



Rakel Dink

January 19 Marks 14th Anniversary of Dink Assassination

ISTANBUL – Commemorations for marking the 14th anniversary of the assassination of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink will take place virtually this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dink served as editor-in-chief of Istanbul's Armenian-language newspaper Agos before being gunned down outside its offices on January 19, 2007.

More than 100,000 people joined the funeral for the journalist and Human Rights advocate, who sought to mend relations between Turkey and the Armenian community.

Traditionally, friends and supporters gather outside the Agos offices to mark the anniversary of the killing. This year, however, the memorial will take place online, with speeches and features on Dink's life broadcast throughout the day.

Ogün Samast, a Turkish ultra-nationalist, was convicted of Dink's murder in 2011, but questions remain over the alleged involvement of state security forces.

For the occasion, his widow, Rakel, released a statement, as did Basak Demirtas, the wife of jailed co-leader of the People's Democratic Party, Selahattin Demirtas.

In her statement, Rakel Dink spoke out against the denial of the Genocide.

"As a granddaughter of a 'leftover of the sword', over the last century, I have seen how our plight has been denied and refuted. As if this was not enough, they added more insult to injury by naming it "the so-called genocide." Has it ever occurred to you that you may be hurting or offending someone? Your endless hostility towards Armenians, your insults, humiliation, grudge, and rage have literally consumed us. Don't you ever get tired of it? What a pity. Your silence and brazenness are so shameful. May God help us all."

She urged all to embrace a peaceful existence.

Then, she spoke about the ongoing trials for the murder of her husband.

"My husband's murder trial has been going on for 14 years. They could not resolve the murder in the past 14 years! They failed to do so, because it's not their intention to solve it. The only thing they strive for is to close this case. They spare no efforts to find a way. But it is like a metastasis. It has spread all over the place; they are not able to wrap it up. How else one can explain the failure to carry out an effective investigation for all these years? How else one can explain the failure to question – not even once – those who issued threats and finger pointed my husband as a target?"

She added, "Let me put it bluntly. Claiming that Hrant was killed by FETÖ [supporters of exiled cleric Fetullah Gulen] is synonymous to saying, 'it was not me, it was my hand.' Alleging that Hrant was murdered by Ergenekon [Turkish deep state] is

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Deal on Karabakh's Status Not Urgent For Russia

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) – The status of Nagorno-Karabakh remains unresolved and it must be a subject of future Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Monday, January 18.

In the meantime, he stressed, the territory will be protected by Russian peacekeeping forces deployed there after a Moscow-brokered agreement that stopped the Armenian-Azerbaijani war on November 10.

"Precisely because the problem of the status is so thorny it was decided by the three leaders [of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia] to circumvent and leave it to the future," Lavrov told a news conference in Moscow. "The [Russian, U.S. and French] co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group must deal with this as well. They have resumed their contacts with the parties and are going to visit the region again."

He suggested that the return to normality and confidence-building measures in the conflict zone will eventually facilitate an agreement on the main sticking point.

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Popov Disputes Pashinyan's Characterization of Minsk Group Proposals

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) – Prime Minister Nikol has misrepresented the proposals to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh jointly made by Russia, the United States and France, according to a senior Russian diplomat.

Igor Popov, the Russian co-chair of the Organization for Security and



Ambassador Igor Popov

Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, on January 14 specifically denied Pashinyan's claims that the three mediating powers pressured the Armenian side to give seven districts around Karabakh back to Azerbaijan and offered it nothing in return.

Pashinyan repeatedly criticized their peace proposals during and after the recent war with Azerbaijan. He dismissed critics' arguments that he could have prevented the disastrous war by accepting the proposals based on the so-called Madrid Principles of a Karabakh settlement, which were first put forward by the U.S., Russian and French mediators in 2007.

In a January 4 article, Pashinyan claimed that the most recent version of the peace plan drafted by Russia and backed by the two other co-chairs of the

see MINSK, page 3

Armenia Has Returned All Azerbaijani POWs

MOSCOW/YEREVAN (Reuters) – Armenia has returned all Azeri prisoners who were captured during last year's conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, but the process with Armenian prisoners has been held up, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Monday, January 18.

Armenia has said that many of its prisoners of war remain in Azerbaijan.

Lavrov said that Armenia did not immediately present a full list of captives it sought, which slowed down the process. Azerbaijan has received all the people it sought, he added.

He said Russian peacekeepers deployed to the region were in contact with Armenian and Azeri forces to establish the location of those named by Armenia.

Lavrov: Ties Between Armenia, Artsakh Still In Place

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – At no point during the decades of negotiations was an issue of cutting off Armenia and Karabakh (Artsakh) from one another voiced, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a news conference when asked by an Azerbaijani news outlet why Armenian officials are visiting Karabakh without Baku's permission.

"No one ever rejected Armenia's communication with Karabakh. The issue of cutting off Armenia and Karabakh from one another was never voiced. And that is why the Lachin corridor, as a concept, was not rejected by anyone. A reliable and permanent communication will be established between the western regions of Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan. Communication between the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia must exist. I do not see reasons for obstructing the contacts in that level," Lavrov said.

Aronian to Participate In Chess Tour

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – The Grand Chess Tour returns with five tournaments in summer 2021, after it has become clear that there won't be a Chess Olympiad in 2021.

The Armenian National Olympic Committee reported that Grandmaster Levon Aronian will participate in the tournament. Between classical time control events in Bucharest from June 3 to 15 and the Sinquefeld Cup in St. Louis on August 16–28 there will be combined rapid and blitz events in Paris, Zagreb and St. Louis.

The total prize money is \$1.25 million.

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Jeff Marootian and Ike Hajinazarian Named to Biden Administration Staff

WASHINGTON – Days ahead of his inauguration as the 46th President of the United States, Joe Biden has hired Jeff Marootian to join his climate team and Ike Hajinazarian to serve as a regional communications director.

Marootian has served as Director of the DC District Department of Transportation (DDOT) since 2017, where during his tenure, has worked to improve street safety measures by expanding services aimed at decreasing traffic



Ike Hajinazarian with Joe Biden



Jeff Marootian

congestion and increasing access to public transportation and the city's micro-mobility program. Before joining DDOT, Marootian was a member of the US Department of Transportation leadership team as a Chief Sustainability Officer, where he directed the implementation of President Obama's Executive Order on Federal Sustainability.

The New Jersey native is an alumnus of see APPOINTMENTS, page 20



ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Russian Peacekeepers Start Demining Outskirts of Martakert

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Specialists of the International Mine Action Center of the Russian Defense Ministry continue to work on demining the territory of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).

In the course of demining and clearing of the outskirts of the town of Martakert, Russian peacekeepers are using modern robotic systems and canine mine detection services that ensure the safety of military personnel while performing hazardous works and to maintain a high pace cleaning of terrain in all weather conditions, the ministry said in a statement on Monday.

Since November 23, 2020, engineering units of the Russian peacekeeping forces have cleared about 551 hectares of territory, 205.3 km of roads, 783 houses, including 25 socially significant objects, and detected and neutralized more than 23.7 thousand explosive objects.

Explosives and unexploded ammunition are removed and destroyed at a specially equipped landfill.

Soldier Shot by Azerbaijani Forces

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL) — Nagorno-Karabakh's army said that one of its soldiers was shot and wounded by Azerbaijani forces on Wednesday, January 13.

The Defense Army said that the 20-year-old soldier, Vartan Kirakosyan, was rushed to a Karabakh hospital and underwent "successful" surgery there.

"His condition is assessed as serious but stable," read a statement issued by it.

The statement added that the army has launched an investigation into the "blatant violation" of the Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement that stopped the war in Karabakh on November 10.

Azerbaijan did not immediately comment on the reported incident. Russian peacekeeping forces deployed in Karabakh also did not react to it as of Wednesday evening.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Armenian counterpart Ara Aytvazyan spoke by phone later on Wednesday. Statements on the phone call issued by their press offices did not mention the reported shooting.

New Town to Be Built in Artsakh

STEPANAKERT (Armenpress) — A new town will be built in Artsakh using the rubble stone excavated from the quarry of Martakert, the Artsakh presidential advisor Samvel Voskanyan announced on Tuesday, January 19.

Voskanyan is also the manager of the G. Gabrielyants Future Generations Foundation, and this organization is implementing the project.

"In terms of a timeframe, it is too early to say because not everything depends on us, but the work will commence not long after the launch of the quarry, probably in the spring," he said.

Voskanyan said they are now carrying out preparation works in the Martakert quarry.

He called the launch of this quarry "vital" because two other stone quarries are lost since the territory went under Azeri control.

He expressed hope that the logistic issues hindering exports of the excavated stone will be solved soon.

2 Injured by Explosion

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Two Armenian rescuers suffered injuries in a landmine explosion during search operations for the bodies of the Artsakh War victims in the territory adjacent to the village of Nrnadzor of the Meghri region in the Province of Syunik on January 19.

Captain Artyom Shahnazaryan and Warrant Officer Aram Navasardyan of the Rescue Service were treated at the Meghri Medical Center and are now being transported to the Kapan city hospital, the Ministry of Emergency Situations said.

Opposition Alliance Vows More Efforts to Topple Pashinyan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Opposition leaders promised on Friday, January 15, more efforts to force Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to resign as they began touring Armenia's regions in a bid to drum up greater support for their campaign.

The two leaders representing a coalition of more than a dozen opposition parties met hundreds of supporters in Gyumri at the start of the tour. They admitted that protests staged by their Homeland Salvation Front following the

nated by the opposition alliance to serve as a caretaker prime minister.

"Many people sitting at home are urging us to act more resolutely," complained Ishkhan Saghatelian of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun), a key member of the alliance.

"People must take to the streets, organize themselves and oust this government. There is no other option," he said, adding that the alliance will also keep pressing pro-government lawmakers to

of this year.

The prime minister has rejected the opposition demands backed by President Armen Sarkissian. He has dismissed the street protests against his rule as an "elite revolt" not backed by most Armenians.

A group of Pashinyan supporters blocked a highway outside Gyumri in a bid to bar Manukyan, Saghatelian and other opposition figures from entering Armenia's second largest city. Police intervened to unblock the road.

Manukyan, who had served as the country's prime minister and defense minister in the early 1990s, labeled the protesters as "tramps" hired by Pashinyan's My Step bloc for cash.



An opposition protest in Yerevan

More than 93,000 Artsakh Residents Took Refuge in Armenia, Official Says

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — According to the latest data, more than 93,000 people of Artsakh took temporary refuge in Armenia during the recent war, chief advisor to the Artsakh president Mikayel Virabyan said at a news conference on Monday, January 18.

He promised to unveil the exact number of the people who have returned to their homes in Artsakh after the war after completing their entire work.

Virabyan said their main task was to provide the returning people with housing, hot food, clothes and medical care, as well as to resolve the issue of children's education.

He said that around 300 million Armenian drams allocated by the Artsakh government were mainly provided in material and financial assistance to the people who were forced to leave their homes in the territories occupied by the Azerbaijani forces during the war. About 54 million drams of the sum were directed to the partial reimbursement of the burial expenses for killed servicemen.

He noted that at present there are more than 50 families registered at the operational headquarters of the Artsakh government in Armenia, who have expressed a desire to return and resettle in Artsakh. In early January, 7 families from Kashatagh region returned to Artsakh and settled in the village of Badara in Askeran region, Virabyan said, adding they were provided with housing and other necessary property.

The official said that those who have not yet returned to Artsakh are mainly waiting for the settlement of the housing problem, which is a temporary issue. He noted although the Artsakh government has promised to resolve the issue in the shortest period possible, it is clear that the repatriation process may take up to three years.

In a related story, Russian peacekeepers on Monday escorted another convoy of refugees who came back home in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) from Armenia, the Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement on Monday.

To date, 49, 827 refugees have returned to their homes in Artsakh, the ministry said, adding military personnel of the Russian peacekeeping contingent ensure the safe return of citizens to their places of permanent residence, provide humanitarian assistance and restore civilian infrastructure.

Russian-brokered ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh failed to attract large crowds.

"I thought that that there are one million people in Yerevan and they all will take to the streets because they were humiliated, but people were so depressed and aggrieved ... I know many people who cry at home but don't bother to come out. We have a lot to do about that," said Vazgen Manukyan, a veteran politician who has been nomi-

stop supporting Pashinyan.

"That Nikol will leave is a fact ... He won't avoid that. The question is when he will do that," claimed Saghatelian.

The parties making up the alliance as well as other opposition groups hold Pashinyan responsible for Armenia's defeat in the recent war in Karabakh and want him to hand over power to an interim government that would hold snap parliamentary elections by the end

Parliament Panel to Probe Response to COVID-19

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The pro-government majority in the National Assembly has given the green light to a parliamentary inquiry into the Armenian government's response to the coronavirus pandemic demanded by the opposition.

The two parliamentary opposition parties, Prosperous Armenia (BHK) and Bright Armenia (LHK), called for an inquiry in June as they accused the government of mishandling the coronavirus crisis.

Senior lawmakers representing Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's My Step bloc initially opposed the move, defending the authorities' response to the pandemic. But they reluctantly agreed afterwards to the creation of an ad hoc parliamentary commission tasked with assessing the effectiveness of government efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Arkadi Khachatryan, a senior LHK parliamentarian, announced late on Thursday, January 14, that parliament speaker Ararat Mirzoyan has formally approved the commission's composition and thus paved the way for the start of its activities.

"The date and time of the first meeting of the investigative commission will

be announced in the coming days," Khachatryan wrote on Facebook.

Although the commission will be headed by Khachatryan, eight of its twelve members have been appointed by My Step. Khachatryan expressed hope that its findings will be "objective and comprehensive" and will answer all "questions preoccupying the public."

Armenia has been hit hard by the pandemic, with nearly 164,000 coronavirus cases officially confirmed in the country of about 3 million so far. The real number of cases is believed to be much higher.

The Armenian Ministry of Health reported on Friday, January 15, that 11 more people had died from COVID-19 in the past 24 hours, bringing the official death toll to 2,974. The figure does not include the deaths of 726 other Armenians infected with the virus. According to the ministry, they were primarily caused by other diseases.

The authorities largely stopped fining people and businesses to enforce their anti-epidemic rules following the September 27 outbreak of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh. The daily number of new COVID-19 infections reported by them grew rapidly as a result. But it has fallen significantly since mid-November.



ARMENIA

Ruben Hakhverdyan Trio Plays at 'My Way' Children's Center

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — One can always find reason to celebrate. No matter how difficult the last year was for Armenians, with the suffering caused by the COVID pandemic and the Artsakh war, Christmas brought with it a spirit of hope for a better future. And that is something to celebrate.



From left, Ruben Hakhverdyan, Sona Petrosyan and her son Raphael

At My Way Socio-Rehabilitation Day Care Center for Children and Teenagers with Autism, children, parents, guests, teachers and staff therapists joined in the newly equipped multi-functional performance hall for a live concert



Ruben Hakhverdyan and a band member listen as young Raphael plays on the piano.

on December 25. The My Way center, located in Yerevan, provides therapy, education and vocational training in its two large, newly renovated buildings. Music and musical therapy play a central role in the educational and social process.

The idea for a special concert came from one of the trained music therapists, Nara Sargsyan, who organized the guest performers. Ruben Hakhverdyan is a poet, lyricist, and guitarist who performs his own compositions as well as traditional pieces. Joined by a cellist and accordion player, as well as the trio's musical technician — who is also a pianist —, they presented songs that the adults had grown up with, and that the children and young adults also knew very well, having learned them a few years ago from a special Ladybird edition of songs by Hakhverdyan “for children from 0 to 100 years old....” The musicians were delighted to discover that their audience could sing along, as most of them knew the lyrics and melodies by heart, with all the nuances and musical shifts. Among the pieces presented were Ete Imanayi, Navak and Dzyun.

Following the performance, the guest musicians put away their instruments, and the audience took over. Music therapist Marina Meliqsteyan provided the piano accompaniment and the teenagers and staff broke into song. Soon the professionals joined in. One young man, Raphael, son of board member and co-founder Sona Petrosyan, displayed his remarkable talent on the piano. He performed works



Ruben Hakhverdyan and the musicians after the concert with the children

by Ray Charles, Johnny Mandel and Aznavour, which inspired a band member to join pianist Marina in a four-hand version of Yerevan (music by Artem Ayvazyan). Carried away by the music, Raphael invited his favorite therapist to dance, and at the end the students had taken over the stage to sing.

Outside guests who had come to visit several centers for children with special needs were astonished by the facilities and by the capabilities displayed by the youngsters, not only in music, but in the arts and crafts they had produced and put on display.

My Way had to reduce its activities due to the pandemic, but the directors are confident that



Ruben Hakhverdyan with the center's therapists

2021 will be better. As for music, if all goes well, they are looking forward to more concerts soon, perhaps even featuring Armen Hyusnunts and his jazz quartet.

Popov Disputes Pashinyan's Characterization of Minsk Group Proposals

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OSCE Minsk Group amounted to a proposed “surrender of lands” to Azerbaijan “in return for nothing.” He said it left open the key question of Karabakh's status.

Popov bluntly denied that in written comments posted on the Russian Foreign Ministry's website on Wednesday. He argued that under the Minsk Group plan Karabakh's population would be able to determine the

disputed territory's internationally recognized status in a future legally binding referendum.

Popov also stressed that the plan tied Armenian withdrawal from two of the seven districts, Lachin and Kelbajar, to the determination of Karabakh's status.

“Therefore, the claims that Russia proposed [the Armenians] to return the seven districts ‘for nothing,’ forget about the status and calm

down do not correspond to reality,” he said.

“Neither the Armenian nor the Azerbaijani side rejected these proposals, even though a full agreement [between the two sides] was never reached. But the bottom line is that negotiations were held on a regular basis up until 2018 when Yerevan came up with new approaches,” Popov added in another jibe at Armenia's current leadership.

Pashinyan and his office declined to com-

ment on Popov's extraordinary remarks.

Foreign Minister Ara Ayvazyan acknowledged in that regard that Moscow has never neglected the issue of Karabakh's status. “I definitely agree with Mr. Popov in that Artsakh's status has been and remains the most important aspect of the conflict's resolution,” he told reporters.

Asked about the clear contradiction between Pashinyan's and Popov's statements, Ayvazyan said: “I don't comment on the prime minister's statements and other comments which are often taken out of context.”

Meanwhile, Armenian opposition figures — and former President Serzh Sargsyan's political allies in particular — seized upon Popov's statement to again denounce Pashinyan's policies on the Karabakh conflict.

Armen Ashotyan, the deputy chairman of Sargsyan's Republican Party (HHK), said Popov branded the Armenian prime minister a liar. In Ashotyan's words, the Russian mediator also effectively accused Pashinyan of torpedoing the Karabakh peace process and paving the way for the autumn war won by Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijani army recaptured four of the seven districts which had been occupied by Karabakh Armenian forces in the early 1990s. Baku agreed to stop its military operations on November 10 in return for an Armenian pledge to withdraw from the three other districts.

