

Thank You President Biden



A large crowd turned out for the Boston April 24 commemoration. (See story inside)

Armenia Delighted with US Recognition of Genocide

By Raffi Elliott
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN— The traditional Armenian Genocide commemoration felt bitter-sweet for the hundreds of thousands of Armenians making the pilgrimage to the Tsiternakarbert memorial on Saturday. In the wake of last autumn’s major military setback against the Turkish-supported Azerbaijani Army, the subsequent ethnic cleansings which have effectively ended millennia of continuous Armenian habitation in the Artsakh towns of Hadrut, Shushi and Talish have evoked memories and long-buried

trauma of the 106 year-old Genocide. Still, for those concerned that the indigenous Armenian people’s presence in the South Caucasus may yet again be under threat, a proclamation by US President Joe Biden has injected new hope that a newly-re-engaged United States on the World Stage would be more willing to support Armenia as it faces renewed threats in the region. Still, as the political consultant Eric Hacopian noted in a recent interview with Civilnet, the Biden Administration’s recognition is largely about correcting a historical wrong and resulted from decades of successful American-Armenian activism. see RECOGNITION, page 7



After the Biden Statement, Will Turkey Move Closer To Admission of Guilt?

By Alin K. Gregorian and Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — Starting on the afternoon (ET) of April 24, 2021, members of the Armenian community could talk about little else other than President Biden’s statement unambiguously recognizing the Armenian Genocide. What was even more interesting was that the story made headlines around the world. From the *Washington Post* to the BBC and the *New York Times*, there were few outlets that did not showcase Biden’s Armenian Genocide statement. But what does it mean going forward? Why now? Several influential people in the Armenian world offered their own ideas. see ADMISSION, page 10



STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN ON ARMENIAN GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE DAY

WASHINGTON — Each year on this day, we remember the lives of all those who died in the Ottoman-era Armenian genocide and recommit ourselves to preventing such an atrocity from ever again occurring. Beginning on April 24, 1915, with the arrest of Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Constantinople by Ottoman authorities, one and a half million Armenians were deported, massacred, or marched to their deaths in a campaign of extermination. We honor the victims of the *Meds Yeghern* so that the horrors of what happened are never lost to history. And we remember so that we remain ever-vigilant against the corrosive influence of hate in all its forms. Of those who survived, most were forced to find new homes and new lives around the world, including in the United States. With strength and resilience, the Armenian people survived and rebuilt their community. Over the decades Armenian immigrants have enriched the United States in countless ways, but they have never forgotten the tragic history that brought so many of their ancestors to our shores. We honor their story. We see that pain. We affirm the history. We do this not to cast blame but to ensure that what happened is never repeated. Today, as we mourn what was lost, let us also turn our eyes to the future — toward the world that we wish to build for our children. A world unstained by the daily evils of bigotry and intolerance, where human rights are respected, and where all people are able to pursue their lives in dignity and security. Let us renew our shared resolve to prevent future atrocities from occurring anywhere in the world. And let us pursue healing and reconciliation for all the people of the world. The American people honor all those Armenians who perished in the genocide that began 106 years ago today.

April 24, 2021



Joseph Biden
President of the United States of America
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Mr. President:
It is with deep appreciation and exhilaration that we express to you the gratitude of the more than one-million-strong Armenian-American community on the occasion of the 106th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, because you made history by recognizing that great human tragedy in its true definition as genocide. True to your lifelong pursuit of human rights and in line with the noble ideals of our founding fathers, you chose to be on the right side of history. see APPRECIATION, page 18



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Putin, Macron Express Readiness to Coordinate Karabakh Settlement

PARIS (Panorama.am) — The situation in Nagorno Karabakh was among the topics of a telephone conversation between Russian President Vladimir Putin and President Emmanuel Macron of France, the Kremlin press service said on April 26. “It was stated with satisfaction that the situation remains calm and systematic work continues to implement the Statements by the presidents of Russia and Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of Armenia on Nagorno-Karabakh of November 9, 2020 and January 11, 2021. The parties expressed mutual readiness for coordination on various aspects of the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement, including through the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] Minsk Group,” the release stated.

Azerbaijani Servicemen Stop Priest Ordination At Dadivank Monastery

STEPANAKERT (Panorama.am) — On April 25 Azerbaijani servicemen didn’t allow Armenian pilgrims to visit Dadivank Monastery in Artsakh, head of the Information Department at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin Vahram Melikyan said in an [interview](#) with Armenpress news agency. “On April 25, the Azerbaijani servicemen banned Primate of the Artsakh Diocese, Bishop Vrtanes Abrahamyan and a group of pilgrims from entering the monastery, mentioning the pandemic as a reason. However, an ordination of a priest was scheduled in the Monastery on that day, which had been agreed upon with the Russian peacekeeping command. It was impossible to approach the Monastery despite the agreements. It’s obvious that the Azerbaijani side wished to stop the priest ordination, but the ceremony was held in the Gandzasar Monastery on the same day in the evening,” Melikyan said.

