

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Deputy PM: Karabakh War Death Toll Won't Surpass 4,000

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – The bodies of 3,439 servicemen have been recovered from the Nagorno-Karabakh battle field as of January 20, Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan said on Wednesday, January 20. The final death toll from the six-week war won't surpass 4000, he added.

Addressing lawmakers in parliament, Avinyan failed to provide the number of missing soldiers, saying that it is still being verified.

According to him, the number of people with amputated limbs does not exceed 150, and all of them will be getting "prosthetics with the best standards."

Azerbaijan has handed over the remains of 30 troops to the Armenian side, the authorities reported Sunday, January 24. A total of 1,281 bodies were recovered between November 13 and January 23.

### ECHR Will Be Informed About Murder of Armenian POW

STRASBOURG (PanARMENIAN.Net) – The representative of Armenia before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), Yeghishe Kirakosyan, said on January 25 there is information about the killing of Armenian prisoners of war in Azerbaijan.

In an interview with the Public Television of Armenia, Kirakosyan stressed that the Armenian side, in its complaints to the ECHR, told the court the lives of the Armenians captured in Azerbaijan are in danger. Therefore, the country asks the court to apply interim measures against Azerbaijan, including to demand information on the state of health and conditions of detention of the captives.

"One of the dead Armenians, whose body was recovered recently, was on the list [of Armenian prisoners of war], for whom the ECHR had applied an interim measure in early January. According to the forensic examination, he was killed recently," Kirakosyan said.

According to him, this is a "very regrettable phenomenon," an unprecedented and gross violation of the Human Rights Convention by Azerbaijan.

He added Armenia has submitted many statements to the ECHR, demanding the use of urgent measures against Azerbaijan in order to ensure the absence of encroachments against them and guarantee their rights.

"Unfortunately, Azerbaijan disrespects the ECHR, the conventions on human rights, which is unprecedented for the Council of Europe member states. The violation by Azerbaijan of the terms for submitting information and its scarcity testify to the disrespectful attitude," Kirakosyan stressed.

He added that the case concerning Azerbaijan could be transferred to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

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### Detroit Radio Stations

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### Hrant Dink Remembered In Germany

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN – Fourteen years have passed since Hrant Dink was assassinated in front of the offices of *Agos* newspaper in Istanbul. Since then, conditions for journalists, intellectuals and pro-democracy activists inside Turkey have worsened and the new war in Nagorno-Karabakh has engulfed Turks and Armenians again in violent conflict. At such a time of political repression and renewed military see REMEMBRANCE, page 5



## Last Minute U.S.-Turkey Accord Grants Ankara Rights to Christian Cultural Heritage

WASHINGTON – In its final hours, the Trump Administration signed a disastrous bilateral U.S.-Turkey Memorandum of Understanding granting Turkey legal rights over the vast religious-cultural heritage of the region's indigenous peoples and other

minority populations, reported the Armenian National Committee of America.

The agreement comes in response to a request by the Government of Turkey, submitted over a year ago – a move strongly opposed by the ANCA, Hellenic American Leadership

Council, and In Defense of Christians (IDC) and a host of cultural rights and museum groups including the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), the Committee for Cultural Policy (CCP), the Global Heritage Alliance (GHA), and the International Association of Professional Numismatists (IAPN), among others.

"The Trump Administration – in its final hours – gifted Turkey the legal rights to claim the vast religious and cultural see ACCORD, page 15

### US Secretary of State Nominee Anthony Blinken Calls Turkey 'So-Called Strategic Partner' at Senate Hearing

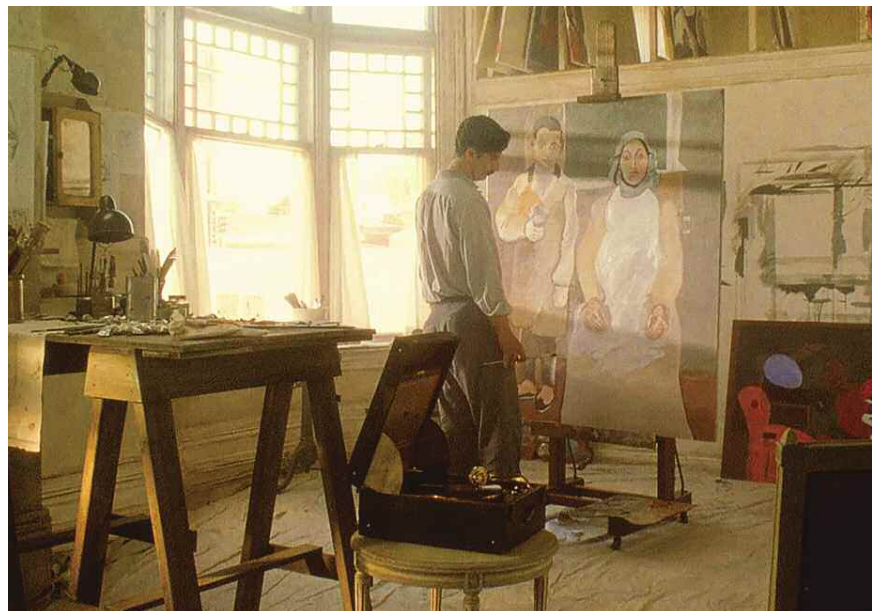
By Haykaram Nahapetyan  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WASHINGTON – Anthony Blinken, awaiting confirmation as the next U.S. Secretary of State, shares the concerns that many American senators have regarding Ankara. "Turkey is an ally that in many ways is acting not as an ally should. This is a very, very big challenge for us, and we are very clear about it," the nominee stated in response to an inquiry by Senator Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), incoming Senate Foreign Relations Committee chair, at the nomination hearing on January 19.

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Anthony Blinken testifies at his nomination hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 (photo Voice of America)



Scene from "Ararat" in which the adult Arshile at his studio works on a painting based on his photo with his mother

### Egoyan, Kouyoumdjian Pay Tribute to Gorky At Virtual Metropolitan Museum Event

By Alin K. Gregorian  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK – Filmmaker Atom Egoyan and composer Mary Kouyoumdjian have partnered with the Metropolitan Museum of Art and created an original work titled "They Will Take My Island," about the late painter Arshile Gorky.

The premier performance took place virtually on January 26 on the Metropolitan's website, as well as its YouTube and Facebook channels.

It features footage shot for but not seen from Egoyan's 2002 film "Ararat" and the documentary "A Portrait of Arshile," accompanied by music and spoken words, by Kouyoumdjian.

Kouyoumdjian's haunting score, specifically written for this event, is performed by the JACK and Silvana quartets.

It is the first performance of the 2021 MetLiveArts virtual season. The performance is free and will remain online indefinitely.

Egoyan's interest in Gorky runs deep. His film, "Ararat," told the story of the Armenian Genocide, in part through the eyes of the young Armenian refugee who later reinvents himself as Arshile Gorky in the US.

see GORKY, page 10



Atom Egoyan

see GORKY, page 10





## ARMENIA

### News From Armenia

## Opposition Ready for 'Uprising'

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The Homeland Salvation Front should stage an anti-government “uprising” if it fails to topple Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan with conventional street protests, a leader of the alliance of 17 Armenian opposition parties said on Tuesday, January 26.

“We are now following the constitutional path in trying to kick out Nikol Pashinyan,” Vazgen Manukyan told hundreds of opposition supporters in the town of Ararat. “If the constitutional path proves fruitless we should organize an uprising.”

“At stake is the future of our country and people. We will either get destroyed or move forward,” added Manukyan.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting, Manukyan explained that the uprising favored by him would involve nonviolent seizures of government buildings.

It was not clear if the comments reflected only his personal views or also those of the parties making up the alliance. Manukyan was nominated by them late last year to serve as a prime minister in an interim government which they believe should be formed after Pashinyan's resignation.

The opposition alliance blames Pashinyan for Armenia's defeat in the war with Azerbaijan stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire on November 10. It staged a series of demonstrations later in November and December in a bid to force him to resign. The protests did not attract large crowds.

The alliance coordinator, Ishkhan Saghatelian, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service on Monday that the opposition forces are now exploring a “new tactic” for their push for regime change.

## Lawmaker Stages Protest Ahead of PACE Session

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Bright Armenia leader Edmon Marukyan staged a protest before a PACE meeting on Monday, January 25, demanding the release of Armenian prisoners of war in Azerbaijan.

“The PACE meeting began with a protest and demand to exert international pressure on Azerbaijan, insisting on the release of Armenian prisoners of war and civilian captives as soon as possible,” Marukyan wrote on Facebook.

The lawmaker also shared a video of himself standing in front of the hall where the meeting was set to be held and holding a sign that read: “Freedom to the Armenian prisoners of war kept in Azerbaijan.”

The first batch of 44 Armenian POWs returned from Azerbaijan in mid-December, although Armenian officials said many more people were being held in Baku. Dozens of others, both servicemen and civilians, have been captured after the completion of military hostilities. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has said in one of his speeches that the newly detained persons are not prisoners of war but “terrorists.”

Human rights lawyer Siranush Sahakyan has said, meanwhile, that at least 120 Armenian prisoners of war are being held in Azerbaijan.

## CoE to Assist Armenia, Azerbaijan, Secretary General Says

STRASBOURG (Panorama.am) – The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić stated on January 25 that the Council is in talks with Armenia and Azerbaijan to provide post-conflict assistance to ensure that human rights were respected. Marija Pejčinović Burić's remarks came while addressing the PACE hybrid session on Monday.

Welcoming the ceasefire reached in Nagorno Karabakh in November, Marija Pejčinović Burić said: “We have always talked about the importance of the peace. These negotiations, meetings are about giving the post-conflict support to both countries in line with our mandate, as everyone on the European land should be ensured their rights are protected. We try to ensure this.”

## A Diplomatic Opportunity Which Calls for Commensurate Action: Communiqué of the ADL District Committee

The Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) District Committee of the Eastern United States and Canada welcomes President Joe Biden's humanitarian-based foreign policy approach to restoring the traditional role of the United States globally.

Armenia and American Armenians are particularly grateful to the new administration for signaling a change towards Turkey's destructive behavior in the south Caucasus, including its instigation of a war using Azerbaijan and jihadi terrorists.

We are hopeful that the Biden White House will make good on its pledge to recognize the Armenian Genocide, completing the initiative taken by the US House of Representatives and Senate.

The change in American administrations offers Armenia a new opportunity to address the fundamental issue of the legal status of Nagorno Karabakh and in particular the constant threat of war by Azerbaijan

and Turkey.

Therefore it is incumbent upon the Armenian government to mobilize its entire diplomatic corps to enunciate and place in proper perspective the issues most vital to its survival and future.

Any change at this stage in key diplomatic personnel may lead to the loss of this valuable opportunity to right past wrongs.

The Armenian government and US Armenian advocacy organizations can pool their resources to realize their most cherished goals.

Talks in the parliament of assigning Lilit Makunts to the position of ambassador to the US are ill-timed. The most seasoned diplomats are required for such positions, particularly during such a crucial and complex period.

We hope the Armenian government understands and appreciates the exigencies of this delicate moment, and takes a proper and wise course of action in order to be geared for success.



## Opposition Slams Pashinyan's Reported Choice For Armenian Envoy to US

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Opposition leaders denounced on Monday, January 25, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's reported plans to appoint a senior but politically inexperienced lawmaker as Armenia's new ambassador to the United States.

Lilit Makunts, who leads the ruling My Step bloc's group in the Armenian parliament, did not deny media reports about her impending appointment when she spoke to RFE/RL's Armenian Service on Sunday.

“There is such an issue on the agenda but it is still under discussion,” she said.

Makunts, 37, taught English at Russian-Armenian University in Yerevan and did not engage in political activities before being appointed as Armenia's culture minister in the wake of the “Velvet Revolution” of April-May 2018 that brought Pashinyan to power. She held that post until being elected to the parliament on My Step's ticket in December 2018.

ment on My Step's ticket in December 2018.

The current Armenian ambassador in Washington, Varuzhan Nersesyan, is a career diplomat who was hand-picked for the post by Pashinyan. Nersesyan handed his credentials to then President Donald Trump in January 2019.

It is not clear why Pashinyan may have decided to replace Nersesyan. The prime minister's office did not comment on Monday on the reports about Makunts's appointment.

Pashinyan's apparent choice of the new ambassador was strongly criticized by senior lawmakers from the two opposition parties represented in the parliament.

“I think he is simply trying to get his people out of the country. I mean his key loyalists who would definitely be prosecuted [after regime change in Armenia,]” claimed Naira Zohrabyan of the Prosperous Armenia Party

(BHK).

Zohrabyan dismissed Makunts as “a woman who only speaks good English.” “Let's hold a contest for the best English speaker and appoint the winner as ambassador to the U.S.,” she suggested tartly.

“She is not a diplomat. I don't know what she will be doing there [in Washington,]” said Gevorg Gorgisyan of the Bright Armenia Party.

“This is a continuation of the bad old traditions,” Gorgisyan complained, referring to politically motivated ambassadorial appointments made by Armenia's former leaders.

In her interview with RFE/RL's Armenian Service, Makunts downplayed her lack of diplomatic experience and argued that “political appointments” of ambassadors is common practice around the world.

“Experience is certainly very important, but in some cases it does not play a central role,” she said.

## President Armen Sarkissian Discharged From Hospital

LONDON (RFE/RL) – President Armen Sarkissian has been discharged from hospital but has not yet fully recovered from COVID-19, his office said on Tuesday, January 26.

The office said in a statement that Sarkissian is “continuing his treatment at home.”

“The Armenian President's condition has relatively improved, there is a positive dynamic in his health state, but he is still monitored by doctors,” the statement said, adding that he is continuing to perform his duties remotely and will return to Armenia “immediately after the doctors' permission.”

According to the presidential press office, Sarkissian tested positive for the coronavirus days after travelling to Britain late last month to spend New Year's Eve with his sons and grandchildren living in London.

The office announced on January 13 that the 67-year-old head of state was hospitalized there after developing double pneumonia and showing other symptoms of the disease.

It remains unclear whether Sarkissian, who has consistently observed physical distancing rules during his official engagements, was infected with COVID-19 in Armenia or the United Kingdom. Both countries have been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.

## Ombudsman Publishes more Evidence of Online Armenophobia in Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – The Human Rights Defender of Armenia Arman Tatoyan has published additional evidence of deep-rooted hatred and enmity toward Armenians in Azerbaijan.

Below are translations of some posts from real Azerbaijani social media users:

- 1) "Armenian women and Armenian children should be killed" - a member of the Bar Association of Azerbaijan.
- 2) I do not feel sorry for the Armenian child. The best Armenian is a dead Armenian.
- 3) The surviving Armenians must be killed, and tortured before killing.
- 4) I want Armenians who have been stripped naked and raped.
- 5) Rogue Armenians must be killed and eliminated from this planet and all those who are on their side must be killed in the same way.
- 6) There should be no place for Armenians in this world. I hate them. All ruthless Armenians must be killed.
- 7) I just fell in love with the words of Ilham Aliyev that we are driving them away like dogs.
- 8) Not a single Armenian should remain alive in Karabakh.
- 9) A conversation between an Azerbaijani parent and their child:  
Q. - Who is our enemy?  
A. - Armenia.  
Q. - How do we feel about them?  
A. - Hate.  
Q. - Raise your hands and repeat, we will drive you away from Karabakh like dogs.  
A. - We will drive you away from Karabakh like dogs.
- 10) Mocking announcements with polls depicting a picture of a beheaded Armenian soldier on the Turkish-Azerbaijani special channel on Telegram, describing how users feel when they see a beheaded Armenian.
- 11) Other manifestations of hostility.  
“The main issue here is that people use the same wording as the Azerbaijani authorities and cultural figures,” Tatoyan said Sunday, January 25.





## ARMENIA

## Violet Jamgochian Karagozian Endowed Scholarship Fund Established to Support Women in STEM

YEREVAN – Armenia is emerging as a hub of creativity and innovation and gaining a reputable ranking in the technology sector. Growth in the IT sector is creating new jobs and bringing new demands for professionals skilled in the areas of computer science, engineering, and data science. The American University of Armenia (AUA) is committed to the development of Armenia and providing the highest quality education in these fields thanks to AUA's affiliation with the University of California and accreditation through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. We are preparing a talented and diverse workforce which will bring the sector's growth in Armenia to the next level. Standing out and shining in the field are Armenian women. AUA female graduates are assuming leadership roles and bringing fresh perspectives and new ideas to a market driven by innovation but historically dominated by men.

In this effort, we are happy to announce the establishment of the Violet Jamgochian Karagozian Endowed Scholarship Fund in support of AUA's Yes, Armenian Women Can! campaign and the advancement of women in STEM fields. The scholarship fund was established through a generous gift from AUA



Violet Jamgochian

Trustee Dr. Ann Karagozian and Dr. Theodore Sarafian in memory of Dr. Karagozian's mother, Violet Jamgochian Karagozian.

"AUA is committed to unlocking the potential in each and every student and is showing what is possible when women are given the proper access and opportunity to top-notch STEM education," remarks AUA Vice President of Development Gaiane Khachatryan. "In 2018 we launched the Yes, Armenia Women Can! campaign to provide scholarship support for women studying Computer Science, Engineering, and Data Science at AUA. Today, half of all AUA students studying at the College of Science and Engineering are female. These young learners are shining in the classroom and in internship positions, while our graduates are standing out as top performers in the field. These striking results are evidence of the transformative power of the campaign and attest to the impressive impact we are making together."

The Violet Jamgochian Karagozian Endowed Scholarship Fund will empower AUA's female students in computer science, engineering, and data science. "My mother, Violet Karagozian, was a woman who was ahead of her time," Dr. Karagozian says. "She studied mathematics in college while working full time to help support her family during the Depression and Second World War. She earned a master's degree and became a high school math teacher for many years, eventually becoming the department chair."

Violet Karagozian was an avid supporter of many Armenian organizations, including the Daughters of Vartan. Dr. Karagozian notes, "She was brilliant and wise and had a strong and abiding Christian faith. She would be so pleased to know that a scholarship in her name will support the next generation of brilliant women in STEM fields!"



## Armenian Robot Robin Nominated for Golden Kitty Award

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Robin, the Armenian robot-companion for children, has been chosen among the best products by the Golden Kitty Award 2020, alongside Apple MacBook Pro, iPhone 12, PlayStation 5, Armenia's Minister of High-Tech Industry Hakob Arshakyan said on Thursday, January 21.

The purpose of Robin is to support children during medical treatment and alleviate their pain by creating positive experiences.

Voting is still underway on Product Hunt's website.

The Golden Kitty Awards is an annual celebration of products, makers, and community members. There are 23 categories up for grabs, with winners of each receiving a Golden Kitty trophy.

## Soldiers Visit Tsakanyan Family after Returning from Baku

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Several of the 44 Armenian prisoners of war who returned home from Azerbaijan in mid-December have visited the family of Smbat Tsakanyan, who at the age of 17, was killed by two Azeri saboteurs back in 2014. The two were among the 12 Azeri POWs who were swapped through Russia's mediation on December 14.

According to the Public Television of Armenia, Smbat's family facilitated in the repatriation of the Armenian captives from Azerbaijan. The group of soldiers thanked them for their efforts because the sides to the conflict had agreed to an "all for all" principle in the POW exchange process.

The first batch of 44 Armenian POWs returned from Azerbaijan in mid-December, although Armenian officials said many more people were being held in Baku. Dozens of others, both servicemen and civilians, have been captured after the completion of military hostilities. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has said in one of his speeches that the newly detained persons are not prisoners of war but "terrorists". Human rights lawyer Siranush Sahakyan has said, meanwhile, that at least 120 Armenian prisoners of war are being held in Azerbaijan. Sahakyan represents the rights of some of the Karabakh POWs before the European Court of Human Rights. The lawyer said



The visiting soldiers at the grave of Smbat Tsakanyan

there is enough evidence proving the capture of said persons, which the Armenian side will submit to international agencies and courts.

## Moody's Assigns Ba3 Rating to Armenia's US Dollar-Denominated Notes

SINGAPORE – Moody's Investors Service has assigned a rating of Ba3 to the proposed senior unsecured, US dollar-denominated notes to be issued by the Government of Armenia. The notes will rank with all of the Government of Armenia's current and future senior unsecured external debt. The proceeds of the notes will be applied toward general governmental purposes.

The rating mirrors the Government of Armenia's long-term issuer rating of Ba3 with a stable outlook.

Armenia's Ba3 issuer rating is underpinned by its robust growth potential with increasingly diverse economic drivers and a lengthening track record of solid macroeconomic management, which raise the country's economic resiliency, and high debt affordability. Implementation of reforms has the potential to raise the quality and credibility of Armenia's institutions, although tangible effects will likely take time.

Balanced against these credit strengths are challenges stemming from the government's

moderately high debt burden that is vulnerable to sharp currency depreciation, the small and low-income economy that is exposed to external developments, and latent geopolitical tensions with neighboring Azerbaijan. These challenges have been amplified by the coronavirus pandemic, resulting in economic contraction in 2020. The high, albeit gradually declining, level of dollarization in the economy also leaves Armenia and its banking sector exposed to external shocks, although the central bank has introduced measures that promote de-dollarization.

