorities of the two states. Yerevan has repeatedly expressed concern over billions of dollars worth of advanced weapons which Israeli defense companies have sold, with the Israeli government's blessing, to Azerbaijan over the past decade.

"Israel should stop this deadly business with Azerbaijan," Armenian Foreign Zohrab Mnatsakanian said following deadly fighting that broke out on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in July.

The Azerbaijani army attacked Armenian military and civilian targets with Israeli-manufactured drones during the week-long hostilities. The Armenian military claimed to have shot down or intercepted 13 of them.

Community News

The Diocesan Assembly Meets Virtually For First Time

NEW YORK – On Saturday, September 12, the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America broke new ground by holding a “virtual” Diocesan Assembly. It was the first time in the organization’s history that the annual gathering went forward as an online event, with attendees participating remotely.

Since the first Diocesan Assembly in 1902, the event has been anticipated as an occasion for Armenian Church leaders from across most of the United States to come together to deliberate, vote, conduct important business, and enjoy social events.

Naturally, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic was the reason for proceeding with the assembly in an online format for 2020. Earlier in the year, worldwide concerns over the spread of the COVID-19 virus had caused the cancellation of the scheduled 118th Diocesan Assembly, which was to have taken place in Dallas, TX.

The change in format led to some departures from past practice. This year’s assembly was conducted as an “informational assembly,” with a limited scope and timeframe. As a practical matter, the assembly did not attempt to conduct any voting for elections, on proposals, or on matters such as approval of budgets.

Some 180 clergy, Diocesan delegates, and parish council chairs registered to take part in the roughly four-hour meeting over the Zoom conference platform.

Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan presided over the occasion, and delivered his annual message on the state of the Diocese from



Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan

within the Diocesan Center in New York.

Members of the Diocesan Council, staff, and others provided updates on key topics, with opportunity given for questions from the attending delegates. The meeting agenda included a financial presentation; a presentation on the Diocese’s Annual Appeal; and a special segment on the Diocese’s educational initiative Vemkar, the inaugural pillar of the Diocesan vision for “Building Up the Body of Christ.”

Lisa Esayan (St. James Church, Evanston, IL) chaired the meeting, continuing the role she had been elected to during 2019’s 117th Diocesan Assembly. In introductory remarks she affirmed that the virtual gathering would constitute the official annual Diocesan Assembly for the year 2020, as required by the Diocesan Bylaws.

A Transformation at Every Level

Findikyan’s remarks, delivered in Armenian and English, began with an expression of his regret that the assembly planned for May, to have been hosted by the St. Sarkis Church of Dallas, had not been able to go forward due to the pandemic. He thanked the pastor and parishioners of that community for the long effort they put into that event, and their grace in accepting its cancellation.

The Primate devoted his address to the vision for the Eastern Diocese that has emerged over the initial years of his term, called “Building Up see ASSEMBLY, page 8



Aran Wines

Armenia Tree Project Organizes Its First Annual Virtual Wine Tasting Event

BOSTON – Armenia Tree Project (ATP) has organized its first annual virtual wine tasting fundraising event on October 24, at 4 p.m. PST/ 7 p.m. EST via Zoom video conferencing.

Anush Gharibyan O’Connor, winemaker, sommelier, and director for Armenian Wines & Spirits Festival- GiniFest, will facilitate the event. Alex Sarafian, founder of Aran Wines by Sarafian Vineyards, will then guide participants through tasting Aran’s signature red and rosé wines. They will discuss Armenia’s 6,200-year-old wine tradition and its revival in recent years.



Anush Gharibyan O’Connor

Raffi Santikian from the Santikian vineyard in Fresno will also make a special guest appearance. Lastly, Jeanmarie Papelian, executive director of Armenia Tree Project, will share updates on ATP’s programs in Armenia and Artsakh, and its plans to move forward with a record-setting year despite unprecedented global challenges.

“We’re sad we couldn’t travel to Armenia this year so we’re bringing a taste of it to our supporters in the comfort of their home with the new format of virtual events,” said Papelian. “We are also overjoyed to highlight a winery from Artsakh, where investments and projects like wine-making and tree-planting are crucial to aid the growth and economy of the territory.”

Participants’ tickets include 2 or 4 bottles of Aran wine and a suggested list of food pairings and recipes. More information about the event can be found here: atpwinetastingevent.eventbrite.com

TCA of Montreal Disburses Donations from Saro Manoukian Fund

MONTREAL – The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) chapter of Montreal disbursed funds this year from the Saro Manoukian Fund, dedicated to a young man who passed away.

To immortalize his memory, the family created a charity fund under his name. The fund’s generated income is periodically allocated to a charity. This year’s contribution was allocated towards a youth oriented educational program.

Through seminars, debates, exchanges, meetings and visits, this program aims to bring together Armenia’s, Artsakh’s and Diaspora’s youth under the valued common denominator of patriotic self-confidence and valorization; establish and strengthen the notions of Nation-Army, Homeland-Church and Armenia-Diaspora, thus preparing the youth to be the future leaders of a democratic and liberal Armenia.

Saro was a patriotic Canadian-Armenian youth. He surely would have been a happy participant in such an educational program.

Previous years’ contributions went to: École Armen-Québec (purchase of library books);

Montreal Children’s Hospital (Framed painting by Roxana Kibzey, medical equipment, fundraising cards and monetary donation);

Hundreds of trees planted in Armenia (Armenia Tree Project);

Supporting a group of Armenia resident musicians with monetary rewards;

Donation to the “Children’s Wish Foundation”;

Tekeyan Center’s illuminated sign;

Donation to clear land mines in Artsakh (via Halo Trust);

Monetary assistance to 3 families of fallen soldiers;

Monetary contributions to 28 Volunteers’ families who participated in the April 2016 Artsakh war.

Classroom renovation – Berdzor (Artsakh) Tekeyan school.

September 21 Proclaimed Armenian Independence Day in Washington, DC

WASHINGTON – Washington DC Mayor Muriel Bowser has proclaimed September 21 in Washington DC as “Armenian Independence Day,” the Armenian Embassy in the US informs.

The proclamation reads:

“Whereas, today the Republic of Armenia celebrates its Independence Day and this year also marks the 100th anniversary of the establishment of relations between the United States and Armenia,

“Whereas, the United States has agreements with Armenia that affect trade investments, strengthen democratic institutions and foster sustainable and inclusive economic growth; and

Whereas, the Embassy of Armenia is located in Washington, DC and contributes to the cultural diversity and educational enrichment of our students through their participation in the DC Public School Embassy Adoption Program; and

Whereas, the Republic of Armenia continues to strengthen partnerships between the two countries to build better relations and goodwill; and

Whereas, I congratulate the Embassy of Armenia on this Independence Day celebration and look forward to your continued collaboration with the District of Columbia:

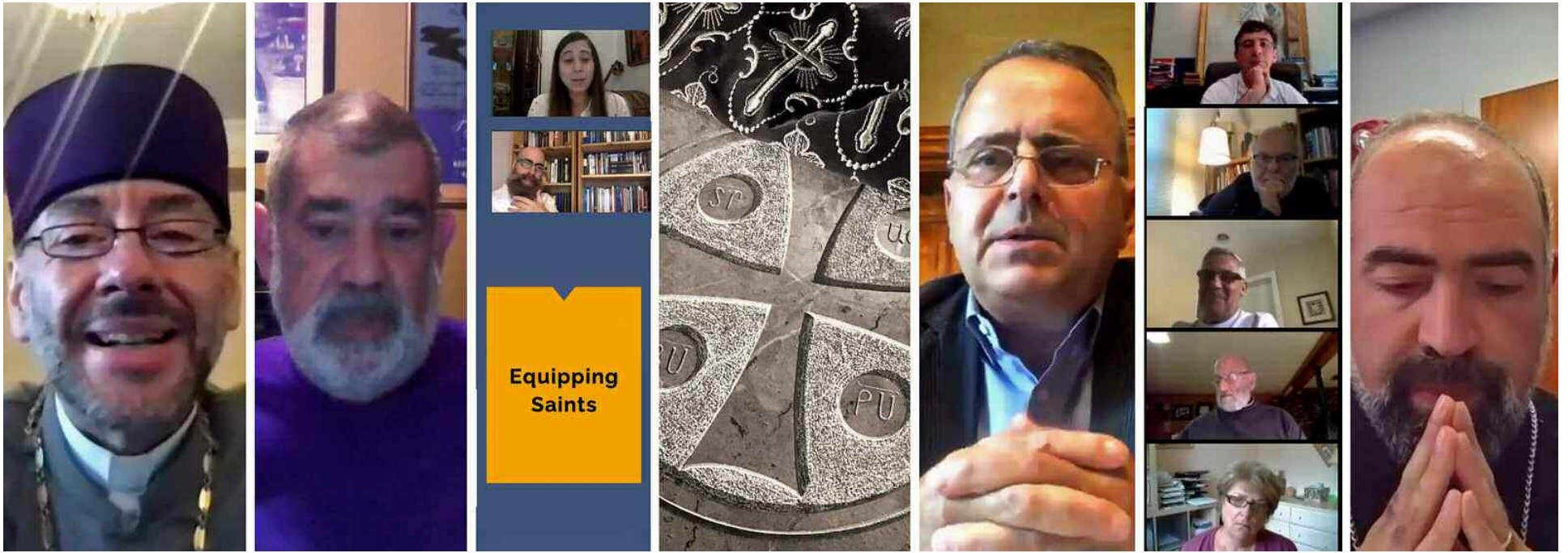
Now, Therefore, I, the Mayor of Washington, DC, do hereby proclaim September 21, 2020 in Washington, DC, as “Armenian Independence Day.”



Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser



COMMUNITY NEWS



A screenshot of various participants in the Diocesan Assembly

Diocesan Assembly Meets Virtually For First Time

ASSEMBLY, from page 7

the Body of Christ." He said of this name: "It's not a motto. It's a true transformation, at every level – from the bishop down to every one of the faithful; day by day, week by week – focusing our energies, our resources human and material, on the one sacred imperative of the Armenian Church."

In pursuing that transformation, he drew a distinction between the church's tradition rightly understood, and the mere repetition of long-held routines. The Primate called on clergy and lay leaders to "reorient our efforts," and praised the spirit of "kachoutiun" ("courage") to adapt in response to new circumstances.

Bishop Daniel went on to sketch the "five pillars" of the Building Up the Body of Christ vision, which are drawn from a passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (4:11-16). These include education, made universal, life-long, and directed to every demographic segment of the community; equipping every

faithful member to be a minister of the church; deepening meaningful participation in the Holy Badarak; promoting loving service and social justice in the church and surrounding society; and reforms to the Diocese' structure and organization, including a reappraisal of the Diocesan Bylaws.