The Armenian opposition blames Pashinyan for the defeat and demands his resignation. The latter rejects these demands.

Deal on Karabakh's Status Not Urgent For Russia

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Speaking after his talks with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev hosted by Russian President Vladimir Putin last week, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that Karabakh's status is among “many issues” that have yet to be settled by the conflicting sides. Yerevan maintains that Karabakh's population must be able to exercise its right to self-determination in line peace proposals made by the Russian, U.S. and French mediators.

Lavrov stressed that Armenian leaders should avoid making “emotional” statements when visiting Karabakh. He chided them for making such statements before the war.

In a related matter, Armenian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Anna Naghdalyan on Friday reacted to the statement made by the

representative of the Foreign Ministry of Russia who stated that the Russian side has always supported the implementation of the humanitarian contacts between the Armenian and Azerbaijani societies. Asked whether there are prerequisites for such programs, Naghdalyan said: “We highly commend Russia's efforts aimed at establishing peace and stability in the region. The Armenian side has always supported humanitarian contacts between the societies of the region, which should be based on mutual respect and tolerance and be aimed at creating mutual trust. Certainly, relevant prerequisites should be established for such programs.”

She noted that the statements of the leadership of Azerbaijan demonstrate that Azerbaijan

is not yet ready for that. Furthermore, creating obstacles for the repatriation of the Armenian prisoners of war, issuing a stamp glorifying the ethnic cleansing of Armenians, as well as the consistent threats being voiced by President Aliyev attest to the fact that Azerbaijan is challenging the trust-building efforts of international mediators.

“The provocative statements made by the President of Azerbaijan in Shushi, as well as the attempts to present the Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Church, which had been targeted during the war, as a ‘war prize and symbol of victory’ are particularly deplorable,” Naghdalyan noted, adding: “These realities prove that the conflict is still far from being resolved, and the peace process is necessary to establish lasting peace in the region.”



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Turkey to Discuss Second S-400 Regiment With Russia

ISTANBUL (TASS) – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced on Friday, January 15, Ankara's plans to discuss with Moscow supplies of the second set of S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems at the end of January.

"We have completed the work on the delivery of the first S-400 regiment, now our dialogue with Russia on the second regiment continues," the Turkish leader told reporters. Erdogan also described the United States' approach towards Turkey on F-35 fighter jets as a mistake, expressing the hope that the Biden administration would rectify the situation.

Moscow signed a contract with Ankara on the delivery of the S-400 systems in 2017. Turkey became the first NATO country to purchase these systems from Russia, drawing criticism from the United States and NATO in general. In October 2020, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that Ankara was not going to give up the S-400 systems despite the US pressure.

Street in Istanbul Renamed for Actor Nubar Terziyan

ISTANBUL (Nor Marmara) – By a decision of the Sariyer municipality of Istanbul, one of the streets of the neighborhood will be renamed for actor Nubar Terziyan.

Terziyan, who always appeared in films in the role of a kind father or boss, was born on March 16, 1909. His official name was Nubar Alyanak. He passed away on January 14, 1994.

Terziyan lived for many years in the Buyukdere neighborhood of the Sariyer district, leaving behind a good reputation. Although the renaming is official, the street has not been officially opened yet. The local authorities are waiting until the restrictions caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic are relaxed, so that they can have an official ceremony.

Special Rep. for South Caucasus OSCE Chair Named

STOCKHOLM (Panorama.am) – The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Ann Linde, announced on Friday her appointment as Special Representatives of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the South Caucasus.

Soder served as State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Sweden from 2014 to 2019. Before that she was Executive Director of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation working on UN matters, UN reform, peace-building and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Turkey President, Opponent Trade Insults

ISTANBUL (Nor Marmara) – The political struggle between Turkey's opposition Republican People's Party (the party founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu and President of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan has become tempestuous. Both are unsparing in their criticisms of one other any time either of them makes a public appearance. They speak sarcastically of each other and make pronouncements that become the subject of lengthy debates and could even cause litigation. Lately there has been an uproar in Turkey after Kilicdaroglu used the phrase "so-called (sözde) president" in reference to Erdogan, putting the legitimacy of the country's leader in question; that is, whether he is really the representative of the authority of the citizenry.

Batuhan Yasar, correspondent for the Haber-7 TV channel, analyzed the accusations hurled at the president by making a vulgar comparison with the phrase "so-called (sözde) genocide" used in Turkey in reference to the Armenian Genocide.

Ombudsman Applies to OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs for Return of Armenian POWs

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Human Rights Defender of Armenia Arman Tatoyan sent an official letter on January 18 to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office over the issue relating to the return of the Armenian prisoners of war from Azerbaijan and the protection of their rights.

"Among other issues the letter also states that the return or release of POWs should be viewed exclusively within the framework of human rights or humanitarian process. The letter addresses both the captured servicemen and civilians.

The return of POWs should be ensured immediately after the end of the military operations. This is a universal demand of international action subject to automatic implementation. Doing the opposite violates the international demands of human rights and

the international humanitarian law, including the third Geneva Convention of 1949.

Therefore, point 8th of the November 9 trilateral statement has an autonomous meaning and should act exclusively with an autonomous interpretation. It in no way can be viewed in connection or dependence with the remaining points of the statement," the Ombudsman said on Facebook.

Tatoyan noted that the November 9 trilateral statement should be applied on all situations before and after it as long as there is an objective necessity for the protection of human rights and humanitarian process conditioned by the war operations.

"The fact that the return of 64 captured Armenian servicemen is delayed with the abuse of legal process is a very vital issue," he said.

"The studies of the Ombudsman and the results of the investigation of complaints constantly affirm that Azerbaijan

is artificially delaying the release of the Armenian POWs, is not announcing the real number of POWs. This also contradicts the international demands of human rights and violates firstly the rights of their family members.

"Evidence collected by the staff of the Ombudsman proves that the number is much more than the one confirmed by the Azerbaijani authorities. This relates also prior to the return of the 44 POWs," Tatoyan said.

"Taking into account the humanitarian mandates of the OSCE Minsk Group and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and their role in the protection of human rights and the fact that our compatriots have been captured in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh), the letter has drawn the attention of the Co-Chairs to the aforementioned and all other issues, raising an urgent necessity for taking decisive measures to release the POWs and rule out the politicization of the issue," he said.

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tantamount to saying, "it was not me, it was my feet." All these years, you have come all the way up to here, blatantly, walking on your feet. And then you held the gun with your two hands, pulling the trigger."

In her statement, Demirtas said, "We are together once again for our deepest wound that we could never come to terms with, we could never get used to over the years, and we will not do so. We are here for our dearest friend, our true brother, our Hrant."

"You, the people who gather in front of Agos each and every year as well as those across the globe who cannot be physically present here but whose hearts keep beating with us. We do not merely commemorate a precious one we lost, but we are also in search for [his] values. We seek justice, we quest for peace that slips through our fingers. We lost our laughter. Our joy, our zest for life," she noted.

She urged not forgetting Dink's contributions and to build on those in order to bring democracy to the country.

"Perhaps we have been seeking jus-

tice for so long, perhaps our spring came rather late. The promises we made to Hrant are still not fulfilled. However, the blame for this delay belongs neither to the society at large, nor to the



Basak Demirtas

oppressed or the others.

"The biggest failure lies with the leaders of the society. Although all the probabilities lay bare, right before our eyes, these leaders do not dare to reach out for them. This is what it is all about. It is all about reaching out and grabbing it. It is all about daring to do it, to show the courage to do it. Yet, we shall not

despair. Just as our dear Hrant did, without giving into vengeance, we will embrace hope with wisdom, patience, love, and particularly with resistance. We have to find a way out of all these polarization, vilification, and tension through common sense. In fact, it is quite easy to get out of this seemingly chaotic and complicated situation. There is only one thing to do. To come together. To stand together for democracy. We, the women, have the power, faith and courage to do so by taking the lead. Let us first come together and join our forces as women. Let us build an all-women pro-democracy alliance against injustice, all forms of violence, and poverty. Let us clear the path for a society that gasp for air. For how long do we have to wait for this? What else do we expect to happen till then?"

She urged others to look forward to a better future.

"What will unite us is not a leader, not a party, not a savior, but it is our own hands. Come, let us lend each other a hand and join forces. Let us save the future of our children.

To watch the program, visit <http://www.hranticinadaleticin.org/>

Historic Armenian Church up for Sale in Turkey

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) – An Armenian Catholic church in the Turkish city of Bursa has been put up for sale, Turkish-Armenian lawmaker Garo Paylan said in a Facebook post on Sunday, January 18.

"The Armenian Church of Bursa is up for sale. Is a place of worship for sale? How can the society and the state allow such a thing? Shame on you!" Paylan captured a screenshot containing the photo of the Armenian church.

According to the online ad, the church is priced at 6 million Turkish liras (approximately \$800,000).

A 300-year-old Armenian Church in Bursa was put up for sale for \$1.5 million on an online shopping platform in 2016. It is not entirely clear whether it is the same building, but both ads were published by a real estate agent.

BURSA

TARİHİ ERMENİ KATOLİK KİLİSESİ

6.000.000 TL

Bursa / Yıldırım / Kurtuluş Mh.

İlan No	894534002
İlan Tarihi	14 Ocak 2021
Emlak Tipi	Satılık Bina
Kat Sayısı	3
Bir Kattaki Daire	1
Isıtma tipi	Yok
m²	600
Bina Yaşı	31 ve üzeri
Krediye Uygun	Hayır
Kimden	Emlak Ofisinden
Takas	Hayır



INTERNATIONAL

Nerses Topolyan:

‘With Armenia in the Heart’

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / MYTISHCHI (Russia) – Nerses Topolyan, 44, a karate coach and Moscow Armenian community activist, was born in the city of Sukhumi, the capital of unrecognized Republic of Abkhazia. He studied at the Abkhazian State University in the department of technology of subtropical and food products (engineering technologist). Since 1988 he has been practicing karate, has a certificate for three dan of Shitō-ryū shitō-kai. For the last five years he has been a student of Shihan Oshiro Toshihiro, from whom he has been studying Shōrin-ryū karate-do and Yamanni-Chinen-ryū Kobujutsu. Nerses lives in Mytishchi (Moscow region), together with his wife, three sons and a daughter. He teaches karate in Moscow (Narekatsi Gymnasium), Mytishchi (School No. 31), Korolev (SmartUm Development Center for the Whole Family), Pushkino (X-Fit Fitness Club) and is the head of the Nika-Budo school of martial arts and combat sports. In September 2019, he represented Russia at the instructor training camp in Naha on the island of Okinawa (Japan).

Dear Nerses, I am always interested in people with diverse interests. How would you define yourself?

First of all, I am a person called by God to improve himself. I would like to keep the title of a human and try to grow higher. After that, I am the son of my parents who wishes them a long and happy life. I am a brother, friend and just an acquaint, who must be ready to live up to good expectations.

Since the age of 12 you have been involved with karate. Many do this, especially in their teens (also two of my sons), but few continue further and delve into its essence. Has karate helped to shape your personality?

Karate has always played an important role in my life. It was a great hobby as a child and a way of communication. There was



a very good karate team in Abkhazia. We were visited by Japanese masters who carried inadvertent information about karate and motivated us. Unfortunately, the 1992-1993 war did not allow for us to continue classes. But, after the war, Abkhazia gradually began to come to its senses and in 1997, having entered the University, I met like-minded people with whom I continued my karate classes. At that time, it was a salvation from post-war stress. Karate has become my profession and one of the main hobbies of my life.

Interestingly, those who practice Shōtōkan karate dislike Kyokushinkan karate and vice versa. Is it the same for those who practice Shitō-ryū?

Fortunately, in my case there is no such thing. Apparently this was instilled by my first teacher, Tsezar Vianorovich Mataradze, who taught Shitō-ryū karate, but also introduced us to the rules of Kyokushinkan. Besides, I started with sambo. Then, when I moved to Mytishchi, I received knowledge at the seminars of such famous masters as Sakumoto Tsuguo (Ryuei-ryu Karate and Kobudo), Akamine Hiroshi (Mukenkai Karate and Ryukyu Kobudo), as well as from Chinese masters: Jesse Tsao (Taichi) and Tian Ye (Taichi and Hong Quan). But, the main teacher for me is Shihan Oshiro Toshihiro, whose technique is just unusually good!

Some who are proficient in karate also study Japanese language and culture.

When you have been doing karate for more than 30 years and communicate with the bearers of the tradition, then of course you partially adopt this culture. First of all, this concerns etiquette. My knowledge of the language is at the level of technical actions and etiquette. When I talk with masters from Japan, I am



certainly interested in other areas as well. The Okinawans (the island of Okinawa is the birthplace of karate) are very similar to the Caucasian and Transcaucasian peoples. Okinawa, by its nature, is generally very similar to Abkhazia.

Interestingly, in 1950s an Armenian-American, Anthony Mirakian was the first Westerner who went to Okinawa and studied karate, later introducing it in the US. Nerses, in your biography, I was intrigued by the fact that for two years you lived in the New Athos Monastery, where you received a diploma from a theological school. What were you looking for there and did you find what you were looking for?

I have been religious since childhood, although my family was not distinguished by the religiosity that was suppressed in the Soviet Union. Since childhood, I have been interested in eternity and God issues. It is a long story... And I ended up in the New Athos Monastery to systematize and enrich my knowledge in theology. There were created excellent conditions for this thanks to Father Dorofey Dbar.

You underwent retraining at RSUFC - the Russian State University of Physical Culture, Sports, Youth and Tourism, which you consider to be the best sports university. And what is the best?

RSUFC is a really strong school with strong traditions and teachers. If time allowed me, I would have received a complete education there. School and university are, first of all, teachers and professors, who are just excellent in RSUFC.

The concept of the Development Center for the whole family, where you work, seems very interesting.

The concept is simple: if you want to captivate the child with something - plunge into it yourself. In the “X-fit” fitness center of Pushkino almost all parents who bring their children to me, at the same time they are engaged in the gym. I have long dreamed of organizing a separate group for the parents of the children, but so far it has not been possible, primarily due to the lack of time in my schedule (I work with young people in four places). I am very impressed when I come to Germany for training camps and see people of retirement age who have just started karate classes.

Having studied technology of subtropical food products, probably you will be interested to know that now subtropical fruits are grown in different parts of Armenia: olives, kiwi, bananas. As an agricultural engineer, do you consider this promising for Armenia?

This is all very interesting, but I think that it is necessary to focus on the production of products natural for a given region and try to enter the world market.

One of my best childhood memories is connected with your birthplace, Sukhumi, where I spent summers twice in the distant Soviet years. It was pleasant to meet local Armenians in this beautiful city and in the vicinity; I remember there was an Armenian school named after Hovhannes Tumanyan. What was the Armenian Sukhumi of your childhood and what is it like today?

I think Sukhumi is the best place on the earth! And this is not only because it is my birthplace. Objectively, the nature is magnificent there! Sukhumi was a very cozy and beautiful city! The school was by the sea! At the end of the school day, we managed to run to the beach and swim in the sea. The summers were very noisy and fun with the influx of tourists and vacationers. We remember those years with nostalgia and sadness. Now Sukhumi is beautiful again, but there is no stability and order. But, we look to the future with hope. Yes, there is an Armenian school named after Tumanyan: I managed to teach physical education for one year there. I dream one day to return to Sukhumi and work at this school again.

The Sukhumi Armenians mainly originate from the

Hemshin region of historical Armenia, there are also descendants of the repatriates of the late 1940s, who could not stand Armenia’s harsh climate and moved to the milder climate of the Black Sea. Where does your family come from?

Surely, you know that there are two terms: Hemshils and Hamshenis. Hemshils are Armenians who have converted to Islam and consider themselves a separate nation. We have always been Christians and are called Hamsheni Armenians. I am the fifth generation of my family living in Abkhazia. My ancestors lived practically in the same conditions and climate: Trabzon, Ordu, Canik - Armenian lands as part of different empires. My ancestors were engaged in the tobacco business in Trabzon. When they decided to move from the Ottoman Empire to the Russian one, they, of course, chose the same climate to grow tobacco. They moved to Abkhazia before the terrible genocide. There was a moment when my great-grandfather, seeing the political changes in Russia, having collected all the capital, wanted to move to Germany, but everything was confiscated from him, and he could not carry out the resettlement. Then my grandfather Nerses was imprisoned and exiled as a Dashnak.

A fate, that has befell many of our great-grandfathers. Nerses. How is Armenian social life in Moscow?

Moscow has everything one to feel himself an Armenian and preserve traditions and culture. There are lots of organizations for teaching the Armenian language to both children and adults. National dances, music, theatrical groups, a museum, a general education gymnasium according to the Russian education system with the classes of the Armenian language, history and literature. And all this is on the territory of the temple complex of the Armenian Church at 9 Olympic Avenue in Moscow, where I work. I also teach physical education and karate at the Gymnasium named after St. Grigor Narekatsi in Moscow, and the motto of our gymnasium is “With Armenia in heart.”

And despite this, unlike many countries, Armenians in Russia are rapidly losing their language and culture. How do you manage to keep the Armenian identity in your family?

My parents studied in Russian schools and universities. I also studied at a Russian school. Then a group for studying the Armenian language met in my school, and I studied there for about a month. I speak the everyday Hamshen dialect, but it is completely insufficient to convey my thoughts. After the war, while in Abkhazia, I began to read historical novels and Armenia’s history and this fascinated me so much that I began to learn the alphabet on my own. Now I continue to study and hope that in the near future I will be able to speak and read Armenian fluently. My wife is not Armenian, but she is also very good in learning Armenian. The Armenian-ness of my family is expressed in belonging to the family cultural traditions and language that we support and develop, as well as in belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church. I, my wife and children are also studying grabar (ancient Armenian language) by prayers.

Have you managed to visit your historical homeland, which is now again in a difficult situation?

When I studied at New Athos Monastery, in the summer I asked for leave to visit the holy places in Armenia, and in the summer of 2004 I went to Yerevan. From there I went to Holy Echmiadzin, Saint Hripsime, Saint Geghard, which shook me to the core. Since then I have not been there and I dream to return! I have no relatives in Armenia and the climate is not very suitable after Abkhazia, but I think more and more about going there, especially after what happened. When there was a 44-day war, I fought COVID-19 and it was very hard. And, in the end, a terrible document was signed on my birthday, on November 10. There are no words. But, we will not give up. This is definitely not the end!



INTERNATIONAL

Armenian Ambassador to UN: Azerbaijan's Actions Set Dangerous Precedent

NEW YORK – The Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations Mher Margaryan addressed a letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres regarding Azerbaijan's persistent, gross and systematic violations of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles of international law in the context of the maintenance of international peace and security.