Upward pressure on Armenia's rating would stem from further reforms that were to raise economic competitiveness and institutional credibility and effectiveness beyond Moody's current expectations. This would in part materialize through greater levels of private investment and increased transparency of and trust in institutions, including in the judiciary. A structural narrowing of the current account deficit and improvement in Armenia's external position, including

through higher competitiveness and foreign direct investment, would also contribute to upward pressure on the rating. An increase in government revenue arising from fiscal reforms beyond Moody's expectations, that would support the government's debt carrying capacity, would additionally put upward pressure on the rating.

Downward pressure on Armenia's rating would emerge if there was a loss of reform momentum, which would likely transpire through weaker confidence in institutions and fiscal slippage removing prospects that the government debt burden will decline over the medium term. An increase in external vulnerability risk, such as a sustained increase in current account deficits that resulted in declining foreign exchange reserve adequacy, would additionally contribute to downward pressure on the rating. A renewed escalation of the conflict with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh territory would also put negative pressure on the rating if it materially impacts economic or fiscal fundamentals.





## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

## Germany Sends 30 Tons Of Humanitarian Aid to Armenia, Artsakh

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – A special flight from the Federal Ministry of Defense of Germany arrived in Yerevan on January 25 with 30 tons of humanitarian aid, the Foreign Ministry of Armenia reported. The aid was collected and delivered through the close cooperation of the RA Embassy to Germany, the Armenian Diocese of Germany and the “Silva Kaputikyan” Union of German-Armenian Women.

“The aid includes medicine, medical supplies as well as items of social sphere. The plane also carried two minibuses with special equipment for the Stepanakert rehabilitation clinic,” the source said.

## Street Named for Talaat Pasha Now Called Justice After Complaints

PAPHOS (Cyprus Mail) – Following a request by the Armenian and Greek Pontian communities of Paphos, the municipal council has renamed Talaat Pasha street, which recognizes the man widely regarded as the principal architect of the Armenian genocide.

“Talaat Pasha street has been renamed as Justice Street. Those who planned and executed genocide have no place in toponyms,” a municipality spokesman told the *Cyprus Mail* on January 20. The street signs are expected to be changed soon.

The municipal council of Paphos is reaffirming its respect for the place names of Paphos in the light of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by dozens of countries around the world, as well as the international academic community, and also the discussion about the genocide of the Greeks of Pontus, the municipality said.

“Through the study of historical facts, the leading role of Talaat Pasha in the planning and execution of these genocides is documented. The council, aware of the weight of its responsibility towards the present and future generations, unanimously decided to remove the name of Talaat Pasha from the street of the city and by a majority decided to rename the street Justice Street,” the municipality said.

## Armenian Trucks Attacked In Georgia, Embassy Reports

TBILISI (PanARMENIAN.Net) – According to the Armenian Embassy in Georgia, Armenian cargo trucks in Georgia’s Qvemo Ponitchala settlement were attacked on Monday, January 25. The criminals threw stones at the vehicles, breaking windshields and windows after which they fled the scene, the embassy added.

Only after the arrival of police were the trucks able to reach the Armenian border safely, they added.

According to the Armenian mission, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia has initiated a criminal case to probe the case.

## Turkish Firm Opens Drone Factory in Ankara

ANKARA (PanARMENIAN.Net) – A drone manufacturing plant started operations on Friday, January 22, in Turkey’s capital Ankara, Anadolu Agency reports.

Lapis Havacilik, a Turkish aviation company, develops unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), commonly known as drones. It was established in 2015. The firm’s 3,500-square-meter plant has already begun mass production of drones.

Its top models are VTOL, which can fly for up to five hours, and LAP 60, which can fly for up to one hour within the range of 10 kilometers. These drones can be used for agriculture, rescue missions, communication and freight.

Turkey’s defense and aviation exports were around \$3 billion in 2020.

# Erdogan Criticizes NATO Allies for Not Selling Turkey Drone Cameras

ISTANBUL (Panorama.am) – Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan criticized the country’s NATO allies for being “bad neighbors” for refusing to supply parts for Turkish drones, Duvar English reported on January 23.

“Despite all the smear campaigns of those among us, our air vehicles are admired all over the world. Turkish armed UAVs are changing the war methods and changed the trend of the war in Libya,” Erdogan remarked at the launch of a new Turkish frigate, according to Ahval news outlet.

Referring to Turkey’s NATO allies, he added that it was their refusal to supply parts, specifically the drone

cameras, as the reason for Turkey’s need to produce more components domestically.

“For example, the issue of the camera, supposedly, we are together in NATO. We want cameras, but they are not giving them. We are told, ‘Why are you fighting in Armenia?’ Armenia is attacking my allies, we have to give all the support we can. Aren’t we together in NATO?” Erdogan asked.

Turkey’s drones were an instrumental part of its interventions in Syria, Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh where they were widely filmed defeating Russian-made air defense systems. Erdogan made it a point to call attention to the increased reputation of the

drones, such as the TB-2 drone developed by Baykar.

Andair, a U.K company, announced it would no longer supply parts for Turkey’s Baykar following a request from the Armenian Embassy in the U.K. Last October, Canadian company Bombardier Recreational Products (BRP) announced that it would stop selling engines for Turkey’s drones. This followed the Canadian government’s decision to suspend arms exports to Turkey over the war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

## European Parliament Condemns Turkey’s Role in Karabakh War

BRUSSELS (RFE/RL) – The European Parliament has strongly condemned Turkey’s “destabilizing role” in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, accused Ankara of sending “terrorist fighters” to the conflict zone and called for an end to Turkish military aid to Azerbaijan on January 22.

In two resolutions adopted this week, the European Union’s legislative body also welcomed the Russian-brokered ceasefire that stopped the Armenian-Azerbaijani war on November 10. But it cautioned that the conflict remains unresolved.

One of the resolutions calls for a Karabakh settlement based on the Basic Principles, a framework peace accord that has long been jointly advanced by the three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group: the United States, Russia and France. It stresses the “urgent need” to ensure “the security of the Armenian population and its cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh.”

Turkey provided full diplomatic and military support to Azerbaijan during the six-week war. Turkish combat drones heavily used by the Azerbaijani army are believed to have been a key factor behind Baku’s military victory. According to Western media reports, Ankara also recruited thousands of jihadist fighters from the Middle East to fight on Azerbaijan’s side.

The European Parliament resolution “strongly condemns the destabilizing role of Turkey which further undermines the fragile stability in the whole of the South Caucasus region.” It says the Turks should “refrain from any interference in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including offering military support to Azerbaijan.”

The resolution also deplores “the transfer of foreign terrorist fighters by Turkey from Syria and elsewhere to Nagorno-Karabakh, as confirmed by international actors, including the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries.”

France has been especially vocal in its condemnation of that transfer. Its Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian reiterated last month French calls for “the departure of the Syrian mercenaries” from the conflict zone.

Turkey has denied sending members of Turkish-backed Syrian rebel groups to Karabakh. Azerbaijan also denies the presence of such mercenaries in the Azerbaijani army ranks.

Armenia hailed the European Parliament resolutions on Friday. The Armenian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Anna Naghdalyan, praised, among other things, the EU’s legislature’s calls for an agreement on Karabakh’s future status to be “founded on the [Minsk] group’s Basic Principles.” Naghdalyan said it thus voiced support for the Karabakh Armenians’ right to self-determination.

## French-Armenian Surgeon Leads Operation on World’s First Double-Arm-and-Shoulder Transplantation

LYON (The Guardian) – French Armenian surgeon Aram Gazarian led the first double-arm-and-shoulder transplantation operation in Lyon.

The Icelandic man who got the transplant is recovering well after the operation, two decades after the accident that cost him both limbs, doctors have said.

“If he can recover the possibility to actively bend his elbow, that would be a life-changer,” he said.

On January 12, 1998, Gretarsson, an electrician, was working on a high-voltage power line when an 11,000-volt surge burned his hands and flung him to the icy ground.

He sustained multiple fractures and internal injuries, and went into a three-month coma during which surgeons amputated both arms.

He underwent several more operations, including a liver transplant.

The operation was “his biggest dream”, Gretarsson’s wife Sylwia told Friday’s news conference, adding that she herself never felt that the operation was truly necessary as he “wasn’t missing anything.”

It took years to find suitable donors, during which some 50

medical staff in total became involved in the preparations for the operation.

Doctors said the outlook for the right arm to become functional was better than for the left, which had also required a complete rebuild of the shoulder. No serious complications had been detected nine days after the operation, they said.



Dr. Aram Gazarian

They said it was still uncertain how much mobility Felix Gretarsson, 48, will recover following the operation earlier this month in the southeastern French city of Lyon.

But “giving a little to somebody who was missing so much, that’s already a lot” Aram Gazarian, the lead surgeon in the operation, told a news conference on January 22.



The patient, Felix Gretarsson





## INTERNATIONAL

# Hrant Dink Remembered in Germany

REMEMBRANCE, from page 1

aggression, commemorating the anniversary of his death assumes special significance.

This was manifest in an event on November 21 in Germany, organized by a group of organizations active in civil society. Presented in digital form due to the Corona pandemic, the gathering was sponsored by the KulturForum TürkeiDeutschland, the Armin T. Wegner Society, the German-Armenian Society (DAG), the TÜDAY association, the Multicultural Forum, and representatives of the Workers Welfare Union.

Following clips from a film on Hrant Dink, Ulrich Klan, presented greetings from the Armin T. Wegner Society, both in Germany and the United States. The lesson to be learned from both Dink and Wegner is to name names, but without hatred. A letter Wegner wrote in 1919 to Woodrow Wilson was quoted, in which he denounced the crimes committed against the Armenians, while warning against blaming a people or a religious group for them. In the same spirit, Dink urged sitting together with the other, even genocide deniers, in discussion and debate.

## Personal Impact

Filmmaker Osman Okkan from the KulturForum opened the first round of discussion, by posing the question: What did Hrant Dink mean to you personally? What most influenced writer Karin Karakasli, who knew him at Agos, was Dink's ability to make her rethink her sense of identity in terms of Armenian-Turkish relations. She recalled his interest in Turkish issues, and his understanding of citizenship and equal rights for Kurds, Turks, Armenians and others.

For Garo Paylan, HDP member of parliament, the identity issue was key. Born in 1972, he recalled the silence that reigned regarding Armenians. His grandfather, Avedis, went by the name of Halis, his mother was Serpil, or simply Anne. Hrant Dink "broke the silence" and "gave me my name back," he said; he opened contact with the church and social groups. When Dink was assassinated, Paylan



Garo Paylan

left journalism and entered politics, convinced that "it didn't make sense to continue in a job."

Çem Özdemir, a Green Party member of the German Bundestag (Parliament), stressed the liberal democratic idea Dink represented, and his multi-cultural vision for Turkish society, whereby citizens could come from any ethnic background and religious belief. Author Dogan Akhanli, who has written about the genocide, was asked to comment on Dink's approach to dealing with it. Depicting him as a "living monument to peace and democracy," Akhanli said Dink was convinced Turkey could be changed only if it dealt with recognition of the genocide, and he had convinced Turkish intellectuals to face their own history. Dink may have been a "romantic dreamer," he said, but dreams can come true, and Turkey does have a potential for change. Here he pointed to the 2013 Gezi Park movement as well as to the example provided by Garo Paylan's political engagement.

Where does Turkey go from here? Osman Okkan asked. Darkness has descended again on Turkey, Paylan said, and silence as well. Much will depend on developments outside the country; if Europe and the US remain silent on human rights violations in Turkey, "that will make it worse for us," he said. Akhanli agreed fully, adding that intellectuals, including Turkish intellectuals, living abroad where they enjoy political protection, should speak out more loudly. Recalling Dink's extraordinary optimism, he said intellectuals abroad should

be more courageous and fight for the release of political prisoners.

## Germany and Artsakh

Following a musical interlude, with two pieces by Komitas performed by pianist Nare Karoyan, Çiler Firtina of the KulturForum moderated a discussion on the Nagorno-Karabakh war and continuing crisis. She asked for reactions to the German government's position, as presented by Foreign Minister Heiko Maas at the end of October: 2 million euros would be allocated to help those who lost everything, he told members of Parliament, international pressure should force Armenia and Azerbaijan to cease hostilities, in recognition of the impossibility of a military solution, and Turkey must act according to its responsibilities as a Minsk Group member.

Dr. Gregor Gysi, parliamentarian for The Left (Linke), had intervened after Maas's statement, and denounced Turkish support in Azerbaijan's violation of the ceasefire as well as its weaponry and fighters. He had characterized the situation as "catastrophic." It was "not easy," he said, to be German foreign minister in this situation, but it would be better to be explicit. Maas was seeking a diplomatic road and avoiding conflict with the parties.

Raffi Kantian, chairman of the DAG, was more explicit. Humanitarian aid is important, he said, but what is most disturbing is the reluctance on the part of the German government, to state the facts clearly. Kantian criticized formulations in official statements from late November, in which Armenia was charged with having violated international law for annexing territories, but Azerbaijan was not; Turkey had "aided" Azerbaijan, but there was no reference to active participation. And what about drones, fighter jets and command units? Though mercenaries were mentioned, nothing was said about the UN convention forbidding this, etc.

Did this have to do with NATO and Turkey's membership? Gysi cited remarks by Maas that Turkey had not discussed the Nagorno-Karabakh issue with its NATO partners nor consulted with them. For Gysi, the problem lies in the predominance of the military over the

political, in international affairs. Defense ministers, he asserted, have more say than foreign ministers. Gysi criticized Armenia for not seizing the chance to negotiate a political solution, and said Azerbaijan exploited this in its drive for a military victory. To return to a culture of political solutions, Gysi went on, one must accept compromise.

Journalist Eike Christian Petering brought up the German parliament's resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide, which was passed in 2016. That resolution also stressed the special historical responsibility, given that Imperial Germany was Ottoman Turkey's wartime ally. Kantian picked up on this, noting that in 100 years Turkey has still not recognized the genocide. And, if silence prevails, if one does not speak out against Turkey's role, Erdogan may think history can repeat itself.

Diaspora Armenians have reacted with dismay and disappointment, said Artin Simonyan, a peace activist and member of the Armenian community in Germany. He expressed his personal disappointment with the silence on the part of media and politicians, especially the German government, and reported that his great grandfather had lost his entire family in 1915. Asked how he deals with the issue, he said he speaks out and tries to educate his friends and associates. Many German friends are utterly uninformed, and among some Turkish friends, "the deep-seated nationalism is stronger than the friendship." Others are empathetic, still others, influenced by Turkish media.

The importance of remembering Hrant Dink cannot be overstated. What he represents, as this commemorative event demonstrated, is the realization that change in Turkey can come about to the extent that truth prevails; that the reality of the genocide must be worked through, and officially recognized. The role of intellectuals, both inside Turkey and internationally, is of immense value, in speaking out, and above all, educating. And Dink embodied an incredible optimism. Even in the darkest moments, it was said during this event, there is resistance, and hope.

## AGBU London Trust Announces New Scholarships for Classical Armenian Studies at Oxford University

LONDON – In keeping with its core commitment to advance Armenian education, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) London Trust recently made a substantial gift to support a scholarship program for graduate students pursuing a master's degree in Classical Armenian Studies at Oxford University. It is the leading university for Armenian studies in the UK and has pursued the subject since the mid-nineteenth century.

By providing support for one graduate student per year for five years, the new scholarship program will play a key role in helping to foster greater understanding of Armenian culture and heritage. The first scholarship will be awarded in October 2021, with the program running through to 2026.

Scholars studying for the MSt in Classical Armenian Studies gain experience in reading and interpreting a wide range of Armenian texts, thus enabling them to develop a critical understanding of the literary culture and historical background of their chosen period. During their time at Oxford, students will have access to the Bodleian Library's unique collection of Armenian manuscripts, which includes a very rare copy of the first book printed in Iran: an Armenian Psalter from New Julfa.

The course is directed by Professor Theo Maarten van Lint, who holds the Calouste Gulbenkian Professorship of Armenian Studies. He says: "Funding is an indispensable element in offering worthy candidates access to the Master's in Classical Armenian Studies. Therefore I am extremely grateful to Joseph and Jenny Oughourlian and the AGBU for this generous and strategic donation."

The creation of the AGBU London Trust Scholarship represents the next stage in an already fruitful partnership between the organization and Oxford, which for the past seven years provided financial



Opening of the Gospel of Mark, written in Classical Armenian, by scribe and miniaturist Mesrop Kizanc'i. Bodleian Libraries MS. Arm. d. 13, fol. 115r (New Julfa, Isfahan 1609)

support to Armenian students reading a range of subjects at the University. The new scholarship program, which will be open to students from all over the world, aligns with the AGBU's mission to uphold Armenian heritage through educational, cultural and humanitarian spheres.

Joseph Oughourlian, AGBU London Trust Chairman and Vice-President of the AGBU Central Board said: 'AGBU is absolutely honored to partner with the prestigious global institution that is the University of Oxford. The University's Faculty of Oriental Studies has been thriving for years and as the world's largest Armenian organization, it is a logical development for AGBU to support the faculty's MSt in Classical Armenian Studies. We deeply thank Professor van Lint and his team for allowing this cooperation to happen.'

For more information about the MSt in Classical Armenian Studies, visit <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/mst-classical-armenian-studies>

## Cultural Center in Marseille Target Of Gunfire

MARSEILLE, France (Armenews.com) – The Sahak Mesrop Cultural Center on the grounds of the Armenian Church on avenue du Prado in Marseille was the target of gunfire on Sunday, January 24 at 6:40 p.m. Several police teams were sent to the premises in the aftermath. The gunshot shattered the window in the center of the second floor, while a piano rehearsal was being held. No one was injured. But the musician who was present on the scene at the time of the shooting as well as the president of the cultural center filed a complaint with the police.

This shooting comes after a series of attacks in France and in the world against the Armenians. In addition to the defacing of a number statues, including that of Komitas at the end of August in Paris or that against the genocide memorial in Décines on November 4, French people of Armenian origin were the target of manhunts in the streets of Décines-Charpieu, near Lyon last July, and at the end of October in Viennes (Isère) and Dijon (Côte-d'Or), against the backdrop of the ethnic cleansing operation led by Turkey and Azerbaijan against the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The ultra-nationalist Turkish group Les Loups Gris, implicated in these acts against the Armenian community in France, was dissolved in early November following these events.

Similar abuses were also observed during the same period in Berlin and San Francisco.

The Prado Cultural Center is also the headquarters of CCAF South, the umbrella organization for French-Armenian entities. It was the logistics hub for humanitarian aid from Marseille and the south of the country to Armenia during the last war.



# Community News

## Pennsylvania Lawmaker Played Key Role in Trump's Plot to Oust Acting Attorney General

By Katie Benner and  
Catie Edmondson

WASHINGTON (*New York Times*) – When Representative Scott Perry joined his colleagues in a months-long campaign to undermine the results of the presidential election, promoting “Stop the Steal” events and supporting an attempt to overturn millions of legally cast votes, he often took a back seat to higher-profile loyalists in President Donald J. Trump’s orbit.

But Perry, an outspoken Pennsylvania Republican, played a significant role in the crisis that played out at the top of the Justice Department this month, when Trump considered firing the acting attorney general and backed down only after top department officials threatened to resign en masse.

It was Perry, a member of the hardline Freedom Caucus, who first made Trump aware that a relatively obscure Justice Department official, Jeffrey Clark, the acting chief of the civil division, was sympathetic to Trump’s view that the election had been stolen, according to former administration officials who spoke with Clark and Trump.

Perry introduced the president to Clark, whose openness to conspiracy theories about election fraud presented Trump with a welcome change from the acting attorney general, Jeffrey A. Rosen, who stood by the results of the election and had repeatedly resisted the president’s efforts to undo them.

Perry’s previously unreported role, and the quiet discussions between Trump and Clark that followed, underlined how much the former president was willing to use the government to subvert the election, turning to more junior and relatively unknown figures for help as ranking Republicans and cabinet members rebuffed him.

Perry’s involvement is also likely to heighten scrutiny of House Republicans who continue to advance Trump’s false and thoroughly debunked claims of election fraud, even after President Biden’s inauguration this week and as Congress prepares for an impeachment trial that will examine whether such talk incited the Capitol riot.

It is unclear when Perry, who represents the Harrisburg area, met Clark, a Philadelphia native, or how well they knew each other before the introduction to Trump. Former Trump administration officials said that it was only in late December that Clark told Rosen about the introduction brokered by Perry, who was among the scores of people feeding Trump false hope that he had won the election.

But it is highly unlikely that Trump would have known Clark otherwise. Department officials were startled to learn that the president had called Clark directly on multiple occasions and that the two had met in person without alerting Rosen, those officials said. Justice Department policy stipulates that the president initially communicates with the attorney general or the deputy attorney general on all matters, and then a lower-level official if authorized.