As the first established "pillar" of this vision, Findikyan referenced the Vemkar online educational initiative, which was released to the public over the summer. A more detailed overview of Vemkar would be given in the afternoon session, he said.

A Demanding But Creative Year

In reviewing the past year's achievements, the Primate focused first on the great interruption of the past half-year under the restrictions of the Coronavirus pandemic. While regretting the loss of the close-knit communal activity that is a hallmark of Armenian Church life, the Primate commended the Diocese's pastors and parish

leaders for their swift, creative responses to the pandemic, which allowed the faithful to participate in meaningful ways in the life of the church, and brought the church's outreach to people in distress during a critical time. He thanked parishes for broadcasting their services over the Internet, and for carefully observing the safety guidelines for meetings and public gatherings.

Along these lines he mentioned the Diocesan youth ministry programs, which reacted quickly when in-person gatherings became impossible, transitioning to a series of frequent virtual events that included a weeklong virtual summer camp experience for several hundred young faithful from across the Diocese.

Bishop Daniel recalled with pleasure his visits to parishes in the earlier part of the year, and the ability these visits afforded him to meet and spend time with the people. While such visits had to be curtailed under the restrictions, he said he was thrilled that

his schedule of visits would be picking up again, and he would be seeing parishioners in the coming months to the fullest extent possible.

He looked back gratefully on the two priestly ordinations he performed in 2019 – ordaining Fr. Andreas Garabedian (Chicago, IL) and Fr. Voski Galstyan (Hartford, CT) – and said he anticipates two or three more priestly ordinations in the coming year.

On the subject of ordinations to the minor orders of the church, the Primate updated the delegates on the question of ordaining girls to serve as tbrs(acolytes) at the altar. The Diocesan Assembly had previously charged the Primate with investigating the question, and Bishop Daniel reported that he has brought up the issue directly in personal meetings with the Catholicos of All Armenians, His Holiness Karekin II, and that the question would be on the agenda of the next National Ecclesiastical

continued on next page

DENNIS M. DEVENEY & SONS

Cemetery Monuments

Specializing in
Armenian Designs and Lettering

701 Moody St. Waltham, MA 02543
(781) 891-9876 www.NEMonuments.com

Giragosian

FUNERAL HOME

James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC
Mark J. Giragosian
Funeral Counselors

576 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472, TEL: 617-924-0606
www.giragosianfuneralhome.com

Telephone (617) 924-7400

Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN

OBITUARY

Alice (Ekmekjian) Vosgerichian

Active in Local Community

BELMONT, Mass. – Alice (Ekmekjian) Vosgerichian of Belmont, passed away peacefully after a brief illness on September 16, 2020. She was 72 years old.

She was the wife of the late Garo Vosgerichian.

She is survived by her son, Dr. George Vosgerichian, and her sister, Ardemis Ekmekjian both of Belmont. She also leaves behind many loving nieces, nephews, cousins and friends who were like family.

Alice was a devoted member of St. Stephen's Armenian Church in Watertown and member of the Ladies Guild where she volunteered countless hours at the church.

She was also very involved in the local Armenian community and was involved with the Armenian Relief Society (ARS), National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and Armenian Museum of America (AMA).

She was beloved by all that knew her and will be greatly missed.

Visiting hours were held at the Giragosian Funeral Home, 576 Mt. Auburn St. (Rt. 16), Watertown on Sunday, September 20. Due to



the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and public safety measures, funeral services were held privately.



The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada gratefully acknowledges the donation by Nazareth A. and Nila Festekjian of \$250 to the Krikor and Makrouhi Kuredjian Educational Fund.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Diocesan Assembly Meets Virtually

from previous page

Assembly of the worldwide Armenian Church – originally scheduled for this year but postponed for the duration of Armenia’s pandemic crisis.

The Primate spoke on his effort to advance the Atlanta mission parish to full-parish status, by securing a grant to assign a fulltime pastor to the community for a period of three

Diocese’s 2020 Annual Appeal, and noted some positive early developments and favorable circumstances that could encourage donors in the coming months.

Oscar Tatosian of the Diocesan Council gave a presentation on the Diocesan budget, which he began by praising longtime council treasurer Roseann Manoogian Attar for the careful attention she has devoted to the orga-



Oscar Tatosian

years. He said that this effort has established a model that can be used in the future to advance several other Diocesan mission parishes towards full-parish status.

Bishop Daniel also addressed the Diocese’s work on the ecumenical stage alongside the Oriental Orthodox, Byzantine Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, as well as in interfaith settings. He praised Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director Archbishop Vicken Aykazian for his longtime leadership on the national and global ecumenical stage.

Finally, recalling the “humbling experience” of being ordained a bishop of the Armenian Church in 2019, the Primate acknowledged the clergy who had served as mentors to him throughout his life and ministry. He expressed thanks to Diocesan clergy and parish leaders for their loving devotion to the church, and thanked the members of the Diocesan Council and Diocesan staff for their support and friendship.

nization’s finances.

He detailed that the Diocese currently projects a 400,000-loss for 2020, due largely to the severe reduction in revenue from facilities rentals at the Diocesan Center in New York, incurred during the pandemic lockdown. The Diocese was eligible for and received more than half a million dollars from the Payroll Protection Fund, but also furloughed nine employees and gave salary reductions to the staff as a result of the pandemic. More promisingly, the Diocese’s Legacy Endowment Campaign passed the \$9-million dollar mark in 2019.

A highlight of the virtual Diocesan Assembly was a special presentation from the Diocesan Ministries departments on the recently-launched Vemkar educational initiative. Dn. Eric Vozzy and Arpi Nakashian gave an overview of the history of the Vemkar name – which originated as a smartphone app and has been developed as the foundational pillar of the Building Up the Body of Christ vision.



Rev. Vart Gyozyalyan

Diocesan Reports

A report on Diocesan finances began with a presentation from Development director Laurie Onanian on fundraising in 2019 and in the current climate. She said that in recent months, she had been deeply touched to see the outpouring of generosity and goodwill from people across the Diocese, who responded enthusiastically to the church’s campaigns to bring financial relief to people in Armenia suffering under the COVID-19 lockdown, and to victims of the Beirut explosion. She spoke about the launch of the

They then led the delegates on a virtual “tour” of Vemkar’s educational offerings available on its website platform, Vemkar.us.

Assembly chair Lisa Esayian led the final session in which delegates asked questions and voiced concerns. While delegates were largely pleased with the format of a “virtual” Diocesan Assembly, many had questions about the scope of assemblies going forward: about the practicality in the near term of holding in-person meetings, and also the urgency of restoring the deliberative and voting functions of the assembly.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. Publication Title: The Armenian Mirror-Spectator

2. Publication Number: 0 0 2 4 - 2 3 4 x

3. Filing Date: 09/21/2020

4. Issue Frequency: Weekly except for 3 weeks

5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 49

6. Annual Subscription Price: \$80.00

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®): 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472-1509

Contact Person: Aram Arkun
Telephone (Include area code): (617) 924-4420

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer): SAME

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank)

Publisher (Name and complete mailing address): Baikal Association, Inc., 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472

Editor (Name and complete mailing address): Alin K. Gregorian, 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472

Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address): Aram Arkun, 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472

10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)

Full Name: Baikal Association, Inc. Complete Mailing Address: 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box None

Full Name: Complete Mailing Address:

12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one)

The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes:

Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months

Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

13. Publication Title: The Armenian Mirror-Spectator

14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: 09/19/2020

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation

		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)		1200	1200
(1)	Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	910	909
b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)			
(2)	Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)		
(3)	Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®	2	0
(4)	Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)	23	23
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))		935	932
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)			
(1)	Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541	115	115
(2)	Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies included on PS Form 3541		
(3)	Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail)	26	26
(4)	Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)	2	3
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))		143	144
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)		1078	1076
g. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))		122	124
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)		1200	1200
i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)		77.92	86.62
16. Electronic Copy Circulation			
a. Paid Electronic Copies		0	0
b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)		935	932
c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)		1078	1076
d. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c x 100)		77.92	86.62

I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership

If publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the 9/26/20 issue of this publication. Publication not required.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Alin Gregorian, Editor

Date: 09/21/2020

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

Throughout the meeting, Diocesan staffers Jennifer Morris and Christopher Sheklian shared the technical roll of moderating the online discussions.

The meeting adjourned with a spirit of optimism from participants and organizers. For many of the delegates the occasion was a welcome reunion with friends they had not

seen since the start of the lockdown, and some lingered on the video conference to exchange brief greetings and warm good wishes.

A series of video “break-out sessions” has been scheduled for the coming weeks as a follow-up to the main assembly meeting of September 12.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Primate Leads Inspiring Exaltation of the Cross Service at St. Vartan Cathedral

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK – It is a holy sliver of wood from the Resurrection Cross carried by Christ, embedded in a small gold crucifix surrounded with the mystical herb, basil.

The Cross carried by Christ on which he was crucified represents Christ's victory over death, and symbolizes both the grief felt by Christians all over the world at the Crucifixion, as well as the salvation and hope of the Holy Cross through the Resurrection.

On Sunday evening, September 13, this powerful Khatchveratz service – celebrating the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross – was held at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in New York, led by the Eastern Diocese's Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan, who planned, organized, and presided over this special ceremonial service.

Due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, only four local area priests and nine deacons participated in this medz antasdan service blessing the four corners of the world. Some three dozen faithful were in attendance.

The Height of Love

In his inspiring remarks, Findikyan called the blessing of the four corners of the world “exceptional during this pandemic. I bless every person, family, every saint, every criminal, every state, every country. I do so while carrying an actual relic of the Cross of the Resurrection that changed the course of human history.”



This was “love shown by action and self-sacrifice. When we take from ourselves and give to another, it is a gift of ourselves. God gives the gift of Himself to bring healing to the world,” he said.

“It is up to us to open our hearts and minds to God's love, to be inspired. The condition of the world today,” he continued, “is filled with selfishness, self-absorption, worries and pains. We need to open ourselves to giving, having empathy, being selfless, and focusing our lives up to God in our every action.”

Following the blessing of the four corners of the world service in the cathedral, the clerical procession marched to the cathedral plaza. They blessed the people of the world and those in attendance before a small table, with the cross surrounded by basil.