In the letter, sent on January 15, Margaryan said, “Azerbaijan has repeatedly demonstrated a blatant disregard towards its pre-eminent obligation to strictly adhere to the principles of non-use of force or threat of force and the pacific settlement of disputes by opting, instead, for instigation of violence, conflict and atrocity crimes in relation to the people of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).”

He stressed that the authorities of Azerbaijan consistently used threatening language, fueling ethnic hatred and propagating war and violence against Armenians. In doing so, the leadership of Azerbaijan “sought to push for a deceptive, victim-blaming narrative on the basis of misplaced, manipulative invocation of the concept of “self-defense” as a purported justification for military action.”

“Videos of public executions, mutilations, inhuman treatment of prisoners of war and civilian hostages and other atrocities have been widespread in online media.

“Despite overt, unconcealed glorification of violence, sponsoring of international terrorism and genocidal ideology, both Azerbaijan and Turkey have been increasingly seeking to manipulate the right to “self-defense” to cover up Azerbaijan's criminal conduct. Much to the embarrassment of those behind this fabricated argument, it must be clearly stated, however, that, in the case of Azerbaijan, neither the conditions of “self-defense” nor of “pre-emptive self-defense” are applicable,” Margaryan stated.

He called attention to Azerbaijan's widespread crimes.

“In addition to the direct explicit evidence of genocidal intent, as communicated by

Azerbaijan's and Turkey's leaders themselves, Azerbaijan's goal of ethnically cleansing the indigenous Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh may be inferred from Azerbaijan's commission of the following atrocity crimes: (1) inhuman treatment, torture, executions and beheadings of captive Armenian civilians; (2) torture, beheadings and mutilations of prisoners of war; (3) widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure; (4) destruction of cultural and religious heritage; and (5) hate speech by the Azerbaijani political leadership and public figures encouraging identity-based crimes against Armenians,” the letter said.

The top diplomat highlighted that throughout its offensive against Artsakh Azerbaijan deliberately targeted civilian sites.

“Azerbaijan has, indeed, waived any self-defence argument by its capture and torture of ethnic Armenian civilians, including humanitarian aid workers, before and after the 10 November 2020 ceasefire. The relevant reports by the Human Rights Defenders of Armenia and Artsakh contain abundant evidence documenting the barbaric atrocities committed by the Azerbaijani armed forces against captured ethnic Armenian civilians, detailing the torture, mutilation and killing of captured Armenian civilians, including after the 10 November 2020 ceasefire.

“Moreover, Azerbaijan's atrocious treatment of Armenian prisoners of war – including mutilation, torture and beheadings – belies any “self-defense” argument. These are not acts of self-defense but acts of genocidal intent. As reported by several international sources and as documented in the Ombudsman's reports, Azerbaijan committed multiple acts prohibited under the Third Geneva Convention, such as executions of Armenian soldiers by gunfire, decapitation of Armenian prisoners of war, deliberate execution of injured, non-resistant wounded soldiers, brutal execution of an alive, captured person, mutilation of the bodies of dead Armenian soldiers 10 and other inhumane acts and atrocities.

“The genocidal intent does not stop at the bodies of ethnic Armenian civilians and prisoners of war; it also seeks to destroy Armenian cultural heritage, while erasing any evidence of the more than 2,000-year-old Armenian civilizational presence. Notable examples of such cultural erasure involved the shelling of the Tigranakert archaeological site, the best-preserved city of the Hellenistic and Armenian civilizations of the Caucasus, as well as the targeted destruction of the Armenian cathedrals in Shushi, including the removal of the Armenian cross and rounded, pointed dome from the “Kanch Zham” (“Green Chapel”) Armenian Church of Saint John the Baptist.

“Despite Azerbaijan's unsubstantiated claims that the ancient Christian cultural heritage in the region is not Armenian but rather exclusively “Caucasian Albanian”, such claims have not stopped Azerbaijan from destroying cultural heritage that it labels as “Caucasian Albanian”, as confirmed by Azerbaijan's devastating campaign against the largest medieval Armenian cemetery in the world – the historical khachkars (cross-stones) in Old Jugha in Nakhichevan, destroyed by the Azerbaijani Government between 1997 and 2006. Notably, Azerbaijan not only denies such conduct – which was captured on video – but also denies the existence of this Armenian cultural heritage at all, in line with Azerbaijan's genocidal indoctrination directed against ethnic Armenians and Armenian culture and history.

“Sadly, such dangerous indoctrination is cultivated at the highest political level in Azerbaijan and Turkey, as reflected in the extensive use of inflammatory, derogatory language in relation to Armenians.

“The past weeks have clearly indicated that bellicosity, warmongering and anti-Armenian sentiments have taken firm hold of the public discourse in Azerbaijan and Turkey, and that these represent serious risks of atrocity crimes. On 22 October 2020, a group of 80 prominent Genocide scholars published a joint letter on the imminent genocidal threat deriving from Turkey

and Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh, in which they point out the continuous policy of denial and justification of the Armenian Genocide.¹⁶ It is clear that Azerbaijan's violent conduct, encouraged and supported by its enabling State, Turkey, has been aimed not at defense but at intentional infliction of maximum casualties on the Armenian side.

“At their core, the belligerent actions of Azerbaijan that began on 27 September 2020 violated international law as Azerbaijan's conduct resulted in the resumption of hostilities, civilian casualties and widespread destruction. Plied with Turkey's illicit caches of military command and counsel, hardware and technological munitions, and universally outlawed foreign terrorist fighters and mercenaries, Azerbaijan's actions also led to the intensification of the conflict undermining peace and security in the region.

“Azerbaijan, therefore, demonstrated not only that it was not acting in “self-defense” under international law, but also that it had no intention of complying with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and human rights law, or any of the Security Council resolutions that it has so often invoked for manipulative purposes. This was further evidenced by Azerbaijan's failure to adhere to the 10 October, 17 October and 25 October agreements on humanitarian ceasefire.

“The fact that Azerbaijan chose to attack in the midst of a global health pandemic exemplifies Azerbaijan's unwillingness to engage in peaceful resolutions and eagerness to resort to force.

“Not only are Azerbaijan's actions incompatible with the core values and objectives of the United Nations, but they also set a dangerous precedent to the detriment of international peace and security and must be unequivocally acknowledged for what they are – an attempt to solve an international dispute by force, contrary to the obligations under international law, including customary law,” the letter reads.

‘Erdogan Should Be Very, Very Worried’: What the Biden Presidency Means for Turkey

BY Natasha Turak

WASHINGTON (CNBC) – Tensions between the U.S. and Turkey have been mounting for a while.

But under outgoing President Donald Trump, many of the potential flashpoints between the NATO allies were smoothed over thanks to a friendly relationship between Trump and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Looking ahead to a Joe Biden administration, there's a chance that some of those tensions could blow up – but there is also chance for reconciliation. Whatever happens, the next four years for Turkey and its relationship with Washington are likely to look very different from the last four.

“The only thing holding the relationship together for the last several years has been Trump's personal relationship with Erdogan,” Michael Rubin, a former Pentagon official and resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, told CNBC. “With Trump removed, Erdogan should be very, very worried.” That's because there is no shortage of conflict points between Ankara and Washington; points that reveal contrasting attitudes toward geopolitics, alliances and governance.

Among those are human rights in Turkey, which Democrats in particular have spoken out against; Turkey's purchase of Russia's S-400 missile system which angered its NATO allies and nearly triggered U.S. sanctions; and its military action against America's Kurdish allies in

northern Syria and support for Islamic extremist groups, which Ankara argues are not terrorists and are necessary to protect its interests in the region.

There are also Erdogan's aggressive moves against Greece and Cyprus over gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean; Turkey's alleged role in helping Iran skirt U.S. sanctions; and the shared Incirlik air base, where Turkey hosts a huge number of American troops, aircraft and some 50 of its nuclear warheads – and which Erdogan has threatened to cut off if hit with U.S. sanctions.

So, that's a lot. What has Biden said on some of these issues?

Biden and Erdogan name-calling

Based on his previous statements, it looks like there will be a tougher line from Washington. In an interview last January, Biden called Erdogan an “autocrat,” criticized his actions toward the Kurds and said that the Turkish leader “has to pay a price.” He also suggested the U.S. should support Turkish opposition leaders “to be able to take on and defeat Erdogan. Not by a coup, but by the electoral process.”

The U.S. would be shooting itself in the foot... if placed under stringent U.S. sanctions, Turkey would double down on its attempts to deepen its relations with Russia and Iran.

Biden has pledged to recognize the Armenian genocide, a hugely contentious issue for Turkey and one which U.S. presidents have avoided acknowledging for a century. Amid the turmoil of World War I, as many as 1.5 million Armenian civilians were expelled or killed by what was then the Ottoman Empire. No gov-

ernment of Turkey has ever acknowledged it as a genocide. Turkey and Armenia do not have diplomatic relations.

Democratic and Republican lawmakers alike have supported sanctions over both Turkey's military assaults on the Kurds, viewed by Ankara as terrorists, and its buying and testing of the Russian S-400 missile defense system. Sanctions would be a devastating blow to Turkey's already suffering economy.

For its part, Turkey has threatened retaliation for any sanctions, including hamstringing the Americans over the highly strategic Incirlik air base. Erdogan has previously slammed Biden for being an “interventionist.”

Still, Erdogan spokesman Ibrahim Kalin on Wednesday said Turkey believes it can have a “good and positive agenda” with a Biden administration, and called any punishment for its S-400 purchase “counterproductive.”

Between Russia and a hard place

Both the U.S. and Europe have become “increasingly frustrated” with Erdogan's emboldened foreign interventions and “erratic” behavior toward allies and adversaries alike, said Agathe Demarais, global forecasting director at the at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

“This is a dangerous path,” she said. “The incoming Biden administration is likely to take a much tougher stance on Turkey than Donald Trump has done.”

But that comes with its own set of risks to the U.S. – namely, that punishing an ally like Turkey only pushes it further into the arms of Russia.

“The U.S. would be shooting itself in the foot... if placed under stringent U.S. sanctions,

Turkey would double down on its attempts to deepen its relations with Russia and Iran,” Demarais said.

With the second-largest military in NATO and strategic access to American operations in the Middle East, Turkey is a partner many believe the U.S. can't afford to lose to an adversary.

Not everyone sees a dire future as a foregone conclusion for Washington and Ankara.

Turkey is “mega strategic” for the U.S. and Europe, stressed Timothy Ash, senior emerging markets strategist at Bluebay Asset Management. Because of this, he expects that “Biden will work overtime to try and improve relations with Turkey and bring the country back into the Western fold.”

“I think it is important to remember that the two biggest risks to the U.S. are China and Russia,” Ash said. “Winning” Turkey back from Russia would be a huge win for Biden, and I think they will focus on that.”

It's also worth noting that the relationship during Trump's tenure wasn't always rosy. In August of 2018, Trump threatened sanctions on Turkey over its detention of an American pastor – a threat that sent the Turkish lira to its then-lowest level ever against the dollar and intensified its deepening economic crisis.

Now, with its currency at record lows, high inflation and unemployment exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, any clashes with the U.S. that risk sanctions are even more perilous for the Turkish economy.

Investors and regional analysts will be watching the Biden-Erdogan dynamic over the coming months to see whether, in the words of Turkish academic Ahmed Alioglu, “Turkey should get ready for a rocky four years ahead.”

Community News

Flagship Pioneering Launches Company To Explore New Biological Pathway

By Alex Keown

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (Biospace) – Flagship Pioneering launched a new company called Inzen Therapeutics, which will discover and develop a new class of medicines based on a new area of biology that will provide new therapeutic approaches to multiple types of diseases.

This new pathway, called Thanokine Biology, provides the potential for new approaches to cancer, fibrotic disorders, immune-inflammatory disorders, metabolic disorders and degenerative diseases. Thanokine Biology was discovered by Flagship Pioneering scientists and is believed to exert “broad and fundamental influence on cell state.” The discovery of this new type of biology led to the formation of Inzen Therapeutics in 2017 to focus on the potential provided by this new area of focus.

Inzen is discovering and developing drugs based on the discovery that living cells process and respond to inputs from cells that are dying, either as a normal step in the cycle of cell turnover or abnormally under disease conditions, Flagship said in a statement. The business incubator added that the new type of biology is a “rich and untapped source of insights” that can be used in disease treatment.

The company’s lead programs in oncology are designed to both kill tumor cells and direct Thanokines from the dying tumor to broadly rewire the tumor microenvironment and generate strong immune responses. Inzen is also targeting indications where dys-regulated responses to turnover are already known to drive important processes like fibrosis and regeneration, including lung and liver fibrosis, Flagship Pioneering said.

Inzen will be helmed by industry veteran Volker Herrmann, a partner at Flagship Pioneering and former executive at SQZ Biotechnologies and Pfizer.

“Every time biological science has discovered a fundamental new way that cells respond to inputs from their environment, for example neurotransmitters, hormones, or cytokines, that insight has translated quickly into a broad range of therapeutic options,” Herrmann said in a statement. “Thanokine Biology is becoming an equally important and fruitful area of investigation. I am delighted to join the exceptional leadership team at Inzen and to help advance its rich and growing pipeline of novel therapeutics.”

Herrmann succeeds Doug Cole, the founding chief executive officer of Inzen. Cole remains chairman of the board of directors, as well as a managing partner at Inzen. Other members of the executive team include Chief Operating Officer Jason Park. Pete Gough will serve as chief scientific officer.

“Inzen’s insights, pioneered and refined over the last four years, significantly expand our understanding of the nature of these inputs and cells’ responses to them, shedding light on a fundamental, but previously overlooked, aspect of biology,” Cole said in a statement.

Inzen isn’t the only new initiative undertaken by Flagship. On Tuesday, Flagship Pioneering launched a new division dubbed Pioneering Medicines. Pioneering Medicines’ mandate is to build a world-class biopharmaceutical R&D capability that will conceive and develop a portfolio of life-changing treatments for patients. Pioneering Medicines will be able to harness the power of its parent’s multiple scientific platforms found in 40

see FLAGSHIP, page 9



Majority Whip Katherine Kazarian

Kazarian Elected Rhode Island House Majority Whip

PROVIDENCE (*Providence Journal*) – Rhode Island House Democrats elected Rep. Katherine Kazarian of East Providence as House majority whip on January 11 at a virtual House Democratic caucus meeting, along with Rep. Mia Ackerman of Cumberland as deputy whip. Majority whip is the third highest ranking position in the House leadership.

New Rhode Island Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi, declared: “I am very excited about our leadership team, which brings a combination of new energy and vast experience on all matters pertaining to the House,” and promised a collective effort to “reform the way business is done at the State House.”

According to her official biography, Kazarian “has sponsored numerous bills to expand the scope of health insurance coverage for Rhode Islanders, including a law that requires health insurance plans to provide for a 12-month supply of birth control to all those who are insured. She has also sponsored legislation to reduce the burden of student loans and successfully created a process for the Department of Education to collect and organize information concerning the duties and responsibilities performed by school social workers.”

Kazarian grew up in East Providence. A graduate of Columbia University, she majored in urban studies and economics. She was elected as a member of the House of Representatives for District 63 in September 2012. She has a strong background in the tech field, having previously worked at both Upserve and Virgin Pulse, and was previously a Senior Planner for the City of Pawtucket.

Engaged to Sam Daniel, she will be attending law school in the fall.

With great-grandparents who survived the Armenian Genocide of 1915, she was motivated to serve as sponsor of legislation requiring Genocide and Holocaust education in all state middle and high schools.



Fresno Armenian Studies to Host Conversation With Commentator Eric Hacopian

FRESNO – Political consultant and commentator Eric Hacopian will participate in “The Artsakh War and Armenia: A Conversation with Eric Hacopian” at 10 a.m. (Pacific time)/1 p.m. (Eastern time) on Saturday, January 30. The presentation is the first in the Spring 2021 Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program and is supported by the Leon S. Peters Foundation.

On September 27, 2020, Azerbaijan attacked the Republic of Artsakh, kindling a war which last until an agreement signed on November 9, 2020. The war resulted in thousands of Armenian soldiers and civilians losing their lives and in Artsakh losing a large part of its territory. The war also triggered a political crisis in the Republic of Armenia, with questions arising about the leadership of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his government.

Eric Hacopian has been a frequent commentator for CivilNet in Armenia, bringing his political expertise to answer some of the unresolved questions arising from the war. In this conversation with moderator Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian of the Armenian Studies Program, Hacopian will discuss the



Eric Hacopian

situation today, answering questions about the lead-up to the war and also the aftermath of the war, including the recent meeting in Moscow between the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan. This will be followed by an opportunity for question and answer from the audience.

Eric Hacopian is a 30-year veteran of American politics, having worked on campaigns from the local to the presidential level. For the past 22 years, he has been the principle at EDH & Associates, a Southern California-based Democratic consulting firm. He has been living in Armenia since 2017.

Zoom Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudieshacopian>

For information about upcoming Armenian Studies Program presentations, follow the Facebook page, @ArmenianStudiesFresnoState or at the Program website, www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies.

Zoom Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudieshacopian>



COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

Garbis Der-Yeghiayan

Celebrated Educator

LOS ANGELES — Dr. Garbis Der-Yeghiayan, president of Mashdots College, passed away on January 12 due to a rapid deterioration of his health after testing positive for COVID-19.

Born in Beirut, Lebanon in 1949, Der-Yeghiayan earned bachelor's degrees in political science/public administration and mathematics (Summa Cum Laude) as well as master's degrees in educational administration and international relations from the American University of Beirut.

At the age of 17, he began teaching at both the elementary and high school level in Beirut before serving as high school principal in Lebanon at the age of 22.

After moving to the United States in 1976, he attended Northwestern University earning his doctorate in human development and social policy, and the University of La Verne earning a second doctorate in educational management. He held honorary doctorates from five universities. He was the first Armenian American inducted into the Academy of Diaspora Sciences in Armenia.

Dr. Der-Yeghiayan was internationally recognized as a founder and catalyst of Armenian higher education in the United States. He served as dean and president, as well as professor of education and international relations at the American Armenian International College/University of La Verne from 1976 to 1992. Afterwards, he served for many years as president and professor of educational management and international relations/public diplomacy at Mashdots College in Glendale. Eleven universities have bestowed upon him honorary professorships. He authored fourteen books on current affairs, history and education, and has presented more than 100 scholarly papers at international conferences.

Dr. Der-Yeghiayan was a visionary and dynamic community leader in Southern California. He was a peacemaker and consen-

sus-builder and as such, highly respected by all segments of the community. He serves on 11 non-profit boards and committees, including Commissioner of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Inmate Welfare Services, generously volunteering his time and sharing his talents and resources. He was the host of three weekly live television programs and was frequently interviewed by TV networks on education and international affairs. He was an ardent writer and his articles occasionally appeared in major newspapers and magazines. He was regularly invited by community organizations, youth groups and schools to serve as guest speaker and master of ceremonies.