Baroness Cox, Parliament Speaker Mirzoyan Meet

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenia’s Parliament Speaker Ararat Mirzoyan received on April 27 a member of the House of Lords of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Baroness Caroline Cox, who was visiting Armenia to participate in the Armenian Genocide commemoration events, the Armenian Parliament reports. Mirzoyan said it’s a great honor for him to host one of the best friends of the Armenian people in the National Assembly. Mirzoyan and Cox discussed issues relating to the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the improvement of humanitarian situation in Artsakh, the return of Armenians prisoners of war from Azerbaijan. An agreement was reached to unite the efforts in the works with the international partners.

Pashinyan Resigns to Trigger Early Snap Elections

By Raffi Elliott

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s government officially submitted its resignation on April 25. The resignation, which was formally accepted by President Armen Sarkissian is the first step in triggering the process to hold snap parliamentary elections by June 20, in accordance with [a deal struck between political forces](#) back in March.

With Pashinyan’s resignation triggering Article 149 of the Armenian Constitution, parliament is given two opportunities within a 14-day period to vote on a replacement prime minister. As part of the deal, parliamentary opposition parties Bright Armenia and Prosperous Armenia have both agreed to withhold nominating their own candidates as part of the complex set of loops that parliament must go through before a general election could be called. This election is expected to take place within 30 to 45 days.

The administration chose the date of his government’s resignation — April 25 — to coincide with the third anniversary of former President Serzh Sargsyan’s resignation in the wake of peaceful mass protests which first swept Pashinyan to power in 2018. The event has since been commemorated with a new holiday, “[Citizens’ Day](#)” held on the closest Sunday.

“This is emblematic in a sense that in this way we are returning to the citizens the authority received from the citizens of the Republic of Armenia, so that they could elect a government through free, fair and competitive elections,” Pashinyan [explained](#) the date chosen.

Pashinyan is expected to remain interim prime minister until the elections are held in June. This decision did not pass without controversy, however. Opposition parties connected to the former regime criticized the decision as being unconstitutional. Armenia’s first President, Levon Ter-Petrosian also voiced concerns about the viability of free elections if Pashinyan retained

his seat. These concerns were rebuked by parliamentary opposition leader Edmon Marukyan, pointing to Article 158 of the Constitution, which states that government officials (including the prime minister) are allowed to remain in office in the interim. “Those who wrote the law are now complaining that the government does whatever it wants,” Marukyan hit back, “Pashinyan already set a precedent in 2018 when he remained interim prime minister after resigning; no-one complained back then.”

According to most polls conducted since January, Pashinyan remains the front-runner, despite being widely accused of losing last fall’s war. The prime minister’s prospects are bolstered by a lack of a third force between him and a widely discredited opposition, as well as positive economic figures in recent weeks. Former President Robert Kocharyan, who accuses Pashinyan of mishandling the negotiation process with Azerbaijan, comes in at a distant second—due in part to the widespread anger among society for his role in the March 1, 2008 massacre. He is widely expected to announce an electoral alliance with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) which has reversed its previous position against the elections. Despite the challenge, Pashinyan is widely expected to retain his seat, either with a reduced majority or with support from a coalition partner, but voter apathy remains widespread.

Still, the prime minister has sparked some concern among those hoping for a free and fair electoral atmosphere over the past several weeks. Pashinyan’s recent visits to villages in Ararat Marz, and in Syunik have been criticized as examples of stealth campaigning by opposition groups and civil rights watchdogs alike. Prominent pro-democracy activist Daniel Ioannisyan, who heads the Union Informed Citizens characterized the trips as “blatant abuse of administrative resources.” He explained that by virtue of his Office, the Prime Minister’s discussing future policies and elections with potential voters gives him a clear upper-hand against opposition

parties. Pashinyan’s supporters have characterized the trips as part of an ongoing series of visits he has undertaken as part of his duties as prime minister in the aftermath of last year’s war with Azerbaijan.

Electoral code reform has been another point of contention among parties in the runup to the vote this summer. The reform, which has been on the books since at least 2018, envisages a fully-proportional system among other changes. Despite helping to craft this reform package, Bright Armenia leader Edmon Marukyan stated concern that with an election now looming, the Central Election Committee would not have time to properly implement the reform packages’ provisions.

Despite receiving approval by the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission, the electoral reform bill was not signed by the Armenian President, but not rejected either. The bill was instead signed into law by the Speaker of the Armenian Parliament, Ararat Mirzoyan, in accordance with the Constitution. However—in light of the concerns highlighted by Manukyan — only part of the bill will be implemented before the election, with other provisions, such as the lowering of the entry barrier, and electoral fraud violations will come later.