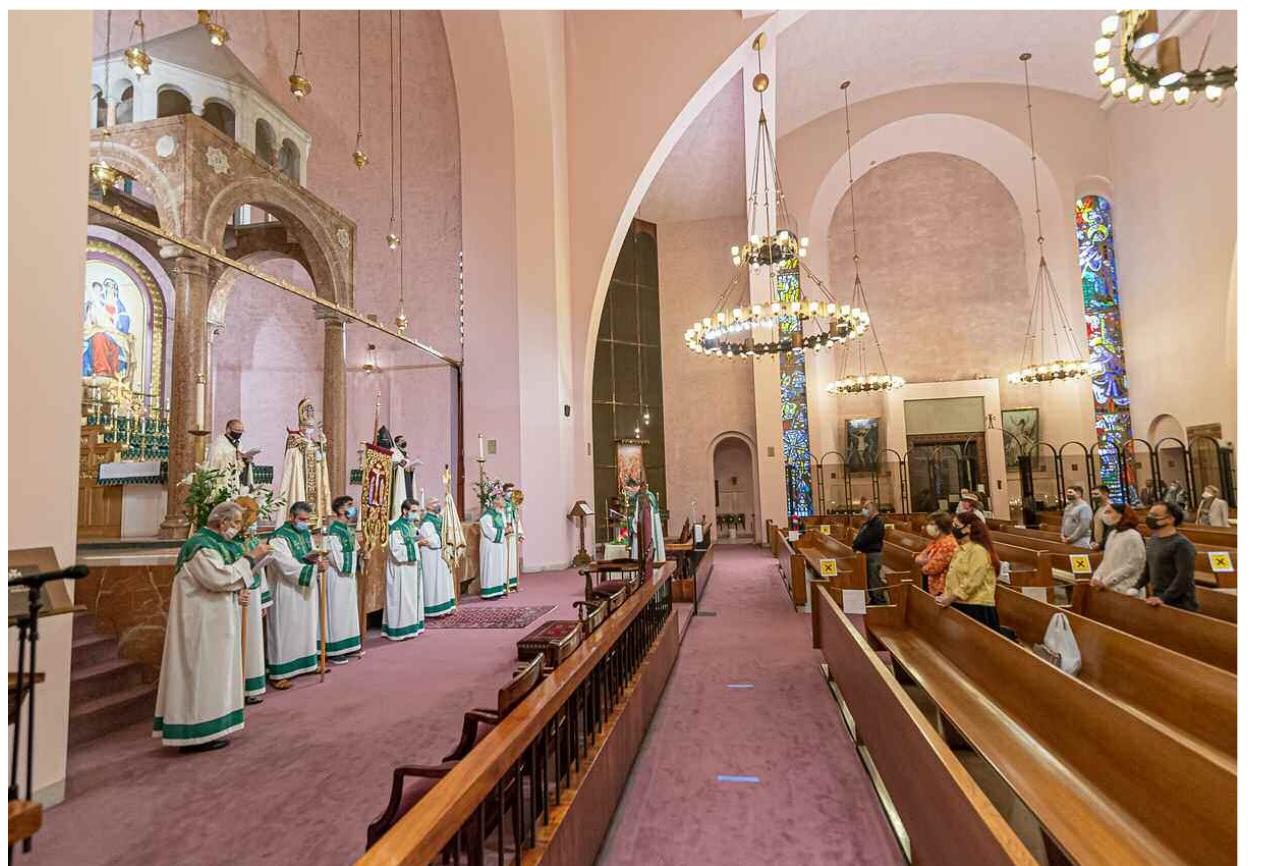
The Primate knelt before the table, kissed the cross and took a sprig of basil. Also showing their reverence, the priests, deacons, and faithful followed. A reception with Armenian delicacies was offered on the plaza.

“I am deeply moved by this service,” remarked the Primate to this writer during the reception. “For centuries the Armenian Church, one of the smallest in Christendom, has had the faith and confidence to bless the entire world. This is truly amazing.”

During the “blessing of the four earthly points, I could only



COMMUNITY NEWS





COMMUNITY NEWS

Man Who Saved Teen From Sinking Car Given Sweeney Award For Bravery

BOSTON (CBS) – A man who saved a teenager from a sinking car is this year’s recipient of the Madeline Sweeney Award for Bravery, an honor given annually on September 11 in Boston.

He was nominated for the award by state Senator Michael Moore, Rep. David Muradian, and Grafton Police Chief Normand Crepeau, Jr.

Chris Etre, 49, of Upton, pulled a teenage girl from a car that crashed and started to sink into the Quinsigamond River in Grafton on December 13, 2019.

The teen driver jumped out right before the car went into the river, but his girlfriend was trapped inside. Etre saw the crash, grabbed a wrench from his truck, ran into the freezing water and smashed the back window. He was able to pull the girl out before the car sank completely.

Chris Etre pulled a teenager out of this sinking car on December 13, 2019. (Photo credit: Grafton Police)

“Putting his own life at risk, Chris Etre personified the selfless courage we remember Madeline ‘Amy’ Sweeney for,” Gov. Charlie Baker said in a statement announcing the



Chris Etre, center, holding his award, with members of the Grafton Police Department and state Rep. David Muradian (Photo courtesy of Patch.com)

award Friday. “In the face of life-threatening danger, he acted quickly and decisively to bring a stranger to safety and is an inspirational example of her legacy.”

Sweeney was a flight attendant on American Airlines Flight 11, the first plane to leave Logan Airport and crash into one of the World Trade

Center towers in lower Manhattan. She called a ground supervisor and relayed information about the hijackers to investigators.

“I’m truly honored to receive such an award in the name of somebody who showed selfless actions herself,” Etre said in a pre-recorded message.

Somali Mother-And-Daughter Human Rights Activists Receive \$1 Million Award

YEREVAN/NEW YORK – The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative awarded the fifth annual Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity to Fartuun Adan and Ilwad Elman, the mother and daughter team who lead the Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre in Somalia. As Aurora Prize Laureates, they will receive a US \$1,000,000 award and a unique opportunity to continue the cycle of giving by supporting the organizations that have inspired their humanitarian action. Fartuun Adan and Ilwad Elman have selected three organizations – Love Does, Panzi Foundation, and Prajwala – that fight for freedom and human rights, provide healthcare to marginalized populations, and save victims of sex-trafficking to be the beneficiaries of their million dollar prize.

Fartuun Adan and Ilwad Elman were chosen among the 2020 Aurora Humanitarians, or finalists, announced on April 24, 2020. Besides the Somali human rights defenders, these outstanding heroes include Congolese activist Angélique Namaika, refugee rescuers Sophie Beau and Klaus Vogel, and educator Sakena Yacoobi from Afghanistan.

To date, Aurora has launched or supported numerous projects in nearly 30 countries, benefitting almost a million people suffering from the atrocities of war, famine, lack of healthcare, genocide or human rights violations. Granted on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors, the Aurora Prize seeks to expand the global humanitarian movement by enabling humanitarians worldwide to continue the cycle of giving.

Fartuun Adan and Ilwad Elman have been protecting women’s rights, promoting peace-building, and rehabilitating child soldiers for many years. Their courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment to the people of Somalia has brought this mother and daughter team global recognition.

“Fartuun Adan and Ilwad Elman embody the spirit of the Aurora Prize and our philosophy of Gratitude in Action, and we are delighted with this opportunity to express our deepest admiration and appreciation to them for the amazing work they are doing in Somalia. They give people a second chance, hope for the future, and inspiration to lead a meaningful life. Their courage, self-sacrifice, altruism, idealism, as well as actions on the ground reflect the values of the global Aurora movement,” noted Vartan Gregorian, President of Carnegie Corporation of New York, Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, and Member of the Selection Committee.

Lord Ara Darzi, Co-Director of the Institute of Global Health Innovation at Imperial College London and Chair of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee, noted in his video announcement of the Laureates, “2020 has been a tumultuous year, but as with all crises, it has brought us together. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, many new modern-day heroes like Fartuun Adan and Ilwad Elman emerged, reminding us of our common humanity.”

“For the last five years, Aurora has been spreading the message that acts of kindness make a difference when you add them up, and Fartuun’s and Ilwad’s courageous activism is a vivid testament to that,” said Samantha Power, Harvard professor, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and Aurora Prize Selection Committee member.

On October 19, 2020, a special Gratitude in Action virtual event will be broadcast live from the New York Public Library to celebrate Aurora’s fifth anniversary by honoring the Aurora Prize Laureates and paying tribute to New York City COVID-19 heroes. A live event will also be held in March 2021 in New York City, along with an ecumenical service to commemorate those who fell victim to the coronavirus.

Tekeyan Cultural Association

SPONSOR



20th



ANNIVERSARY

a TEACHER

IN ARMENIA AND ARTSAKH

SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 2001, THE TCA SPONSOR A TEACHER PROGRAM HAS RAISED \$734,590 AND REACHED OUT TO 6,829 TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF IN ARMENIA AND ARTSAKH








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

\$200 \$400 \$600 other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Make check payable to:
Tekeyan Cultural Association—Memo: Sponsor a Teacher

Mail your check to:
TCA Sponsor a Teacher
5326 Val Verde, Houston, TX 77056
Your donation is Tax Deductable



Arts & Living

Michelin-Starred Chef Nahabedian On Post-Riot Rehabbing, Covid And Best Advice She Ever Got

By Mike Thomas

CHICAGO (*Chicago Magazine*) – Chicago Chef Carrie Nahabedian spoke with Mike Thomas:

After the shutdown was announced, I went to Florida to relieve my sister, who'd been caring for our 91-year-old mother. When I got back May 30, mentally ready to open Brindille for outdoor dining, the riots had started, and the restaurant was severely damaged. You have to remember, Brindille was architecturally designed. It won best design from the James Beard Foundation. Everything in it is hand-crafted, all custom. The main window was broken. They'd smashed all the wood and metal and defaced all the paint. The entire months of June and July were spent repairing the damage.

If you make the decision to stay open through the pandemic, you constantly have to adapt. It's hard enough making money at 100-percent occupancy, let alone 25 percent. You're seeing just how fragile the system is; only the adaptable survive.

As a chef, if you're tired, unhappy, or feel unappreciated, you have to find a way to get over that. Because cooking is highly personal and it will come through in the food.



Carrie Nahabedian

My mantra to my cooks has always been: Cook as if you're cooking for yourself.

Before dinner service, I always go to the restroom and throw water on my face, put a fresh chef coat on, some lipstick, drink a glass of water, and say, "OK. We're on."

My father was 93 when he died, 74 years after being wounded in World War II and as a direct result of those wounds. He was the backbone of my life. He had so much honor and integrity. I often wonder: If he hadn't been at Normandy in World War II, if he didn't get wounded and taken in by the underground and learn French, if he didn't start laying carpet at the Ritz-Carlton in Chicago and speak French to the chefs there and tell them he was part of the liberation and say, "My daughter loves to cook, can she come here?"—would I be where I am?