Dr. Der-Yeghiayan was a dedicated Rotarian. He joined the Rotary Club of La Verne in 1981, served with distinction as president in 1984-85 and International Service chair 1982-84 and 1985-1998. He served as District 5300 International Service chair, 1994-1996; Rotary Friendship Exchange District chair, 1996-1998; Rotary District 5300 Peace Conference chair, 1990-present; Polio Eradication Chair, 2002-2005; Annual Giving Chair, 2004-2005; presenter at District Assemblies and Conferences; District 5300 Governor, 1999-2000; Russian Leadership Program Committee chair, 1999-2000; Literacy Task Force Zone 24 Coordinator, 2000-2001; RI Global Quest Membership Task Force coordinator, 2000-2001; Chair of Southern California-Nevada Multidistrict Presidents'-Elect Training Seminar (PETS) 2001; Membership Workshop Coordinator at RI Presidential Conference in Salt Lake City, 2001 as well as at Governors'-Elect Training Seminar (GETS) and Zone Institutes; Rotary International Membership Coordinator of Zone 24, 2001-2002; Poverty Alleviation Zone Coordinator, 2003-2005; Instructor, Presidents'-Elect Training Seminar, 2004; Membership Development and Foundation workshop leader in various Rotary Districts; Chair RI Zones 25



and 26 Peace Conference, 2011-2013; Advisor to RI Director, 2011-2013. He has represented the RI President to four District Conferences in Pennsylvania, Lebanon, Bahrain, and Texas. He delivered more than 1,500 speeches to Rotary clubs throughout the world. He has initiated numerous new programs promoting international understanding. Through his efforts, the Rotary Club of La Verne was able to establish the first Rotary Club in the former Soviet Union. During his tenure as Governor, District 5300 received top awards in per capita annual giving and membership development. In 2002, at the Rotary International Convention held in Barcelona Spain, Garbis was honored as "World Champion and Most Distinguished Past District Governor." He was also the recipient of "Rotary District 5300 Peace Ambassador" title in 2000, Rotarian of the Year award in 1990, 1995, 2000, 2006, 2010 and 2014; Meritorious Service award in 2005, Rotary's "Service above Self" award in 2007 and "Peacemaker of the Year" District 5300 inaugural award in 2010.

In 2013, at the RI District 5300 24th anniversary peace conference, the District Governor proudly announced the establishment of the "Garbis Der-Yeghiayan Peace Institute" in honor and in appreciation of his efforts.

In March 2005, he co-chaired and served as keynote speaker of the first ever Rotary International Caucasus Peace Conference held

in Ankara, Turkey, and attended by Armenian and Turkish Rotarians. His inspiring speech and subsequent meeting with both Turkish and Armenian leaders led the way to numerous joint efforts between Armenia and Turkey for the first time since 1915 as well as the signing of the protocols between the presidents of the two countries in October, 2009. He was actively engaged in shuttle diplomacy between Israel and Lebanon, Israel and Palestinian Authority, and Turkey and Armenia. He organized annual trips to Turkey promoting public diplomacy between Turks and Armenians. As District Governor in 1999-2000, through District 5300 Rotary clubs he sponsored 9 matching Grants projects in Turkey and was honored by the president of Turkey for his humanitarian efforts. In addition, 16 country presidents and prime ministers have honored him by issuing special proclamations.

He received more than 200 recognitions. His interests included church activities, playing the violin, conducting, chess, writing and photography.

A funeral service was held on January 16 at the Armenian Church of Christ of Upland, California.

He leaves behind his wife Angela (Doctorian) and two sons, Jimmy Paul and Johnny Samuel and many relatives and friends.

Barbara Haroutunian

Educator, Community Leader

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. — Barbara (Zamanigian) Haroutunian passed away on January 12. She was the wife of the late John Haroutunian and the daughter of the late Leo and Victoria Zamanigian.

Barbara received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Wayne State University, taught elementary school and became a principal in the Detroit public school system.

She was an active member of St. John Armenian Church in Southfield. During her college years, she sang in the St. John Church Komitas Choir and years later became chairman of the church's Women's Guild. She served several terms on the Women's Guild Central Council of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church.

Shortly after retirement, Barbara was called upon by the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem to restructure the curriculum of the St. Tarkmanchatz School there.

She taught English in Ijevan for several years. While there, Barbara observed that many classrooms were in need of repair; she raised \$25,000 to completely renovate the rooms.

Barbara joined a committee of international Armenian women to assist in the region's reconstruction. She was on the Board of Education of the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian Day School; was a Past Matron of the Daughters of Vartan Zabelle Otyag of Detroit and also served on the Grand Council of the organization from 1994-1996 and 2002-2005. Barbara was a member of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party and the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United



States and Canada. She was a member of the Armenian Heritage Cruise Committee for many years.

She leaves her daughter Lindsay (Aram) Sahakian, two grandchildren, Chloe and Mason, her brother Dr. Gary (Mariann) Zamanigian and a nephew, Drew Zamanigian.

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Dontation

The Detroit chapters of the Tekeyan Cultural Association and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party donate \$100 to the Tekeyan Sponsor a Teacher Program in memory of Barbara Haroutunian



COMMUNITY NEWS

Flagship Pioneering Launches Company To Explore New Biological Pathway

FLAGSHIP, from page 7

different companies. The idea is to use the technology owned by those companies, including the likes of Moderna and Evelo Biosciences, to take research into new areas that are not being studied by those companies.

“With visibility and access to all Flagship companies, Pioneering Medicines is well positioned to originate new medicine ideas based on these platforms. Pioneering Medicines also has the unique ability to combine these platforms, harnessing the power of multiple Flagship scientific innovations to create truly novel products,” Flagship Pioneering said in

a statement.

Despite the trailblazing efforts of researchers within those 40 companies, Noubar Afeyan, founder and CEO of Flagship Pioneering, said there are still innumerable therapeutic opportunities that go unexplored. Pioneering Medicines will leverage Flagship’s innovation approach to find those opportunities and explore them through a robust R&D program.

“This unique model allows Flagship to achieve greater value from our existing scientific innovations for both patients and investors,” Afeyan said in a statement.



Noubar Afeyan

THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator thanks the following individuals for their generous online donations providing support for its operations via <https://givebutter.com/COz5Uy>.

- Arshagouhi Tavitian \$300
- Sonya Doumanian \$250
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- Tania Festekdjian \$50
- William Rinck \$50
- Harold Takooshian \$44
- Ellen Chesnut \$43
- Adrine Arakelian \$25
- Suren Seropian \$25



Donation

The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada gratefully acknowledges the donations to the Armenia Fund for Artsakh humanitarian aid at the end of 2020 from Arsen Nazarian (\$50).



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Insurance Foundation for Servicemen in Armenia

The Insurance Foundation for Servicemen in Armenia was created in January 2017 to insure the social wellbeing of soldiers injured while on active duty as well as that of the families of soldiers who died while performing their duties. The insurance Foundation for Servicemen will provide monetary compensation to the families of soldiers as well as to soldiers injured or fallen

in combat on or after January 1st, 2017.

Every employed person in Armenia, gives 1000 drams (\$2) monthly from their salary to the Foundation, which will be raised to 3000 (\$6) drams in July 2021

Please encourage everyone to stand alongside the brave servicemen of Armenia by making a small donation for their insurance.

The Foundation operates on the principle of complete transparency. In enactment of this principle this website provides the possibility to see both your donations from overseas and every employed person’s contribution month to month in Armenia.

At any given time it is possible to see the total funds of the Foundation as well as the total amount of compensations.

<https://www.1000plus.am/en/>





COMMUNITY NEWS

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian
Datian

Dining In Diaspora's Armenian Yogurt Spice Cake

In her respected culinary blog and multimedia project, Dining In Diaspora, Detroit-based journalist and writer Liana Aghajanian explores the intersection of forced migration, identity and cuisine, tracing the Armenian experience in America through food and cooking. “I spend a lot of time looking through news-



Journalist and writer Liana Aghajanian.

paper archives, both in person and online. It's tedious and reading minuscule prints sometimes dating back over 100 years make my eyes go blurry, but newspapers are my first love. There's nothing more exciting than coming across an Armenian-related food reference in an old paper. Sometimes they're in the context of restaurants or food events, but sometimes they're more jarring - articles by newspaper reporters or food columnists discussing the ‘oriental’ and ‘foreign’ fare of the Armenian people, discussing shish kebab, cracked wheat and eggplant dishes as if it is the most unusual kind of food they're heard of,” says Liana.

“In a Los Angeles Times clipping, a restaurant called ‘Dardanelles’ presented a ‘Cook's Tour of Armenia’ in 1936, where ‘Chef Puzant’ cooked dolma and pilaf in the auditorium of the new Times building which had opened a year prior. And as I've previously written, George Mardikian's Omar Khayyam restaurant in San Francisco revolutionized the concept of Middle Eastern food in America in pioneering ways,” adds Liana. “By the 1950s and 1960s, many Americans were curious about replicating the ‘exotic’ dishes brought to America by many Armenians in their own homes. Recipes began appearing in local and national newspapers. Some were directly from the home cooks themselves, and others were written by food editors, like this Armenian Yogurt Spice Cake recipe.”

“There's no mention of the origins of this recipe in the 1983 *Palm Beach Post* piece by food editor, Rosa Tusa,” Liana says. “Given that this recipe uses toasted coconut on top, it's more of a merger of American and Armenian tastes coming together. The fragrant spices (nutmeg and cinnamon) and the yogurt (unmistakably an Armenian introduction into America) make this recipe particularly more East than West. Despite so much archival evidence, the role of Armenian immigrants and refugees in the food lore of America remains hidden and obscured in the modern era. This recipe is a small (and delicious) sampling of what that history looks like.”



Armenian Yogurt Spice Cake

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup butter
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 eggs
1 cup plain yogurt

TOPPING:

1/2 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
1 tablespoon melted butter
1/2 cup chopped almonds
1/4 cup sweetened shredded coconut
1/4 cup milk
1/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Grease and flour a 10-inch tube pan (Liana uses a flat pan, but you can use anything cake batter can be poured into). Combine all dry ingredients and set aside. (One alternative to using separate spices is to buy pumpkin pie spice mix, since it also has cloves, which adds a really nice taste.)

In another bowl, cream 1/2 cup softened butter with sugar until light and fluffy. Add the eggs and beat until smooth. Alternate adding dry mixture and yogurt, beginning and ending with the flour mixture. Beat until smooth and pour batter into pan. Bake for about 1 hour, or until a pick inserted in the center comes out smooth.

Cool cake completely after turning cake out of the pan. To make the topping, combine brown sugar, melted butter, almonds, coconut, milk and vanilla. Spoon mixture on top of the cake and place under a hot broiler until lightly brown, checking every 5-10 seconds to prevent the cake from burning. For this recipe, go to: <https://www.diningindiaspora.com/food/2017/12/20/armenian-yogurt-spice-cake>



Dining In Diaspora is a book and multimedia project documenting the Armenian experience in America through food, founded by journalist and writer Liana Aghajanian. The project traces the intersection of cuisine and agriculture with genocide, immigration, identity and more. Excerpts from the project have been featured in *Eater*, *Taste*, *Roads & Kingdoms*, CNN's *Parts Unknown*, and *Food52*. Visit diningindiaspora.com. Also see Liana's tribute to Choreg at: <https://www.diningindiaspora.com/food/2018/3/30/choreg-for-armenian-american-s-identity-is-braided-into-this-bread>

Photos and recipe are courtesy of Liana Aghajanian

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Metropolitan Museum to Present Program Dedicated to Arshile Gorky

NEW YORK — On Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at 7 p.m., the Metropolitan Museum of Art will present the digital world premiere of Armenian-American composer Mary Kouyoumdjian and Oscar-nominated Armenian-Canadian filmmaker Atom Egoyan's MetLiveArts commission, "They Will Take My Island" (2020), a highly personal 30-minute video with performances by the JACK and Silvana string quartets.

"They Will Take My Island" (2020) is a collaboration between Kouyoumdjian and Egoyan over their mutual admiration of the Armenian painter Arshile Gorky, who has been highly influential to their work. It is a musical documentary hybrid infused with themes of family and immigration. The work integrates audio and film footage from Egoyan's "Ararat," a film that explores Gorky's life in the context of the Armenian Genocide and modern life, and "A Portrait of Arshile," a film Egoyan and his wife Arsinée Khanjian made in dedication to their son, named after the painter. It also includes interviews with Saskia Spender, granddaughter of Gorky and president of the Arshile Gorky Foundation; Parker Field, managing director of the Arshile Gorky Foundation; and Michael Taylor, chief curator of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

"They Will Take My Island" was originally scheduled to premiere in March 2020 as part of a portrait concert celebrating Kouyoumdjian's music, but it was canceled due to the COVID-19

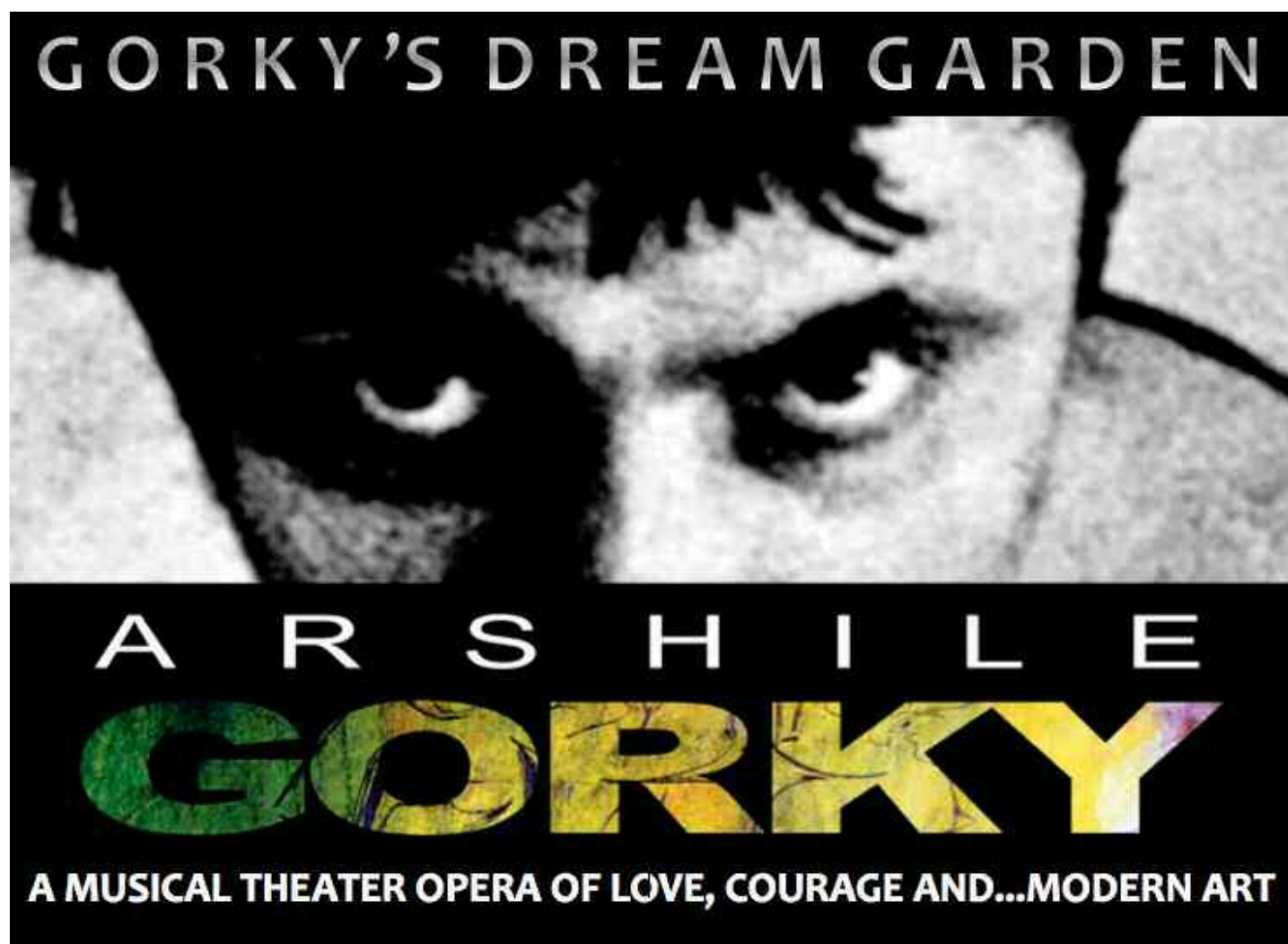


Mary Kouyoumdjian and Atom Egoyan

pandemic.

"When Atom and I created "They Will Take My Island," we reflected on the Armenian Genocide through the lens of one individual artist and his own processing of such horrors through his art making," writes Kouyoumdjian. "In a way, Gorky's creative work invited us to process our own identities as descendants of survivors and to choose how and what we amplify with our artistic voices. We never would have anticipated that history would devastatingly repeat itself in our present. With the current conflicts over indigenous Armenian lands, deliberate ethnic cleansing and loss of life, mass displacement, and historic art and cultural structures being erased, we feel not only a responsibility to celebrate our culture as best as we are able, but to shout for aid and attention on the Armenian community as we all confront this global humanitarian crisis together."

Egoyan says, "In this moment where the frailty of an ancient heritage is so clear, when we can already see the Armenian presence being erased from historical lands, we are offering a meditation on the transmission of culture. They Will Take My Island begins with a photograph of a young Arshile Gorky with his cherished mother, taken in the city of Van just before the Armenian Genocide of 1915. It ends with an image taken in the Art Gallery of Ontario, where Gorky's painting 'They Will Take My Island' hangs today. How the complex story of this great Armenian-American artist shifted



Michelle Ekizian's 'Gorky's Dream Garden' to Be Presented on Two Upcoming January

RIDGEWOOD, N.J. — Composer Michelle Ekizian's 'Gorky's Dream Garden' described recently in 'Broadway World' as a "genre bending hybrid opera" inspired by the dramatic life and art of the great abstract-expressionist 20th century Armenian-American artist Arshile Gorky will be the focus of two special on-line events during the last two weeks of January. Viewers will gain an inside glimpse into Ekizian's long evolving epic trilogy that is currently veering toward large-scale orchestral and staged reveals for live and film streaming productions.

Like modern day troubadours, Ekizian with her probing musical psychodrama and Gorky with his surreal and abstract art arising out of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 — when 1.5 million Armenians throughout the Caucasus were killed by Turkey's Ottoman Empire — have traversed terrains of distress and de-stress toward responding to a troubled world. Ironically, their emotionally charged works seeking transcendence are timelier than ever. Now in view of not only the Coronavirus Crisis, but of fall 2020's conflict in Azerbaijan between its government and its Armenian communities amidst Ankara's reoccurring flames of war, they appear to be a part of a bigger unending picture of history.