As the date for Congress to affirm Biden’s victory neared, Perry and Clark discussed a plan to have the Justice Department send a letter to Georgia state lawmakers informing them of an investigation into voter fraud that could invalidate the state’s Electoral College results. Former officials who were briefed on the plan said that the department’s dozens of voter fraud investigations nationwide had not turned up enough instances of fraud to alter the outcome of the election.

Perry and Clark also discussed the plan with Trump, setting off a chain of events that nearly led to the ouster of Rosen, who had refused  
see PLOT, page 7



The magnificent Armenian monastery of Dadivank—built in the 9th to 13th centuries, with foundations in the Apostolic Age—has become an international symbol of the way Artsakh’s Armenian heritage is endangered in the aftermath of the war.

## Eastern Armenian Diocese Creates New Group to Focus On Protecting Artsakh’s Armenian Heritage

NEW YORK – The New York-based Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America has created a special committee to protect the endangered Armenian heritage sites of Artsakh. The group composed of academic researchers and clergy was formed in the aftermath of the 2020 Artsakh war, with the blessing of Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan.

With the surrender of territories in Artsakh containing numerous Armenian monasteries, churches, cultural sites, and monuments, the working group aims to advocate for the preservation of these Armenian treasures, while informing the public of their historical importance.

Led by Dr. Rachel Goshgarian, assistant professor of history at Lafayette College and a former director of the Eastern Diocese’s Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center, the Artsakh Preservation Working Group met on December 29 and January 14 to discuss measures that intellectuals, academics, and clergy could take to complement the preservation efforts already set in motion by the Mother See of Echmiadzin.

Participating in the meetings were Archbishop Vicken Aykazian (Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director); Fr. Garegin Hambarzumyan (Mother See of Echmiadzin); Fr. Simeon Odabashian (Diocesan Vicar); Dr. Christina Maranci (Arthur H. Dadian and Ara Oztemel Professor of Armenian Art and Architecture at Tufts University); Dr. Nicole Vartanian (Executive Director of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University), and Deacon Armen Terjimanian.

Bishop Hovakim Manukyan (Primate of the Armenian Diocese of the United Kingdom) and Fr. Pakrad Berjekian (Vicar General of the Western Diocese of the United States) also participated in individual meetings.

### Combatting Disinformation and Destruction

Group members discussed the most effective steps to educate the Armenian and non-Armenian public about the cultural and religious sites that remain in the Artsakh territories that were handed over to Azerbaijan at the end of the Artsakh war. They agreed to focus on goals of protection, information, advocacy, and celebration, working in collaboration with the Mother See of Echmiadzin’s newly created office for this purpose, as well as the efforts coming from the Western Diocese and the Diocese of Great Britain.

The office at the Mother See, headed by Fr. Hambarzumyan, aims to establish ties with international organizations to lobby for and assist with the preservation of Armenian monuments in Artsakh; disseminate information  
see HERITAGE, page 11

## Society for Armenian Studies and Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation Sign Cooperation Agreement

FRESNO – As part of its new policy to strengthen ties with academic institutions in Armenia, the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) signed an Agreement on Cooperation on January 13, with the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation (AGMI).

The Agreement aims at cooperating on different academic projects that would be beneficial to both parties and advance the field of Armenian Genocide studies. The scope of the cooperation includes, but is not limited to, exchange of mutual information on academic activities carried out by both parties; exchange and loans of books relevant to both parties; exchange of knowledge and expertise with respect to Armenian Genocide; sharing of advice, educational consultation, and research about the Armenian Genocide study and research; cooperation through local and international conferences and symposia to advance the field of genocide studies in general and Armenian Genocide studies in particular; mutual cooperation to educate the general public about the Armenian Genocide; and close cooperation and coordination between the Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies (JSAS) published by the prestigious Brill publishing house and the International Journal of Armenia Genocide Studies (IJAGS), Ts’eghaspanagitakan Handes, both published by the AGMI.

Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian, director of Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Fresno, will serve as the liaison on behalf of the SAS while Dr. Edita Gzoyan, Deputy Scientific Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation and the editor of IJAGS will serve on behalf of the AGMI.

Commenting on the Agreement, SAS President Bedross Der Matossian said, “We are looking forward to cooperate with the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation (AGMI) on academic issues pertaining to genocide studies in general and the Armenian Genocide in particular. This is part of our new policy to strengthen ties with different academic institutions in Armenia. This cooperation will be mutually beneficial to all of us. The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) has members whose research deals with the Armenian Genocide. Through harnessing the existing potential of scholars from both bodies, the field of the Armenian Genocide Studies will advance in the right direction.”

Prof. Harutyun Marutyan, director of the AGMI, welcomed the Cooperation Agreement stating, “The challenges facing researchers in the field of Armenian Studies in the 21st century require new, modern approaches and the consolidation of Armenian potential. The shaping of the Armenian factor in the field of humanities, taking world experience into account, is one of the priorities of our time. The study and popularization of Armenian history, culture and the issues of the Armenian Genocide are among the imperatives for both the AGMI and SAS. We are sure that the goals and intentions mentioned in the Cooperation Agreement, signed between the two institutions, will be realized and will contribute to the expansion of ties between researchers on both sides and the development of Armenian Studies in general.”

The SAS, founded in 1974, is the international professional association representing scholars and teachers in the field of Armenian Studies. The aim of the SAS is to promote the study of Armenian culture and society, including history, language, literature, and social, political, and economic questions.

To contribute to the activities of SAS contact Prof. Bedross Der Matossian at bdermatossian2@unl.edu.

Information about the SAS can be found on its website at [societyforarmenianstudies.com](http://societyforarmenianstudies.com).







## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Pennsylvania Lawmaker Played Key Role in Trump's Plot to Oust Acting Attorney General

PLOT, from page 6  
to send the letter.

After The New York Times disclosed the details of the scheme on Friday, the political fallout was swift. Senator Richard J. Durbin, Democrat of Illinois and the incoming chairman of the Judiciary Committee, told the Justice Department in a letter on Saturday that he would investigate efforts by Trump and Clark to use the agency "to further Trump's efforts to subvert the results of the 2020 presidential election."

Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the majority leader, said that it was "unconscionable that a Trump Justice Department leader would conspire to subvert the people's will." He called on the department's inspector general, Michael E. Horowitz, to investigate "this attempted sedition."

Horowitz has already opened an investigation into whether Trump administration officials improperly pressured Byung J. Pak, who abruptly resigned this month as the U.S. attorney in Atlanta after being pressed to take actions related to the election, according to a person briefed on the inquiry. Durbin is investigating that matter as well.

Trump also tried to force Justice Department officials, including Rosen and the acting solicitor general, Jeffrey Wall, to file a lawsuit before the Supreme Court that would challenge Biden's victory, according to a person briefed

on the request.

One of Trump's outside lawyers even drafted a brief for the department to file to the court. Department officials and the White House counsel, Pat A. Cipollone, told Trump that the plan would fail for several reasons, including the fact that the department did not have the grounds to challenge the outcome, the person said.

The fight between Trump and Justice Department officials over the Supreme Court filing was first reported by The Wall Street Journal.

The episode with Clark and Perry is yet another example at impeachment managers' disposal as they put together their case that Trump should be disqualified from holding office again.

Clark declined to comment on his relationship with Perry, and he categorically denied devising any plan to oust Rosen. He said that there had been "a candid discussion of options and pros and cons with the president" that had been inaccurately described by The Times, but he declined to provide details. He declined to say anything more about his conversations with Trump or Justice Department lawyers because of "the strictures of legal privilege."

Asked whether his conversations with the president had violated the department policy governing contact with the president, he said that senior lawyers at the agency provided legal

advice to the White House as part of their duties. "All my official communications were consistent with law," he said.

Clark, a member of the conservative Federalist Society, had been appointed the acting head of the civil division in September. He also oversaw the department's environmental and natural resources division, where he had worked under President George W. Bush.

Neither Perry nor his top aides responded to repeated requests for comment.

Some Senate Republicans, including Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the minority leader, have grown increasingly worried that if they do not intervene and distance themselves from Trump, the havoc wreaked by the former president could hurt Republicans' political fortunes for years to come. The episode amounts to an unwelcome reminder that damaging information around his presidency could continue to emerge even though Trump is no longer in office.

And Perry's role in the discussions could further escalate tensions in the House, where Democratic lawmakers were already livid at Republicans for fanning the flames before the Capitol riot, with some rank-and-file members calling for the expulsion of lawmakers who led efforts to overturn the election.

The pressure that Trump placed on the Justice Department, including any plan that he may have considered to remove Rosen, also rais-

es legal questions for him.

Trump's duty as president was to ensure that "laws be faithfully executed for the benefit of the country," and efforts to interfere in the election could be considered a violation of his constitutional duty, said Neil Eggleston, a partner at Kirkland & Ellis and a White House counsel under President Barack Obama.

There is little chance that a Justice Department letter sent to Georgia lawmakers would have prompted the state to invalidate its Electoral College votes.

But the plan was consistent with the posture Perry had taken since November, when he began to falsely claim that there had been rampant fraud in the election, and throughout it all, Perry has remained defiant. Facing calls to resign over his role in the efforts to overturn the election, Perry issued a one-word response: "No."

Perry, a retired brigadier general in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard and an Iraq War veteran, has been scrutinized for his openness to the conspiratorial. He baselessly suggested that the 2017 mass shooting in Las Vegas by a lone gunman could have been influenced by "terrorist infiltration through the southern border" and refused to support a resolution that condemned QAnon, a pro-Trump conspiracy movement. (Perry said he believed that the resolution infringed on individuals' right to free speech and that he did not personally subscribe to the movement.)

An early supporter of the "Stop the Steal" campaign, Perry was one of 126 House Republicans who joined a legal brief in December supporting an extraordinary lawsuit seeking to overturn Biden's victory. And he joined over two dozen of his colleagues who urged Trump to direct William P. Barr, the attorney general, to "investigate irregularities in the 2020 election."

He objected on behalf of 79 other House Republicans to certifying Pennsylvania's electoral results and was among 139 House Republicans who voted to reject Biden's electoral victory, even though he later acknowledged Biden as the president-elect.

The plan that Perry devised with Clark set off a crisis at the Justice Department. When Clark approached Rosen with the Georgia letter at the end of December, Rosen refused to send it, according to four former administration officials. On Jan. 3, Clark notified Rosen that he would be taking his job at Trump's behest.

As Rosen prepared to meet Trump later that day and fight for his job, his top deputies, including the acting deputy attorney general, Richard P. Donoghue, and his outgoing chief of staff, Patrick Hovakimian, convened the department's senior leaders on a conference call, according to five former officials with knowledge of the call.

They told the department leaders that Rosen's job was in jeopardy because of Clark's machinations and said they would resign if Rosen was removed. They ended the call by asking their colleagues to privately consider what they would do if that happened. Over the next 15 minutes, all of them emailed or texted Hovakimian, saying that they would quit.

While Rosen, Donoghue and other top department and White House lawyers spent nearly three hours with Trump and Clark, debating the merits of sending the letter to Georgia lawmakers, Hovakimian — in anticipation of Rosen's removal — drafted an email to the department's senior leaders, including those who were not aware of what was transpiring at the White House, according to two people briefed on the letter.

In it, he explained that Rosen had resisted Trump's repeated entreaties to use the department's law enforcement powers for improper ends and that the president had removed him, according to a person who reviewed the email. He wrote that he and Donoghue were resigning immediately and encouraged his colleagues to think hard about what they would do and to always act in the interests of the United States.

When Hovakimian received word that Rosen had been allowed to stay, he drafted a new email that he sent to the anxiously awaiting officials: Rosen and the cause of justice had won.

Maggie Haberman contributed reporting from New York.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS/OBITUARY

## Sarkis Sam Kouzoujian

### Technology Pioneer, Dedicated to Church

BELMONT, Calif. — Sarkis Kouzoujian of Belmont, Calif. was born in the Bronx, New York, on April 18, 1933 to Harry and Vartouhy Kouzoujian, survivors of the Armenian Genocide.

He passed away on Christmas Day, December 25, 2020, from complications due to COVID-19.

He is survived by his loving wife of 62 years, Seda, son Van, daughter Karen, and grandson Jack.

Early on, Sarkis realized his passion for technology. He attended Samuel Gompers Technical High School where he excelled in the emerging field of radio and television technology and design. This would form the foundation for his future in the evolving field of data processing and the birth of microcomputers. Sarkis' desire for lifelong learning fostered an open mindset and was the backbone to his positive and optimistic nature, and a belief that anything is possible. Contrary to prevailing workplace practices at that time, as more women entered the field of technology, Sarkis was an innovator in demanding equal pay for the women in his department.

Through his active involvement in the greater New York Armenian community, Sarkis met the love of his life, Seda Katchouny. They married in 1957 and established their home in Flushing, NY. Shortly after the arrival of their children, Van and

Karen, Sarkis pursued his academic degree in engineering from Farleigh Dickinson University, working during the day, going to school at nights. He was selected to be a member of an elite group that designed the depository trust system for the New York Stock Exchange. In 1973, this led to an opportunity in San Francisco to work for the Pacific Stock Exchange. The entire family moved, including his mother and mother-in-law, to the San Francisco Bay Area to start a new life in California.

With an entrepreneurial spirit and a keen awareness of the dawning of the microcomputer era, Sarkis followed his dream and opened one of the nation's first personal computer stores, ComputerLand, in 1978, with additional stores to follow. Recognized as a pioneer in the industry, Sarkis was asked to participate on the advisory boards of both IBM and Apple Computer. After the sale of the business in 1986, Sarkis leveraged his decades of expertise by providing consulting and advisory services to businesses on implementing their computer systems.

Sarkis was a very spiritual man and gave back to his Armenian community and church. He was a member of the Knights of Vartan, an Armenian philanthropic fraternal organization, where he was honored as "Man of the Year," served as Commander of the local chapter, and was a member of the national



executive board. Sarkis also served on the parish council of St. John Armenian Apostolic Church in San Francisco, on the executive board of NorCal Senior Services, and was actively involved with the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU).

Sarkis valued his family and friends above all else and was loved by all who knew him. He would always make himself available to individuals or organizations needing any of his wide range of skills. He will forever be known for his loving and giving nature, warm and broad smile, the twinkle in his eyes, and his roaring sense of humor. He had a passion and love for travel, crossword puzzles, and exploring the unknown.

The family has chosen to defer a celebration of Sarkis' life until we can all gather together safely to honor him. To memorialize Sarkis' love of technology and enthusiasm to inspire the next generation, the family has set up the Sarkis Kouzoujian Scholarship fund, with the AGBU at 55 E. 59th St, New York, NY 10022.

## Ann (Vartabedian) Talanian, 101

### Longtime Member of Holy Trinity Church

BELMONT, Mass. — Ann (Vartabedian) Talanian passed away peacefully at her home on Saturday, January 16, at age 101.

She was born on September 19, 1919, in Woonsocket, RI, to Reuben G. and Elsie A. (Hagopian) Vartabedian.

They lived on her uncle's farm, where she attended a one-room schoolhouse. At age 8, her family moved to Hartford, Conn. She was an honors student at Hartford Public High School and an active tennis player.

After graduation, she worked as a client services supervisor at Travelers Insurance Company until her marriage to Albert G. Talanian of Boston in 1948.

They moved to Belmont with their three daughters in 1959. When her daughters were teenagers, Ann returned to work as client services supervisor at Doble Engineering Company in Watertown until her retirement.

Ann and Albert enjoyed 54 years of marriage until his death in 2002.

Ann is survived by her daughters Nancy Talanian and husband Francis Fortino of Whately, MA; Deborah of Belmont; and Laurie Travia and husband Anthony Jr. of Winchester. Ann is also survived by her sister-in-law Nevart Talanian. In addition to her husband, she was predeceased by her sister Arline Bagdikian and brother-in-law Edward; her sister Iris Humphrey and brother-in-law John; her brother-in-law Charles Talanian; and her sisters-in-law Evelyn (Talanian) Mukjian, Virginia (Talanian) Ohanian, and Arsenne Tutunjian, and their husbands James Mukjian, Michael Ohanian, and Simon Tutunjian, respectively. She is survived by many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Ann was a member of Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church of Greater Boston, the church



Women's Guild, and the Armenian Assembly of America.

She enjoyed family gatherings, traveling, her summer home in Cotuit, MA, playing bridge, and watching the Red Sox.

Ann's family gives special thanks to her team of physicians at Massachusetts General Hospital, including Drs. William Carlson, Louis Ercolani, Annie Lee, and Katayoon Goodarzi, as well as her caregivers Robin Cedrone, Nora Turchi, and Susan Ruane, who surrounded her with comfort and love. Special gratitude is also extended to West River Hospice of Needham.

Funeral services and burial will be private. A memorial celebration of Ann's life will be conducted at a future date.

## Lazarus A. 'Larry' Pahigian

### Pharmacist, Advocated for People with Special Needs

NORTH ANDOVER, Mass. — Lazarus A. "Larry" Pahigian, 89, of North Andover, passed away on January 14, 2021 at the Lawrence General Hospital after a brief illness.

Born in Lawrence, he was the son of the late Ashod and Pilo (Gulian) Pahigian.

Larry was raised in Lawrence, MA, and was a graduate of Lawrence High School and Northeastern University.

He was a licensed pharmacist and owned and operated Gulian's High School Pharmacy in Lawrence, North Andover Pharmacy and American Medical & Surgical Supply Co.

Larry once served as President of the Massachusetts State Pharmaceutical Association, taught at Mass College of Pharmacy, and after selling his businesses, became an executive at CareMark.

He was involved in numerous community and service organizations including as Past President of the North Andover Lions Club, The Masons, Armenian Pharmacists Association, and as an active member of the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe, Haverhill, MA.

He dedicated himself to defending and advocating for the special needs community, their rights, and prosperity.

In addition to time with his family, Larry also enjoyed golf and was a 45 year member at Andover (MA) Country Club and most recently at Portsmouth (NH) Country Club and Cypress Lake Golf Club in Ft Myers, Florida.

Larry is survived by his beloved wife of 65 years, Alice (Hamamjian) Pahigian; his children, Cary Pahigian and his wife Barbara of MD, Beth Richards and her husband Jack of Seabrook Beach, NH, and Pamela Pahigian of Andover; his sister, Carol Bazarian and her husband Charlie of North Andover; his sister-in-law, Audrey Pilbosian of Arlington, MA; his grand-



children, Tyler Richards and his partner Samantha Valletta, Conor and Parker Richards, Brad, Brendan, and Amanda Pahigian; his great-grandchild, Cayson Richards. He was also predeceased by his brother-in-law, Jack Pilbosian. Survivors also include nieces Lisa Gardner and husband Anthony of Northborough MA, Michelle Beeney and husband Jeff of Andover, MA, Julie Ballentine and husband Scott of Exeter, NH; his nephew Jeff Pilbosian and wife Heather of North Hampton NH. Many of Larry's friends' children knew him as "Uncle Larry."

At the family's request, all services will be private. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe.

Burial will be in Bellevue Cemetery, Lawrence.

Arrangements are by Cataudella Funeral Home, Methuen, MA. To send condolences, please visit [www.cataudellafh.com](http://www.cataudellafh.com).

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## COMMUNITY NEWS/OBITUARY

## Bob Avian

### Choreographer of Broadway Smashes

By Neil Genzlinger

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (*New York Times*) – Bob Avian, a choreographer, director and producer who was deeply involved in some of the biggest Broadway shows of the last 60 years, including – with his frequent collaborator, Michael Bennett – “A Chorus Line,” one of the longest-running musicals in history, died on Thursday, January 21, in Fort Lauderdale. He was 83.

His husband, Peter Pileski, said through a spokesman that the cause was cardiac arrest.

Mr. Avian also choreographed the Broadway hits “Miss Saigon” (1991) and “Sunset Boulevard” (1994), among others, and directed a 2006 revival of “A Chorus Line” that ran on Broadway for almost two years, as well as productions of that show in London in 2013 and at New York City Center in 2018. He shared Tony Awards for choreography with Mr. Bennett for “A Chorus Line” (1975) and “Ballroom” (1978).

It all started with a happenstance of casting. Mr. Avian began his career as a dancer, and early on, about 1960, he was cast in an international tour of “West Side Story.”

“I loved the adventure of traveling around the world,” he wrote in “Dancing Man: A Broadway Choreographer’s Journey,” a memoir written with Tom Santopietro and published last year, “but the tour would prove even more momentous for one all-encompassing reason: During rehearsals in New York, I met a fellow castmate, Michael Bennett, a 17-year-old high school dropout marked for greatness.”

The two became friends, and within a few years Mr. Bennett had graduated from dancer to choreographer. In 1968, when he choreographed the Neil Simon/Burt Bacharach/Hal David musical “Promises, Promises” for Broadway, he brought Mr. Avian aboard as assistant choreographer, and they worked



Bob Avian (Photo courtesy Peter Pileski)

together for the next two decades, until Mr. Bennett’s death from AIDS in 1987.