I have an enormous amount of energy and can live on almost no sleep. I think it's my natural state of being.

When you get to a certain level, there are only so many people you can talk to. Charlie Trotter and I mentored each other professionally. It was an intense relationship. We shared an obsessiveness about attention to detail.

see NAHABEDIAN, page 17



Valeria Kasparova-Vaneh Kasyants

'Modernity Is Love and Respect For the Past'

YEREVAN-SAINT PETERSBURG – Choreographer, dancer, contemporary dance teacher Valeria Kasparova (whom many in Armenia know as Vaneh Kasyants) was born in the family of art manager Vadim Kasparov and choreographer Natalia Kasparova - founders and directors of the Saint Petersburg "Cannon Dance" House of Dance. Since

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

1998 Valeria has studied jazz, modern, contemporary, partnering, improvisation and other dance techniques at the "Cannon Dance." She studied, trained and danced in the productions of such choreographers as Natalia Kasparova (Russia), Bob Boross (USA), Renana Raz, Idan Sharabi (Israel), Jiri Pokorný (Netherlands / Czech Republic), Carolina Mancuso (Argentina / Netherlands), etc. Valeria attended academic vocal training at Yerevan Conservatory (teacher - Anna Mayilyan), as well as trained with the Honored Worker of Culture of the Republic of Armenia Gagik Ginosyan and became a qualified specialist and teacher in Armenian traditional dances and songs (in 2013-2016). As a performer, she took part in the productions of "Children out of the Cage," "Revelations of Ararat," "YouMake ReMake," "The Art of Movement: Stereoscopic Dance," "She," "Waiting for Godot," etc. Among her own productions are a number of performances children and teenagers, as well as "The House In Which ...," "Voices," "Dardzi Tever" ("Wings of Return," a multi-genre Armenian ethnic performance), "Others," as well as choreography in dramatic performances ("Wake up and Sing: Remake," "Ay, yes, Pushkin," "Autumn Sonata"), etc. Valeria is a performer, choreographer and teacher of "Kannon Dance," tutor and teacher of jazz dance at the "Karambol" State Musical Theater, at the department of contemporary dance at the Boris Eifman Dance Academy, artistic director of the "Kannon Dance Young" and "Kannon Dance Project," etc. Since 2017, she is the founder and artistic director of the ensemble of "Aralez" Armenian ethnic songs and dances. She regularly conducts master classes and training courses in Russia and abroad, participates in choreographic festivals in many countries of the world...

Dear Vaneh, let's start our conversation by talking about your parents. Vadim Galustovich Kasparov is the creator of the largest contemporary dance festival in Russia, "Open Look," the head of the modern dance department at the Boris Eifman Dance Academy in St. Petersburg. And your mother, Natalia see KASYANTS, page 16

How Geoffrey Zakarian Stays Fit With a Swing Set

By Chrissy Callahan

NEW YORK (Today Show) – Geoffrey Zakarian has found a pretty creative way to sneak in a workout during quarantine.

The Food Network star just gave fans a glimpse at one of the exercises he's put on repeat over the last few months, and it actually looks kind of fun – but also extremely difficult.

In a video posted to his Twitter and Instagram accounts, the 61-year-old walks up to a swing set, jumps and grabs the top bar before swiftly swinging his legs in the air and moving them up and down for 10 seconds.

"People asked me what I did to stay fit during Covid. I found a swing set and just hung around. literally!" he captioned the post, adding the hashtag #WorkoutWednesday.

A lot of fans appreciated the chef's playful approach to fitness.

Zakarian, who is a chef/partner at The Lambs Club in New York City, told TODAY Food he's made a few changes to his workout routine while spending more time at home the past few months.

"I actually have done more body weight than weights. Pull ups, chin ups, lots of hanging to increase actual mobility," he said.

The chef also swears by one simple piece of equipment for his at-home workouts.

"Get a set of bands. They are great and you can work out anywhere you want. No gym needed. Simple and effective sit-ups, pushups, and squat thrusts are also great cardio options," he said.

Of course, Zakarian has also broken a sweat while tending to his impressively lush garden.

Fitness is a priority for the chef, especially since his job involves tasting limitless decadent dishes.



Geoffrey Zakarian and his daughters

"[As chefs], we have everything and anything we want for free. Free food, drink anytime you want, so temptation is everywhere," he said.

Over time, Zakarian has developed a healthy approach to balancing eating and exercising.

"Even at 61 years of age, I realize that food is not the enemy. Everything needs to be in moderation. Six packs are made in the kitchen – not in the gym," he said.

While spending more time at home over the past few months, the father of three has clocked in many hours in the kitchen with his two daughters Madeline, 13, and Anna, 11. Back in April, the family whipped up some scrumptious breakfast tacos loaded with eggs and bacon for TODAY viewers.

In June, the talented trio taught TODAY's Hoda Kotb and Jenna Bush Hager how to make the perfect baby back ribs and a side of chimichurri-covered corn. Madeline and Anna also broke some exciting news: The pair will be releasing their very own cookbook in October.

"They have been inundated with the sound and the love and the smells of food from complete birth," the proud father said.

Like father, like daughters!



ARTS & LIVING

Medieval Armenian History in Global Context Boosted by Prestigious European Grant

GRANT, from page 1

The ERC's scale is very large. Its budget for 2019 was over 2 billion Euros. ERC grants are allocated through open competitions, and only approximately 12% of applicants are successful, with this percentage even lower for women. In Pogossian's category of consolidator grants (for people who received their doctorate a maximum of 12 years prior to the application) in the social sciences and humanities, in 2019 out of 674 submitted proposals, only 78 were selected.

Pogossian's grant is for two million Euros and she will be able to hire up to 9 researchers to work together. The project is entitled *Armenia Entangled: Connectivity and Cultural Encounters in Medieval Eurasia, 9th - 14th Centuries (ArmEn)*, and will begin on October 1, 2020. ArmEn will be based at the University of Florence, Italy, where Pogossian is about to take up a tenured position as Associate Professor.

This position in essence, Pogossian said, would be an addition to the centers of Armenian studies in Europe. Even after the project's end Dr. Pogossian will pursue her research and training of students at the

Ottoman Empire.

The importance of the grant is multiplied when recent difficulties in academia are taken into consideration. Pogossian said that in the last 10-20 years it has been very hard to pursue small, sophisticated but highly specialized fields, find students, and then find funding for these students. Entire departments are scaled down by universities who say there are not enough students. This is true, she said, not only for Armenian studies but also for other Oriental Christian studies.

Pogossian expressed the hope that the recognition by ERC of the importance of Armenology may inspire more Armenians to support the existing chairs in Europe and donate to create new ones to allow Armenian studies to continue to grow in the future.

Project Goals

ArmEn will examine the geographical area of the Armenian Plateau and the surrounding regions as an area rarely subject to centralized political, cultural and religious control during the period studied. This perhaps facilitated the great cultural exchange there between various

Pogossian thinks that Armenian sources are important for two interrelated reasons: "1) The Armenians constituted the group most widely dispersed and integrated in the space of CAM, and engaged intellectually, politically (including via mixed marriages), militarily, religiously, and commercially with Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs, subjects of the Byzantine Empire (Greek-speaking or not), Syriac Christians, Georgians, Caucasian Albanians, a number of Turko-Muslim dynasties, Kurds, Iranians, Western Europeans, and Mongols; and 2) Armenian sources reflect the dynamic connections between all these cultures synoptically and diachronically, covering regions for which no other evidence exists."

The project will integrate the information from Armenian sources with Arabic, Syriac, Greek, Georgian, Turkish, and Persian material. Furthermore, it will, Pogossian stated, create tools for research such as an online source base and interactive map. It will apply interdisciplinary methods combining analysis of textual and material evidence with a digital humanities approach.

Based on the aforementioned, it will,

research for the medieval period.

Project Participants, Advisors and Products

Although as a European grant, all participants in the ERC project must spend at least 50 percent of their time in Florence, they can originate from anywhere in the world. Pogossian said that there will be two colleagues in Germany, two or three American collaborators, and two to four participants from Armenia who will be working with manuscripts and artifacts there. All will be selected competitively through an open search by a university committee. There are no limitations on nationality, but those who work in Armenia most likely will be Armenians, as they are the ones who know the Mashtots Matenadaran (Institute of Ancient Armenian Manuscripts) in Yerevan inside and out, Pogossian said.

In all, there will be nine to ten people, but not all will participate for the full five years. Some may work for two and others for three years.

While Armenian is one of the primary languages of the project, naturally, there must also be specialists in Georgian, Turkish, Arabic and



Example of medieval cultural interaction: trilingual 14th century gravestone inscription from Yeghegis, Vayots Dzor, Armenia (Photo and photographic reconstruction: Dr. Lapo Somigli, University of Florence)

University of Florence, continuing her already important contributions to Armenology in a most propitious academic environment.

To indicate the scale of Armenian studies in general, she noted that when you have a conference of Byzantine studies, you can expect more than 1,000 participants, and when you have a conference in Islamic medieval studies, you can easily go beyond 2,000. Yet in the whole world there are only at the most several hundred specialists of Armenian studies in all time periods. Nonetheless, she stressed that this is a very important and strong field, even if it is a small one, with Armenian sources vital for topics in her period like the history of the Crusades, the Byzantine Empire, the history of Georgia, the Mongols, the Seljuks, and the

ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. Pogossian stated, "The project intends to tackle precisely this polycentrism and test whether it enhanced, or on the contrary, prevented fluidity, and boundary-crossings, cross-pollination between multiple and shifting elite cultures, including agents and locations of these interactions or conflicts. Articulated in texts, depicted on artifacts, and minted on coins, the intensive circulation of ideas, goods, images, and mental constructs south of the Caucasus mountains, east of Anatolia and north of Mesopotamia (CAM) has thus far not been studied systematically for this period of time. The goal of ArmEn is to fill this gap and position CAM in a wider scholarly debate on entanglements in Eurasian history."

Pogossian said, "develop a theoretical framework for the study of cultural entanglements under conditions where there was no overarching hegemonic power, single elite culture, or one unifying religious message/tradition."

Pogossian added as an aside that she chose the project to focus on Armenia's connections with the East rather than with Western Europe for various reasons. Among them, she mentioned that Armenian-European relations have been much more extensively explored. One reason for this is that 19th century scholarship tended to be Eurocentric, as Dr. Nina Garsoïan had pointed out many years ago when she started her ground-breaking studies on the Iranian factor and connections in Armenian culture. Dr. Pogossian's project will continue this type of

Syriac. Furthermore, most scholars know Greek and Latin as working languages.