On Saturday, January 23 at 8 p.m., an hour-long conversation on the Lied Society's weekly "Round Table Series" program which broadcasts on Facebook will be devoted to Ekizian and her ongoing "dream gardening."

About song and opera and featuring leaders in the vocal musical arts, the "Round Table" broadcasts present perspectives on the singing voice, its performance practices and its contribution to society. The episodes are guided by Abe Hunter, the pianist/vocal accompanist and the organization's founder, and Richard Ollarsaba, the Mexican-American bass-baritone. Joining in the conversation will be the international opera conductor Joseph Rescigno who is the author of Conducting Opera: Where Theater Meets Music published last season by University of North Texas Press. This is the Facebook link for logging on to the Lied Society's 'Round Table' live Streaming: <https://www.facebook.com/liedsociety>

From Wednesday, January 27 through Sunday, January 31, the Ridgewood Guild International Film Festival will screen Ekizian's 90-minute 'Love Songs Showscape from Gorky's Dream Garden taped live in concert at the Newark Museum of Art.' This year's festival — now Virtual — will celebrate RGIFF's 10th anniversary says the organization's executive founders, Dorothy Fucito, casting agent and CEO of Clancy Productions, and Tony Damiano, president of the Ridgewood Guild. It will present over 80 selected films and 20 hours of content ranging from dramas, comedies, music videos, and international flicks. The festival lineup includes only two feature length films: Ekizian's 'Love Songs Showscape from Gorky's Dream Garden' and Dana H. Glazer's romantic drama 'A Case of Blue,' starring Stephen Schnetzer and Annapurna Sriram. The 'Dream Garden' screenings will enable audiences to enjoy The Newark Museum of Art's 2019 up close and personal preview starring the venerable Brent Barrett (winner of the Los Angeles Music Critics Award and frequent leading man for international and Broadway productions of "Phantom of the Opera," "Chicago" and "Kiss Me Kate") as Gorky — and featuring the late legendary "Woodstock" folksinger Richie Havens (heard on the work's So Be It video montage as Gorky's Chekhovian "Black Monk") with some of the tri-state area's outstanding talent including: Palisades Virtuosi, Art of Motion Dance Theatre, actors Bolet and Sannutto, mezzo Hasmik Mekanedjian and soprano Karen Lubeck. Winners of the 2020 Awards will be announced at the conclusion of the Festival. The schedule will be posted on RGIFF's site as it becomes available (<https://ridgewoodguildfilmfest.com>).

In tandem with the upcoming virtual events, Ekizian has prepared a 10-minute Quick Tour video exploring how the universal "dream garden" has been set as grounds for timely, thought provoking landscapes on themes of suicide, genocide and crisis.

With wild synchronicity, "Gorky's Dream Garden" draws upon music from the 18th-century Armenian troubadour, Sayat Nova, beloved throughout the artist's ancestral war torn lands that are of the general region of the "seat of civilization" (and today's conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan).

The Quick Tour illustrates how Ekizian, like Gorky, uses the power of artistic expression to explore their enigmatic place of beginnings — which have also fueled the visionary '60's era Soviet filmmakers Parajanov ("The Color Of Pomegranates") and Tarkovsky ("Andrei Rublev") and, most recently in the fall of 2020, Lady Gaga and Hollywood film director Tarsem Singh ("911"). See these two Links for the Quick Tour and the opera's 5-minute Trailer:

To see the clips, visit 'Seven Gates to Gorky's Dream Garden (a Quick Tour of Michelle Ekizian's musical theater opera):' https://youtu.be/Fh_KOCAeI9Q and 'Love Songs Showscape Trailer: Gorky's Dream Garden in Newark:' <https://youtu.be/iiV0oQ8pcRY>

from an island located in Lake Van and migrated to a studio in New York is at the root of the exploration Mary and I have taken to create this

piece. Given the current threats against national Armenian heritage, we feel this work is particularly urgent."

To watch, go to the museum's website and follow the link to met.org/358nsUc

Arts & Living

Dr. Vahram Shemmassian To Speak on Armenians of Musa Dagh

LOS ANGELES – Dr. Vahram Shemmassian, director of the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Northridge, will speak about his new book, *The Armenians of Musa Dagh: From Obscurity to Genocide Resistance and Fame 1840-1915*, at 10 a.m. (Pacific time)/1 p.m. (Eastern time) on Saturday, February 6.

The presentation is part of the Spring 2021 Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program and is co-sponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, and the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS).

The Armenians of Musa Dagh: From Obscurity to Genocide Resistance and Fame 1840-1915 is a comprehensive history of the people of Musa Dagh, who rose to prominence with their resistance the Genocide in 1915. The book was published as volume 11 in the Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno. Prof. Barlow Der Muqrdechian is general editor of the Armenian Series.

In *The Armenians of Musa Dagh* Shemmassian has presented a thorough analysis of the social, religious, educational, political, and economic history of the six villages which constitute Musa Dagh. In his presentation Shemmassian will discuss the genesis of the idea to write the book and about his research on the topic. His work focuses on the important period of the mid-to-late nineteenth century, offering the reader a previously unavailable insight into the people whose courage and persistence ultimately led to their successful self-defense.



Dr. Vahram Shemmassian

Shemmassian is director of the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Northridge. He holds a PhD in History from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). His book, *The Musa Dagh Armenians: A Socioeconomic and Cultural History, 1919-1939*, was published in 2015 by the Haigazian University Press in Beirut. He has also published scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals, as well as book chapters on the fate of Armenian Genocide survivors in the Middle East between the two World Wars.

Zoom Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudieshemmassian>

For information about upcoming Armenian Studies Program presentations, visit the Facebook page, @ArmenianStudiesFresnoState or at the Program website, www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies.



Kariné Poghosyan

With Verve and Passion, Kariné Poghosyan Brings Out the Soul of Classical Music

NEW YORK – Kariné Poghosyan is a truly one-of-a-kind classical performer. From Carnegie Hall to the banquet halls of local New York Armenian churches, from albums of Khachaturian and other classical composers to her popular mini-concerts on social media, Poghosyan inspires listeners with her vivacious, passionate piano interpretations of a wide range of classical music.

I still can't claim to be any kind of connoisseur of the classical music, but hearing Kariné Poghosyan play for the first time a few years ago changed my perception of classical music as a genre.

At the time, I was living in the New York area, and with a few friends and their families, I attended the annual dinner held at the Holy Cross Church in Washington Heights, Manhattan. The historic parish on 187th Street has lost the once-vibrant Armenian neighborhood that surrounded it, but many with historic ties to the church return for periodic events meant to keep the place afloat. As we sat down to an Armenian feast of lamb and pilaf, I was told that the entertainment of the evening would be a classical pianist. "She's good," my sharp New Yorker friend insisted as his mother tried to pass me more bulghur pilaf. I nodded mildly, expecting a typical innocuous *hantes* performance that would inevitably include one of the Armenian classical composers, which in this country seems to mean only either Komitas or Khachaturian.

I was right about Armenian composers, but wrong about everything else. A young woman ascended the dais and began to hammer out a Khachaturian piece like her life depended on it. Astounded by the fireworks coming from the piano, I turned around to observe. The pianist, whom I was seeing and hearing for the first time, looked like she was possessed of such a musical soul that one could observe on her face, in the gestures of her hands, and her entire comportment, emotions similar to what Khachaturian himself must have had when he composed the piece. It was my first encounter with this true artist, whose name, I then learned, was Kariné Poghosyan.

Poghosyan, who was born and raised in Yerevan, took the obligatory piano lessons – as all Armenian girls do, she says. She hated them at first. Then, at age 13, her old piano teacher moved away and she got a new teacher, Irina Ghazaryan, who changed everything for her. "We wouldn't really be doing lessons per se," she says. "We would just be doing these explorations, she [Ghazaryan] would say 'Well, how about you play the phrase this way'." Poghosyan says she will never forget her teacher and how she changed her whole attitude toward music. "Somehow I understood the magic of music...I just found the spark and the joy of music at that stage," she says, also attributing the change to maturity. After

see SOUL, page 13

Srpuhi Dussap's Mayda:

One Woman's Struggle to Be Free

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Billed as "the first Armenian feminist novel," *Mayda* packs a wallop. Srpuhi Dussap's book, beautifully written and surprising until its final pages, treats important political and social issues but never bores. Conventional by upbringing and somewhat weak-kneed by temperament, Mayda does a lot of growing up in Dussap's 1883 epistolary novel. The chains that for so long bound women in all aspects of their lives at the time are eventually shattered as Mayda matures and follows the wise counsel of her older best friend and consort, Mme. Sira.

Mayda is born into a bourgeois *Bolsetsi* family and lives life with all the social advantages, discreet charms and privileges of the Armenian amira bourgeoisie – until her husband unexpectedly dies, leaving her penniless with a daughter, Hranush, to care for. Now Mayda must face the awful but undeniable fact that none of her society friends will acknowledge her anymore. For all practical purposes, she has been entirely stripped of any social standing.

Mme. Sira however will have none of her self-pity. She exhorts Mayda instead to be independent and to live her own life – not common for women of her social milieu at the time: "The past pampered you as a tender child. The present will make a woman out of you in the face of misfortune, giving you courage...Be as great as justice, as great as truth, as great as sacred love. Avoid darkness, avoid falsehood." Coincidentally this was basically the same advice that Dussap gave the great novelist Zabel Yessayan who visited her in her youth: namely, study, make something of yourself and then advocate for change in order to better women's lot in society.

As the plot in *Mayda* twists and winds, Mme. Sira is not just a friend. She may be considered the conscience of both Mayda and Dussap as well, often railing against the unjust treatment of women under Ottoman law. The short-lived Ottoman Constitution of 1876 having done little to alleviate the harsh lot of minorities and woman, she declared, "What does the law do really?"

Mme. Sira writes Mayda in a long disquisition: "The law ties a noose around (a) woman's neck that it tightens or loosens as need be. What is (a) woman before the laws of the most civilized nation in Europe if not the property of her husband?...Her lot is silence." This seems obvious to us today, but at the time these words were quite remarkable. The illustrious Krikor Zohrab took great offense and condemned Dussap's book.

Dussap herself was born into a wealthy Catholic Armenian family, studied in Europe, married a Frenchman and then devoted much of her life to philanthropic efforts and helping the Armenian communities spread across the Empire in any way that she could.

Thwarted love, betrayal, death, deceit: Mayda overcomes all these and more as she makes a place for herself and her daughter Hranush in a world full of trickery and evil. Mayda holds its own as one of the best

see MAYDA, page 14



Kariné Poghosyan Brings Out the Soul of Classical Music

SOUL, from page 12

starting her lessons with Ghazaryan, Poghosyan “knew that music would be very important in my life.” But a career? “I saw this old black and white footage of Van Cliburn,” she says, referring to the legendary American pianist who took the Soviet Union by storm in 1958, winning the First International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. Seeing Cliburn playing Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto, Poghosyan relates, “He looked so in the zone, and so fluid...it was one of those moments when a kid sees something and points, like ‘ah, I want to do that’”

Poghosyan came to Los Angeles at 18 with her parents who nurtured her artistic dreams. (Her father is noted painter Razmik Poghosyan, and her mother, Melanya Navoyan, is an engineer who also dabbles in painting.) After getting her bachelor’s in piano performance from Cal State Northridge, her teachers, recognizing her talents, encouraged her to go to the center of classical music – the East Coast. After being accepted at the Manhattan School of Music, the family took a U-Haul truck across the country. It was quite an adventure, Poghosyan relates, laughing. They had a small upright piano which was naturally placed all the way forward in the storage compartment. But Poghosyan’s father had created an opening so she could get to the piano if necessary. Every time the family got to a rest stop, the undaunted artist, who was slated to perform at a festival the day after arriving in New York, would slip through the stacked boxes to get to the piano and practice.

Champion of Khachaturian

Poghosyan gained her Master’s in Music from the Manhattan School of Music. She got her Doctorate of Musical Arts, which she finished in a record 2 years. Her thesis was on the piano works of Aram Khachaturian, which also became the theme of her first commercial album. Though Poghosyan is linked in the minds of many with Khachaturian, “I did not really connect to his music as much while I was in Armenia,” she says. Nevertheless, “for our thesis we’re encouraged to choose something that hasn’t been done before. I was just brainstorming and immediately thought, why not Khachaturian?”

Poghosyan relates that not much had been written on the famed Armenian composer since the 1960s when he was still touring the world. She started studying Khachaturian’s works, and “then it just somehow unraveled, this whole hidden passion for his music that I didn’t even know I had, and I just couldn’t get enough – I still can’t get enough of his music. If I have a chance to play it around the world, everywhere, I definitely will.”

Poghosyan indeed has been performing Khachaturian’s music everywhere she goes. Her passionate performance style, in fact, seems to be a perfect match for what Khachaturian was

whole year – 365 videos. She did the same thing on YouTube. Then in January, she started Patreon account, which proved invaluable during the COVID pandemic. She posts videos to it every day and her subscribers – depending on the “tier” – receive everything from the daily videos to special recitals, to sponsor credits in her upcoming albums for the highest tier subscribers. Without the income from regular concerts, this platform has been an amazing tool for Poghosyan and many other musicians.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Poghosyan has added Facebook Live appearances to her repertoire. “If you asked me one week before we went into lockdown ‘Do you mind going live and just playing for the universe out there?’... I would probably have a panic attack,” she says, laughing. But once the world was on lockdown Poghosyan figured, “Why not? Maybe five people will tune in and want to run away into the world of music for 15-20 minutes.”

It was more than “five people,” her Facebook Live concerts proved highly popular and so she made them a weekly occurrence, with her 45th concert – dedicated to the music of Arno Babajanian – slated for Friday, January 22.

“It’s been super meaningful to search for different themes for each week” says Poghosyan. And she truly shows her vast repertoire and understanding of classical composers as she introduces new pieces to her listeners week after week. Poghosyan typically says a little about the composer and about each piece, informing her audience about the background of the music. Her friendly, vibrant demeanor puts a welcoming face onto the world of classical music for those who might not typically listen to it, and makes her fans excited to hear what she is going to present. And in today’s world, it helps to have some context as to why certain pieces were written by a composer. It can go from being “that piece that your 9-year-old cousin had to practice over and over again” to being a deep and meaningful experience, when, for example, you learn that Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata* was written after the composer experienced a major romantic rejection.

Bringing Classical Music to a Wider Audience

“I’m very passionate about making the world that doesn’t feel as close to classical music, understand how much they’re miss-



piece and the artist responded with a dedication to the sick friend.

But, she says, “the thing that makes me the happiest is also that I’m seeing a lot of different age groups.” Poghosyan is passionate about breaking down the stereotype that classical music is for old people. It “is such nonsense,” she says. “Young people are all about heart and soul and energy and passion. And classical music has all of that!”

A Proud Armenian Artist

As a proud Armenian, she has had a lot of support from the community especially in the New York area. She has worked with AGBU, Tekeyan, Armenia Fund, and other groups in the past, including a fundraiser with Armenia’s permanent mission to the UN in support of the Artsakh War, which noted writer Chris Bohjalian also participated in as a speaker. Poghosyan’s Facebook account, so valuable to her career, was even temporarily blocked when pro-Azeri hackers reported as spam her outspoken posts in support of Armenia and Artsakh.

She also seeks to promote some of the great Armenian composers who might not be known in the wider world. For her weekly Facebook Live concerts, she generally has to come up with unique ideas of what to present. But the choice for January 22 was easy – it’s precisely the 100th birthday of Arno Babajanian. “I want to use that opportunity to introduce Babajanian to the 99-percent non-Armenian crowd” who watches her concerts. “I also want to highlight the many different aspects of his music that aren’t often highlighted.” Many know Babajanian primarily as an ethnic composer with his most famous piece, *Elegy*, based on Sayat-Nova’s immortal ballad *Kani Vur Jan Im*. “He is so diverse, there are so many layers to him, that [Armenian folk influence] is just one of the layers. There’s also a very crazy avant-garde layer where he goes into this very dissonant, out-there, atonal style music...I’m going to keep it short, because I know it’s not as accessible, but I want to show just a two minute piece of his, that’s just so crazy, Prokofiev-esque and Stravinsky-esque. And he also wrote for film, and jazz style music. And I might to a piece from that style. He’s a little bit like Gershwin, to me.” Noting that Babajanian might have had the stature of Gershwin had he come from a larger nation than Armenia, Poghosyan adds: “I’m going to try to help with that mission – we’ll see.”

Certainly, Poghosyan is not only keeping people entertained during the pandemic, but promoting classical music to a broader audience, shining a spotlight on Armenian composers, and most importantly, using her passion for the music – something that comes out in her playing as well as when she speaks about the composers and the background – to bring listeners a different classical music experience than they are used to. When presented and interpreted by Poghosyan, classical piano music is something more than just an intellectual exercise or a high-class form of entertainment.

“If I can summarize what I’m doing with music, I want to make sure music is more than just an escape, I want to make sure that music ... has that transformative power, and you do not come out of the concert hall the same person that you were.”

For more information about her, visit her website, www.karinepoghosyan.com.



trying to express in his compositions. “There’s only so much you can do with what’s on the page,” Poghosyan says. “There’s so much that isn’t there on the page, but somehow you begin to guess the composer’s intention, and...I feel that deep, deep level of connection with Khachaturian, for sure.”

Classical Star of Social Media

Since the pandemic started, many musicians have turned to social media as a performance venue, but Poghosyan was already there. “I was doing these sorts of things before I had to do these sorts of things,” she says. Two or three years ago, she challenged herself to post a video to Facebook every day for a

ing out, and bring them into this world,” the pianist says. “It’s interesting because since Covid I’ve had so many people write me in the comments, from all over the world.” Poghosyan has fans from the US, Canada, Australia, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and of course Armenia. Her performances seem to spread in a word-of-mouth manner by being reshared on social media. She seems bowled over by the response she has gotten – requests for composers, requests for pieces – occasionally even personal stories that she gets to share in, such as a fan whose friend wasn’t doing well health-wise, but had loved Poghosyan’s rendition of Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* when she was performing in Europe. The fan asked Poghosyan to play the



ARTS & LIVING

The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914

In 2020, Cornell University Press published *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and The Armenians, 1801-1914* by Prof. Stephen Badalyan Riegg. This study traces the relationship between the Romanov state and the Armenian diaspora that populated Russia's territorial fringes and navigated the tsarist empire's metropolitan centers. Analyzing the complexities of this imperial encounter – beyond the reductive question of whether Russia was a friend or foe to Armenians – allows us to study the methods of tsarist imperialism in the context of diasporic distribution, inter-imperial conflict and alliance, nationalism, and religious and economic identity.