He was assistant or associate choreographer for Mr. Bennett on “Coco” (1969), “Company” (1970), “Follies” (1971) and “Seesaw” (1973). Then, in 1975, came their biggest hit of all, “A Chorus Line,” on which they were co-choreographers.

“A Chorus Line” is a musical about dancers creating a musical, and with Bennett’s and Avian’s snazzy footwork and Marvin Hamlisch’s catchy music, it caused a sensation.

“The conservative word for ‘A Chorus Line’ might be tremendous, or perhaps terrific,” Clive Barnes wrote in the *New York Times*, reviewing the original production at the Public Theater in May 1975; it quickly moved uptown and ran for 15 years and 6,137 performances on Broadway, a record at the time (though it has since been

surpassed by several shows).

Revisiting the show in 2013 in England, Mr. Avian reflected on its appeal.

“The show is about the anonymous kid in the chorus, the guy who works on the assembly line, the clerk in the store,” he told *The Telegraph* of London. “They are everyone. It’s not bigger than life; it is life.”

In his memoir, Avian wrote about what made his creative partnership with Mr. Bennett work.

“I wasn’t cautious with Michael,” he wrote. “I knew him so well that I could tell him exactly what I thought. In effect I seemed to instinctively assume the role of his editor. Michael was a more mercurial personality than I, and ambitious though I was, I did not possess Michael’s burning intensity. I didn’t want to be Michael, and he didn’t want to be me.”

Robert Avedisian (he shortened the name when he became a professional dancer) was born on Dec. 26, 1937, in Manhattan to John and Esther (Keleshian) Avedisian, immigrants from Armenia. His father was a chef, and his mother was a seamstress. By the time he was 11, he knew he loved to dance and was pretty good at it.

“When my parents went out, I would push back the furniture, clear an open space, turn on the record player and leap around the apartment,” he wrote in his memoir. “Boys weren’t supposed to dance, especially not in Armenian culture, but I loved music, and I especially loved the freedom I found in dancing.”

He didn’t have any formal training, though, until he enrolled at Boston University, where he graduated from the College of Fine Arts in 1958. He also studied at the Boston Ballet School.

After the “West Side Story” tour – which was playing Berlin when the Berlin Wall went up in 1961 – he booked a national tour of “Carnival,” working under the director and choreographer Gower Champion. Not long after, he got his first chance to see a show choreographed by his friend Mr. Bennett, a summer stock production of the Richard Rodgers musical “No Strings.”

“I knew right away that he had it – and he knew he had it,” Mr. Avian wrote.

Bennett’s career took off, and with it, Avian’s soon did too.

Some of their projects were more challenging than others. There was, for instance, “Coco,” a 1969 André Previn-Alan Jay Lerner musical that garnered a lot of attention, both for its enormous budget and for its star, Katharine Hepburn, who played the fashion designer Coco Chanel. Mr. Bennett was the choreographer, Mr. Avian his assistant, and from the beginning they realized that they had their work cut out for them. Avian recounted the first rehearsal in “Dancing Man”:

“We’re excited and even in awe of the great Kate – for precisely 10 minutes. And then Michael and I look at each other and realize there’s an elephant in the room: The legendary Katharine Hepburn doesn’t have a musical bone in her body.”

Still, though critics were unkind, “Coco” ran for 329 performances on the basis of star power alone.

Avian wasn’t limited to the choreographic



Bob Avian & Michael Bennett with their 1979 Tony Award for Ballroom (Photo: Bob Deutsch)

side of things in his work with Mr. Bennett. On “Ballroom,” in addition to his Tony-winning choreography, he was a producer. And on their next collaboration, “Dreamgirls” (1981), which Mr. Bennett directed and choreographed, he was a lead producer. That show ran on Broadway for more than three and a half years.

When Bennett became ill, Avian wasn’t sure about his own future, and particularly about whether to accept an offer from the producer Cameron Mackintosh to stage a revival of “Follies” in 1987. In an interview with *The New York Post* last year, he said it had been Mr. Bennett, near death at the time, who spurred him on, telling him: “You should do this. You know what we did with the original, and you know the characters.”

Avian went on to do the “musical staging” (as the credit reads) for Mackintosh’s production of “Miss Saigon,” for Andrew Lloyd Webber’s “Sunset Boulevard” and, in 1999, for the Stephen Sondheim revue “Putting It Together.”

Avian and Pileski, who had been together for 36 years and had homes in Fort Lauderdale, New York and Connecticut, married in 2011. He is also survived by a sister, Laura Nabedian.

## Hagop Ucuzian

WATERTOWN – Hagop Ucuzian of Watertown passed away at home surrounded by his family on January 20, 2021 at the age of 89.

He was born on April 3, 1931 in Sivas, Turkey to the late Dikran and Paris Ucuzian.

He is survived by his beloved wife Nadia (Bilalian) Ucuzian. He was the loving father of Talin Bekelian and her husband Kevork of



Belmont and Tanya Ucuzian of Watertown. He was the proud grandfather of Karina, Liana and Lara. He was the dear brother of Mariam Cogan of Montreal and the late Amira Ucuz. He is also survived by many loving nieces and nephews.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and public safety concerns, funeral services & interment were private.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472.

## ADL and TCA Activist Makrouhi Koumrouyan (Kouyoumjian) Passes Away

BOURDJ HAMMOUD, Lebanon – Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) and Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) activist Makrouhi Koumrouyan (Kouyoumjian) passed away on Friday, January 22, 2021. Services took place on January 22 at the Bourdj Hammoud Armenian cemetery chapel, after which interment took place.

Born as Makruhi Avedisian in 1927, she was the wife of ADL leader Hampartzum Kumruyan (1924-1991), who was former editor of the party organ Zartonk, former chairman of the TCA in Lebanon and veteran member of the Armenian General Benevolent Union and the Armenian Youth Association. He was an intellectual and educator, who used the penname Hrach Vahuni.

Together the couple brought up four children, Dr. Hrach (current chairman of the ADL Supreme Council) and wife Shushan, Vahe and Eleanor, Nora and Kevork Kevorkian, and Harout and Silva, who in turn collectively gave them 10 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren as of today.



## Marie ‘Maro’ Ajemian

### Noted Comic Actress

LOS ANGELES – Marie “Maro” Ajemian, a California actress and school finance director, passed away on Saturday, December 19, 2020, succumbing to an aggressive cancer.

Born in Jerusalem on September 21, 1955, she moved with her family at a young age to Beirut, where she graduated the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Taruhi Hagopian Girls School. She worked for a period of time in Jeddah. In 1981, she moved to the United States.

She was a member of the AGBU Ardvast Theater Group, which became the Satamian Theatre Company, and acted with many other Armenian theatrical groups. She has appeared in 13 plays, 2 operettas, 2 professional plays and a film. She performed stand-up comedy because she believed that “laughter is the cure.”

Maro Ajemian performing at the sold out “An Evening of Comedy” in 2018 organized by the

TCA Metro Los Angeles chapter in Pasadena

She was a longtime member of the Tekeyan Cultural Association as well as the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party.

Maro was well liked for her humor and warm personality. Her love for her family and the Armenian people and culture were well known. She left behind her husband Hrach; son Ara; daughter Salpie and son-in-law Vahe Rupchian and their children Shant, Aren and Vahan; brother Ohan and wife Yvonne Yergainharsian and children, Sona and Nayiri; brother Koko Yergainharsian; and members of the Ajemian, Yergainharsian, Rupchian, Arakelian, Melkonian, Demirjian, Balian, Dawani, Hovhanessian and Kupelian families.

Funeral services, followed by interment, were held on January 5, 2021 at Hollywood Hills Forest Lawn Mortuary Park.







# Egoyan, Kouyoumdjian Pay Tribute to Gorky At Virtual Metropolitan Museum Event

GORKY, from page 1

In an expansive interview this week, Egoyan, an Academy Award-nominated filmmaker with a string of introspective films as well as lush opera productions and installations, has found a way to combine his heritage with a non-linear approach to art.

"Gorky is one of our greatest visual artists," he said, adding "he is clearly, in terms of American contemporary art, hugely important."

"He was one of our most important survivors of the Armenian Genocide," he added, along with Komitas.

The two were "creative forces that needed to survive catastrophe" and in that way, contribute to the canon of world art.

Kouyoumdjian, Egoyan's collaborator in this program, in an interview said she was thrilled

ic car accident, a devastating studio fire and the end of a troubled marriage drove him to suicide in 1948.

(Interestingly, Maxim Gorky himself was the pen name for Russian writer Aleksey Maksimovich Peshkov.)

During his short and tragic life, again and again he returned to the photograph taken of him and his mother before the Genocide.

"The Armenian Genocide was so appalling," Kouyoumdjian said.

The processing of that event, and his role as survivor, she said, led to so much of his art. His life, she said, "offers a lot of insight into what people had gone through."

Egoyan concurred: "He was dealing with a past trauma and that led him to reinvent himself."

## A Painting Casts a Spell

The painting "They Will Take My Island" was the first painting of Gorky that Egoyan saw; it hangs in the Art Gallery of Ontario.

"It has such an evocative title," Egoyan said.

The title of the painting, Egoyan said, is particularly poignant now, after the disastrous war launched against Armenia and Karabakh, which led to the loss of a good portion of the latter.

"It has a strong meaning for me, especially in light of what we have experienced," Egoyan said. "We had no idea how much it would reverberate."

Both he and Kouyoumdjian said they really loved the titled of the painting.

"It's a beautiful title" with "an added significance."

At the end, "We are left to wonder," Kouyoumdjian said.

The Met program includes "really crucial images from" his film "Ararat," including a deleted scene in the Armenian language between Ani, played by his wife and frequent collaborator, actress Arsinée Khanjian, and Gorky, in his studio. In the scene they are talking about this reincarnation as Gorky in the US.

"I am delighted to finally present this scene," Egoyan said.

Kouyoumdjian added, "He [Gorky] kept coming back to the photo. There must have been so many feelings and thoughts. The loss of his home and his identity. What he could not say during the Genocide, he returned to in order to express himself."

"Gorky did express the same image repeatedly. I can relate to it as well," she noted, adding that "for the past 20 years, most of my work has centered on the Armenian Genocide."

In addition, it includes scenes from "Portrait of Arshile," which Egoyan explained, is a love letter of sorts in the form of a short film, addressed to his son with Khanjian. "We wanted to describe to our son why we had chosen to name him Arshile," he said.

The Met project "is a very different way to work," he said. "Something really developed organically."

"This is a collaboration unlike anything I've done before," Kouyoumdjian added.

"It was a dialogue between the two of us," he said, explaining that as diasporan artists he and Kouyoumdjian could offer a specific point of view.

Kouyoumdjian said that Egoyan would share clips and she would compose based on those.

In addition, the project features the voices of several experts on the works of Egoyan, including his granddaughter.

Said Kouyoumdjian, "Normally I write a lot of music for film. Atom had given me access to his films 'Ararat' and 'A Portrait of Arshile.' I took excerpts of audio and edited them into the music. I sent Atom the mockup of what the music would be. He and his editor created films for that music. It was a really interesting collaboration. I scored music to that story so that the music would serve the text best."

It is especially heartbreaking to think about the "ancient monuments that are being desecrated once again," he added. The images of the attacks on the Nakhijevan monuments were fresh in the minds of Armenians, but already, a

whole host of new photos and videos of attacks on Karabakh's historic monuments are being released.

At the same time, he painting and sketched many versions of the 1912 photograph that was taken of him and his mother, possibly influenced by frescos of the Madonna and Jesus that he would have seen.

Egoyan noted that initially when the Metropolitan Museum approached Kouyoumdjian and him to put together the program, it was meant to be a spread-out series of events and concerts. The pandemic, however, forced the two to come up with a new virtual format.

The Metropolitan Museum has on exhibit one painting by Gorky, "Water of the Flowery Mill."

## Armenian Genocide's Shadow

Aside from creative outlets as diasporan artists, what unites Egoyan and Kouyoumdjian is their connection with the Armenian Genocide.

Egoyan's grandmother was orphaned during the Genocide and later ended up in Egypt.

"Her sorrow seeped through to [her son] my father, who was an artist," he added. In fact, both his parents were painters who met in Cairo as students of teacher and artist Ashot Zoryan. (Art is a family business for the Egoyans; his sister, Eve, is a concert pianist.)

His father's "tremendous sense of grief" was expressed through his art. In fact, he said, the first time his father visited the Tsitsernakabert Armenian Genocide Monument in Yerevan, "he had a psychic breakdown when he saw the structure, the pillars ... which took him back to that moment."

Preserving memories – the past – is a theme Egoyan frequently revisits, as well as addressing

The composer noted that her grandparents were survivors of the Armenian Genocide and they eventually ended up in Lebanon. "As a grandchild who lives in the US and [not worried about] a lot of risk exploring this."

Kouyoumdjian often mixes voices with her classical compositions, which are often influenced by Armenian folk melodies. In 2015, for the Genocide centennial, she created music for the Kronos Quartet.

"We took the pieces to Yerevan, where we interviewed with survivors. When audiences hear things ... from human voices, it hits a little differently than if it were only music," she said. "It invites empathy from the listener."

## Importance of Art and Monuments

Egoyan said he was happy that the project was finished before the recent disastrous war.

"I hope our holy sites are preserved but we are incredibly fearful," he noted.

Egoyan said that one of the factors that drew him so deeply into the late artist's world was an essay by Peter Balakian, titled "Arshile Gorky: From the Armenian Genocide to the Avant-Garde."

Egoyan said that he "tends to go back to images and reexamine and reframe them," he said.

He also used footage from an Armenian protest in front of the Turkish embassy and other material. All the footage was eventually transferred to 35-millimeter film and shown later as part of the Venice Biennale among others.

"We need to instill in ourselves that our culture matters and that it can also matter to others," Egoyan said.

In case of Gorky, he said, it was interesting that Gorky was running away from his history as it was too traumatic for him, but "his horri-



Mary Kouyoumdjian (CAROLINE TOMPKINS PHOTO)

to collaborate with the Canadian filmmaker.

"I have been such a big fan of Atom Egoyan since I was a teenager," she said.

She had sent him a letter and asked for him to collaborate with her, and she said to her surprise, he had replied positively.

"It was incredible that he had awareness of who I was," she recalled.

Aside from mutual admiration, she explained that both she and Egoyan have been influenced greatly by the life and work of Arshile Gorky.

Egoyan said he was delighted when Kouyoumdjian approached him for the Metropolitan project.

One of the reasons Egoyan was thrilled to work with Kouyoumdjian was her libretto on Egoyan.

"We were committed to the idea of working together," he said. "It was a way of going deeper into the character."

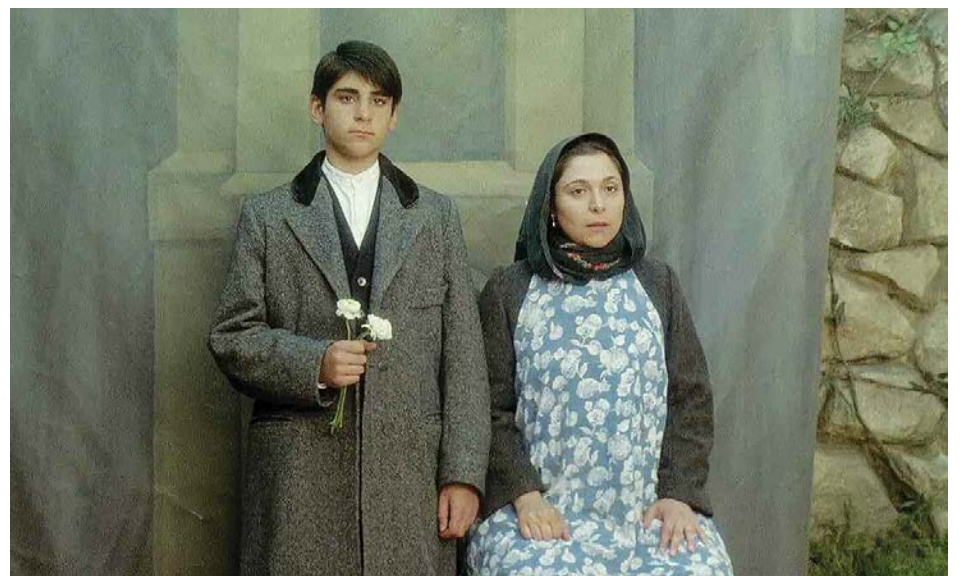
The program also includes interviews with Saskia Spender, granddaughter of Arshile Gorky and President of the Arshile Gorky Foundation; Parker Field, Managing Director of the Arshile Gorky Foundation; and Michael Taylor, Chief Curator of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

"We were hoping to present it on stage and use the museum for an expansive production of this piece," Egoyan said.

## Reinventing Vostanik

In addition to his obvious talent and tragic backstory, Gorky's fascination lies in his mystery, Egoyan said.

Gorky's life story is like a work of fiction, with highs and lows that are almost beyond human endurance. He was born in Van in 1904 as Vostanik Adayan, survived the Armenian Genocide, saw the death from starvation of his beloved mother, and after arriving in the US and reinventing himself as Arshile Gorky, a relative of writer Maxim Gorky, became a trailblazer of 20th-century American abstract school of painting along with Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning. A trag-



Scene from "Ararat" in which Vostanik and his mother pose for a photographer.

the distortion of history. The pain makes it so that "there are answers that can't be pondered," he explained.

This theme, he said, applies to his movies that do not deal with the Armenian Genocide, such as 2013's "The Devil's Knot," with Colin Firth and Reese Witherspoon, about the "communal horror" that grips a small, rural American town after the murder of several children.

History and immigration as well as the Armenian Genocide have shaped Kouyoumdjian's viewpoint, also.

"When my parents came to the US, they had no people here. So there was a lot of pressure growing up to preserve the culture. Growing up in the '80s and '90s, here I was pushing against all those things. When I moved away from home," however, she explained, she started to appreciate what she had been rebelling against and embraced it.

Another influence of the Armenian Genocide, she said, is the idea of survivors' guilt, something that she said fascinated her.

"Part of it has meant that because I am in a position that I can speak out, I feel it is my responsibility to do so," she noted.

fyng history was so woven into his work."

Artists like Komitas and Gorky, he said, "transmit the core of our identity. We have a responsibility to preserve those and as artists to keep them alive."

Asked Kouyoumdjian: "There is so much culture and art that was destroyed. How do we move art and culture forward?"

## Other Projects

Egoyan stressed that it is not always the dark side of humanity that interests him; he takes on the jolly side when he works in opera, including the Canadian Opera Company's production of Mozart's "Cosi fan Tutte," to which he brings "joy and lightness."

Egoyan is working on various opera projects that have been pushed back because of COVID to 2022 and 2023, and two film projects are also in the running.

"Death in Venice" by Benjamin Britten for Pacific Opera Victoria and Richard Strauss's "Salome" for the Canadian Opera Company.

When you make a film you think wider, about who will see the film, he explained.

*continued on next page*





## Tribute to Gorky

from previous page

"It is great to have the support of the Met," he added. "How does anyone really apply themselves to an art work? The Met did have the major exhibition 'Armenia.'"

Kouyoumdjian has received commissions for such organizations as the New York Philharmonic, Kronos Quartet, Carnegie Hall, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Beth Morrison Projects/OPERA America, Alarm Will Sound, among others. Her work has been performed internationally at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, MASS MoCA, the Barbican Centre, Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), Millennium Park, and more. She has also worked on the soundtrack of the movies "The Place Beyond the Pines" and "Demoniac."

She is currently finishing her doctorate at Columbia University; she holds an M.A. in Composition from Columbia University, an M.A. in Scoring for Film & Multimedia from New York University, and a B.A. in Music Composition from the University of California, San Diego.

Kouyoumdjian noted that she has made a resolution to do more things that scare her professionally, in order to expand her horizons.

She has collaborated with the Metropolitan before. A couple of years ago, she recalled, she was commissioned to write for the soundtrack to be performed live at a showing of Sergei Paradjanov's "Color of Pomegranates"

For more information about Atom Egoyan and his past and future endeavors, visit [www.egofilmarts.com](http://www.egofilmarts.com); for information about Mary Kouyoumdjian, visit <http://www.marykouyoumdjian.com/>.

To watch "They Will Take My Island," visit the museum's website <https://www.metmuseum.org/events>. The program will be up indefinitely.

## US Secretary of State Nominee Blinken Calls Turkey 'So-called Strategic Partner'

BLINKEN, from page 1

Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Jim Risch (R-ID) echoed Menendez's perspective. Risch has been known for criticizing Turkey on many occasions for buying Russian armaments, stating of Ankara that "these interests are in direct conflict with Turkey's long-standing allies in NATO and fuel instability in the region."

Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) inquired as to whether Biden's administration would pursue more sanctions against Turkey, "until they change the behavior." Blinken, who had looked into some of CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), before coming to the Senate, stated

that what Turkey has done in acquiring the Russian S-400 missile system is unacceptable: "The idea that a so-called strategic partner of ours is in line with one of our biggest strategic competitors - Russia, is not acceptable. We need to see the impact the existing sanctions we have had and then determine whether more needs to be done."