Though most research will be carried out on textual sources, the project specialists will not only deal with manuscripts and written materials. Pogossian said that material artifacts will also be studied. There is an important archaeological component in the project. The University of Florence has already been working with archaeologist Prof. Hamlet Petrosyan of Yerevan State University for almost a decade, and this relationship may allow participation in excavations of Dvin led by Prof. Petrosyan.

When asked how potential difficulties of access to sites due to political obstacles might affect research, Pogossian replied that there are no archaeological surveys planned in such



ARTS & LIVING



Dr. Zara Pogossian, left, with her Italian colleague, archeologist Dr. Elisa Pruno, at the Caravanserai of Selim, in 2018 on a field trip to Vayots Dzor in the Republic of Armenia in 2018

areas but that fortunately, when in situ surveys are not possible, publications and prior descriptions can be used. The focus will be more on written sources for Turkey, Syria and northern Mesopotamia. An advantage is that many manuscript sources have been digitized.

An art historian will participate in the project, and aside from the art historical component numismatics will be included. There is also a small side project involving collaboration with Arthur H. Dadian and Ara Oztemel Professor of Armenian Art and Architecture Christina Maranci at Tufts University in Massachusetts. It involves tracing medieval Armenian travellers' stories as part of research on the mobility of Armenians between Asia, Africa and Europe during the Middle Ages.

Some of the project members already on board include Dr. Barbara Roggema, a leading specialist in Early Islam, as well as Christian Arabic literature and Syriac, and Prof. Alexandra Cuffel, specialist in medieval Judaism, as well as Jewish-Christian-Muslim interactions in the Middle Ages. They will be both based at Ruhr University Bochum, Germany, while Prof. Michele Nucciotti at the University of Florence is the archaeologist working with Hamlet Petrosyan.

In addition to the actual participants, the project has a board of advisors, including Professor Stephen Rapp, Jr. of Sam Houston State University, a Georgian specialist, Michael Pifer of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Edda Vardanyan of the Matenadaran (Yerevan) and the Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance (Paris), and István Perczel, professor of Byzantine and Syriac Studies, from the Central European University (Budapest/Vienna). Pogossian explained that these are senior scholars who volunteer to take part in the project due to its overall scholarly interest and expected new and exciting research. As Pogossian is not a specialist in all the fields covered in the project, for example Georgian or Arabic, she will collaborate with the members of the advisory board for work connected with these languages and cultures, among others.

Pogossian already had to propose a plan for

work for each year on the project, and she said that while she will not dictate the exact topic or direction of individual researchers involved in the project, she will provide a set of themes and ideas that should guide the research of all the participants. While the exact form of interaction and collaboration will depend on the situation with COVID-19, she said that if there could not be personal meetings, there certainly would be Zoom or mixed meetings every two or three months to see where people stand on their topics and what they have discovered. Junior scholars may need more guidance.

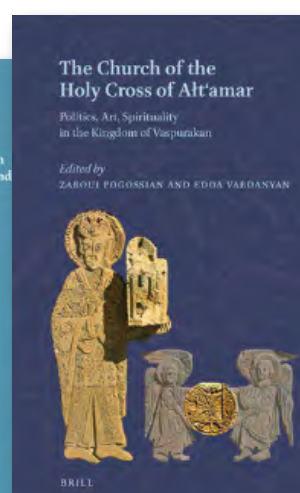
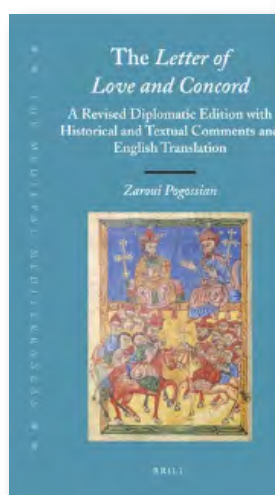
Various conferences and publications are planned that will disseminate the results of the project to the wider scholarly world. A website will make sure that interested non-academic audiences receive information on the project, and its results and discoveries are made available to the general public as the project moves on.

Pogossian's Academic Work

Pogossian's educational background is impressively wide ranging. Born in Armenia, she received her undergraduate education at Maharishi International University in Fairfield, Iowa, a master's degree in international development from American University in Washington, D.C. (1994), a second master's degree in medieval studies from Central European University in Budapest, Hungary and finally her PhD from the latter institution in 2005. She said that she would call herself a philologist-historian, since in order to do research on medieval Armenian history, philological skills are indispensable, not least for reading numerous unpublished manuscript sources.

She has taught as adjunct professor at the American University of Rome (2006-8) and John

Cabot University at Rome (2006-15) and at the Rome Center of Loyola University (2014-17). Meanwhile, from 2015 to the present she has been serving as a research fellow and project coordinator of an ERC-funded project, JewsEast, at Ruhr University of Bochum in Germany.



Aside from many articles, she is the author of two books: *The Letter of Love and Concord: A Revised Diplomatic Edition with Historical and Textual Comments and English Translation* (Medieval Mediterranean vol. 88; Leiden: Brill, 2010) and *The Church of the Holy Cross on Alt'amar: Politics, Art, Spirituality in the Kingdom of Vaspurakan* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), co-edited with Edda Vardanyan.

Pogossian said that her approach in the current project has its roots in her past research and Armenian history itself. Her first book, she related, was about a source from the Cilician period of Armenia that claimed that the Armenians and Romans have been allied for centuries and St. Gregory the Illuminator was an equal colleague of the pope. She tried to read it between the lines to understand to whom the author was appealing, what he knew about Armenian history and how he presented it. This text has

numerous words in Latin, Greek, Persian, Mongolian and Turkish, so she had to deal with all these cultures to understand the specifics of the Cilician Armenian culture and the sources it produced. This type of approach was dictated by the medieval texts that were the result of the particularly entangled circumstances of Armenian history.

At present, she has various ongoing research projects that will merge into the larger project she is running. She is interested in the cult of saints, and in particular that of Saint Sergius or Sargis. She wants to see not who he was but how and where he was venerated, and what beliefs were associated with that veneration. There is evidence of shared practices when it comes to the veneration of St. Sergius among the Armenians and that of al-Khidr among Muslims of medieval Anatolia, with similar types of fasts and rituals. Exploring the background of such exchanges will be one of her research tasks.

Another topic she is interested in is to explore the role of women as intercultural brokers. What happens, she wonders, in mixed marriages? How do women represent themselves and appear as cultural in-betweens? When an Armenian woman married a Muslim potentate, and sponsored the building of a mosque or a monumental structure, can the inscriptions she left tell us anything about shared practices? Are they comparable to inscriptions on Armenian churches left by other contemporary female founders? Such topics go to the heart of questions on cultural exchanges and need further exploration.

Aside from all her own academic work, Pogossian intends to continue to call attention to the importance of Armenian studies for medieval history in general and the crucial information that Armenian sources can provide for Eurasian history. This is a task she intends to pursue will beyond this ERC project. She exclaimed, "This is my bigger goal for the rest of my career: to get Armenian studies out of its bubble and become an integral part of studies on Eurasian history more than it has been thus far."



ARTS & LIVING

'Modernity Is Love and Respect for the Past'

KASYANTZ, from page 13

Vladimirovna Kasparova, is the artistic director of Kannon Dance, award-winning director of a number of productions. And it is no surprise that their daughter chose the same path...

In general, I always had a choice. Nobody ever, especially my parents, forced me to choose this particular field of activity. But, on the other hand, I was born exactly when my parents were just starting to develop their business, and I spent all my childhood exclusively in the dance halls and behind the stage. In my life there has not been a single day without dancing in one form or another (to this day). So I often jokingly say that I absorbed the love of modern dance during that period, along with my mother's milk. Or maybe this is not a joke.

And the classics? After all, modern dancers must master the technique and art of classical dance...

Absolutely! Ballet technique is an unconditional foundation for the training of a high-class dancer. But it is important that while studying the classics, the student should not get the impression that this is the only correct way of movement. Nowadays, in any European ballet company there is necessarily modern dance performance in the repertoire. And without mastering the modern technique, even with an incredible classical base, no one is taken there. Personally, I believe that in parallel with the classical education, the dancer simply MUST develop himself in other directions in order to expand his horizons and be ready / open to everything.

Your first choreography was in the play "The House in Which ..." based on the acclaimed Russian-language novel of the same name by Mariam Petrosyan, a writer from Yerevan. The novel was translated into more than ten languages. There are so many characters in it, yet there is no traditional plot. What was your choreographic approach to this unique literary work?

It was my debut as a choreographer (frankly, a very ambitious and daring, even insane, step). The book hooked me with the fact that children with disabilities are presented in it as independent, deep and creative personalities. The key

thought was that these children are no different from ordinary children, and only our attitude towards them makes them truly vulnerable. After all, that is why they refuse to go out into the alien outside world, where no one is waiting for them, and find a way to stay in their own forever. Igor Stravinsky's music "The Rite of Spring" is connected with this powerful theme of sacrifice. I selected the characters, relying on the dancers, and, of course, I tried to complement the picture with figurative set means (scenery, costumes, video projection)...

I wonder if Mariam herself saw your production.

Honestly, I wonder, too. It is always a great responsibility to interpret the work of another author in your own way. But I still remember how in 2014 the members of the St. Petersburg fan-society of "The House in Which" came to the premiere, and after the performance they approached me in complete delight. They said that they were initially skeptical, but the performance very accurately and subtly conveyed the atmosphere of the book, despite the metaphor and a slightly different plot of the production. I do not think that Mariam herself saw my work or heard about it, but I want to believe that when this happens, she will be happy.

Born outside Armenia, being half-Armenian, half-Russian, how much do you consider yourself a part of a large Armenian family?

In my life there was a difficult moment in self-identification, when I could not figure out who I was: "at home among strangers, a stranger among my own." And when the realization came that I am an Armenian, there was a feeling much more than belonging to a large Armenian family. The blood that flows in me connects me (even indirectly) with Mashtots, Narekatsi, Komitas, Nzhdeh and other great minds of our people. And this realization led me to a completely different mindset. I suddenly felt vividly my responsibility for the face of my Motherland in other countries, and this is incredibly motivating. You have no right to fall face down into the mud when there is such age-old wisdom, strength and history behind you.

Where are your roots? Artsakh or Syunik?