Based on extensive research in the archives of St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Yerevan, *Russia's Entangled Embrace* reveals that the Russian government relied on Armenians to build its empire in the Caucasus and beyond. Analyzing the complexities of this imperial relationship – beyond the reductive question of whether Russia was a friend or foe to Armenians – allows us to study the methods of tsarist imperialism in the context of diasporic distribution, inter-imperial conflict and alliance, nationalism, and religious and economic identity.

Stephen Badalyan Riegg during 2020-23, is a Texas A&M Arts & Humanities Fellow.

Riegg's current book project, *Westerners in the Tsar's East: European Lives in Imperial Russia's Caucasus*, analyzes the lives of the Western European expatriates who lived in the Caucasus from Russia's first annexation in that region in 1801 to the collapse of the Romanov dynasty in 1917. To deepen our understanding of tsarist repertoires of rule, this work examines often-conflicting Russian perceptions of "foreign" and "Western" life in what the state portrayed as its most prized "Eastern" borderland. A cross-cultural and cross-border narrative, this study portrays Russian imperialism as a multifaceted process of global encounters that transcended not only political but also ethnocultural boundaries.

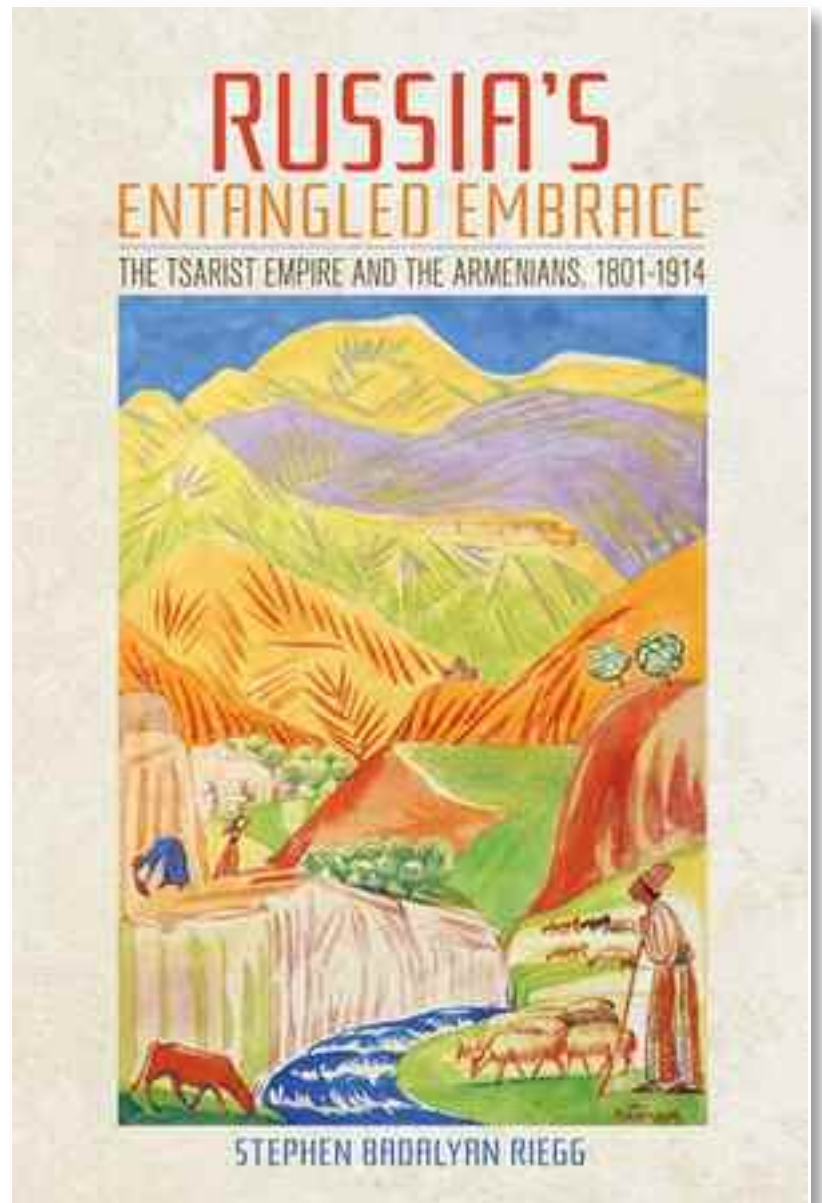
His research has appeared in the journals *The Russian Review*, *Ab Imperio*, and *Nationalities Papers*. The Fulbright-Hays program, American Councils for International Education, Kennan Institute of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, American Research Institute of the South Caucasus, and the Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fund have supported Dr. Riegg's work.

"Russia's Entangled Embrace is written in fluent, clear, and persuasive prose, giving a deeply textured account of Russian imperial relations with the non-Russians, in this case primarily the Armenians. This excellent book illuminates both Russian imperial practices and empire-making more widely."

—Ronald Grigor Suny, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, author of *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else*

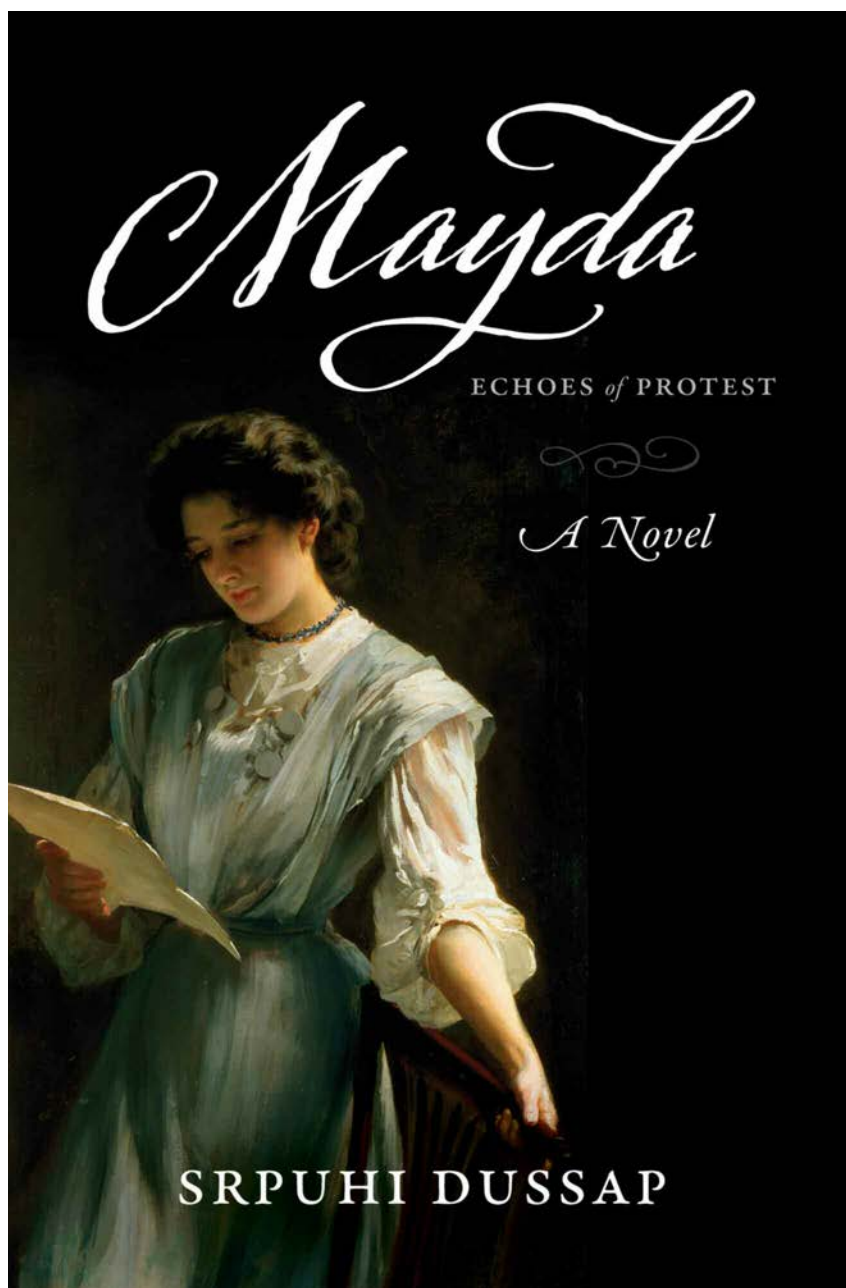
"This intriguing and well-written book fills an important gap in the historical literature on both Armenians and the problem of imperial rule in tsarist Russia. Riegg's prose is sharp and clear, leavened at moments with irony and wit, admirably describing complex developments and motivations in an accessible manner."

— Paul Werth, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, author of *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths*



The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914
By Stephen Badalyan Riegg. Hardcover \$45

Myda: One Woman's Struggle to Be Free



MAYDA, from page ?

epistolary novels to date. As morally relevant as Richardson's Pamela and in places as devious as Laclos' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, Dussap's book – one of the first to be set down in colloquial Western Armenian rather than its literary variant – is written in simpler everyday language. Here's an example of Dussap's elegant and dramatic writ-



Srpuhi Dussap

ing, in a letter from Mayda to Mme. Sira: "I was oppressed by the burden of my depression and the new responsibility fated by my condition. I was aimlessly flowing in the abyss of despair when your redeeming voice urged me to get up, take courage and ensure my daughter's steps in the treacherous road of life."

Dussap would publish three more novels that all center on the condition of women in society – Siranush (1884) and Araksia, or The Governess, (1887) – before abandoning literature after the death of her daughter Dorine from tuberculosis in 1891.

This edition of Mayda was published in 2020 by AIWA Press (Armenian International Women's Association), the tenth title in an invaluable series of translations of Armenian women authors. Previous books include Shushan Avakyan's remarkable translation of Shushanik Kurghinian's *I Want to Live*, as well as *The Other Voice* by the late Diane Der-Hovanessian, and

Antonina Mahari's *My Odyssey*. Also included are three works by Zabel Essayan: *The Gardens of Silihdar*, *My Soul in Exile* and *Other Writings*, and her seminal *In the Ruins*, a literary reporting of the horrors that the author witnessed in Adana immediately following the 1909 massacres. These publications are of particular importance as they make Western Armenian literature available to the English-speaking public. They rescue a part of Armenian and Turkish history that is vital to understanding everything from the psychological and economic mores of Ottoman society to the eventual Armenian-Turkish conflict

which led to the Aghed in 1915-1923.

Finally, the works have strong literary value in and of themselves: one hopes that Mayda, for one, may soon be part of all university curricula that examine 19th century feminist writings. Kudos go to Nareg Seferian for his precise and flowing translation of Mayda – a book that everyone should read, whether their interest lies in feminism, Armenian Studies, or simply good literature!

Purchase Mayda:
<https://aiwainternational.org/product/mayda-the-first-armenian-feminist-book/>



ARTS & LIVING

Joseph Bohigian Releases Music On Armenian Experience of Exile

FRESNO — Armenian-American composer and performer Joseph Bohigian has released a new composition titled *The Water Has Found its Crack* exploring the Armenian experience of exile as expressed through music. For this project, Bohigian moved to Yerevan in October 2019, where he worked as translator and did research at the Komitas Museum-Institute and taught a Laptop Orchestra Workshop at the Yerevan Conservatory.

The title of the piece comes from a Hrant Dink article about a French-Armenian woman who died while visiting the village of her youth in Turkey. When the question of where she should be buried arose, a man from the village responded "Let her be buried here...the water has found its crack." Through this story of the Armenian longing for reunion with their indigenous land, Bohigian questions his place in the homeland, both musically and spiritually, and the ever-shifting internal and external identity boundaries in diaspora.

The idea of the water finding its crack is represented in the text of the composition, which comes from fragments of Armenian folk songs gathered by the composer from the works of Komitas. Bohigian weaves these text fragments, which reference water as metaphor for displacement and exile, into a new composite form. Musically, the composer reflects on the centrality of displacement in Armenian culture in a quasi-folk song which references the Armenian migrant song genre. The fluidity of dispersion manifests in lingering quarter tone glissandi which push at the boundaries of the tetrachord structure of Armenian music.

Finally, Bohigian seeks a reunion of the Armenian musical experiences of his youth in Fresno, California and those of his time in Armenia through an abstraction of Armenian sacred chant.

The recording includes performances by sopranos Catherine Sandstet, Heidi Schneider, and Alina Tamborini, percussionist Rob Cosgrove, violinist Kate Dreyfuss, violist Sophia Sun, and cellist Tsung-Yu Tsai and can be found at the following link with more information about the piece: <https://www.josephbohigian.com/the-water-has-found-its-crack>

Bohigian is a composer and performer whose cross-cultural experience as an Armenian-American is a defining message in his music. His work explores the expression of exile, cultural reunification, and identity maintenance in diaspora. Joseph's works have been heard at the Oregon Bach Festival, June in Buffalo, Walt



Joseph Bohigian

Disney Concert Hall, New Music on the Point Festival, TENOR Conference (Melbourne), and Aram Khachaturian Museum Hall performed by the Mivos Quartet, Decibel New Music, Great Noise Ensemble, and Argus Quartet. He is also a founding member of Ensemble Decipher, a group dedicated to the performance of live electronic music.

For more information, visit josephbohigian.com

Calendar

MASSACHUSETTS

FEBRUARY 10 – Wednesday at 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. To register, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org French Cuisine Chef Tyler Stout Executive Chef, Troquet on South

FEBRUARY 27 — UNDER THE SNOW MOON

A virtual program of Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to Meet & Greet, Virtually Walk the Labyrinth. Share Wishes for The Wishing Tree. Enjoy Musical Performances. at 4pm. TO REGISTER VIA ZOOM, please email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org with February 27 in Subject line

MARCH 3 — Labyrinth Walking: The Power & Health Benefits.

A virtual program of the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine, Osher Center for Integrative Medicine at Brigham & Women's Hospital/Harvard Medical School and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park in collaboration with Armenian-American Medical Association, Boston Public Health Commission, City of Boston Age Friendly and The Greenway Conservancy. at 5pm. Welcome: Maura Koutoujian, PCC, CPHWC Senior Professional Coach, Mass General Brigham/Brigham and Women's Hospital; Fellow, Institute of Coaching, McLean/Harvard Medical School; In Conversation: Darshan Hemendra Mehta, MD, MPH, Medical Director and Director of Medical Education, Benson-Henry Institute; Associate Director, Osher Center for Integrative Medicine, Brigham & Women's Hospital/Harvard Medical School; Assistant Professor in Medicine, Harvard Medical School, with Armineh Mirzabegian, MD Internist, Reliant Medical Group, part of OptumCare; UMASS Medical School, To register, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org with March 3 in Subject line

MARCH 24 – Wednesday at 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. To register, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org Seafood! Executive Chef Kathy Sidell Owner, Sidell Hospitality, Saltie Girl, Met Back Bay, Stephanie's on Newbury

RHODE ISLAND

The Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church of Providence hosts the following Armenian Cultural Hour programs virtually every Friday at 7:30 pm. For information on how to watch or participate in the programs, contact the church office or check the church's Facebook Watch page.

January 29 –Levon Hovsepian & Armen Ghazharyan in Concert "From Classics to New Days"

NEW JERSEY

JANUARY 23 — Saturday at 8 p.m., Composer Michelle Ekizian discusses "Gorky's Dream Garden" on the Lied Society's weekly hour-long "Round Table" streamed LIVE on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/liedsociety>

JANUARY 27 — From Wednesday, January 27 through Sunday, January 31, the Ridgewood Guild International Film Festival will screen virtually Michelle Ekizian's 90-minute "Love Songs Showscape from 'Gorky's Dream Garden'" taped live in concert at The Newark Museum of Art' on its dedicated screening platform. See its website for forthcoming schedule updates: <https://ridgewoodguildfilmfest.com>

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EDITORIAL

Can Biden Tame the Turkish Bully?

By Edmond Y. Azadian

President Trump had created the perfect storm in international relations by allowing bullies such as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to wreak havoc in certain regions of the world and even interfere with US domestic problems.

One of the casualties of Mr. Erdogan's adventures abroad has been Armenia. That is why the government and people in Armenia have been wondering if President Joe Biden's election will be able to tame the Turkish bully.

Jerusalem Post contributor Seth J. Frantzman believes the light is at the end of the tunnel. In an article published on January 12, he speaks of a positive answer to that question, even in the title, "Turkey's Blank Check to Invade Countries May End with Trump."

Michael Rubin, a former Pentagon official and resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, adds, "The only thing holding the relationship together for the last several years has been Trump's personal relationship with Erdogan. With Trump removed, Erdogan should be very, very worried."

Indeed, in an interview, Biden called Erdogan an "autocrat" and vowed to support Turkey's opposition, while in a Democratic party debate, he stated, "I would be having a real lockdown conversation with Erdogan and let him know that he

fired the prosecutors dealing with the case to avoid a trial. Both his former State Department head, Rex Tillerson, and National Security Advisor John Bolton, have tried to explain the implications of Trump's interference regarding the issue.

Bolton confided that "Trump wanted to do a favor for his friend, Erdogan."

The consequences of the suit will be dire for Turkey's failing economy.

In the meantime, political fortunes are changing in the Middle East and the Caucasus, and Turkey is changing its discourse with the incoming US administration. It is preparing to take preemptive measures before Erdogan faces a showdown with Biden's administration.

To begin with, Turkey had been exploring backdoor channels to mend fences with Israel after the fraying of relations. Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu is trying to extract the highest possible price for the restoration of those relations. Both parties realize that the gate of US Middle East policy is in Israel.

After spewing venomous remarks in Baku during the December 10 victory march, Erdogan came up with some conciliatory language toward Armenia. First, he has stated that he will help Azerbaijan and Armenia to improve relations to the extent that they will no longer need peacekeeping forces to safeguard residents. Of course, the statement has a double meaning; now that Turkey has introduced its own military forces in Azerbaijan to balance the Russian presence, it will further push

Russia out of the region to please the US.

The other prong of the announcement is meant to assuage Europe. Indeed, negotiations between the European Union and Turkey have been stalled for some time now. And one of the conditions has been the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

In addition, Mevlut Çavusoglu, Turkey's foreign minister, talking to Heiko Maas, his German counterpart, has stated that Turkey is looking for better relations with Armenia.

The fact that Turkey is not talking to Yerevan directly indicates that this is political posturing to forestall a potential clash with the Biden administration, rather than a genuine attempt at diplomacy.

Armenia, unfortunately, is weak, particularly after the recent war, which also involved Turkey, but the moral power of the Armenian Genocide still remains a factor to be reckoned with. And Turkey is cognizant of that fact.

The other development, in which Turkey was mired, was the tense relations between Qatar and the other bloc of the Sunni Arabs, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Ankara took advantage of that tension to side with Qatar, where it has put its military base. Both Turkey and Qatar have been fanning the flames and financing Islamic terrorism in the Middle East and around the world. Recently, the two blocs met in Saudi Arabia and restored relations, dropping the 13 demands put to Qatar. Turkey has yet to reposition itself in this confusing state.