The final part of Robert Menendez's questioning was about the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide and its acknowledgment by the Biden administration.

The video of the segments related to Armenia/Artsakh and Turkey are available at [mirrorspectator.com](http://mirrorspectator.com).

## Diocese Creates Group to Focus on Protecting Artsakh's Armenian Heritage

HERITAGE, from page 6

globally about the religious and cultural monuments at risk; and compile a database of academic research and publications topical to Artsakh and its ancient Armenian heritage.

Since the ceasefire, Azerbaijan continues to push out a multi-pronged disinformation and revisionist history campaign designed to de-Armenianize the monasteries and churches that exist in Artsakh. It persists, too, in destroying numerous khachkars and obstructing international cultural and aid groups from inspecting monuments and monasteries now under Azeri control.

Armenian intellectuals around the world have also signed numerous open letters to various global cultural groups, including UNESCO, condemning Azerbaijan for its attempt at revising the cultural history of the region.

As the danger looms over Artsakh's Armenian heritage sites, the Diocesan committee aims to contribute to documenting and monitoring the Armenian monuments in the region; bring together existing research while supporting new research on Artsakh, in Armenia and the diaspora, to combat Azerbaijan's disinformation campaign; and reach out to diasporan Armenians and non-Armenian friends and allies regarding the importance and historical significance of the endangered sites.



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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.

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By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/NOVATO, Calif. – Alice Calaprice was born in Berlin in 1941 to a German father and Armenian mother. Her grandfather Artashes Abeghian was one of the brilliant Armenian intellectuals of the first half of the 20th century. He received his doctorate in Germany and later taught at the universities of Berlin and Munich. Among other works, he published a German-Armenian grammar book and dictionary, a map of ancient and modern Armenia, a translation of Goethe into Armenian, and of Armenian writers into German. He was also a Member of Parliament of Armenia's First Republic.

In 1951, Alice immigrated to the US with her mother and sister, Margit. She graduated in 1963 from the University of California at Berkeley with a degree in sociology and minor in Near Eastern Studies. In 1970 she moved to Princeton, NJ, with her husband and two children. From 1978 to 2002, she worked as a senior editor at Princeton University Press and became an author and editor of several books. Now she lives in Novato, Calif.



Dear Alice, I first learned about you from your mother, the late Mrs. Rusan Abeghian (whose letters to me I treasure), who in 1996 sent me the first edition of your first book, *The Quotable Einstein*, which have been translated into about 25 languages! I was thrilled to read that book, which revealed many aspects of Albert Einstein the man. It later had three updated editions, plus you wrote a book on children's letters to Einstein, a bibliography of his writings that you put into personal and historical context, and a biography for young adults, written with Trevor Lipscombe. Due to your knowledge of German as well as your writing and editing skills, you became one of the right people to help bring to light some previously unknown aspects of Einstein's life, legacy, and personality. How much of the 42,000 Einstein-related documents has been presented to the general audience?

Artsvi, it's great to be doing this interview with you. The first and last time we met was in 2003 in Princeton, which gave us a chance to talk about our families and maybe also about my longtime work with Einstein's papers. It is hard to estimate how much of the archive made it into my books. The sheer number of documents in the archive reflects the complexity of his work, personality, and the times in which he lived. There are thousands more documents see CALAPRICE, page 14



The HARC Studio

## Detroit's Armenian Radio Shows Forge Ahead

DETROIT – The Detroit metropolitan area, the home of some 40,000 Armenians, has perhaps the singular honor in the Eastern United States of having two Armenian programs broadcast on the radio airwaves.

The two programs, H.A.R.C. (Heritage of Armenian Culture Radio) and the Armenian Radio Program of Detroit, have long supplied cultural content to the local Armenian community and beyond. Furthermore, these two serve complementary roles.

While the Armenian Radio Hour of Detroit is similar to programs in other communities which offer popular music and community news, HARC provides more classical content and is aimed not only at the Armenian community, but the music and culture lovers of the wider region.

It is a testament to the strong Detroit Armenian community that two radio programs have been founded there and still exist to the present.

### Detroit's Armenian Radio Program

Known and beloved for years as the Armenian Radio Hour, this program is the oldest Armenian radio show in the country and perhaps one of the oldest ethnic programs, period.

The Armenian Radio Hour of Detroit first aired on May 22, 1943 on WJLB-AM (1400), founded and hosted by tar-player Haig Ohanian, who had at the time recently relocated to Detroit from the New York area.

Ohanian, born in Ekaterinodar (renamed Krasnodar), Russia, was a musician and sometime actor in ethnic productions, as well as occasionally playing bit parts in Hollywood. Having arrived in the United States in 1924, he was responsible for the once well-known "High Art Recordings" label of 78 rpm records. Although his Caucasus style of Armenian music was at the time not in much demand for live events in Michigan, he found his niche on the radio where his productions were showcased. The "High Art" recordings, according to many, were actually performed by an orchestra of non-Armenian classical session musicians, for whom Ohanian prepared sheet music. Ohanian himself performed the tar in these recordings, and see RADIO, page 13



Haig Ohanian playing tar, 1940s. Originator of the Armenian Radio Hour

A Critical Exclusive

## Antonina Mahari On How to Survive Fascism and Communism – and Being Married to An Armenian!

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

*"That's how the world is arranged: they can take anyone's freedom from him, without a qualm. If we want to take back the freedom which is our birthright – they make us pay with our lives and the lives of all whom we meet on the way. They can do anything, but we cannot. That's why they are stronger than we are."*

–Georgi Tenno

*The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*

NEW YORK – Born in 1923 into an educated family of the Vilnius bourgeoisie, Antonina Pavlitayte spent her early twenties during the Nazi occupation that devastated her home country of Lithuania during WWII.

Much of the country was stripped of its freedom and people – often the most accomplished members of society – were summarily executed at a whim. The Gestapo imprisoned Pavlitayte on trumped-up charges. She watched members of the country's leading intellectuals and artists, many of them her friends, mercilessly tortured until they perished rather than confess to crimes that they had never committed. Pavlitayte decided to remain in Lithuania after the war despite warnings from many of her peers who fled to the West. This was a decision that the young writer and thinker was later to regret when an even greater threat descended on her nation in the form of the Soviet Russians who drove out the Germans from this once powerful Baltic kingdom.

After having watched so many of her fellow Lithuanians murdered and tortured by the Nazis in the most abhorrent ways, the young Pavlitayte discovered that if any group of people could perhaps equal the Nazis in vicious ideological warfare and abject cruelty threat it was perhaps the Stalinists. Antonina had a heart of gold and a will of steel, but seeing her fellow countrywomen psychologically tortured and publicly accused of being everything from traitors to their nation to common street whores, was even more difficult. One might have expected such behavior from Fascists who after all placed the nebulous entity known as The Nation above all individuals –and over the concept of Freedom itself. But Fellow Travelers and the original Marxist-Leninists both had dreamt of a brotherly Utopia where societal resources and individual wealth would be shared equally by all – the fall seemed even greater yet. How then to reconcile any of this with Louis Althusser's observation that "Ideology... is indispensable in any society if men are to be formed, transformed and equipped to respond to the demands of their conditions of existence."

Arrested almost immediately once the Russian secret services entered Lithuania, Pavlitayte was jailed and interrogated for months. One of the hardest things she described was watching both the proud and the weak perish under the strain of human cruelty – the aristocrat shorn of her honor and standing, the innocent young girl who cannot see MAHARI, page 16





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## Detroit's Armenian Radio

RADIO, from page 12

when vocals were necessary, generally American-Armenian young women from the Detroit area were featured. One of these singers was dramatic soprano Araxie Serkaian Terterian, whose brother, Nerses "Nick" Serkaian would take over the program in 1967.

Nick Serkaian's broadcasts of the Armenian Radio Hour, which he hosted for a staggering 37 years, are fondly remembered by community



Nerses "Nick" Serkaian, former host of the Armenian Radio Hour

members to this day. The shrill clarinet strain of the well-known march *Zeitoutsiner* (i.e. *Ippolitov-Ivanov's Procession of the Sardar*) was the signal to the younger generation that "grandma was listening to the Armenian Radio Hour."

To many community members, Serkaian was the Armenian Radio Hour. Unlike

Haig Ohanian, who had broadcast in Armenian, Serkaian broadcast in English to cater to the next generation, and took pride in being one of the few American-born hosts of an ethnic radio program throughout the country.

Born in Detroit in 1932 to immigrant parents from Turkey, Serkaian was staunchly non-partisan within the Armenian community. Serkaian made the program a community bulletin board, announcing local news like weddings, funerals, and church affairs. He took pride in having been able to announce births of children, later on, their graduations and marriages, and finally the births of their own children. He also promoted local Armenian-owned businesses. In between, he played popular Armenian folk music. By the late 1990s, the program had bounced around the dial to where it is now, WNZK-AM (690) "the Station of the Nations," which features mostly a variety of ethnic programming.

In 2004, Vaughn Masropian, the dumbeg player and vocalist of the local "Johnites" band, took over the program. When Serkaian was on his deathbed, Masropian relates, "he wanted me at the hospital. He grabbed me with his hand — he had worked in construction — and almost squeezed it off. He said, 'Under no means does anyone else have the rights to the time slot.'" Masropian went to the WNZK studio, whose staff kindly taught him the ropes of how to record the show, as previously recorded shows by Serkaian were played for a few weeks.

For the past 17 years, Masropian has been the affable host of what is now called the Armenian Radio Program. He has moved the time slot from 10 a.m. on Sundays, to 6 p.m.



Vaughn Masropian, host of the Armenian Radio Program

Under the slogan of "A Community in Unity," he has forged relationships with the clergy of all four area Armenian churches, St. John's (Diocese), St. Sarkis (Prelacy), St. Vartan's Armenian Catholic Church, and the Armenian Congregational Church, whose clergy appear as regular guests on the show. Entering the digital age, the show is also now available online.



Bulletin board at HARC studio of famous artists that have been interviewed or featured

### HARC (Heritage of Armenian Culture Radio)

The HARC Armenian radio program has an entirely different mission and role. The brainchild of community leader, cultural and literary critic, ADL/Tekeyan activist, and the *Mirror-Spectator's* senior editorial columnist, Edmond Y. Azadian, HARC was launched in 1973. Azadian, as founder and executive director, saw the need for a different kind of program to serve not only the Armenian community but to introduce the wider public to Armenian culture.

The purpose, according to Azadian, was to promote Armenian culture and give it a more scholarly format as well. Funded by the Manoogian Foundation, the program does not have any advertising and doesn't consider itself to be in competition with other radio programs that serve more popular tastes. Azadian credits four well-known individuals in the cultural realm that helped give the program a boost at its inception: Berge Jamgotchian, organist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra; Detroit native Ara Berberian, operatic bass who later joined New York's Metropolitan Opera; New York-based pianist, composer, and musicologist Shahan Arzruni; and Detroit-born, Juilliard-trained Armenian popular folk and dance clarinetist and ethnomusicologist Hachig Kazarian.

Originally airing on Wayne State University's WDET radio station and hosted by influential local radio personality and WDET anchor Judy Adams (of Armenian descent), the program was also syndicated and aired across the US and Canada. In the days when everything was done on reel-to-reels, the recording of the show would be circulated to stations as far as New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and even Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Initially, a committee composed of Azadian and community leaders and musicians such as Alice Haidostian and Margaret Benian (both noted pianists) had developed the plans for the program. Benian had suggested Charlene Apigian to be involved in the planning committee as well. Since part of the goal was to provide academic level information on composers, artists, and other cultural figures, Apigian suggested the creation of an archive or mini-library of information on these individuals. In 1976, Apigian was given the role of program host and co-producer.

As the program developed, operations were moved from the WDET studio to a specially-constructed radio room in the St. John's Armenian Church complex in Southfield. Recording engineer, Ron Manasian, was put in charge of constructing the radio room along with his cousin Joe Arslanian, a carpenter. An impressive mini-studio was built, complete with reel-to-reel play-

ers, turntables, microphones, shelving units for the completed shows, storage for LPs and cassettes, drawers, etc. In a nearby room were the file cabinets with all of the newspaper clippings, photographs, and pamphlets that Apigian had collected. For about 15 years, Apigian ably served as host with Manasian as engineer.

"Initially our idea was to broadcast not only music, but also to develop the music archives so that any individual could come and use our archives. That's why we have accumulated the voices of many historic artists," Azadian states, and goes on to name Akim Tamiroff, William Saroyan, Alan Hovhaness, sculptor Roupen Nakian, the Kavafian sisters (classical violinists), Ludwig Basil (an Armenian composer from Germany), and scholars like David Marshall Lang, Christopher Walker, and theatre figure Gerald Papisian. Azadian also gives credit to Soviet Armenia's "Committee for Cultural Relations with Armenians Abroad" which provided HARC regularly with music and texts (translated by Azadian) from 1973 until the fall of the USSR.

For the last 30 years, Suzy Cazandjian has been the host of HARC. As a student at Wayne State University in Detroit, Cazandjian majored in public relations but was heavily involved in taking the Armenian studies courses offered at the time by Professor Dickran Toumajan, as well as music. Cazandjian, a classical pianist, was passionate about introducing the music of Armenian composers such as Khachaturian, Babajanian, and Barkhoudarian in piano competitions that she entered. Toumajan introduced her to Azadian at a time when Apigian needed to retire from the radio program, and she was given the role. Cazandjian sees her job as host as a natural extension of her championing of Armenian music through her own appearances as a pianist.

The current focus of the program is on classical, opera, folk and liturgical music. Features on Armenian composers, musicians, writers, and poets are included as well as documentaries on Armenian history and culture. Everything is broadcast in English. Cazandjian says that she gets a lot of feedback from non-Armenian listeners and it thrills her that they are hearing this music that they wouldn't be able to hear otherwise.

Typically, Cazandjian does 3 contrasting segments. At one time, according to Azadian, the 3 segments would be classical, folk music, and an interview. Cazandjian says that she sometimes might do a documentary program which could take up the whole show or half the show. She does the research and prepares the programs, as well as hosts the show. Azadian has stepped back into more of an advisory capacity at this point. For the past 22 years, the show has, like the Armenian Radio Hour, moved to WNZK, where it now airs on Sundays at 9 p.m.

Apigian reminisced about some of the famous Armenians that have appeared on the program



Former HARC host Charlene Apigian with husband Ardo. They performed together in an Armenian band in the 1960s

in her time: Eddie Mekka (from the TV show "Laverne and Shirley"), Mike Connors (star of "Mannix"), and movie actor David Hedison.

"We featured anything written by or performed by an Armenian," Apigian recalls. They would record noted baritone opera singer Ara Berberian (a Detroit native) reciting poetry. In some cases, Apigian was able to get noted poets such as Diana Der Hovanessian and David Kherdian to record themselves reciting their own poetry at their homes, and send the tapes back to Detroit.

"The caliber of artists we've had on the program, everything about it is very unique and special," says Cazandjian.

For a schedule of the programs, visit <http://www.birach.com/wnzkgpm.html>





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Alice Calaprice: Deep Roots in Two Cultures

CALAPRICE, from page 12

now than there were 43 years ago, when I prepared the original computerized index of the archive for which Prof. John Stachel laid the groundwork. In my books, I tried to impart some facets of Einstein's remarkable life that could be found in the archive at the time my books were published. I am neither a physicist nor a historian of science, so my books were vetted by specialists but are written for a general audience. Einstein was not only a physicist but also a humanitarian, an astute political activist, and a man of many involvements and interests, such as philosophy, music, travel, and leisure-time activities like sailing. His name is known all over the world, but there are many myths about him that scholars have been attempting to correct.

**And your Einstein work became *An Einstein Encyclopedia*, published in 2015 with two co-authors.**

Yes, I thought it would be useful to have a small, desk-top encyclopedia that summarily covers the fundamentals of Einstein's life. I had often wished I had such a reference at my disposal while doing research and spending hours to search for basic facts. Einstein scholars can now quickly find facts about his life, family, colleagues, works, activities, awards, interests, relationships, and so forth. Two Einstein-scholar friends – a historian and a physicist, both of whom had worked on The Collected Papers of Albert Einstein volumes – agreed to join me in this project. I had copyedited the fifteen volumes that have been published to date and thus had easy access to facts. Princeton University Press published the encyclopedia. I think we succeeded in presenting the most useful information, including reproductions of some interesting documents and photos from the archive.

**You are an avid traveler and have visited about 45 countries. Which one stands out for you?**

Thank you for asking about my favorite pastime! Traveling widely is, in my opinion, as important an educational pursuit as reading a wide variety of books. I've always been captivated by the foreign and the unknown, both in travel and in subject matter. Twenty-five years ago, I became especially curious about the remote parts of the world that many people don't want to visit. I had also become more passionate about wildlife and conservation and wanted to combine the two interests. My first eco-trip was in 1995 to a part of Siberia called the Russian Far East; the organizers labeled it "In the Tracks of Siberia's Great Cats." Who could resist a trip to track tigers and Amur leopards! Our small group was the first non-scientist group to be allowed into that area after the Iron Curtain fell. We visited three nature preserves close to the coast during this trip. Today I can't believe that I ventured out like that, but it's still my most memorable trip. We didn't see any wild cats, only some huge paw prints in the mud. One of the guides poured plaster on a track, made a mold, and later gave it to me. We also had to scale a cliff along the Sea of Japan because of high tides in the area we were exploring, and I think this might have been the most frightening experience in my adult life. I wrote a detailed journal about this trip, as well as subsequent trips to Botswana and to Mongolia and China, where I traveled with my adult children. Also memorable were Iran, the Amazon Basin in Peru, India – I went there twice – and Uzbekistan. You might remember that you had put me in touch with a friend of yours in Tashkent, whom I met there, musicologist Alexander Djumaev. I also loved Rwanda, Kenya, Botswana, and Namibia because of the chance to see wild animals. In Rwanda, just a few years ago, a friend and I, together with a small group of adventurers and porters, climbed a steep mountain, close to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in rainy weather. All this for the privilege of having a one-hour visit with a family of mountain gorillas! The porters carried rifles to protect us not from gorillas, but from Congolese guerrillas and poachers.

**Alice, you have also been in your mother's country – Armenia – when it was still a part of the Soviet empire... what about that trip?**

Of course, that trip was memorable as well! I had heard about a group of Armenians who were given permission to go there in September 1986, and decided to join them, then my mother and sister decided to go as well. It's a special experience to breathe, for the first time, the air that one's ancestors had breathed for centuries. I had the same feeling later, when, in 1991 or 1992, I visited Berlin, where I myself had taken my first breath.

In Armenia, my mother was, of course, much more emotional than Margit and I. She was, once again, back in Yerevan, where she had spent several years of her childhood. In 1966, she had already made her first return visit. Some of her many relatives came to the hotel for a tearful reunion and to meet Margit and me. For the most part, we were not allowed to leave our group and guide, and we were required to spend nights at our hotel. Somehow, a cousin and her boyfriend managed to get permission (or maybe not!) to whisk us out of town to their favorite restaurant in a fairly distant rural area, farther away than we were, in principle, allowed to go.

We were able to sight-see within Yerevan on our own and got around by subway. We managed to visit a cousin, Mher Abeghyan, the artist and son of Manouk Abeghyan, who took us to the wing of a museum that contained many of his paintings. In another cousin's small apartment, we enjoyed a lavish dinner and wonderful hospitality. In the rural areas, we visited the usual famed venues, including the poignant genocide memorial at Tsitsernakaberd and several of the beautiful churches for which Armenia is famous. My mother became most emotional, however, when we visited Tbilisi (Tiflis) in Georgia, where she was born and, as noted in her memoir, had spent the most joyful years of her early childhood. When she was about 7 years old, after my grandfather became a member of Parliament during the First Republic, her family moved to Yerevan. After that, her life became very chaotic, with emigration to Germany four years later, wartime, divorce, and then off to America with Margit and me.

**Alice, although you were a child when you knew your maternal grandfather, what kind of memories do you have of Artashes Abeghian?**

By the time I was born in Berlin during the war, my grandparents and mother had been settled there for almost 20 years and were assimilated into German life, but they were fervently hanging on to their Armenian culture as well. I know that my grandfather was intensely involved in Armenian activities, even though the Armenian community in Germany was small at the time. I didn't know about some of his involvements until I read about them after my mother's death. I know he was revered by the displaced Armenians who ended up in postwar Germany. We were generally introduced to them as his grandchildren, suggesting to us that it was an honor to be related to him.

I'm sorry to say I don't remember much about my grandfather firsthand, since I've forgotten almost everything about our years in Germany, which for me were years of war and postwar experiences and losses. My remembered image of him is his bald head bending down, fountain pen in hand, looking at papers and books. Occasionally, he would put me on his lap and show me how to use a dictionary. My grandmother, Natasha, lived in his shadow, but I think she was his equal intellectually, being well educated, cosmopolitan, and a compulsive reader and storyteller. I believe both my grandparents spoke to us mostly in German, and we called them Oma and Opa, the words German children call their grandparents. We spoke German with my mother as well, and later English, so I never became fluent in Armenian. But we did learn the Armenian alphabet and learned to write simple sentences, and Margit also speaks the language better than I do.