Oh, in fact, one absolutely incredible story is

connected with my roots, I cannot help but share. The family of my father is noble, and from both parents it reaches to Northern Iran, that is, the ancient Armenian region of Parskahaik. When I was very little, my mother staged the "Songs of Komitas" performance, and I grew up listening to the music from this production. But most of all, one melody was imprinted in my memory, as if it was always with me. Many years later, I learned that this is the melody of an ancient Armenian princely dance, and I decided to learn it. I got it right the first time, as if I had been dancing it all my life. And then Gagik Ginosyan, who taught me this dance, asked where my roots came from, and when I said that my ancestors were nobles from Parskahaik, he literally lost his voice for a while. It turned out that this dance is EXACTLY from there and of my ancestors, of their class! Then we finally believed in the call of the blood: you cannot imagine this on purpose.

I also love to perform that wondrous, powerful, truly aristocratic "Ishkhanats par" - "Dance of Princes." And in general, you once said that the turning point in your creative life was the day when you watched the performance of the Karin ensemble of Armenian traditional songs and dances, after which you began to study Armenian dances in depth.

Yes, that is right. On that day, I almost physically felt how I had changed completely and irrevocably. Our folklore is something that is transmitted along with DNA and, accordingly, the feeling of performing these dances on a completely different level. I would even say that this is a kind of thread that is outside of space and outside of time, preserves our national memory and awakens the true spirit in the body. In our time, many are trying to be modern, ignoring the centuries-old cultural heritage. But modernity, for me, is, first of all, love and respect for the past. It is impossible to become modern by rejecting the past.

Do you agree with the idea that it is possible to delve deeply into folk dances only if you have also learned the language well?

In general, yes. Each language has its own poetry, words and untranslatable phrases that do not sound right in another language and lose their significance. The Armenian language is lit-

erally satiated with such sayings and expressions, and no language in the world can convey their true beauty and grandeur. Plus, if you have already started to study the movement and music of your people, how can you ignore his voice?

Both your mother and you have staged plays and choreographic pieces on Armenian themes. I really like your "The Plowman's Song" ("Horovel"). Please tell us about them, as well as the style of the Aralez troupe.

In the 2000s, my mother, inspired by Armenia, staged the play "Songs of Komitas," which was nominated for the "Golden Mask" award in 2008 and was highly appreciated by Russian and foreign audiences. After that we worked together (as a dancer and an assistant) on other Armenian projects, such as "The Revelations of Ararat," "Sketches on Armenia," "1915," etc. I will not list my Armenian performances - there are a lot of them. As for the "Aralez" ensemble and its style, everything is quite simple - ethnic Armenian dances in their pure form, as the "Karin" ensemble does. Our ensemble was created with the aim to give the Armenian youth living far from their native land the opportunity to touch it through the dances of our ancestors. As my great friend and teacher, Gagik Ginosyan says: "We do not just teach dances. We return the pride of being Armenian to the Armenians."

What exactly are you doing today, and what place do Armenian dances take in it?

At this time, I have a higher goal: I am developing my own dance style and lexical language, based precisely on Armenian traditional dances. Israel is now the Mecca of modern dance. And why? Because local choreographers have found their own unique language of movement, which is modern, but at the same time has a bright national flavor. And I asked myself - why cannot Armenia do the same finding his own unique language of modern dance? This is my main task now. And I am on my way. Literally in March of last year, I created the performance "Voices," which is entirely based on Armenian traditional dances in a modern interpretation. And it had great success, both in Russia and abroad. So, there is a lot of work, there are new ideas and dreams, and I try to follow them, no matter what...



Valeria Kasparova-Vaneh Kasyants's work in "The Plowman's Song"



ARTS & LIVING

97 • 2019

REVUE BELGE
DE PHILOLOGIE
ET D'HISTOIRE

FASC. 3: LANGUES ET
LITTÉRATURES MODERNES



AFL. 3: MODERNE TAAL-
EN LETTERKUNDE

BELGISCH
TIJDSCHRIFT
VOOR FILOLOGIE
EN GESCHIEDENIS

97 • 2019

Belgian Philology Publication's Latest Issue Dedicated to Daniel Varoujan

GHENT, Belgium – *The Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire / Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis* (97, 2019) has published a special issue on Daniel Varoujan. Edited by Professor Peter Van Nuffelen of Ghent University, Belgium, the volume is titled *Daniel Varoujan: Un poète arménien à Gand - cent ans après*.

The aim of this special issue is, first, to illuminate the exchanges between Belgium and the Ottoman Empire and the experiences of students coming from that region, through the example of the Armenian poet Daniel Varoujan, student at Ghent University from 1905 until 1909. It includes therefore papers on foreign students at Ghent (P. De Messemaeker and C. Verbruggen) and on Belgian public opinion about the Armenian question in this period (H. Alloul and H. De Smaele), besides articles on the life of Varoujan in Ghent (Simon Payaslian) and his publications in French in Ghent (E. Delacenserie). A second aim is to probe what influence the stay in Ghent had on the artistic and intellectual development of Varoujan, through the articles by K. Beledian and M. Nichanian. The introduction offers an introduction to the life and work of Varoujan and a framework within which to read the various articles.

Armenian poet Daniel Varoujan



Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

Sini Beurek from Salpy's International Kitchen

Discover this savory Sini Beurek and other international recipes at Salpy's International Kitchen food blog, adapted and tested by Salpy Rozario. Beurek (burek, börek, or boreg) is a classic part of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern appetizers or meze. Beurek is a traditional staple in many Armenian households, and is considered the Armenian version of the Greek tiropita and spanakopita. (There are many tiropita variations too, the traditional version contains feta cheese, eggs, homemade phyllo and olive oil.) Beurek come in several versions, using different kinds of doughs and cheeses. Versions are as diverse as the family recipe, cookbook, or region of the world, and they can be filled with meats and savory or sweet fillings. This filling contains with two types of cheese, onions and parsley.

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound package phyllo dough (bring packaged phyllo to room temperature before opening and using)
1/2 pound butter, melted
1 teaspoon sesame seeds
1 teaspoon nigella seeds, optional
2 tablespoons butter
1/4 cup milk

FILLING:

1 pound Mexican Queso fresco cheese, grated
1 pound Mexican Panela cheese, grated
5 medium green onions, finely chopped
1/2 cup Italian flat leaf parsley, finely chopped (to taste)
1 teaspoon Aleppo pepper
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper

PREPARATION:

Divide the phyllo sheet into 2 portions, cover with clean dishcloth to prevent from drying.

Mix the filling ingredients in a large bowl.

Brush a 10" x15" baking dish with butter. Brush each sheet of phyllo as you lay them in the dish, spread the filling on top, continue in the same manner with the remaining dough, brushing each layer generously with the melted butter until all the dough is used up.

Melt the 2 tablespoons of butter with the milk, and pour over the tray. Cut into even pieces using a sharp knife or pizza cutter, and sprinkle the tops with sesame and nigella seeds, if desired. Bake in a 375 degree preheated oven until golden brown, approximately 45 minutes.

For this recipe, go to:

<https://www.facebook.com/SalpyInternationalKitchen/photos/a.193156930836425/1346902405461866/?type=3&theater>



Chef Nahabedian on Post-Riot Rehabbing, Covid and Best Advice She Ever Got

NAHABEDIAN, from page 13

I would rather have every food critic and difficult customer come in than any Armenian we know, because they are so highly critical. To this day, I get nervous when any of our family members dine, specifically my mother. She is a diva.

In our business, you have two types of cooks: ones who want to work at night and ones who want to work during the day. Cooks who work at night always look down on the cooks who work during the day, because all they do is prep and lunch. If you're a serious line cook, like I was coming up, you want your station to get hammered every single night.

The best lesson I've ever learned was from my mentor at the Four Seasons, Fernand Gutierrez. If you looked up "French chef" in the dictionary, Fernand's picture would be there—big guy, big mustache, toupee. Smoked four packs a day, drank like a fish, and beyond passionate for cooking. His lesson was: You've got to be true to your craft. So no matter what you do—like if you're learning Indian cuisine—you've got to respect how it evolved.

At Naha once, a man started off with five people at his table, and one by one they basically told him what they thought of him until he was left all by himself. I don't remember what it was about, but I do remember that a number of people threw liquid in his face. He never stopped the service, so then all the food came out.

My father used to tell me, "The higher up you go in your career, the farther you get from what made you great in the first place." That's part of why I still cook.

Calendar

MASSACHUSETTS

OCTOBER 7 — 10am Celebrating What Unites Us! A virtual cooking series, a collaboration of City of Boston Age-Friendly Boston, OLDWAYS and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to keep us connected, coming together. NATIVE AMERICAN CUISINE Chef Sean Sherman member of the Oglala Lakota tribe Cookbook author, The Sioux Chef Indigenous Kitchen - 2018 James Beard Award for Best American Cookbook; co-founder, The Sioux Chef.com - 2019 James Beard Leadership Award. To register via Zoom, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

EDITORIAL

Lost and Found Independence

By Edmond Y. Azadian

During the last six centuries, the concept and reality of a homeland have been lost and found, yet Armenians have survived after losing their homeland and have struggled to recover it from the ashes of history.

Today, as we celebrate the 29th anniversary of Armenian independence, we face an ironic situation; while Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is mapping a plan for Armenia's future, the year 2050 to be exact, President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan is dreaming of absorbing the present territory of Armenia into his own country. How history can reconcile these two opposing concepts is anyone's guess.

It is not a new phenomenon for Armenians to lose their homeland, but this time around, the prospect of losing is far from their minds. Instead, based on the current reality, Armenians are determined to maintain the recovered territory of Karabakh and aspire even to restore, one day, the lands prescribed by the Treaty of Sèvres.

On September 21, marking the 29th anniversary of Armenia's independence, Pashinyan detailed his overarching plan for how he envisions Armenia in 2050; a projection for the next 30 years.

"These are ambitions based on the future, but not predictable commitments and plans. Thus, we formulate our ambitions, which can be called unofficially as dreams," he said.

Armenia is located in a geographic area where wars, earthquakes and clashes of civilizations are not uncommon. In order to achieve such a mega-plan, all predictable factors need to be considered.

Pashinyan, reflecting on the past, said that Armenia has never adopted such a plan, and that is why the country is in its current enervated situation.

Pashinyan's plan is ambitious indeed; it envisions increasing Armenia's population to 5 million, creating 1.5 million new jobs, conquering poverty, increasing the GDP 20 fold, raising the median salary by seven, adopting a healthy lifestyle in an ecologically sound Armenia, extending life expectancy to 90 years, building the most efficient army, converting Armenia into a high-tech country with at least 5 corporations worth more than \$10 billion, inviting 10,000 start-ups and winning 25 Olympic gold medals.

In order to work, Pashinyan's plan must make Armenia attractive for investors.