Another Turkish strategy now is its military concentration in Azerbaijan and in Kars. This mysterious move has many interpretations. One of them is the forthcoming centennial of the Treaty of Kars (March 1921). Many believe Turkey will invite the Russian side to "celebrate" the centennial of Russo-Turkish relations. That is also an opportunity for Armenia to revisit the treaty which has many legal flaws and yet determines Turkey's border with Armenia.

The other interpretation is that the incoming US administration will be engaging with Iran to get it to adhere to the nuclear treaty worked out during the Obama administration. For that purpose, the US will need leverage from the Middle East, for which Ankara may oblige.

To all appearances, a rocky start of relations is predicted between the US and Turkey. It remains for diplomats in Armenia and advocacy groups and influential Armenians in the US to take advantage of this political window which may be open only for a short while.

After all, the Biden administration will treat Turkey as a NATO ally and force the latter to behave like one, since Turkey has taken advantage of the power of its membership and acted independently, contravening NATO objectives.

It remains to be seen if Biden will tame the bully or if Erdogan will convince the US administration that Turkey has the right to act on its own in the world political scene.



is going to pay a heavy price for what he has done. Now pay that price."

This latter statement refers to the massacre that Erdogan organized against the Kurdish US allies in Syria.

During the US presidential election, Ankara was very critical of Biden's candidacy, hoping that Trump would be re-elected. That is why Turkey withheld its congratulatory message to Biden until Congress ratified the electoral college votes. No wonder then that President Biden's transition team has not yet responded to a request by Mr. Erdogan for a phone call. Obviously, there is no love lost between the two leaders.

There are a slew of issues where Erdogan is in conflict with US policies. Aside from the attack on the Kurds, the other issues are the purchase of the Russian S-400 missile system, subsequent accommodation with Russia and Iran, Turkey's alleged role in helping Iran skirt US sanctions, Turkey's skirmishes with another NATO ally, Greece, and a standoff with France, which threatens to rip apart the NATO alliance.

Last but not least, Biden's pledge to recognize the Armenian Genocide will upset the Erdogan administration. Incidentally, Samantha Power, President Obama's United Nations ambassador, is back in Washington to head the United States Agency for International Development. She had pledged, on behalf of candidate Obama, to recognize the Armenian Genocide, a promise she could not keep.

At the end of Obama's term, she publicly apologized for her failure. Now she has the opportunity to make good on that promise. Will it be politics as usual again or will she actually live up to the moral principles which she advocates? We will see.

Another issue is looming which will put the strained relations between the US and Turkey under even heavier pressure. The case by the US against the Turkish state-owned HalkBank will soon get underway at the Southern District Court of New York. The bank was indicted on charges of helping Iran skirt a US embargo. President Trump had bypassed US laws and twice

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Armenia's Defeated Leader Is Unable To Resolve Problems from The Lost War

There are three reasons why Armenia is in such a state of chaos and confusion:

The first reason is that Armenia, as the defeated side in the war, has very little leverage in the implementation of the “Statement” or agreement signed on November 9, 2020 by the President of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of Armenia and President of Russia.

The second reason is that since the text of the “Statement” was vague, key details were left out causing uncertainty.

The third problem is that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, as the demoralized head of the defeated side, is in no position to resolve or minimize the damage caused by the war. The reasons for his ineffectiveness are: his failings during the war and his mismanagement and inexperience throughout his tenure as Prime Minister.

The only proper course for Armenia is for Pashinyan to resign of his own free will without any pressures, demonstrations, and ugly confrontations. While it is horrible that Armenia was defeated by powerful outside enemies during the war, it is much worse when Armenians treat each other as enemies. Those who say that no one can replace Pashinyan are insulting the Armenian nation. No one is irreplaceable. There are plenty of competent and intelligent Armenians both in Armenia and the Diaspora who can manage Armenia competently. The new leader should be neither a part of those in power now nor those of the past. The Armenian people will choose Pashinyan's successor through democratic elections. Armenia needs fresh blood!

Returning to the November 9, 2020 agreement, it is strange that specific deadlines were set for several of its provisions – such as the withdrawal of Armenian troops from the various territories surrounding Artsakh – but point 8 of the agreement, the “exchange of prisoners of war, hostages and other detained persons, and dead bodies” had no specific deadline.

Prime Minister Pashinyan should have insisted on a deadline before signing the agreement. Thousands of Armenian families are in an extremely tragic situation, not knowing whether their loved ones are dead or alive. Meanwhile, many of the Armenian prisoners of war are being tortured by Azeri officials in contravention of the Geneva Convention. Azeri soldiers have shamelessly videotaped themselves decapitating or cutting off the ears and limbs of captured Armenian soldiers and civilians. This is a continuing war crime which should be presented to international courts.

Armenia and Azerbaijan exchanged a small number of prisoners shortly after the war. The fate and the number of the rest of captured Armenian soldiers remain unknown.

After a lengthy and frustrating wait, the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia finally met in Moscow on January 11, 2021, to take decisions on two key points: 1) the exchange of prisoners of war and hostages; and 2) determination of the final status of Artsakh, according to an announcement made before the meeting by the Armenian Prime Minister's office.

Shockingly, after the Moscow meeting, a new agreement was signed by the three leaders mentioning only point 9 of the November 9, 2020 agreement: “the unblocking of all economic and transportation routes in the region.” This means that Armenia would be able to use the railway that starts in Northern Armenia, crosses Nakhichevan and exits in Armenia's South on its way to Iran. Armenia would also be able to use the railway that crosses mainland Azerbaijan, reaching Baku and then Moscow. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, would have a route through Southern Armenia linking Nakhichevan to mainland Azerbaijan. Very short deadlines were set to form high-level committees on the transportation routes without mentioning either the exchange of prisoners of war or the final status of Artsakh. Amazingly, Pashinyan announced immediately after the summit meeting: “Today we failed to resolve the issue of prisoners of war, this is the most sensitive issue. We agreed that we will continue [talks] in this direction. I hope we will be able to come to a concrete solution as soon as possible.... Unfortunately, it is impossible to resolve all issues in one meeting.” The Moscow meeting was a second defeat for Armenia.

Pashinyan's comments should be unacceptable to all Armenians, regardless of whether they support him or not. How could he have sat in a meeting for four hours with Presidents Putin and Aliyev and not insisted on the immediate exchange of the prisoners of war? Two months have passed since the ceasefire! No one knows when Putin, Aliyev and Pashinyan will meet again to resolve this critical issue. This is no way to defend Armenia's interests, even consider-

ing the dire situation of a defeated country. Pashinyan should have made clear at the meeting that priority number one was the exchange of prisoners. Unless it was decided that these prisoners would be exchanged within a few days, he would refuse to discuss any other issue with them. How can Armenia and Azerbaijan discuss the unblocking of transportation routes between the two countries while Armenian prisoners are languishing in Baku jails and tortured? Furthermore, neither the November agreement nor the subsequent Moscow announcement indicated who will pay for the construction of the road and railway linking Nakhichevan to mainland Azerbaijan through Armenia.

While Armenia's Prime Minister continues to negotiate from a position of weakness, the Azeri side is becoming even more strident; warning Armenia's leaders not to travel to Artsakh after the Armenian Foreign Minister went there. Azerbaijan insisted that this was a violation of the November 9, 2020 agreement, although there is no such prohibition in the agreement. In addition, Azerbaijan announced that the Armenian prisoners of war would be tried as “terrorists”; therefore, not subject to an exchange. Even though Armenia is in a very difficult situation after the war, Armenian leaders have to fight hard to protect the country's interests as much as possible. The more subservient Armenia's leaders behave, the more demanding Azerbaijanis and Turks become.

Regrettably, Pashinyan seems to have convinced himself that unblocking transportation routes between Armenia and Azerbaijan would boost Armenia's economy. I seriously doubt this is true. Would any Armenian feel safe traveling or sending goods through Azerbaijan? Who will protect them? More problematic is Armenia's agreement to allow Azerbaijan a road and railway link between the two countries, allowing Turkey to cross Nakhichevan, and then through Armenia's Southern region reach mainland Azerbaijan and onwards to the Turkic Republics of Central Asia. This is the century-old Pan-Turanian dream of Turkey which is now about to become a reality. Such a route would undermine Armenia's sovereignty and endanger its existence. The Armenian people and its government should do everything in their power to block this Pan-Turanian connection. Giving access to Azerbaijan and Turkey to cross Armenia's territory has absolutely nothing to do with the Artsakh war and such a provision should not have been included in the November 9, 2020 agreement.

I fear that Armenia's downhill slide will continue as long as the country is ruled by a Prime Minister who is primarily responsible for the loss of Armenian lands and the deaths of thousands of soldiers.

Could Turkey-Greece Talks Yield Positive Results?

By Metin Gurcan

ISTANBUL (AI-Monitor) – After months of bilateral tensions over maritime borders and gas exploration rights, Turkish and Greek diplomats are scheduled to resume on January 25 talks in Istanbul on long-standing territorial disputes in the Aegean Sea. The meeting will break a nearly five-year hiatus in the talks, but the prospect of any meaningful de-escalation and confidence-building appears elusive.

The meeting will mark the 61st round in the so-called exploratory talks between the two troubled neighbors, initiated nearly two decades ago in a bid to define and resolve a tangle of clashing territorial claims in the Aegean. The two sides have reported little progress over the years, while the disputes – involving continental shelves, airspace boundaries, islets with disputed ownership and Greece's militarization of islands close to Turkey's shores – have grown even more complex since the last round in March 2016 amid a fresh row over gas drilling rights in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Ankara signed a maritime delimitation deal with Libya's Tripoli-based Government of National Accord in November 2019, while Greece struck a similar deal with Egypt in August. The agreements cover overlapping zones in the Eastern Mediterranean, meaning that the Turkish-Greek disputes have spilled over beyond the Aegean, growing into a regional crisis involving other littoral states.

The Turkish-Greek exploratory talks began in 2002 amid a thaw in bilateral ties, spearheaded by then Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem and his Greek counterpart, George Papandreu. The process has been volatile, mirroring the ups and downs in bilateral ties. While more than 30 rounds of talks took place in the first three years, the dialogue became less frequent or fell into lengthy hiatuses in the ensuing years.

Last summer, bilateral tensions simmered around the Greek island of Kastellorizo, a stone's throw from Turkey's Mediterranean coast, as Ankara sent a research ship escorted by military vessels to the area where Greece also claims maritime rights. Though the area is not part of the Aegean Sea per se, the issue is expected to come up in the Jan. 25 meeting as maritime rights form the core of bilateral rows in both seas. The two sides will take stock of how their positions have changed in the past five years and what they can negotiate next.

The Greek side wants to limit the discussion to the demarcation of maritime zones, while Turkey wants to bring up also the status of eastern Aegean islands as well as islets it describes as of “undetermined ownership.” The meeting – to be chaired by Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Onal and veteran Greek diplomat Pavlos Apostolidis – is unlikely to produce any breakthrough in the short term.

Still, Ankara has agreed to resume the talks, even though it appeared bent on muscle-flexing and coercive diplomacy with Greece until recently. What lies behind its change of heart? The reasons have to do more with external factors than a policy shift in Ankara.

The chief external factor is the change of guard at the White House. The imminent departure of President Donald Trump will deprive Ankara of its chief helper in Washington over the past four years. Incoming US President-elect Joe Biden's administration is not only unlikely to be as lenient on Ankara but is expected to coordinate tougher positions with the European Union. Ankara's decision to resume talks with Greece resonates as a message to the Biden administration and the EU ahead of critical NATO and EU summits.

At the February 17 NATO summit in Brussels, Biden and EU leaders are expected to discuss joint decisions on Turkey. Therefore, Turkey wants to display a commitment to diplomacy with Greece ahead of the summit, even though it expects little from the talks.

Ankara is abuzz with talk of intensive efforts to arrange a meeting between Erdogan and Biden on the fringes of the summit. Erdogan has reportedly made multiple attempts for a phone call with Biden over the past month, but with no success thus far. Whether Biden eventually meets with Erdogan in Brussels will be an important sign of how Turkish-US relations proceed in the coming months.

Another milestone for Ankara is the EU summit in March. The bloc's summit in December ended with a decision to defer discussions of possible sanctions against Turkey over its “unauthorized drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean” to the March summit. “The EU will seek to coordinate with the US on matters relating to Turkey and the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean,” a European Council statement added.

Ankara is eager to show that it favors de-escalation both at the negotiating table and on the ground. The Oruc Reis seismic research ship, which surveyed Mediterranean waters for gas throughout the summer, is moored in the Gulf of Antalya until June 15.

The resumption of talks with Greece has deeply irked Turkey's nationalist quarters, including retired admirals and generals suspicious of the West. They see the talks as “beating the air” or a diplomatic gimmick to distract Turkey while Greece advances its interests on the ground.

Retired Adm. Cem Gurdeniz – credited as an architect of the Blue Homeland concept, which advocates for Turkey's geopolitical expansion and aggressive protection of its maritime interests – believes that the Foreign Ministry has been too meek in the exploratory talks and that their resumption endangers the Blue Homeland tenets.

In remarks to the media this week, Gurdeniz said that Turkey was nearing a geopolitical junction where it must decide whether to continue to align with the Western security block in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea or opt for independent strategies to protect its interests. He slammed the government for backing down from its hard-line attitude in the row with Greece, adding, “You cannot manage Turkey's geopolitics with such zigzagging.”

In sum, Ankara's decision to resume talks with Greece looks like a gesture to find favor with the incoming Biden administration and the EU. The same can be said for Athens. By posing for the cameras in the same room, the Turkish and Greek delegations will have accomplished their mission on January 25.



Traitors,' Land 'Sellers,' and Propaganda: How a Nationalist Can Become a Nation's Worst Enemy

By Garen Kazanc

Ever since the cradle, many Armenians grew up with the notion that we're a mighty race that can never be beat and whose warriors were top of the line. Legendary stories of outnumbered Armenian freedom fighters defeating scores and scores of Turkish soldiers were told to us repeatedly. We held these truths to be self-evident and never refrained from evoking these narratives during the recent war. But a major reality check happened on November 9 when a piece of paper was signed and the world these Armenians imagined in their heads suddenly came crashing down.

Indeed, we were all shocked. Even if you suspected the outcome of this war beforehand, the shock still reverberated powerfully. We were alarmed by the new arrangement of affairs: The Russian tanks suddenly rolling into Artsakh. The Artsakh Armenians abruptly leaving their homes. No one was able to keep up with the drastic turn of events. But there was a particular kind of shock that was also apparent among many, one that stemmed from utter disbelief. A disbelief that negates an adherence to a certain type of belief, or rather belief system, which many Armenians trusted and held dear throughout their lives. Not only were there lies told by the army and politicians, but this inherently meant all the most important figures throughout their lives, including friends, teachers, and family, who told them stories of this mighty race, had lied to them as well. But this was still far removed from the most critical lie of all: the one they told themselves. This was the real crisis at hand.

This is why the peace agreement was so catastrophic for these types of Armenians. Reality hit them hard when they realized that they were not only told these lies, but told themselves these lies and believed them, no questions asked. Even with the war's end, they're still looking for excuses that console and make themselves feel better (i.e. "we should've sent all our reserves!", "we should've continued fighting!", "not one inch!"). But in reality, this would have cost more young lives, the loss of more land, and an even more tumultuous future for the country and its people. In other words, the nationalist would become the nation's worst enemy.

Nationalism in some ways is like Disneyland. It's a happy place that is filled with myths and legends that make us feel good. But this place does not exist in real life. It's a figment of our imagination and the more we invest our time in wandering this illusory state of mind, the more we are detached from the very nation we claim to protect. Yet, unlike Disneyland's costly admission, nationalism is free. We are free to push nationalist dogmas and live with that imaginary world in our minds. But this is rather effortless and it's the least you can do for your nation, whereas realism is hard and takes more time and energy, but is ultimately more fruitful and rewarding.

When it comes to Armenians, I have realized that those who boast about Armenia the most are actually the most harmful for Armenia. We have all seen the flags on the cars, keyboard warriors, Armenia flag emojis, and the sharing of Nzhdeh quotes. Yet, despite all its shiny paraphernalia and calls for the enlightenment of one's identity, nationalism is blinding. You are blinded to a certain reality on the ground because you created some makeshift one in your head. During the war, this manifested itself in the "haxtelu enq!" or "next stop Baku" narratives which led many Armenians to this kind of unwarranted self-confidence.

This kind of denialism is why the nationalist will always shift the blame onto others. This is apparent in their finger pointing at politicians and military commanders. Given that nationalists are so self-righteous in their idealism, they can't possibly imagine that the problem might be found within the nation as a whole, or better yet themselves. They hardly can imagine that the world they created in their heads, filled with victories and grandeur, is the exact opposite of the reality of defeat they're witnessing today. Alas, the scapegoating begins. This becomes apparent in the "selling" land accusation, a catchphrase that has become so prevalent in our discourse today. The idea that Gagik "sold" Ani to the Byzantines, Khatisian "sold" Kars to the Turks, and now Nikol "sold" Artsakh to the Azerbaijanis is nothing short of denialism throughout our history meant to deflect the collective responsibility of nationhood and pin it on just one man. If it weren't for him, they say, we'd be

victorious.

The use of the words "treason" or "traitor" is also quite noteworthy in this case. This word has been thrown around so much that its true, starker meaning, has been rendered obsolete. In this environment, it is used to compel people to keep them in line with the nationalist narrative: In other words, toe the nationalist party line or else. But this approach does nothing less than stifle creative ideas within public discourse by ridiculing or "cancelling" them. This kind of chastisement is especially dangerous for a community and country that is in desperate need of new and creative ideas to solve our current predicament. Granted, this is not something new. Calling someone a traitor was commonplace during the Soviet Union against its dissidents and whoever did not toe the party line was considered an enemy of the people. The term "politically correct" was born during these dark times as a way of creating a uniform, more "correct" language within public discourse. The norms that applied to that dark era are precariously still with us today.

Such dogmatic abstractions also make it very difficult to engage in any kind of constructive dialogue. For example, the realist will point out obvious deficiencies within the Armenian military only to be met with abstract responses from a so-called patriot. This prevents rational debate to

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resolve those issues and enters a realm that is not grounded in reality. Rational participants in the discussion are almost immediately shown the "traitor" card and the conversation has sunk to becoming nothing more than meaningless metaphysical static. An enduring complication when it comes to these discussions is that idealist rhetoric is difficult to refute or dispute given that no one can deny what's being said. When criticizing the military, no one is denying the heroism of the soldier. When being open to sign away territory to prevent war, no one is denying that those beautiful lands are originally ours. But these responses do not help solve the issues at hand. As a result, such discourse ultimately stalls any creative thinking and ends any discussion towards new solutions. We are left with meaningless political discussions that offer no solutions and don't serve any goal other than fulfilling some kind of unreasonable desire to be the loudest patriot in the room.