**During your youth, you were involved in Armenian community life. I remember some translations of Armenian tales from German into English in the American-Armenian press of the 1960s... It will be interesting to know**

**about those activities.**

Yes, after we came to America, we became part of the Armenian community. I joined the Armenian Youth Federation Juniors in San Francisco, and later the "seniors." During my college years, I became an active member and held several positions as an officer, including AYF West Coast Council president. As a delegate, I attended national conventions on the East Coast and in this way got to know Armenian communities in other parts of America. I was also a camp counselor at Camp Hayastan in Massachusetts for two summers, where each counselor directed the activities of a group of children. Several of my fellow AYF members are still friends. But being half-German, I always had an identity problem, as the pressures to "be Armenian" were many, and sometimes hurtful.

As to the Armenian folktales: My grandfather had translated them from Armenian into German, and he probably published some of them in German newspapers. When I was still a child, my mother showed them to me. I read them, loved them, and decided to translate them from German into English. My mother suggested I submit them to the Armenian newspapers, and some were published a few years later. As an adult, I translated more stories and thought I might try to get them published in book form, but then I learned that one or two authors had already done so, and I gave up on the idea.

**Do you have any plans for a new book and trip in this new year?**

I don't have any plans for another book, at

least not about Einstein! The motivation to continue writing about him has disappeared by now, especially since I've moved away from my colleagues. I had been asked to co-author a book about the Armenian displaced persons and the DP camp in Germany after World War II, but I recently decided I wasn't up to it as an author. I had already bought a few books on postwar displaced persons in Europe and became interested in the topic, so I offered to collaborate if I can be of help in some other way. I decided to dig into my own family history instead, as people of my age often do! Coincidentally, last year a German cousin informed me she found a boxful of old letters among the belongings of her deceased mother. Among them were letters from my mother, my Armenian grandmother, and my father to my aunt and to my German grandmother, from 1946 until we left Germany in 1951. Some of them were heart-wrenching but enlightening, answering some of my unanswered questions. I also learned that my father, whom I met only once as an adult, became a pacifist after the war. My mother's diary from 1931 and 1932, while she was in Geneva as a young woman studying languages, was also in the box. All this material was written in German. I am thinking that this treasure trove will provide some good material for memoir-writing!

As to trips, who knows how this year will unfold? A friend and I had planned to go to Armenia last fall, but of course that became impossible because of the coronavirus. Maybe this year, big adventures will become possible again! I still feel up to it!

## Mariinsky Theater Records Beethoven Symphonies Performed by Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra

ST. PETERSBURG (Panorama.am) – The Russian Mariinsky Theater, one of the largest cultural institutions in the world, are recording Beethoven symphonies performed by the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra (ANPO). The works are being carried out with the consent of the theater's artistic director and principal conductor Valery Gergiev.

Within the framework of A Pilgrimage to Beethoven festival, the orchestra is performing the genius composer's Symphonies No. 1, No. 2, and No. 5 out of 9 planned for recording under the baton of its artistic director and principal conductor maestro Eduard Topchjan. The process is carried out at Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall, the head of the Public Relations and Marketing Department of A Pilgrimage to Beethoven, Rosa Grigoryan, reported on Monday.

The 14-member staff led by Mariinsky Theater top specialists has brought high-quality and state-of-the-art video-recording equipment, including 2 PTS devices, as well as 5 cameramen, who shoot from 10 positions, to create a high-quality image and sound. The final product will be distributed via international streaming and distribution platforms, presenting Armenian classical art in the best way possible. It should be noted that these specialists are behind audio and video production of a famous Mariinsky TV channel.

"It is a great honor for us that the artistic director and the principal conductor of the Mariinsky Theater, Valery Gergiev, approved the visit of his specialists to Armenia, who carry out the process under the direction of the Grammy-nominated sound director Ilya Petrov, stage director Dmitry Kazakov, and video engi-

neer Arseniy Nikolayev. Specialists from Saint Petersburg praised the orchestra level of performance, skill and dedication of Maestro Topchjan, professionalism of local sound and light specialists, and effectiveness of the hall staff who diligently assisted to the specialists of the Mariinsky Theater throughout the whole recording. Hopefully soon Armenian and international public will have the opportunity to see and hear the result. We should have high-quality video and audio product, which we will promote and distribute via various electronic streaming platforms," General Producer of the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra Arman Padaryan noted. He has organized the visit of the Mariinsky Theater technicians to Armenia.



Members of the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra

A Pilgrimage to Beethoven festival is organized by the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra with the support of Armenia's Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

The festival pays tribute to the legacy of the genius composer, which was created in the context of his eternal struggle against darkness. Two symphony and two chamber concerts have already taken place within the framework of the festival. There will be more Beethoven concerts this year. Incidentally, ANPO plans to complete recordings of all 9 Beethoven symphonies in 2021.





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# U.S.-Turkey Accord Grants Ankara Rights to Christian Cultural Heritage

ACCORD, from page 1

heritage of the region's indigenous peoples and minority populations - among them Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs, Arameans, Maronites, Jews and Kurds," said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. "This reckless and irresponsible move was done over the protests of the ANCA, the Hellenic American Leadership Council, and In Defense of Christians by an Administration well aware that Turkey has openly, unapologetically, and systematically spent the past two centuries destroying minorities, desecrating their holy sites, and erasing even their memory from the landscape of their ancient, indigenous homelands."

Hellenic American Leadership Council Executive Director Endy Zemenides concurred. "In his confirmation hearing for Secretary of

State, Anthony Blinken correctly identified Turkey as a 'so-called strategic partner' of the United States. The fact that the present State Department ignored both the divergence in strategic interest and, most importantly, democratic values and signed a cultural agreement with a Turkey that has demonstrated the intent to wipe out its Christian minorities and their heritage is a travesty. Those that participated in the signing of this agreement are potentially complicit in the continuation of Turkey's oppression of its Christians. We will work with the incoming Secretary and Administration to ensure that this agreement is indeed effectuated in such a way that actually protects Christian heritage in Turkey," stated Zemenides.

IDC President Toufic Baaklini explained, "This MOU is a shameful stamp of American

approval on the destruction of Christian cultural heritage in Turkey. We will work with the incoming Biden Administration to ensure U.S. policy towards Turkey will be much stronger moving forward."

Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou, who served on the US Commission on International Religious Freedom from 2004-2012 and lectures at Tufts University Fletcher School, called the agreement "a surreal moment in U.S. foreign policy." Prodromou explained, "well-documented and extensive evidence by cultural heritage experts leaves no doubt that the state of Turkey is the single greatest threat to that country's cultural heritage. The Trump Administration has now put the United States in the position of enabler to Turkey's weaponization of cultural heritage policy, used for a century as a cudgel to erase the country's vulnerable religious minorities,

including Greek, Armenian, and Assyrian Christians, and Jews. The incoming Biden administration will face one more challenge in trying to restore U.S. leadership in the protection of human rights and religious freedom, as Washington tries to ensure that Turkey does not hide beyond the MOU in order to commit 'memoricide' against its Christian and Jewish minority communities."

The cultural property agreement with Turkey was negotiated by the State Department under the U.S. law implementing the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey David Satterfield and Turkish Minister of Culture and Tourism Mehmet Ersoy signed the bilateral Memorandum of Understanding.

While the final memorandum text has not been made public, Turkey's request called for U.S. import restrictions on virtually all art originating in their territory, spanning all periods in history from the prehistoric up to the modern era.

U.S. law requires that four conditions be satisfied before signing an agreement:

1. The cultural property of the requesting country [and on the designated list] is in jeopardy from pillage.

2. Turkey has taken measures consistent with the 1970 UNESCO Convention to protect its cultural patrimony.

3. The application of import restrictions, if applied in concert with similar restrictions implemented, or to be implemented within a reasonable amount of time by those nations individually having a significant import trade in such material, would be of substantial benefit in deterring a serious situation of pillage, and remedies less drastic than import restrictions are unavailable.

4. The application of import restrictions is consistent with the international community's interest in the interchange of cultural property.

Opponents of the agreement argued that none of the key criteria had been met.

In testimony submitted on January 21, 2020, to the State Department Cultural Property Advisory Committee which recommended the signing of the agreement, the Association of Art Museum Directors argued, "While all of the facts are important, perhaps the most troubling is Turkey's failure to take measures to protect its cultural patrimony. Instead, it is taking affirmative steps to eradicate some of the country's most important heritage—particularly that of its minority cultures and religions—through state-sanctioned destruction of cultural patrimony. Nobody should condone this conduct. But that is exactly what the Committee will do if it concludes that Turkey qualifies for import restrictions and recommends the MOU."

Joint testimony submitted by the Committee for Cultural Policy and the Global Heritage Alliance opposing the agreement went further, noting, "By encouraging an MOU with Turkey, the State Department is not only ignoring common sense and the balanced cultural policy set by Congress decades before - it is directly harming important U.S. constituencies such as the Armenian, Greek, Cypriot, Syriac, and Kurdish communities founded by minorities who suffered under Turkish persecution in the 20th century. [...] A MOU approving Turkey's cultural heritage policies will strengthen Erdoğan's nationalist and anti-Semitic program, which already threatens to deprive Jewish and Christian communities of rights to community property and their most precious religious artifacts."

Following the signing of the agreement, the State Department Bureau of Education and Cultural Heritage will work with Turkey's Embassy and archaeologists to build a comprehensive "designated list" of items prohibited from import. Similar lists, developed as part of memoranda with other countries, have included virtually all objects, unless they can be proved to U.S. Customs' satisfaction to have been out of country for more than ten years. Agreements are usually valid for five years, though legislative oversight is generally lax, and memoranda with other countries have been renewed for decades, often with no measurable benefit for the preservation of antiquities.

## Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

### Lebanese Judra (Lentils and Rice)

#### Cooking with Jon's Lebanese Judra

This recipe appears in *Cooking With Jon*, the engaging cookbook written by award-winning chef Jon Koobation, the owner and head chef at the acclaimed Jon's Bear Club in Reedley, Calif. for several decades before he retired. Born in Dinuba, a small farming town in the central San Joaquin Valley, Jon's history with the restaurant started many years earlier. He worked at the famed Vallis' Restaurant in Kingsburg, the Redwood Inn of Sultana, Dinuba Ranch, and the Swedish Mill, and became The Bear Club's executive chef in 1973. Through the 1970s and mid-1980s, Jon's Bear Club established itself as a fine steakhouse. "Using the freshest local ingredients available each season was always valued by our guests," says Jon, "and one of the reasons they chose to return again and again."

Jon learned how to make this recipe from Mike Raphael, his boss and the former owner of Jon's Bear Club Restaurant. "Mike

and his partner owned The Bear Club up until 1985 when I bought it and changed the name to Jon's Bear Club. Mike would go racing with me and make this recipe at the racetrack. We parked our large motorhome and trailer next to many of our competitors, and after a long day

of practice and qualifying, we would all set up to cook and have a huge potluck dinner. As memorable as the racing was during those trips, the friendships and the incredible array of foods, desserts, and grilled barbecue dishes are truly unforgettable. This recipe, made with lentils and rice followed by caramelized onions, was a crowd favorite," says Jon.

"Serve this dish with labne or yogurt, flatbread, and an Armenian or Fattoush Salad, and if you want to get fancy, add crispy fried onions strings on top. The main flavor is the onions, fried to the point of dark golden brown. This is what gives the rice its beautiful depth, both in color and taste.

*Cooking With Jon* is in keeping with Jon's commitment to making fine dining accessible for today's home cook. His signature recipes include: Baja Cobb Salad, Sweet Chili Prawns, Cabbage Dolma with Beef and Lamb, Herb Seared Lamb Tenderloin with Eggplant Caviar and Basil Oil, Grandma Bazarian's Shish Kabob, and the ever-popular Chicken George - plus poignant family memories and stories about Jon's remarkable culinary history and car racing experiences that are sure to delight readers.



#### INGREDIENTS:

1 cup brown lentils, rinsed  
2 cups Swanson's chicken broth (or beef or vegetable broth)  
1 1/2 cups water  
1 cup long grain rice (or coarse bulgur), rinsed  
1 large onion, finely diced  
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil  
Kosher salt and cracked black pepper  
Dash of cumin, optional  
Serves 10.

#### PREPARATION: For the lamb:

In a saucepan, add lentils to the broth and simmer for 15 minutes. Add the water, rice, stir, and cover. Cook 20 minutes more until the water is absorbed.

Meanwhile, sauté the onion in olive oil until nicely caramelized. Fold the onions into the lentil and rice mixture. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Drizzle with olive oil, if desired.

Note from Jon: "The onions should be caramelized so that they are very dark brown, but not burnt. If you go too far, the burnt onions can cause a bitter taste and this will ruin the dish. Also, the burnt onions won't disappear magically into the cooked lentils, like the soft unburnt ones do."

<https://thebusinessjournal.com/best-valley-restaurant-award-winners-announce-ed-2/>

Jon is the recipient of the 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award in the California Restaurant Association's "Best of the Valley" awards.

Contact Jon at [chefjonkoobation@gmail.com](mailto:chefjonkoobation@gmail.com) to order his cookbook and for a personally signed copy.





# Antonina Mahari on How to Survive Fascism and Communism – and Being Married to an Armenian!

MAHARI, from page 12

find the energy to fight back on any level. Pavlitayte was eventually sent to a Siberian

events in the Soviet republics and also in what it teaches us about the human spirit. It also suggests that good and evil are not just opposites but can both be deeply enmeshed in the human soul. Mahari makes it clear that in many ways Soviet rule was perhaps far worse than the Nazi occupation in Lithuania. Armenians rightfully think of themselves as having suffered unbearably at the hands of their Ottoman oppressors who murdered over half of the world's Armenian population, but here are some sobering numbers. Of the two million Lithuanians alive at the onset of WWII, 500,000 (including 90 percent of the country's Jewish population) were massacred by the Nazis and an additional 150,000 were deported by the Russians and sent to die in Siberia. Altogether some 35 percent of all Lithuanians were massacred. While comparative victimology is not of much interest in the end, these numbers are telling.

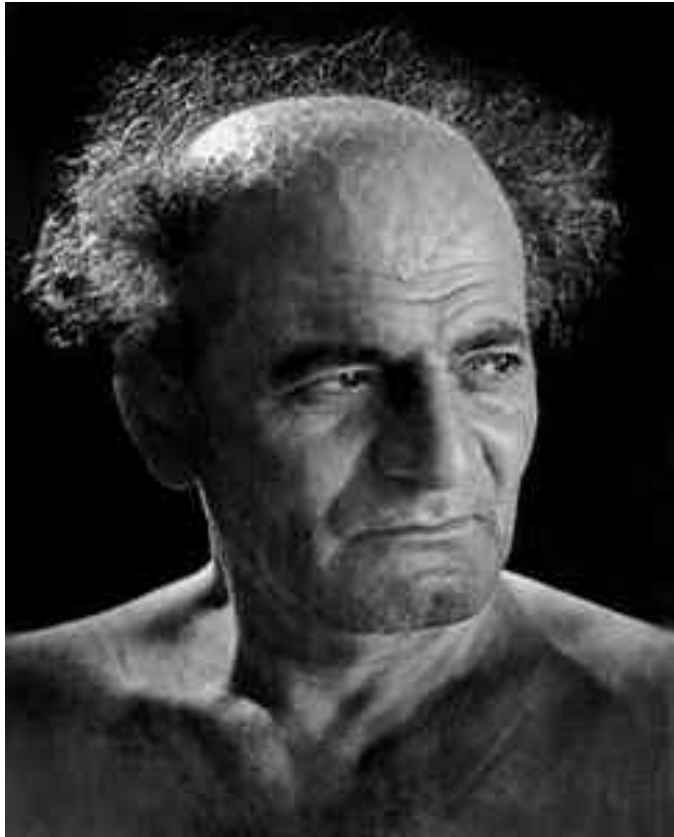
It will come as no surprise then that Antonina prefaced her book with the following sentence: "I dedicate this autobiographical narrative to my unforgettable friend of harsh and anxious days – to Gurgun Mahari, with whom I walked along these most agonizing roads." Here Antonina seems to implicitly acknowledge that just as she saved Gurgun's life on many occasions that he ultimately may have saved hers as well. Rising above ideology and nationalism and religion, above material concerns and the desire to be wealthy or all-powerful: pure love.

### A True Odyssey

Mahari completed the original Russian-language manuscript of *My Odyssey* in 1972 while still living in difficult conditions in Soviet-controlled Yerevan. As editor Ruth Bedevian relates in her foreword, the book was smuggled out of Soviet Armenia and published in

Western Armenian in Beirut in 1994. The final Russian manuscript was published in Yerevan in 2003 and only in 2007 was it translated into this present English-language edition. It will be of particular interest to Armenian readers because of the love story at its core between one of Armenia's greatest writers and one very smart woman from a different land whose amazing devotion to her husband are touching indeed – as was his devotion to her. And the story as well of one woman's unfaltering belief in justice that triumphs over almost every form of evil imaginable, she who once said, "If I am not worthy of respect for who I am, then turn your gaze away. Mahari lived a long and eventful life before passing away in 2017 at the age of 95 in Yerevan. She did outlive her husband by quite a few years, as he had feared, but after his death she converted his house into a museum and devoted herself to his memory and to writing the unvarnished truth about life under Soviet Communist rule in the Soviet Union.

*My Odyssey* was published as part of the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) Press series of woman writers, and their editors are to be commended for including this work, for the window that it offers us on another Soviet Republic, as well as for the light it sheds on the life of Gurgun Mahari as well. Finely translated from the original Russian by Jaklin Ekmekjian and Gohar Arsenyan, what the prose sometimes lacks in pure elegance it more than makes up for in passion and historical detail.



Portrait of Gurgun Mahari

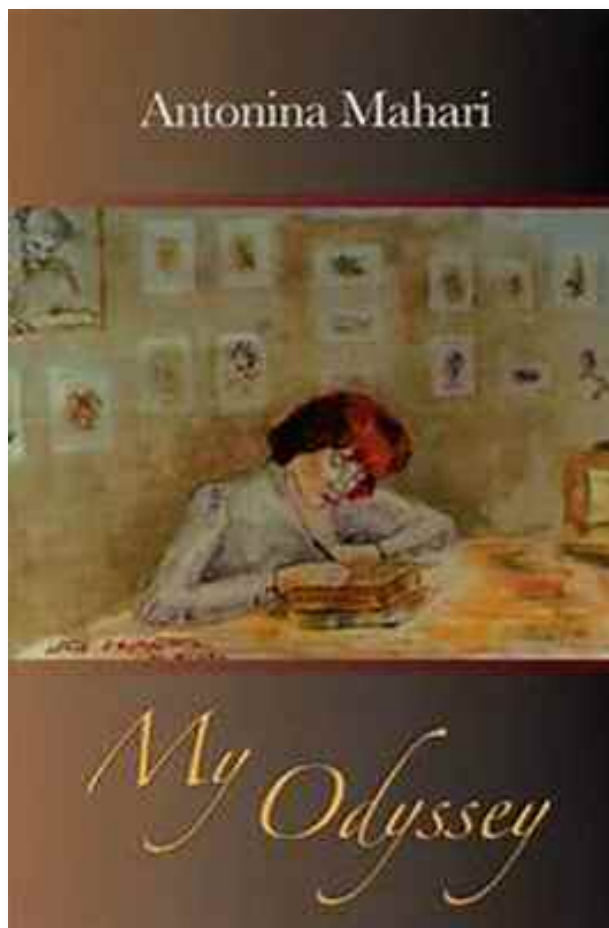
labor camp in the Krayonarsk region where she met the love of her life, the Armenian poet Gurgun Mahari; he from the warm lands of the Caucasus, she from the frigid North, both communicating in Russian, a language that wasn't theirs, and perhaps most serious, he already in his 50s and twice her age, so old that he felt compelled to tell her that life had dealt him one last cruel blow – to undoubtedly die years before his beloved Antonina.

She would spend ten years in the Siberian camps, and he seventeen. During those years, he grew sickly from illness and malnutrition. Several times he almost perished of illness, but each time Antonina nursed him back to health. She describes the pain a well of being a writer or an artist imprisoned under such stark conditions, robbed of everything that they valued: their friends and family, the sun, their work – all creativity forever extinguished. And yet Pavlitayte not only survived but she eventually thrived even when faced with the worst that her jailors could do to her. While in Siberia and tending to chores all day, Gurgun wrote Antonina love poetry and made exile bearable for her. Eventually they were able to safely reach Yerevan, where they brought up their only son, Sasun. But Mahari's health was still poor and he faced a backlash from other writers such as Paryur Sevak for ideological reasons and most probably, out of jealousy, turned on him. Mahari's masterpiece, *The Burning Orchards*, about the flight from Van during the Genocide, was famously purged due to its unflattering portrayal of Armenian Marxists and because it appeared in parts "too nationalistic." Mahari was accused of having glorified the useless resistance of the fedayis against the Ottoman Empire, or conversely for describing some Armenians' deep if perhaps misplaced sense of loyalty to the Sublime Porte.