There was no reference to the role of the church, other than a passing mention of "traditional values." Nor was the diaspora's role factored in, except with regard to repatriation, whereas the diaspora has a large potential which could be properly harnessed and turned into a contributing factor to these overarching goals.

Repatriation cannot be fashioned or planned based on historical experience. The main repatriation to Armenia took place in the 1920s and 1930s, when stateless Armenians had been scattered geographically and they were in search of a base. Masses returned from Greece and in the 1940s, from the Middle East, to overburden the misery of the local people and only end up in Siberia. Many of those who moved to the homeland were disenchanted with the experience.

Writers, artists and scholars were invited to create a cultural renaissance of the homeland. Prominent figures such as Avetik Isahakyan, Gosdan Zoryan, Hratchia Ajaryan, Martiros Saryan and Ara Sarkisyan heeded the call. Yet, today's repatriation can only be achieved when Armenia becomes a highly attractive place to live and raise a family. Very few foolhardy people will venture to settle in Armenia out of patriotic zeal, leaving behind their comfortable lives in the diaspora.

During earlier repatriations, there were some misconceptions, from those settling in Armenia and from the locals, who were wondering why people living elsewhere could forfeit their lives and choose to live in a country where living conditions considered minimal elsewhere were considered luxurious at home.

Also, there was no reference to the Genocide and the future of the Armenian Case. Perhaps these policies had to do with compensation and territorial claims.

Back to the present: some who heard about the prime minister's plans greeted it with sardonic smiles, whereas others accepted it with the belief that Pashinyan knows all.

Succeeding generations of Armenians have struggled to gain independence but twice it was not those efforts but historic accidents which brought independence to Armenia.

In 1918, the Ottoman and Russian empires collapsed and in the ensuing political vacuum, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan

attained independence, only to be absorbed into the Soviet Union two years later. The same thing almost happened again in 1991, when the Soviet Union imploded and its constituent republics were left on their own.

Today, as we celebrate nearly three decades of statehood, it behooves us to assess the historical experience of those years in order to be able to project the future and somehow accommodate Pashinyan's plan.

As much as Armenia has struggled to build a civil society based on Western democratic values, it has been handicapped by the burden of history, and to this day, it cannot build statehood based on a political philosophy.

Before, the Soviet era, the czar was the monarch and embodied the state. Then, the Soviet regime came to power, supposedly to implement an ideology. It was basically a huge demographic experiment which failed because the Czar's one-man rule continued, only this time, replaced with Stalin's one-man rule.

When the Soviet empire splintered, the emerging states became miniatures of their former parent state. Armenia could not escape the shadow of the personality cult. Four succeeding regimes in the country all were ruled by a mini-monarch. The reason that Armenia and its fellow republics replicated the former model of statehood was that they failed to develop an ideology; ideologies are built on political parties, in the European pattern. Yet in Armenia and its similar nations, all the parties were centered around a strong leader's person or purse, rather than a set of beliefs.

One can still ask what the political ideology of Pashinyan's My Step party is. In addition, we have to wonder if the party can outlast Pashinyan.

We can claim all we want that our ideal is to build a state emu-



lating Western democratic values, but when the country continues to be ruled by a strongman, democracy will evade Armenia.

A certain level of altruism and national pride is expected from the ruler to work towards rebuilding state institutions and develop true political parties, which can eventually lead to a system of government wherein the individual ruler will not compete with the system.

As long as we fail to recreate such traditions, the current chaos will continue in Armenia and each new administration will heap blame on the previous regimes for its own failures.

A propos, the diasporan political parties were not able to survive in Armenia for the same reason. They were not perfect because they were formed and operated in alien societies but they had developed ideologies which survived their leaders and they had an experience in the liberation movement.

The Velvet Revolution brought an end to corruption, attempted to establish the rule of law and temporarily put a hold on emigration. But a revolutionary government by definition has some difficulties, since instead of operating as opposition, now it works as the power center. This new situation for the revolutionaries has led to vendettas. Witch hunts and rancorous treatment of the ancient regime officials will only generate instability. Instead, the new administration needs stability in order to achieve its long-term goals.

Armenia can rank itself among civilized countries if it can muster the courage to celebrate its 30th anniversary, having on the stage side-by-side Levon Ter Petrosian, Robert Kocharyan, Serzh Sargsyan and Nikol Pashinyan. This may sound like an unorthodox expectation but it is the hallmark of civilized nations.

Mirror Spectator

Established 1932

An ADL Publication

EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Marc Mgrditchian

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST:

Edmond Y. Azadian

CONTRIBUTORS:

Florence Avakian, Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian, Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, Philip Ketchian, Kevork Keushkerian, Harut Sassounian, Hagop Vartivarian, Naomi Zeytoonian

CORRESPONDENTS:

Armenia - Hagop Avedikian
Boston - Nancy Kalajian
Los Angeles - Taleen Babayan
Berlin - Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Contributing Photographers:

Jirair Hovsepian

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is published weekly, except two weeks in July and the first week of the year, by:

Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472-1509

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

U.S.A.	\$80 a year
Canada	\$125 a year
Other Countries	\$190 a year

© 2014 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator
Periodical Class Postage Paid at Boston, MA
and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0004-234X

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472

Other than the editorial, views and opinions expressed in this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the policies of the publisher.

Copying for other than personal use or internal reference is prohibited without express permission of the copyright owner. Address requests for reprints or back issues to:

Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA
02472-1509



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Pro-Trump Black American Group's Controversial Link to Turkey

(Part II)

Last week, I published part 1 of my article describing the efforts of a Black American group's plans to lobby for Trump's reelection with the financial support of wealthy Turkish businessmen who would invest billions of dollars in the United States. One of these businessmen was Ali Akat.

During his visit to the US, Akat met with XStrategies CEO Alexander Bruesewitz at the Trump International Hotel in Washington, DC, discussing Turkey's intent to invest \$12 billion in the US and create 25,000 jobs. Akat was photographed at the US Capitol with three Republican congressmen, Joe Wilson of South Carolina, Pete Sessions of Texas and Scott Perry of Pennsylvania. He also met with billionaire Tom Barrack and Lara Trump at the Trump International Hotel.

Salon.com reported that Akat told the Turkish press that "Scott took him to Republican National Committee headquarters, where he was photographed giving an address, and the White House. Here is a rough translation of the relevant passage: 'During the meetings with Darrell Scott, he supported the project warmly. He forwarded our project to Donald J. Trump, his colleagues and family. He took me to the Republican headquarters first. I had the opportunity to explain the project there, and it was liked by everyone. Then he took me to the White House, based on the seriousness of the matter. We had contacts in the White House. We had meetings with Donald J. Trump's special assistants and assistants Andrew Giuliani, Clayton T. Henson, Ronny L. Jackson, Jennifer S. Korn and Alexandra E. Veletsis.'"

"The Turkish article included a photograph of Akat and Darrell Scott reviewing a thick binder together in a conference room at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building next

door to the White House, according to people familiar with the building. The building hosts most of the White House staff," according to Salon.com.

"Akat told a Turkish-American [news] outlet that 15 Turkish companies were ready to push ahead with business in the US. Around this time, Darrell Scott publicized his trips aboard Air Force One and White House visits in his URC capacity, as he and URC [Urban Revitalization Coalition] co-chair Kareem Lanier worked directly with Trump and advisers including Jared Kushner (whom Scott calls 'J-Rock') on what would become the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council, effected in an executive order that December. Scott's visits included his evening watching the midterm election returns with Trump in the White House," Salon.com reported. "The day before Scott and Trump watched the election, Trump exempted Turkey from energy sanctions that his administration had slapped on Iran in November. This was sharply criticized by some US officials, who saw the move as capitulation to Erdogan's strong-arm tactics — especially as negotiations related to Halkbank, a Turkish financial institution that is now under federal investigation for evading Iranian sanctions."

Salon.com reported: "On the same day Trump gave Turkey a pass on sanctions, Ferhan Ademhan — a wealthy Turkish industrialist and investor who also has ties to Akat, as well as to [Turkish writer Rabia] Kazan and, through her, Trump campaign surrogate and Pence ally Martha Boneta — posted on Facebook: 'America has released 8 countries [from the sanctions] it applied to Iran. Our country has been released as well. We have been rid of this burden on behalf of our country.' A few weeks later, Akat was back at the president's Washington hotel, posting photos of Trump and Giuliani as well as gifts from the White House."

"On Dec. 12, Trump signed an executive order establishing the White House Urban Revitalization and Opportunity Council. The order appends 'opportunity zone' development to nearly every paragraph. Darrell Scott was present at the signing, and Trump singled him out for praise. That day, the National Diversity Council — a group founded by former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen, where Scott and Lanier served as senior officials and Kazan sat on the advisory board — posted the news on Twitter, pointing out the irony that Cohen had been sentenced to prison the same day: 'URGENT President Trump IMPORTANT Speech Signs Exec Order

amid Cohen Sentenced 3 Years in Prison <https://youtu.be/LRZviaXbHOI>," Salon.com reported.

A few weeks after Cohen's offices and homes were raided by the FBI, confiscating phones and computers, National Diversity Council (NDC) director Bruce Levell, who Kazan says had shaken her down for \$1,000, expressed concern to Kazan in a text message, obtained by Salon: "Trust me. Don't talk to anybody about NDCTrump. Delete. Cohen under fire. Thanks."

"On Dec. 23, after the Opportunity and Revitalization Council had been officially created, Trump tweeted about 'discussing heavily expanded Trade' with Erdogan.... Two days later, the Daily Sabah — which is owned by Erdogan's son-in-law — published another interview with Akat, indicating that the trade talks had advanced. He pegged the prospective economic package at \$1 billion. The article, published on Christmas Day, was headlined, 'Turkish-American bilateral trade expected to soar next year,'" according to Salon.com. "The following month Trump tweeted about trade policy with Turkey again...: 'Also spoke about economic development between the US & Turkey — great potential to substantially expand!'"

Salon.com concluded "This effort — backed by Scott and Lanier at the URC, among others — would have entailed changes in US trade policy to give Turkish manufacturing companies priorities in the United States, seemingly contradicting Trump's 'America First' agenda."

According to experts from "CREW [Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics], the Campaign Legal Center and OpenSecrets told Salon that on its face this initiative would raise concerns about possible violations of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), which requires Americans who lobby on behalf of foreign interests to register with the government."

Salon.com reported that "The URC might also face tax law liabilities. At one point the group was a tax-exempt 501c (3) nonprofit, which can accept donations, including from foreign nationals, without having to disclose sources. But because the URC apparently never filed a tax return, the IRS automatically revoked its tax-exempt status this May."