Hence, nationalism is lazy thinking. You bank on the idea that your identity, history, religion, and other mythologies will do the fighting for you whereas the realist will always say rationalism, modernism, science, and technology should be the top priorities. The more Armenians abandon nationalistic dogmas, the more they'll realize that they have a lot of catching up to do. If we say, for example, that "Ararat is not ours" as opposed to saying that it is ours, we will find ways to actually make it ours rather than live with the thought of it being in our possession already. This can also apply to Artsakh. Why fight for Artsakh when you believe it's all said and done? We all have run into people who said there will never be another war but if there were one, we would defeat them because the enemy is dumb and incapable of using the technology they had procured over the years. This kind of thinking leaves us parading around with

an extravagant display of self-confidence yet leaves us more vulnerable due to this deep-seated inertia.

On that account, while it is true that 1994 was a victory in the minds of many, it can also be viewed as a loss. The loss came in the form of losing our capability of asking ourselves the tough questions and thinking more creatively about our country while doubling down on a successful but outdated strategy of a bygone era of warfare and convincing ourselves that we will win again. The defeat for the Azerbaijanis, on the other hand, created a fresh impetus for them to think creatively and question their understanding of warfare. They perhaps understood that nationalism and militarization go hand in hand. Think of Napoleon and Hitler. They rebuffed their military and also their nationalist rhetoric simultaneously. However, when you have nationalism but no militarization, you're committing a fatal self-inflicting wound. This is where Armenia is at today.

This is not to say that fixing this mindset would have us winning every war. Indeed, there are many variables when it comes to warfare and statehood, some of which are entirely out of our hands. This is also not to say we should put down our arms, relinquish the Armenian nation-state and give in to our enemies' desires of eradicating us as a people. The realist in me realizes that nation-states, for the time being, exist and are real structures of power. Nation-

states do provide security and stability in a limited sense. We can hardly picture a world without them. They are real in a sociological sense and we must live with them no differently than we live with all other forms of unjustified structures of power throughout our lives. In reality, we must defend ourselves from the nationalism, racism, and fascistic tendencies of those who are hell-bent on eradicating us. And the best way to do that is to not fight myths and legends with more myths and legends, but to fight them with science, reason, and technology. This can apply not only towards warfare, but for many other sectors of Armenian society including the economy, politics, education and more. Harnessing this potential is crucial for the country of Armenia to become more of what it deserves to be.

Our news media outlets and academia also play a crucial role in this regard. As seekers of objective truth, the journalist or academic must break through subjective nationalist mythologies and allow for a full objective report or study of the Armenian predicament. This means asking the tough questions and admitting the faults and misgivings of the Armenian condition. The media's attempt at manufacturing consent has turned itself into an industry of recycling myths that appeal to its readers with clickbait titles that have little to do with reality, but have everything to do with ratings and clicks. Yet in practice, we are seeing these news outlets become nothing short of propaganda machines molding the community to toe party lines. Ultimately, this has created an echo chamber of myths and legends that steered the reader and thereby the community away from the reality on the ground and towards some metaphysical realm where myths and legends have superimposed reality.

Just as the victory of the first war was in some ways a loss of our collective creative capacity, the defeat of this war can reverse that trend. Accepting defeat is the start to that process. Defeats are in a way helpful because they can provide an impetus for many to abandon bankrupt idealism and focus on new and more constructive approaches. Armenians can now open our minds to new ways of looking at themselves and the challenges ahead of them. Not only is this a time to reconstruct our infrastructure, roads, and foundation of our country, but it is also a time to reconstruct our frame of mind. This moment of reflection is test for us all as we learn from our mistakes and build upon our continued successes. That is the real mindset of a winner.

Born in Paris to Armenians from Turkey, Garen Kazanc moved to Los Angeles at a young age, where he attended and graduated from the Armenian Mesrobian School in 2006. He received a B.S. degree in sociology from California State University, Los Angeles. He has been an active member of Hamazkayin and the Armenian Poetry Project and has contributed articles to various Armenian newspapers and media outlets.



COMMENTARY

What Can You Do?

By Cristopher Patvakanian

DURING THE SUMMER OF 2018, I had the great privilege to complete an internship at the Central Bank of Armenia (CBA) through an internship program offered by my university. As a freshly declared economics major in my sophomore year of college, I thought it would be the perfect opportunity to not only further my experience and knowledge of economics, but also do “something” to give back to Armenia. I of course didn’t doubt how incredible of an experience it would be working among truly Armenia’s brightest and most creative economists at the CBA’s Research and Training Center in Armenia. Quite honestly, how much of a contribution my small research project was during that internship is debatable, but I can say just how profoundly the experience impacted my studies in economics as well as my relationship to Armenia. In particular, one conversation I had with a senior colleague at the bank changed my life and outlook on diaspora relations with the homeland.

The colleague, who typically had much more interactions with the interns in previous years, was incredibly busy during 2018, so I’d say the other interns and I were very lucky to have had the opportunity to speak with him. He invited us to his office to discuss our internship experience and how our projects were going, and gave us the opportunity to debate and ask him “big” questions. The program, which typically has students from all over the world and of all backgrounds, happened to have all but two interns with Armenian ancestry that year. I presume many had the same ambitions as me in finding our way to the CBA – to give something back to our homeland and benefit from the experience.

During our discussion, the big question I had hoped to ask was “What can we as the diaspora do to help Armenia?” (not that Armenia necessarily needs any diasporans “saving it”). All of us had just witnessed the 2018 revolution, and felt a sense of renewed hope and positivity in the country. Naturally, I was curious to hear, from an economist’s perspective, what is to be done now.

The answer to my question was not what I expected: “You’re asking the wrong question. Don’t come and ask me ‘What can we do?’ Ask yourself, ‘What can you do?’” Immediately, I felt confused. What kind of answer is that? I had expected a response more along the lines of “We need to unite,” “We need to invest,” “We need to be more involved,” etc. – the kind of comfortable answers which frame the “responsibility” collectively on everybody but

nobody at the same time. The colleague continued with more uncomfortable truths in response to my question: “Don’t ask what other people are doing or what others should do because you are a part of the diaspora. Ask what are you doing now, or rather, what aren’t you doing now and why?”

The discussion continued with more on taking responsibility and ownership, and putting an end to the endless talking with a start to the actual doing. There was nothing wrong with thinking big, but truthfully speaking, there is much more value to starting somewhere (even small) and actually doing something.

The conversation was a wake-up call. Jokingly, the colleague asked me at the end if I had been convinced to move to Armenia, and I replied, not yet. But I’m certain even an hour more of that discussion might have changed that (not that Armenians should have to be convinced or swayed into repatriating; in my view it should be something they do because they want to do it.) But the big takeaway for me from that conversation was to put an end to the discussions and start the actions. The call for action, if not always present, had a special aura that year.

That summer, I had the great fortune to not only meet the amazing team at the CBA, but also fantastic youth in

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Armenia through a brief volunteering experience for the Aurora Prize. Though I have gone to Armenia many times, both experiences on the ground at the CBA and Aurora with so many young people my own age were eye-opening. I interacted with a generation of people who had hope, who saw a future in Armenia, and were inspired and excited about the things to come. To say their energy and enthusiasm was infectious would be an understatement. I mentally made my own plans and envisioned a future for myself in Armenia, but at the same, lacked an understanding of what I had to offer yet, if anything.

Flash forward two years. The hope and optimism is seemingly replaced by despair and panic. The COVID-19 pandemic devastated the Armenian people and stretched our country’s already scanty resources to the limit. The tragic war of 2020 took away the lives of so many of that bright generation I had met just two summers ago. It’s a loss almost impossible for me to comprehend.

The chaos, I think, crushed the hopes of many Armenians, both living in the country and in the diaspora. Many diasporans stopped following the situation after

the war, stopped their activism and donations, and lost their enthusiasm for the Armenian cause. And for a brief period, that included me. I stopped watching the news, took a break from donating to humanitarian aid, and just needed some “time off.” I think that was an incredibly selfish and self-indulgent but also necessary thing to do. Like many, I was disappointed by the political actors and international institutions, incredibly depressed about the pillage of our people, and traumatized by the frequent videos of war crimes showcased on social media. Taking time to process, think, and work through these very real issues was something I needed. But I didn’t dwell on them for too long, because unlike two years prior, when I could not find the senior colleague’s answer to “What can you do?”, I had already done and been doing my “somethings.”

Prior to graduating, I wrote my senior thesis on Armenian diasporan investment, to not only provide evidence for its existence, but to further the field of diaspora studies and highlight its importance for our country. I intend on publishing the piece and have yet to make it publicly available, but the intention is to motivate a call to action not only from the Diaspora, but also Armenia itself. My other “something” is working with an Armenian data science organization called DataPoint Armenia. As a contributor there, I share my data science and economics background to help further the study of Data Science in Armenia, conduct projects on areas related to the country, and encourage others both in the Armenia and the diaspora to embrace this up-and-coming field. Finding these “somethings” for me to do were certainly not easy or immediate, but occurred through persistence, the great fortune of my Armenian network, and the motivation of logical reasons. And for me, this is just the beginning of many things to come.

Though patriotism and love for Armenia are reasons to start, I think you have a larger and longer lasting impact when there are compelling reasons to be involved, participate, and partner with our homeland. In terms of the diaspora’s involvement as a whole, I think there’s much more to be done right now, and the call to action couldn’t be any clearer than today.

In the 21st century, we fortunately have an unprecedented access to information and people though the internet, social media, and professional networks. In my view, if you’ve figured out what your “talent” is and are in a place to share it, what, how, why, or even if, you choose to do something to help Armenia with your specialty is up to you. But I strongly encourage you to do so. As a diasporan reaching out to other fellow concerned diasporans, I leave you with one final thought. Try not to think “What can we as a Diaspora do?”, but rather “What can I do?”.

(Cristopher Patvakanian is a researcher and data scientist based in Boston, MA. He has studied economics, government, and political-economy, and researched Armenian Diaspora investment for his undergraduate thesis. He has interned at the Central Bank of Armenia and volunteered briefly for the Aurora Prize Humanitarian Initiative. He is also currently a data science contributor with DataPoint Armenia.)

Science Group Hopes to Contribute to Thriving Armenia

By Richard Ohanian

The year 2020 was a challenging year for all of humanity, especially for Armenians around the world. One of the main lessons learned in the past year is that Armenians must prioritize advancements in science, technology, engineering and mathematics if Armenia is to survive and thrive in the future as an independent and viable nation-state. To that end, Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (AESA) is bound to become one of the main enablers of realizing such a vision for the Armenian trans-nation.

AESA’s mission is to enable and empower an Armenian STEM Community worldwide to reach its fullest potential and to facilitate progress through STEM education, collaboration, and humanitarian initiatives in Armenia, Artsakh and the Diasporas. We envision AESA to be the leading platform for enabling the Armenian STEM Community worldwide to network and address global challenges through innovative solutions and to foster a world where Armenian STEM professionals are empowered, enabled, and influ-

ential. We are building a future upon our values of scientific rigor and endeavor, innovation, teamwork and collaboration, mentorship, integrity, accountability and transparency as well as diversity in disciplines, age, and gender.

Our long-term goals include transforming AESA into a 21st century global organization and becoming a role model for professional organizations in the Armenian nation-state, creating a strong community of Armenian STEM professionals, worldwide, implementing high-impact/high-value STEM-based projects and initiatives in Armenia, Artsakh and the Diasporas, attracting youth towards STEM, registering hundreds of new AESA members, and lastly, creating a strong AESA presence across all online platforms and media.

To that end, we are institutionalizing AESA by creating permanent programs such as the AESA STEM Academy, AESA STEM Conference and Expo, AESA Leadership and Entrepreneurship Academy, and the AESA Advanced Research and Development Program. These initiatives will enable AESA to better utilize its resources on programs that are aligned with organization’s vision,

mission, and long-term goals.

These initiatives will advance science, technology, engineering and mathematics in Armenia, Artsakh and the Diasporas. For example, through AESA Advanced R&D Program, we will foster and enable STEM-based projects in Armenia and Artsakh by analyzing, prioritizing, and funding high-impact and high-value STEM projects in our homeland.

AESA STEM Conference and Expo shall return during the second half of the year, either in virtual or in-person format. These hallmark events bring together STEM researchers, faculties, students and professionals in Armenia and the Diasporas to share their work and knowledge in their respective fields.

AESA will mobilize its resources in establishing research centers, think-tanks, technology startup accelerators and incubators in Armenia, Artsakh and the Diasporas. AESA has formed a strategic alliance with Yerevan-based Smartgate VC to establish HeroHouse Glendale that will house Glendale Accelerator. HeroHouse Glendale is destined to become a regional tech hub/center in Glendale. AESA HQ has relocated its offices

and operations to HeroHouse Glendale and we plan on organizing our post-covid activities in the new location.

AESA membership grew threefold during last year and we strive to continue that trend in 2021 by actively promoting the registration of AESA branches in various universities, cities, and states. Talks are on the way to establish STEM based associations in Canada, Australia, Europe and the Middle East as well. To that end, we plan on performing strategic planning towards the end of 2021 to sharpen our strategic and technical decision-making processes, revisit our long-term goals, better align our resources, and define key performance indicators to measure our progress.

With all our resources, Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America is committed to the advancements of science, technology, engineering and mathematics in the Armenian trans-nation. We are inviting all scientists, engineers, technologists, and investors to join our efforts by contacting us contact@aesa.org

(Richard Ohanian is the president of the California-based AESA. He can be contacted at rohanian@aesa.org.)



The First TUMO Box Has Opened in Gavar

GAVAR, Armenia – On December 18th, thanks to the cooperation between the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies and dot818, the first TUMO Box has opened in Gavar, a program aimed at the educational development of small towns and villages.

The event was attended by TUMO and dot818, the sponsor of Gavar TUMO Box, the Minister of Education and Science, Vahram Dumanyan, Deputy Minister Zhanna Andreasyan, the Deputy Minister of Transport and Communication, Victoria Poghosyan, the Governor of Gegharkunik region, Gnel

of the Gavar TUMO Box project. Cultivating Armenian youth is a guarantee to our success in the fields of handicrafts, art, construction, culture and science. I wish the best to the children of Gavar and the TUMO team. Until our next project in Armenia!”

At the event, the first registered students of the Gavar Box learned more about the program and met with experienced TUMO alumni. Gavar TUMOians Yegor, Hayk and Larisa were the first ones to try out robotics, drawing and programming.

The goal of the TUMO Box project is to make



Dignitaries with the young TUMO enthusiasts

Sanosyan, the Mayor of Gavar, Guren Martirosyan, as well as representatives of local self-government bodies, TUMO alumni and prospective Gavar TUMOians.

Welcoming those present, TUMO CEO Marie Lou Papazian stated, “TUMO’s regional expansion is gaining momentum with the opening of the Gavar TUMO Box. In a few days, a TUMO box will be opened in the border town of Berd, located in Tavush province. This process is ongoing, and we reaffirm our mission to make the TUMO curriculum accessible to young people in even the smallest communities in Armenia and Artsakh.”

Gnel Sanosyan, the governor of Gegharkunik Province, stressed the importance of the initiative. “I’m thankful to our partners for making the project happen during such difficult times. The regional government and our communities are willing to support TUMO in opening new Boxes in the region. Another one is slated to open in Sevan soon. It is very important to decentralize our educational and development efforts, and to fully realize the potential of even our smallest communities. With an initiative like this, students are free to get the most innovative education right in their hometown.”

David Tonoyan, the founder of dot818, sent his thoughts about the cooperation and potential of the project from the US, noting, “dot818 is very excited and proud of the implementation



The trailer that is the home of TUMO in Gavar

begin in the self-study phase of the TUMO curriculum in the Box, and will then move onto TUMO Dilijan for workshops and labs. Each TUMO box will provide the opportunity to educate over 300 young people a year in the fields of technology and design. In addition to TUMO’s main program, the Box can be used in the morning for other educational programs.

Dot818 is an American marketing solutions

company based in Glendale, California, founded in 2011. It specializes in publisher solutions, advertising solutions and lead distribution. In addition to its headquarters in California, dot818 also operates an office in Charlotte, North Carolina and the United Kingdom.

TUMO Box’s next location will be in Berd, located in Tavush province, slated to open this December.

Jeff Marootian and Ike Hajinazarian Named to Biden Administration Staff

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the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Administration where he is currently an adjunct faculty member. He is the former Director of the Democratic National Committee’s Ethnic Outreach Committee and LGBTQ+ Outreach Committee.

Prior to being appointed to his current position, Hajinazarian served on the Biden campaign as the Western Pennsylvania Regional Press Secretary. He has worked as a Press Assistant to Senator Joe Donnelly of Indiana and later worked as Deputy Press Secretary on the House Homeland Security Committee’s Majority Staff.

Hajinazarian, a first generation Armenian-American was born in Ohio to immigrant parents. He earned his degree in Journalism from Indiana University and a Political Management graduate degree from George Washington University.

the TUMO curriculum accessible to young people in small communities. It is a small but technically equipped mini TUMO. Students will



A still from “Songs of Solomon”

Armenia’s Oscar Entry ‘Songs Of Solomon’ Acquired By Cloudburst For 2021 Release

LOS ANGELES (*Deadline*) – Cloudburst Entertainment has acquired rights to “Songs of Solomon,” Armenia’s official entry for this year’s International Feature Film Oscar race. The drama, directed by Arman Nshanian, who also produced the picture with Oscar-winning “Green Book” producer and co-writer Nick Vallelonga and Asko Akopyan, will get a 2021 release date.

Nshanian’s feature directorial debut, written by Audrey Gevorgian based on a true story, centers on a brave Turkish woman who, at a time of dire prejudice during the Hamidian massacres, risks her own life and the life of her family to save her best friend who is hunted down for her religious beliefs. The picture spans 1881-1915 in Constantinople and culminates in the last concert given by the priest Solomon, the composer also known as Komitas. Samvel Tadevossian, Arevik Gevorgyan, Tatev Hovakimyan, Sos Janibekyan, Nshanian, Artashes Aleksanyan and Jean-Pier Nshanian star.

“‘Songs of Solomon’ explores a difficult time in Armenian history but ultimately is a beautiful reminder that the power of friendship translates beyond cultural boundaries,” Cloudburst CEO Steve Fedyski said. “We are thrilled to bring this impactful story to screens everywhere.”

Added Vallelonga: “Asko Akopyan and I are honored to partner with Cloudburst on the distribution of Arman’s stunning and important film. Like Green Book, the film explores the power of music in a culture, as well as promoting the hope that we must all work together to overcome, respect and accept our differences with love and peace.”

Karo Kavoukjian, Steve Fedyski, Ken Rather, Jeff Wallner and David Polemeni are executive producers.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announces its shortlist in the International Feature category on February 9.

By Patrick Hipes