The changes in the book combined with the outcry against it in both Soviet Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora, sent Mahari into a deep depression.

Mahari's ultimate revenge lies perhaps in the fact that the original unexpurgated version of *The Burning Orchards* is now considered one of the great books in the Armenian canon, alongside Abovian's *Wounds of Armenia* and the poetry of Charents.

But time and again it was Antonina's inner strength and determination that saved both her and Gurgun. The value of Mahari's memoir lies both in his accurate descriptions of historical



Wall of photos at the residence of Antonina Mahari

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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/liefsociety>

**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>



## EDITORIAL

## A Window of Diplomatic Opportunity

By Edmond Y. Azadian

The speed and magnitude of the Karabakh war of September 27-November 9 stunned the diplomatic world. Turkey had chosen the right psychological moment to strike. Russia was no less interested in the war, which would allow its peacekeeping forces into Azerbaijan's territory.

Throughout the war, the US was embroiled in one of its most contentious presidential elections, not that otherwise it would have minded what was happening to Armenia and Karabakh. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had spared a single sarcastic sentence for the Karabakh war, stating: "We hope Armenians can defend themselves."

Time was also of essence in Moscow and Ankara, since both were interested in bypassing the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group format, which had been handling the simmering Karabakh conflict for the last three decades.

Now, with the elections over, the US is realigning its domestic and world agendas. At this time, the diplomatic world is catching up with the events that took place during the war in the Caucasus and that process will afford an opportunity for Yerevan to address its grievances and insist on its agenda which was ignored by all the stakeholders in the war.



Now, positive statements are being pronounced both in Washington and European capitals, favoring Armenia. The incoming Biden administration has its political plate full. Despite that fact, it has already addressed the Karabakh war and reiterated its pledge for the recognition of the Genocide.

Of course, these statements are more of warning shots to Ankara than rewards for Armenia.

The European Union has also positioned itself along Washington's lines.

At this time, it is incumbent for Armenian diplomacy to work overtime to take advantage of this window of opportunity.

Statesmen who have studied Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's political decision-making processes in the past can easily forecast its ability to adapt to new situations and make Turkey's political role relevant to President Joe Biden's evolving policy for the Middle East and the Caucasus.

Even if Armenia exerted the same flexibility, its value and impact would not match that of Turkey, given the latter's military potential and political clout.

During recent Senate confirmation hearings, in answer to Sen. Ed Markey's question, the nominee for Secretary of State Anthony Blinken reiterated Biden's pledge to recognize the Armenian Genocide. He also promised to "review US security assistance to Azerbaijan."

This enforcing of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, which has been waived by all presidents since 1992, should be welcome news for Armenia.

US Ambassador to Armenia Lynne Tracy has reinforced Blinken's statements in an article published on January 20, saying, "The United States continues to call for the swift and safe return of the remaining detainees. We condemn the acts of atrocities connected within the conflict."

The European Parliament has adopted a resolution whereby it has made its position very clear on the Karabakh conflict. Article 24 of the resolution states: "[The parliament] regrets that changes to the status quo were made through military force, rather than peaceful negotiations; strongly condemns the killing of the civilians and destruction of civilian facilities and places of

worship; condemns the reported use of cluster munitions in the conflict; urges both Armenia and Azerbaijan to ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which comprehensively bans their use, without further delays; stresses that a lasting settlement still remains to be found and that the process of achieving peace and determining the region's future legal status should be led by the Minsk Group co-chairs."

Article 38 of the same Resolution condemns Turkey's destabilizing role in the conflict, its military assistance to Azerbaijan and the injection of terrorists into the battlefields.

Both the US and Europe have been left out of the game, which was controlled by Russia and Turkey. The two remaining co-chairs, France and the US, have been demanding that their voices be heard, by reviving the negotiation format of the Minsk Group.

Once the Minsk Group revisits the issue, Armenia has to take up the current challenge to bring up its agenda forcefully and clearly. To begin with, it has to concentrate on Azerbaijan's violation of the group's core principles. The first principle was that there can be no military solution to the conflict. Therefore, Baku must be held accountable for its aggression.

In addition, as a result of that aggression, another principle has been accomplished by default: that of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. The last principle remaining to be resolved is the self-determination of the people of Karabakh.

Once the co-chairs convene, the focus has to be on that last principle, and that will not happen by itself.

Already, Russia, through President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, has been insisting that Karabakh is Azerbaijani territory, because Moscow has a very clear solution in mind – to offer its citizenship to Karabakh Armenians to obtain the right to hold on the Azerbaijan territory. Once its five-year mandate expires, under the pretext of "protecting its citizens," it can itself annex the territory.

It is an uphill battle but Armenian has to take up the challenge and dispute the identity of Karabakh's territory.

To say that Karabakh is part of the internationally-recognized territory of Azerbaijan is a political statement which cannot be sustained by either international laws or history. When Baku annexed

the Karabakh Autonomous Oblast to its territory in 1989, it committed an illegal act. Even when Stalin placed the enclave under Azerbaijan's rule, he recognized the region's identity.

The people of Karabakh obeyed the terms of the Soviet constitution to seek independence from Azerbaijan as well as the Soviet Union. But the strongest case for independence is Baku's mistreatment of its minorities and the pogroms it has launched against Armenians. The Armenian people have no choice but to seek self-determination and secede from the grip of the tyrant.

When opinions vary so much, it will take tremendous effort and diplomatic skills to force the issue. Is Armenia ready for that?

There will be a contest between Armenia and Turkey to win over the European Union and the US. Turkey has already toned down its rhetoric and is negotiating with Greece and is planning to similarly engage with Cyprus.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu was in Brussels recently to reset the fraying ties with NATO. Pretty soon, Turkey will send its coterie of lawyers, lobbyists and diplomats to Washington to make nice.

Turkey's economy is in decline and if the US applies further sanctions, the country's economy will collapse.

Al-Monitor's senior correspondent Amberin Zaman predicts that "Things will get tougher in the US-Turkey relations" because irreconcilable issues divide the parties, such as the demand for the extradition of dissident cleric Fethullah Gulen by Turkey, the purchase by Turkey of the S-400 Russian missile systems, US support to Syrian Kurds (YPG) and particularly Biden's priority for human rights issues.

President Trump used to condone all despots' rights to trample the human rights of their citizens. President Biden is changing course as Erdogan is moving to improve relations with Europe, but the latter will hit a snag there too, because human rights are a non-negotiable issue for the European Union. Erdogan has pledged a new package of human rights to dupe the Europeans but he cannot go too far in that direction because it may erode his Islamic base at home.

see DIPLOMACY, page 18

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## COMMENTARY

# Remembering Our Heroes: Lieutenant-Colonel Ashot Chobanyan

By Vahe Sahakyan

The date was January 9, 2021. Many of my friends in Armenia gathered at St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Yeghvard to bid farewell to a dear friend of our childhood, Ashot Chobanyan. A huge crowd attended the memorial service at the church, despite the snow on the ground and the bitter cold, to pay tribute to their compatriot from Yeghvard, to the fallen hero of the second war in Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh (September 27 - November 10, 2020).

Lieutenant-Colonel Ashot (Arshaluys) Chobanyan was killed in action on October 13, 2020, near the village of Sarinshen (Shahyeri), on the way from Jrakan (Jebrayil) to Hadrut in Nagorno-Karabakh – an area that remained under the Azerbaijani control following the Russia-brokered cease-fire on November 10, 2020. Ashot's body was recovered only at the end of December, and was laid to rest at the Yerablur Military Pantheon in Yerevan, Armenia, on January 10, 2021.

Ashot was born in Orojalar (Orojalar), a village in the district of Bogdanovka (now Ninotsminda, Samtskhe-Javakheti) in Soviet Georgia on September 3, 1978. He was very young when his family moved to Yeghvard, a small town in Armenia, some 10-15 miles north of the capital Yerevan, on the slopes of Mount Ara. I first met Ashot when he was 10 years old. My brother Hayk and Ashot were classmates at the No. 3 Secondary School in Yeghvard. My own family moved to Yeghvard from Armenia's third largest city of Kirovakan (now Vanadzor) in the summer of 1988. This was the same year the Karabakh movement had started and the anti-Armenian sentiments in Azerbaijan and the pogroms in Sumgait had driven many refugees to Soviet Armenia. Hayk and Ashot became friends that same year, when Hayk joined their class. They studied in the same classes for seven years and graduated in 1995.

As two adventurous middle schoolers, Ashot and Hayk spent much time together, both at school and after school. Aspiring and curious, their ambitious projects of building a robot, an automatic coffee grinder and maker (not known at the time in Armenia), or discovering medicine to cure some illnesses made their friendship ever stronger. Ignoring my skepticism, they continued putting much time, effort and imagination into drawing up plans, finding appropriate materials, putting together some parts, and conducting experiments in the pursuit of their projects, until at some point a new interesting idea or project occupied their curious minds, energy and time. Those were the days of our happy and carefree childhood.

We were teenagers when the first war in Nagorno-Karabakh broke out in the winter of 1991-1992. Armenia's independence, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the war in Nagorno-Karabakh and the economic blockade imposed by the neighboring Azerbaijan – all these events had disrupted the Soviet-era supply lines, infrastructure and transportation networks. The events that made news headlines in many countries had very tangible effects on our daily lives. The war, the devastated economy and hyperinflation, accompanied by the shortage of energy, water, natural gas, and food, left hundreds of thousands of Armenia's

inhabitants around or below the poverty line. The hardship of life, however, made our friendship and bonds even stronger.

Ashot and his brother Arman lived with their parents Alik (Aleksan) and Haykush on the top, fifth floor of an apartment building with no elevator. As many families did at the time, Alik installed a wood-burning oven in their apartment that served as a heater and a stove to cook food in winter. Early fall was the season when all close friends of ours, five or six people, would gather on weekends at one of our friends' apartment buildings to chop wood for winter with two-man crosscut saws and axes. The work was hard and physically demanding, especially at Ashot's place, where after the chopping was done we all had to load our hands with as much chopped wood as we could carry and climb the stairs up to the top fifth floor. Exhausted from work, we were happy, however. The work was usually followed by a social gathering and a small feast around some modest meal cooked on a wood burning oven.

It was during the years of war, when Ashot, Hayk, Armen (another mutual friend of ours) and I began playing rock music at the local music school in Yeghvard. My father was a teacher at the music school. He taught students how to play various instruments – drums, electric guitars, and synthesizers. The best of them played in the band my father had started, composed of youngsters between ages 13 and 18. With his encouragement and support, we used the outdated Soviet-era instruments in his rehearsal room to play our own rock compositions loud enough



Ashot with his family in 2012

to often annoy the refugees from Baku who were temporarily placed in some of the rooms at the music school. Ashot took accordion classes for five years. He had also learned to play the piano, but he became the Jason Newsted of our band. He loved the heavy metal of Metallica and loved playing the bass guitar, although at the time we had only a few tape recorded songs by Metallica, and their full albums were nowhere to find in our small town. Not a very gifted singer, occasionally he would also try his dull and funny voice alongside our singer Armen.

Ashot was a happy, positive, and funny young man with a wonderful sense of humor. He was the soul of our social gatherings, who would tell jokes, do silly things and act to make people laugh. I can still recall one of his jokes, told many years ago. A really drunk person in Yerevan waves for a cab. A cab stops, picks him up, and the driver asks: "Where to?" The drunk person goes: "To China," and falls asleep. The cab driver decides to play a trick. He turns the ignition on, revs the engine a couple of times, then turns the ignition off and wakes the passenger up: "Hey, wake up, we arrived!" The drunk dude, surprised and apparently impressed by how fast they arrived, turns to the driver and, wearing a serious expression on his face and raising his finger, expresses a rebuke: "Dude, don't ever drive that fast, you'll get yourself into trouble sometime."

I still remember that day vividly – Ashot acting as a drunk person, the expressions changing on his face and his voice, as he made the switches between the roles of the driver and the passenger. He was a good joke teller, but he never considered becoming an actor or a standup comedian. At some point, he was preparing to become a musician. But life had other plans for him.

Ashot was drafted to compulsory military service at the age of 18. Armenia's Military University, established a few years before, in 1994, had been actively recruiting students from among the new army conscripts. I remember those days when Ashot discussed with family and friends the offer he received from the Military University, and the prospect of starting a career in the military. It was a hard decision, but Ashot made the choice, entered Armenia's Military University, and successfully graduated as a lieutenant in 2001. Since 2001, Ashot served in various military units in Artsakh and Armenia, mostly in commanding positions, and continued climbing up the military ladder.

Ashot got married in 2002. Ashot and his wife Marine grew up in the same neighborhood in Yeghvard, and knew each other from a very young age. I remember their wedding party, my brother Hayk being the kavor (godfather), and the good time we all had that day. Ashot's daughter Haykuhi was born in 2003, in Yeghvard, and his son, Alik, was born in 2007 in Goris, in the Syunik region of Armenia. Ashot's military career moved his family from one place to another, wherever his services to the homeland would be most needed. They lived in the apartments reserved for military personnel for many years. Occasionally,

when Ashot visited his parents in Yeghvard, we all would have a reunion. We would catch-up and chat for hours, usually about families, children, and world politics, but rarely about work. Then, as usual, Ashot would start telling jokes and endless engaging stories from his time in the armed forces. He was a very entertaining and interesting person, but also very humble. He never boasted of his achievements, promotions or awards. After a few hours spent together, we all had the feeling as though we had said goodbye yesterday and we were going to see each other the next day, and this would continue every day.

In 2012-2013 Ashot finished a 10-month intensive training program at the Russian Military Academy in Moscow. Upon his return, he was appointed to serve as deputy commander of the border guard brigade in Noyemberyan, in the north-eastern region of Armenia. After serving in the military for more than twenty years, Ashot retired in 2018 with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, and settled in Yerevan, ready to enjoy civilian life with his wonderful family.

Ashot was dreaming of having his own home, starting a small business and establishing a modest life in Yerevan, but above all, of a peaceful and bright future for his children in Armenia. Business partnership with Aram, our other childhood friend, was bringing Ashot very close to the life he wanted to have, when the second war in Artsakh broke out on September 27, 2020. Ashot volunteered to rejoin the army, and was appointed to serve at the military commissariat in Yeghvard. At his own initiative and request, however, Ashot was dispatched to the frontline, where he thought his experience and skills would be more needed. The battalion under his command selflessly defended the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh against the heavily armed, more numerous and technologically more advanced Azerbaijani army between October 6 and 13. Ashot fell on October 13, the day after his long-time friend and colleague in service, commander Colonel Vahagn Asatryan, was killed in action in the same location. Posthumously Ashot Chobanyan was awarded the Order of the Combat Cross by the president of the Republic of Armenia for exceptional courage and self-sacrifice in the service to the homeland.

Ashot's daughter Haykuhi expressed the following words of tribute about her father: "He never retreated. He always saw the good, the positive in everything... He brought us up that same way... He kept teaching us that we should not give in to emotions and we should always be guided by our minds, by reason. His dreams were all about me and my brother, about our good education and bright future." I hope the bright and peaceful future that Ashot dreamed for his children will someday become a reality in Armenia and Artsakh, for which Ashot and many others paid the ultimate price of self-sacrifice. Rest in peace, my dear friend. You will live in our minds and thoughts forever as a happy, kind and positive individual as you always were.

(I would like to thank Ashot's wife Marine Jalavyan, his daughter Haykuhi Chobanyan, his brother Arman Chobanyan and Arman's wife Lusine Arzumanyan, my friend Aram Musayelyan and my brother Hayk Sahakyan for helping with factual details and providing the photos.)

## Window of Opportunity

DIPLOMACY, from page 17

Turkey is also wooing Israel to ingratiate itself in Washington but thus far, no response, because Israel is facing new elections. Besides, the latter has found new friends in the region, while until recently, Turkey was the only Islamic state that was friendly with Israel.

Now, through the Abraham Accords, Israel has established relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan, and Saudi Arabia is next in line.

In addition, Turkey's support for Hamas in Gaza does not bode well with the administration of Benjamin Netanyahu.

Another component of Turkish overtures to the US is its readiness to take on Iran or Russia, just in case Washington decides to turn the screws on both and may need local surrogates on the ground. That is why Turkey is flexing its muscles in Kars, right across from the Russian base in Gyumri, through joint military exercises with Azerbaijan's army.

Throughout this complex web of political issues, Armenia has to find openings to plead its case in Washington and European capitals.

However, it looks like Yerevan is beginning to take up the challenge in a misplaced manner. While a seasoned diplomat must be stationed in Washington in these trying times, the Pashinyan administration is toying with the idea of sending Lilit Makunts, a political appointee with no diplomatic experience, to Washington. Makunts is the head of Pashinyan's My Step political party and her only previous experience was as culture minister. The current ambassador to the US, Varuzhan Nersesyan, is a career diplomat. It is the wrong move at the wrong time to downgrade your diplomatic representation at what is virtually the capital of the world. Unfortunately, this seems to be a pattern with Pashinyan in selecting his cadres at other ministries too.

Some concerns have been raised in the parliament regarding Makunts' appointment. In the end, wiser heads must prevail to avert a self-inflicted wound to Armenia's diplomacy.

Armenian-American advocacy groups will certainly play a role in Armenia's rapprochement with Biden's administration. They can serve as the extension of Armenia's foreign policy arm, but Armenia has to help itself before the diaspora can lend a helping hand.

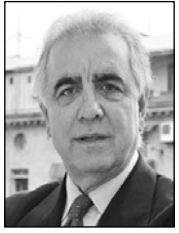


Ashot Chobanyan's awards





## COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Azerbaijan Exploits Everything For Propaganda, Including Art

The Calvert Journal published last week an article by Lucia de la Torre titled, “The Aliyev influence: how nepotism and self-censorship rule Azerbaijan’s art scene.”

On October 2, 2020, two days after the start of the Artsakh war, a giant Azerbaijani flag was placed on the façade of Baku’s YARAT Contemporary Art Space gallery with a giant message: “Karabakh is Azerbaijan.”

This did not sit well with the Turkish-born Kurdish artist Ahmet Ogut whose exhibition “No Poem Loves Its Poet” had been displayed in the gallery since May 2020. Ogut requested that the propaganda banner be taken down and boldly declared: “I refuse to allow my work to fall prey to political instrumentalization.”

The gallery refused to remove the banner and closed down Ogut’s exhibit on October 29, 2020, three weeks earlier than scheduled.

According to The Calvert Journal’s article, “This is one example of how Azerbaijan’s apparently thriving art scene conceals something darker: a deeply nepotistic environment which routinely suppresses dissident voices while crafting an international image of Azerbaijan as a free, art-loving nation.”

Artists like Ogut, who refuse to go along with Azerbaijan’s political propaganda, are quickly ostracized and lose all artistic privileges.

Artists worldwide were alarmed by Azerbaijan’s abuse of power, trampling on the rights and independence of an artist. However, this came as no surprise to those who have followed many other violations by the country’s despotic leader. Ruled “by President Ilham Aliyev and Vice-President and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva, the Azerbaijani government has been repeatedly criticized by human rights’ groups for ongoing censorship, a poor human rights record, and rampant corruption. And, like many nearby authoritarian regimes, members of the President’s family are known to own most of the country’s major businesses, earning them millions of dollars since the fall of the USSR and situating Aliyev amongst the world’s richest oil billionaires,” The Calvert Journal reported.

The YARAT gallery was founded by Aida Mahmudova, an artist, curator, and Vice President Mehriban Aliyeva’s niece. The Marriott Hotel in Baku, “which is allegedly connected to

Aliyev’s daughters Leyla and Arzu Aliyeva according to reporters for the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, is one of YARAT’s main partners,” The Calvert Journal wrote.

“Mahmudova is also the director of another of Azerbaijan’s main contemporary art galleries: Baku’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMa). The museum was founded by Mehriban Aliyeva in 2009, and is funded by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation (of which Mehriban Aliyeva is the President and Leyla Aliyeva the Vice-President), a charitable organization created in memory of the former president of Azerbaijan and father of current president Ilham Aliyev. Elsewhere in Baku, another star venue on Azerbaijan’s cultural scene is the Heydar Aliyev Center. The current director of the Heydar Aliyev Center is Anar Alakbarov, a former assistant to the Vice President of Azerbaijan and current assistant to the President,” The Calvert Journal reported.