This is a bizarre tale of a couple of individuals doing the bidding of the Trump campaign to make the President look good in front of Black Americans, while claiming to attract investments from Turkish sources to poor Black community areas. Their efforts need to be further investigated by the Department of Justice and the Internal Revenue Service.

The Importance of Tavush:

The Paros Foundation Rebuilds Border Villages in Armenia

By Christopher Atamian

TAVUSH IS NOT IN ARTSAKH!

When Azerbaijan started bombing villages along the Tavush border in mid-July, many people in the Armenian diaspora and elsewhere mistakenly assumed that they were shelling a part of Artsakh. And looking out at any of the verdant valleys in Tavush, you'd be forgiven for thinking that you were actually in Switzerland or some lost corner of paradise. But Tavush is in fact part and parcel of the Republic of Armenia proper, making Azerbaijan's actions all the more provocative as they shattered any illusion that Armenia is not in danger of getting embroiled in an all-out war again. Located in the country's northeastern edge and bordered by Georgia to the North and Azerbaijan to the East, Tavush is an ancient Armenian province. Its scenic capital of Ijevan—once an important rest stop on international trade routes—sits at the foothills of the Gugark Mountains, on the shores of the Aghstev River. The region measures just 2,704 km² (about one-fourth the size of Rhode Island) and on a good day has a population of just over 125,000 people.

Shelling from the other side of the border is nothing new to the farmers and other villagers who live in the region, some of whose families have been tilling the land from time immemorial. Two of its more isolated cities for example, Berd and Novemberyan, regularly receive volleys of sniper shots from Azeri positions. As a result of this and other factors village men often leave to find work in Russia—predictably, many never return. Perhaps in desperation or out of a sense of duty, some have also signed up as contract soldiers and can be found at their military posts guarding the border—and this, for about \$300 a month. This puts additional stress on the village women, who must tend to all domestic duties alone, from tilling gardens to caring for their animals, children and extended families. As a result of these precarious situations, Armenians in the region are more likely to have smaller families, which poses a demographic threat and becomes a national security issue.

Founded in 2006 by Roger Strauch in part to address these ongoing concerns, the Paros Foundation understood from the start the strategic importance of these border positions and of helping Tavush region in general. Since 2011 they have been working to strengthen them, rebuilding houses that have been shelled and providing jobs for Armenians on the front line through its many programs. The foundation has developed a strategic and somewhat niche approach to help remedy these problems: "We implement mid-sized infrastructure improvement projects in order to raise awareness and improve conditions for these residents and ultimately help to secure the border," explains Executive Director Peter Abajian.

Altogether from 2013 to 2020, Paros has spent almost \$1.1 million in Tavush on 65 different projects. Most remarkably the foundation has no administrative costs whatsoever, "The Strauch Kulhanjian family underwrites 100% of our administrative expenses, which allows donors to allocate their contributions directly to projects," said Abajian. In the border village of Nerkin Karmir Aghbyur, with support from Jean-Marie Atamian and his family, Paros has

made major improvements to the water system, local school, kindergarten and medical center. Apart from improving infrastructure, the foundation is currently in the process of implementing an economic development project, establishing a fruit orchard with over 1,000 trees. All of these undertakings have helped to stabilize the community and led to a doubling of the annual birth rate from 2013 to today. As is evident to anyone who visits the region, border villages have been especially hard hit economically since hostilities erupted over a two decades ago between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in part because some 70% of the land in any particular village lies too close to the border to be farmed or to graze animals without the risk of being shot and killed.

As Abajian also points out, there are a wealth of current and planned programs available for interested donors. "Our work in Tavush along the border will be continuing for the foreseeable future with two major projects in Aygepar including the reconstruction of a large apartment building and the creation of an agriculture incubator facility," said Abajian. Some are larger in scale than others, but all are affordable for anyone interested, as donations of any size can be made in true crowdfunding fashion. One particularly interesting program "Recycling on the Border" seeks to partner with the Innovative Solutions for Sustainable Development of Communities NGO ("ISSD") in order to implement recycling education at schools in ten villages. The children will be provided with colored bins and will collect trash that is then sent to proper recycling facilities. This gives both children and their families a stronger stake in their communities—teaching them about recycling but also to care about their environment and to be happier within it. The point of Paros Foundation programs isn't simply to patch up existing problems but to find long-term solutions for building a happy and prosperous Armenia.

With the almost unbelievable news that Turkey's Volkan Bektir is taking over the Presidency of the landmark 75th General Assembly of the United Nations, and even more remarkable threats coming from Azerbaijan's President Aliyev to bombard Medzamor, Armenia's nuclear plant, the young Third Republic faces an existential crisis. Fighting off two enemies, one on each side of its border, will be no easy task. And while events such as the recent destruction of Beirut Port and the COVID-19 pandemic have grabbed everyone's attention and resources of late, a global leadership vacuum now exists that presents an existential threat for Armenia. Just as no Western power came to Armenia's defense in 1915, none will do so now. It's up to the diaspora to support organizations like Paros that understand how to help defend and strengthen Armenia through crucial infrastructure and life-saving projects. As Charentz famously wrote: "Oh Armenian people, your only salvation lies in the power of your unity."

You can find out more about the Paros Foundation and its many projects at www.paros-foundation.org

(Christopher Atamian is a writer, translator and filmmaker living in New York City. His latest book, *A Poet in Washington Heights*, which was awarded the Tololyan Literary Award and nominated for a National Book Award.)



Arson Guts San Francisco Armenian Church Cultural Center

ARSON, from page 1

This attack follows the vandalism at the end of this July of the Krouzian Zekarian Vasbouragan Armenian School and its adjacent community center, the walls of which were covered with profanity, anti-Armenian slogans and the colors of the Azerbaijani flag.

(In even more disturbing news, according to the CBS affiliate in San Francisco over the weekend shots were fired at the school, sparking a new hate crime investigation – the third hate crime against an Armenian establishment in the city within the last two months.



Around 2:25 a.m. Saturday, officers patrolling the city's Stonestown neighborhood heard gunshots near the Krouzian-Zekarian-Vasbouragan Armenian School at 825 Brotherhood Way.

No injuries were reported, but according to San Francisco police, the school's sign was damaged.)

Rostom Aintablian, chairman of the church's Board of the Trustees, said: "They set three different fires, two on the bottom floor, and one on the middle floor. We do think it's arson."

The bottom and middle floor are almost completely burned out and the church offices gone, while the overall structure remains intact, according to Aintablian.

Aintablian believes the fire is a hate crime and stems from years of tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia. "We know our history, we know who our enemies are," he said. "We think it has something to do with the war in our country. We don't know for sure, but deep inside me tells me it has something to do with this. Or else it doesn't make sense to me for someone to come in the middle of the night and set fires in the building."

San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin condemned the act with a message on Twitter. "This is an outrage," Boudin wrote. "The Armenian community of San Francisco woke up today to an arson at their church.

There is no room for this cowardly, hateful, criminal conduct in San Francisco. We stand with the Armenian community against hate!"

Alex Bastian, deputy chief of staff for the San Francisco District Attorney's Office, also called the fire a cowardly act and posted images of the damaged building on Twitter.

"For some context, in our history and around the globe, every time Armenians have been targeted, they come for our churches and our schools," tweeted Bastian, who was

baptized in the church. "But you know what? It's very hard to terrorize my community, no matter how hard people try. We are hardened by the millennia of hardship and the centuries of injustice. Most of us in the community are refugees, or the children of refugees, from war zones around the world."

Bastian said he believes the fire is related to the vandalism of San Francisco's Armenian School Krouzian-Zekarian-Vasbouragan in July. The school provided surveillance video to the San Francisco Police showing men covering walls with hateful and racist graffiti.

"Attacks against our community are escalating, from vandalism - to arson - to unfortunate-

ly whatever is next," Bastian wrote.

San Francisco resident Raffi Gharakhanian watched on Thursday as community members arrived to see the damage at the church building. He said although he is not a member of the church, he felt compelled to show up as an Armenian.

"It is disappointing to see hate crimes against Armenians. It happens all over the world but this hits close to home. I felt it was important to be here."

Rep. Adam Schiff issued a statement: "For Armenians around the world, but especially in our

California community, this hits close to home. The devastating fire – caused by arson – at St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church in San Francisco is despicable. Those responsible for this act of hate must be swiftly brought to justice.

"Across the country, hate crimes are on the rise. And for the Armenian community, hate directed towards the community is nothing new – from vandalizing churches, to tearing down flags, and even violence. We must all condemn hate, wherever it is seen, however it manifests."

Biden Campaign Official Issues Statement

STATEMENT, from page 1

communities. As we pioneer this large operation, I have made it a personal goal to ensure that the campaign is actively working to address the issues raised by ethnic communities in the United States. Foreign policy being of high interest to ethnic communities, my personal views related to foreign affairs issues and ethnic communities do not reflect those of my previous employers, but instead fully and wholeheartedly align with those of Vice President Joe Biden. This includes the Vice President's pledge to recognize the Armenian Genocide and the Vice President's views on the conversion of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque, among others. As a child who survived the horrors of the Srebrenica genocide in Bosnia, I work for the campaign because I believe the Vice President is the right person to lead our nation, to address human rights concerns, and to fight for what is right. He will ensure that the voices of those unheard in America and around the world are heard, and I am honored to be a part of his team and support his views and efforts.

Anthony Barsamian, an Armenian-American activist, commented on this statement, declaring: "We expect the executive branch to follow the US Congress by fully and unequivocally affirming the Armenian Genocide once and for all and to stop Azerbaijan's military aggressions against Armenia and Artsakh. We welcome the statement released by Elvir Klempic which demonstrates again that a Biden Administration will affirm the Armenian Genocide and direct the State Department to formally change US policy. We call on the Trump Administration to use its executive authority immediately to follow the example of President Ronald Reagan, having acknowledged the Genocide while serving as President. Any attempts by the Administration to continue to block legislation set forth by the US House and Senate, rather than fully acknowledge the proud legacy of the United States, should be reversed with new policy prior to the November election."



The Tekeyan School of Beirut



The Vahan Tekeyan School, founded in 1951, was damaged by the August 4 explosion in Beirut. It primarily serves a low-income segment of the Armenian community and already was struggling due to Lebanon's economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. Now it is trying to reopen for the fall semester.



The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada is sending aid and asks your assistance too. Make your donations by credit card at <https://givebutter.com/bXn8Lm> or as checks mailed to the Tekeyan Cultural Association (memo: Beirut Tekeyan School), at its headquarters (755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown MA 02472). All administrative costs for this campaign will be borne by the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada.

For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com or call 617 924-4455.