Baku has several other smaller art galleries which are controlled by Azerbaijan’s government. “The Qiz Qalasi Gallery, an art venue in Baku with a branch in Berlin, is headed by Emin Mammadov, who also works as Art Curator for the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. ‘Modern Art of Azerbaijan’ is a travelling exhibition supported by the Heydar Aliyev Center that toured European capitals, where Mehriban and Leila Aliyeva hosted lavish inaugurations attended by European government officials and diplomats. In November 2020, the gallery launched ‘Armed with the Arts,’ an exhibition allegedly meant to promote peace after the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war, while, similarly to YARAT, openly supported the position of the Azerbaijani government and used politically-charged, bellicose language. Kicik QalArt Gallery, a project of the ‘Art ex East Foundation’ and another important smaller-scale venue in the capital, although now closed, used to be owned by Olivier Mestelan, a Swiss art collector and financier. Mestelan used to sit on the board of Ataholding, an open joint-stock company that managed Atabank, one of the biggest commercial banks in Azerbaijan, now bankrupt and owned by the Azerbaijan Deposit Insurance Fund (ADIF). According to an investigation carried out in 2011 by Radio Free Europe’s Azerbaijani Service, Mestelan was also claimed to be the treasurer of three offshore Panama-based companies linked to Azerfon, a Baku-based telecommunications company with links to Arzu and Leyla Aliyeva,” The Calvert Journal wrote.

Lesley Gray, a scholar researching the development of the contemporary art scene in the Arab Gulf and Caspian Sea region, explained that Azerbaijan and other countries use contemporary art as a tool to reshape the country’s international image.

Azerbaijan’s leaders are not interested in art for art’s sake. “They hope to use art as a tool to attract international attention for something other than imprisoned journalists and crackdowns on free speech,” The Calvert Journal reported.

The Azerbaijani government has also used its investments in contemporary art around the world to project power and establish goodwill. “Mehriban Aliyeva, through the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, has shelled out generous sums for cultural institutions such as The Palace of Versailles, Paris’ Louvre Museum, and the Vatican Museums, while the Friends of Azerbaijani Culture Foundation, a non-governmental charity which she founded in 1995, routinely organizes art exhibits abroad,” according to The Calvert Journal.

As a result, “in 2004 Mehriban Aliyeva was designated UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, a laurel given in recognition of her actions to promote international cultural exchanges. Later, in 2010, Aliyeva received a gold medal from UNESCO for her ‘efforts in establishing an intercultural dialogue.’ Over the years, Azerbaijan has had a particularly favorable relationship with the UN body – in October 2015, at the petition of Mehriban Aliyeva, UNESCO hosted an exhibition ironically called ‘Azerbaijan – Land of Tolerance’ at its Paris headquarters. At the opening, when a journalist asked Aliyeva whether the title of the exhibition lived up to the reality in Azerbaijan, considering the country has ‘many political prisoners in jail,’ Aliyeva denied this and turned her back while security guards pushed the journalist away. The relationship was particularly favorable between Mehriban Aliyeva and Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, 2009-2017. Their relationship came under scrutiny in 2017, when Kalin Mitrev, Bokova’s husband, was investigated by the Bulgarian Chief Prosecutor in relation to media publications about payments made by Azerbaijani companies to his [bank] accounts. Bokova then wrote a letter to The Guardian [newspaper] defending the rightfulness of her relationship with Azerbaijan, but never spoke openly about the money allegedly received by her husband or her stance towards Azerbaijan’s human rights abuses,” The Calvert Journal reported.

However, Azerbaijan’s devious use of the arts was exposed in 2011, when “Azerbaijan censored its own entry to the Venice Biennale, the world’s most high-profile showcase of contemporary art, by hiding the work of one of its own artists under a piece of cloth. Moscow-based artist Aidan Salakhova’s work *Waiting Bride*, which showed a woman in a black veil from head to foot, and another sculpture, which showed the Black Stone of Mecca contained in a vagina-shaped marble frame, were hidden under a white cloth. The [Azeri] government later claimed that the artworks were ‘damaged during transport’, while senior sources at the exhibition clarified that the works were censored for being considered offensive to Islam,” according to The Calvert Journal.

Nothing is surprising about the exploitation of art by Azerbaijan. A government, whose soldiers cut off the heads and ears of captured Armenians, can easily abuse art to cover up its corruption and gross human rights violations.

# Why Azerbaijan Is Unfit to Rule over the Armenians of Artsakh

By David Boyajian

Corrupt, sadistic, and run by a hereditary dictatorship, Azerbaijan is unfit to rule over others, least of all Armenian Christians.

Yet that iniquity could materialize due to the recent 44-day war by Azerbaijan, Turkey, and terrorist jihadis against the Artsakh Republic (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Armenia.

The November 9, 2020 armistice could force democratic, Armenian-governed Artsakh (pop. 150,000) into Azerbaijan’s (pop. 10 million) despotic grip.

Since the war began, though, mainstream media have rarely pointed out Azerbaijan’s depravity and long-standing abuse of Armenians.

In the 1920s, Stalin transferred the ancient Armenian provinces of Artsakh – 96-percent Armenian – and Nakhichevan to Turkey’s friend, Azerbaijan. The delusional tyrant mistakenly believed that this would lure Turkey into the USSR’s web. That injustice has brought Artsakh nothing but agony. Even before the transfer, Azerbaijan had been massacring Armenians in Artsakh and Baku.

Unlike 3,000-year-old Armenia, no country named Azerbaijan existed before 1918. Its inhabitants didn’t even call themselves Azeris until the 1930s.

Artsakh was officially autonomous within Soviet Azerbaijan, but the latter held the real power. Artsakh’s Armenians were persecuted due to raw Azeri fanaticism, not the Soviet system. Armenians went from from 96% to 76% of Artsakh’s population by 1988, the result of repression, deportations, economic warfare, and murder by Azerbaijan.

Then-KGB Major General Heydar Aliyev (Azeri dictator Ilham Aliyev’s father) acknowledged importing Azerbaijanis into Artsakh to replace the Armenians that he had exiled.

Azerbaijan maliciously closed many Armenian schools, orphanages, and libraries.

Armenian-language inscriptions on ancient monuments were

depicted as Azeri.

Museums were looted of artifacts that proved Artsakh to be an ancient Armenian province.

### Even the name Artsakh was banned.

Large quantities of meat, dairy products, and wool were directed to Azerbaijan instead of to needy local Armenians.

Baku frequently imprisoned local Armenian leaders who protested, but gave Azeri gangs free rein.

### Breaking Free

Artsakh voted to exit Azerbaijan in accordance with Soviet law in 1988 and international law in 1991 as the USSR dissolved. In response, Azerbaijan massacred Armenian civilians in Artsakh, Baku, Ganja, and Sumgait.

The ensuing war ended in 1994 with victory for Artsakh’s Armenians. Armenians fled the rest of Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijanis fled Armenia.

Artsakh became self-governing, reformist, and widely respected. It maintained representative offices in Washington, D.C., Europe, and elsewhere.

Azerbaijan proceeded to gorge on revenue from its gas and oil fields. Yet it still mirrored its Soviet self: repressive, corrupt, violent, and anti-Armenian.

Artsakh became doubly determined to never again submit to Azerbaijan.

### Azerbaijan’s Post-Independence Horrors

The U.S. State Department says Azerbaijan has “significant human rights” problems, including: unlawful/arbitrary killing; torture; arbitrary detention; political prisoners; heavy restrictions on the press; incarceration of/violence against journalists; severe restrictions on political participation; systemic government corruption; torture of [LGBTQ] individuals; and the worst forms of child labor. Azerbaijan “did not prosecute or punish most officials who committed human rights abuses.”

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom cites Azerbaijan for “engaging in or tolerating severe violations of religious freedom.”

Europe’s Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting

Project (OCCRP) named President Ilham Aliyev its 2012 “Organized Crime and Corruption Person of the Year.”

Azerbaijan is guilty of “arbitrary arrest and detention of opposition politicians, civil society activists, human rights defenders and critical journalists,” says the European Court of Human Rights.

Freedom House ranks Azerbaijan as “Not Free” – worse than the Congo and Cuba.

Reporters Without Borders rates Azerbaijan’s press freedom as 168th out of 180 countries – worse than Pakistan and Somalia.

International human rights organizations have rebuked Azerbaijan for repressing and forcibly assimilating its Lezgin and Talysh minorities.

Azeri Lieutenant Ramil Safarov was prosecuted and imprisoned for beheading Armenian Lieutenant Gurgen Margaryan at a 2004 NATO program in Hungary. Under questionable circumstances, Hungary later dispatched Safarov to Azerbaijan. He was hailed as a national hero, awarded a medal, and promoted.

Azerbaijan has perpetrated the utmost brutality since the earliest days of Artsakh’s struggle and during the recent war. Azeri troops have abused, mutilated, and beheaded Armenian civilians and soldiers. Armenian POWs have been summarily executed. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have decried these war crimes. Azerbaijan has still not released all POWs despite pledging to do so and continues its attacks in violation of the armistice.

In the 1990s, Azerbaijan imported Afghan Mujahedin, Chechens, Pakistanis, and terrorist Turkish Grey Wolves to fight Armenians. The recent war saw Azerbaijan and Turkey bring in thousands of jihadis and ISIS terrorists from Syria, Libya, and elsewhere. In so doing, Azerbaijan has violated the UN convention against using mercenaries. Draw the appropriate conclusion about a political culture that deploys terrorists and thugs.

Like Turkey, Azerbaijan has long desecrated and destroyed  
see ARTSAKH, page 20





# Congress Should Stop Giving Azerbaijan a Free Pass on Iran And Russia

By Michael Rubin

The guns are now silent in Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia has released its prisoners-of-war and diplomats pressure Azerbaijan to do the same. The Minsk Group, which the United States co-chairs alongside Russia and France, seeks to restore its diplomatic relevance as Azerbaijan blindsided it and the State Department with its September 2020 military offensive on the disputed territory. That action contradicted the basis of its waiver under Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act that enabled the United States to provide Azerbaijan with military assistance.

Rep. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, highlighted the challenge that both Turkey and its alliance with Azerbaijan will pose to U.S. foreign policy during his committee's confirmation hearing for Anthony Blinken, President Joe Biden's nominee to lead the State Department. Blinken criticized Turkey but did not signal any substantive change in policy.

While continuing the policy status quo toward the Caucasus would be a mistake, part of the reason why the State Department continues to undermine efforts to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its actions is because of the fundamental disconnect between perceptions of Azerbaijan in Congress and the reality of that country's policy.

While the Armenian lobby vocally promotes U.S. recognition of Armenian Genocide, Azerbaijani diplomats and lobbyists have long maintained a lower but equally effective profile in Congress where they both paint Azerbaijan as both an ally in the war against terror and as a regional bulwark willing to stand up to Russia and Iran. As important, Elin Suleymanov, Azerbaijan's skilled and extremely effective ambassador in Washington, and a bevy of unregistered agents of influence argue to senators and congressmen that Armenia is beholden both to both Iran and Russia.

It is true that Armenia has ties to both Iran and Russia. Turkey and Azerbaijan's economic blockade on Armenia makes Iran an economic lifeline to which Armenia can export its agricultural and some manufactured goods. Russia maintains a military base in Gyumri. Troops stationed at the base largely remain confined to it and do not appear active elsewhere in Armenia or the Caucasus. Armenians I interviewed—including those more oriented philosophically toward the West—say that the Russian presence largely serves more as a deterrent to Turkish or Azeri aggression than as an endorsement of Russia's foreign policy.

In reality, however, Azerbaijan's ties to both Iran and Russia in recent years have become deeper and more strategically significant than Armenia's. Azerbaijan's relationship with Iran was not always positive. While the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1992, Baku accused Iran in 1999 of both spying for Armenia and training militant Islamists to undermine the Azerbaijani government. In 2001, an Iranian warship ordered an Azerbaijani exploration ship hired by British Petroleum to withdraw from exploration operations in a disputed zone within the Caspian Sea. Iranian officials also clashed with their Azeri counterparts over Azerbaijan's security cooperation with Israel. Iranian resentment toward Azerbaijani secularism kept mutual suspicion high.

In recent years, however, the relationship between Tehran and Baku has grown steadily warmer. In August 2004, for example, the two countries agreed to a twenty-five-year gas swap contract in which Iran would supply Azerbaijan's landlocked Nakhichevan region and Azerbaijan would deliver gas to Iran's northeastern provinces. In December 2005, Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev joined Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at the opening ceremony for the new gas pipeline from Iran to Azerbaijan's landlocked Nakhichevan region as they put the agreement into action.

Such cooperation has accelerated with alacrity in recent years. On April 9, 2014, Aliyev traveled to Tehran. At his audience with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, he stressed the "importance of broadening Azerbaijan-Iran ties even further." Ali Hasanov, the head of the Department of Social and Political Affairs at the Azerbaijani presidency, explained at the time that Aliyev's visit to Iran was the "beginning of an important stage for development of friendship and partnership . . . and deepening mutual cooperation." Shortly after, Azerbaijan hosted an Iranian trade delegation comprised of fifty Iranian companies led by Mahmoud Vaezi, Iran's minister of telecommunications and information technology.

In 2015, the rapprochement deepened. Iran announced its support for the Azeri position in Nagorno-Karabakh, and the two countries formed a joint defense commission. Six months later, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding to construct a north-south railway, part of the growing linkage between Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia. Baku and Tehran reached agreements to link the two countries' power grids shortly after. On Feb. 23, 2016, Aliyev returned to Iran to sign eleven documents, including an agreement for the construction of hydroelectric plants on the Aras River. These applied specifically to regions that Azerbaijan had lost to Armenia in 1994, and signaled the economic logic behind the Islamic Republic's shift from Armenia to Azerbaijan. (According to the Persian language press, these

projects are now moving forward). Other commercial agreements quickly followed. Subsequent announcements showed these agreements were not only aspirational but real as the two countries fulfilled their agreements. Over the past decade, Azerbaijani imports to Iran have quadrupled to almost \$500 million. As the Trump administration implemented a "Maximum Pressure" campaign on Iran, Azerbaijan became a major lifeline for the Islamic Republic. Consider: Between January and August 2020, Iranian exports to Russia via Azerbaijan amounted to \$1.5 billion; over the same period the year before, the total was just \$4.3 million.

Other aspects of the bilateral relationship should have raised alarm bells in Washington. On a June 8, 2016, visit to Germany, Aliyev reportedly admitted that Azerbaijan had been buying weaponry from Iran. Iran-Azerbaijan military cooperation picked up pace over the following year and, in 2018, the two countries reached an agreement to jointly produce military equipment. This means that U.S. arms sales to Azerbaijan risk bettering Iran's own domestic armament industry. A 2018 Agreement on a legal convention to govern Caspian waters removed the major barrier to further cooperation. Bilateral military cooperation accelerated in 2019 even as Azerbaijan feigned cooperation with U.S. sanctions on Iran. While Suleymanov continues to assure Congress that Azerbaijan is an ally in the war on terror, Azerbaijan's foreign minister Elmar Mammadyarov lamented the death of Iranian Qods Force Chief Qasem Soleimani.

Tehran and Baku also signed a memorandum of understanding to extend media cooperation. Aliyev told Khamenei during a meeting on March 5, 2017, in Tehran that both countries actively supported each other's positions in international organizations. In 2016, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Russia began holding trilateral summits to advance their strategic axis, the first of many.

Of equal importance has been the further development of the north-south transport corridor. On March 7, 2016, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia signed a memorandum outlining further rail cooperation and reduction of trade tariffs. In order to implement the corridor, Aliyev loaned Iran \$500 million. Iran and Azerbaijan continue to develop facilities and protocols to further the project.

Aliyev now brags openly about how Azerbaijan's cooperation with Iran and Russia comes at Armenia's expense. In his 2021 New Year's address, the Azerbaijani president declared that "there is a trilateral format involving Azerbaijan, Iran and Russia. Does Armenia have such a format with any other countries? No! This is a clear example of how correct our policy has been."

Azerbaijan's turn to Russia has been just as striking. Indeed, Aliyev is quickly defining himself as Azerbaijan's most pro-Russian president since Ayaz Mutalibov, a former communist official who ruled Azerbaijan from 1991-1992. While the two countries enjoyed cordial relations in subsequent years, the 2008 Georgian War appears to have been a turning point as the conflict weakened Baku's faith in the West's capacity to oppose Moscow's revanchism and power projection. Aliyev traveled to Moscow just one month after the cessation of hostilities in Georgia to lay the groundwork for a new relationship between Russia and Azerbaijan. It was the first of many other Aliyev visits to Russia.

Moscow and Baku's formal delineation of their border in 2010 removed the chief impediment to economic cooperation. Whereas in 2001, Azerbaijan imports from Russia totaled perhaps \$100 million, today, they surpass \$2 billion. Aliyev, meanwhile, allowed Russia to expand cultural and educational programs in Azerbaijan. Indeed, the last decade has witnessed numerous economic agreements, especially in the energy sector. Military trade also increased. In 2017, for example, the Azerbaijani Army reportedly received a new batch of Khirzantema-S anti-tank missile systems from the Russian Federation. In 2018, Azerbaijan hosted a conference for senior Azeri and Russian officials in Jojog Marjanli, a town transferred from Armenian control in the April 2016 "Four-Day War." Significantly, the conference was titled "Baku-Moscow Geopolitical Axis: Azerbaijan is Russia's Only Ally in the South Caucasus." The feeling is mutual. On April 4, 2020, the Russian Foreign Ministry declared Azerbaijan to be "Russia's major strategic partner." Russia and Azerbaijan are now openly discussing nuclear cooperation.

There is grave danger when the White House and State Department calibrate policy to perceptions of what a country once was rather than what it has become. The United States' strategic posture suffered because both the George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump administrations wished to see in Vladimir Putin a willingness to cooperate productively which, simply, was never there. The same pattern has been true with Turkey and China where, for too long, American officials have been deceived or in denial about the malign intents of their leaders. Alas, Azerbaijan too must now be included on such a list. The Azerbaijani embassy and its lobbyists might paint Azerbaijan as a country that stood by America in the dark days after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks but that is not the Azerbaijan of today. Instead, Azerbaijan has become a strategic ally of both Iran and Russia, maintaining its pro-Western façade only to avoid accountability in Washington for its strategic turn. Simply put, to arm or support Azerbaijan today is to empower the Kremlin and Khamenei, not to bring security or further American interests in the region.

Part of the reason why the State Department continues to undermine efforts to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its actions is because of the fundamental disconnect between perceptions of Azerbaijan in Congress and the reality of that country's policy.

(Michael Rubin is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. This commentary was originally published on nationalinterest.org.)

## Why Azerbaijan Is Unfit to Rule over the Armenians of Artsakh

ARTSAKH, from page 19

multitudes of Armenian churches and monuments. YouTube's "The New Tears of Araxes" shows Azeri soldiers obliterating a large 9th century Armenian cemetery in Nakhichevan. UNESCO is being prevented from inspecting Armenian monuments Azerbaijan has just taken control of.

The Azerbaijani Laundromat was – and may still be – a multi-billion dollar money laundering racket run by Azeri kleptocrats and the Aliyev clan. German, Italian, Slovenian, and other European officials were bribed to whitewash Azerbaijan's human rights record.

Azerbaijan covertly bankrolled a PR junket to Baku in 2013 for several Members of Congress and staff. They were lavished with rugs and other gifts which the Office of Congressional Ethics ultimately made them surrender. Azerbaijan funded the junket through a Dallas-based organization affiliated with renege Turkish imam Fethullah Gülen.

Human Rights Watch says Azerbaijan intentionally struck Artsakh's "homes, businesses, hospitals, schools, the local water

supply" and Holy Savior Cathedral in the recent war.

"Within the next 25 years, there will be no state of Armenia in the South Caucasus. These people ... have no right to live in this region," declared Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry spokesperson in 2004. A year later, Baku's mayor told a German delegation, "Our goal is the complete elimination of Armenians. You Nazis already eliminated the Jews in the 1930s and 40s, right?"

"We [Azerbaijanis] must kill all Armenians – children, women, the elderly. [We] need to kill [them] without [making a] distinction." After Azeri soccer manager Nurlan Ibrahimov posted that in October, the Union of European Football Associations banned him.

Such venom has resulted in the horrors we see above.

Some Azerbaijanis have threatened to bomb Armenia's nuclear power plant. Last year Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry formalized the threat.

In sheets of newly released Azerbaijani postage stamps, an Azeri in a hazmat suit is spraying Artsakh with chemicals, suggesting Armenians are vermin to be exterminated.

Azerbaijan's territorial ambitions have included not just Artsakh but also Armenia. In December, Pres. Aliyev once again claimed parts of Armenia while beside him Turkish President Erdogan glorified Turkey's 1915-23 genocide against millions of Armenians and Assyrian and Hellenic Christians. Azerbaijan and Turkey's intentions are obvious.

Now you know why Artsakh's Armenians have fought and died to live free from Azeri rule. In their place, you'd do the same.

Artsakh is at least as deserving as other states that since the 1990s have achieved self-determination through international support, such as East Timor, Montenegro, and South Sudan.

Regardless of the recent war's outcome, if the international community cannot see the justice of Artsakh's case and effectuate a remedy consistent with self-determination, then there is no justice.

(David Boyajian is an independent writer whose efforts focus on commentary and investigative reports regarding the Caucasus.)