One controversial provision which would have been entirely removed with the reform — the use of mobile ballot boxes — has instead found new life in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. With over ten thousand active cases in the country two months before the vote, public health officials and electoral officials are scrambling to ensure that the constitutional right to vote is not impeded by the ongoing public health crisis. The government is struggling to ensure that basic hygiene rules are kept: such as requiring masks, social distancing and more, however not all designated locations are designed to meet these [requirements](#).

Putin, Macron Express Readiness To Coordinate Karabakh Settlement

PARIS (Panorama.am) — The situation in Nagorno-Karabakh was among the topics of a telephone conversation between Russian President Vladimir Putin and President Emmanuel Macron of France, the Kremlin press service said on Monday, April 26. The presidents discussed the developments in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, highlighting that the situation in the region remains calm and expressing readiness to coordinate on various aspects of the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement, according to the source.

“It was stated with satisfaction that the situation remains calm and systematic work continues to implement the Statements by the presidents of Russia and Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of Armenia on Nagorno-Karabakh of November 9, 2020 and January 11, 2021. The parties expressed mutual readiness for coordination on various aspects of the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement, including through the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] Minsk Group,” the release added.

Ombudsman Voices Concern after Attack On Civilian by Azeri Servicemen

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — An attack on a shepherd in the village of Aranus, in the province of Syunik, by Azerbaijani soldiers, has caused Armenian Human Rights defender Arman Tatoyan on Tuesday, April 27, to raise the alarm.

In his statement Taotyan sought a security zone around Syunik to prevent incursions.

According to him, the shepherd on April 18 was grazing his cattle near his house when three armed Azerbaijani servicemen approached him.

According to the shepherd, the servicemen first threatened him with their weapons, and then two of them pulled him and tried to take him to move to the border by force. During all this time, the soldiers constantly cursed and threatened the pastor.

Then, when they saw that Armenian Armed Forces servicemen began to rush to help the, the third Azerbaijani serviceman hit the shepherd in the eye, causing a bruise and immediately left for their position.

Tatoyan’s office said an investigation had revealed that the soldiers kept shouting insults while openly displaying their firearms on April 20.

The staff of the Human Rights Defender also recorded an alarming interview of the

head of Aravus village about the incident in mass media.

The shepherd’s family members, as well as the villagers who rushed to help the shepherd, informed the Human Rights Defender’s Office that they had also heard Azerbaijani soldiers’ shouts, including that the Azeris had moved from their position to the shepherd.

The head of the Aravus village informed the Human Rights Defender’s Office that there are houses in the villagers even less than 500 meters away from the Azerbaijani positions (for example, 100 or 200 meters). This fact was also recorded by the Human Rights Defender’s Office monitoring conducted at the site.

The RA Human Rights Defender specifically states that the Azerbaijani servicemen committed a criminal attack on the Armenian border resident. This confirms gross violations of the internationally recognized rights of the citizens of the Republic of Armenia, as well as rights enshrined in the Constitution of Armenia.

Armenia’s Human Rights Defender will send the information about these incidents to relevant international organizations, as well as will include it in the security zone concept, Tatoyan said.



INTERNATIONAL

Turkish-Armenian MP Paylan Threatened by Nationalist Lawmaker over Genocide Remarks

ANKARA (Bianet) — Independent MP Ümit Özdağ has threatened Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) deputy Garo Paylan over his remarks about the Armenian Genocide.

On April 24 Genocide Remembrance Day, Paylan criticized the fact that there are still streets and schools named after Talat Pasha, who was the Ottoman Empire's minister of interior during the Genocide.

"After 106 years, we walk on streets named after Talat Pasha, the architect of the Genocide. We educate our children at schools named after Talat Pasha," he wrote on Twitter. He likened the situation to naming schools and streets after Hitler in Germany.

Quoting his tweet, Özdağ wrote, "Impudent provocateur man. If you are not content, go to hell. Talat Pasha didn't expel patriotic Armenians but those who stabbed us in the back like you. When the time comes, you'll also have a Talat Pasha experience and you should have it."

Özdağ, a former member of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), was elected as an MP in the 2018 elections from the İYİ (Good) Party, a splinter movement of the MHP.

He resigned from the İYİ Party in early March, accusing it of expelling nationalists from the party.

In response to Özdağ's tweet, Paylan called him a "fascist" and wrote: "The remnant of the mentality that obliterated my people says, 'We'll do it again.' You hit us and didn't we die? We died. But those left behind never give up the struggle for justice. And they won't give up after me as well."



Ümit Özdağ (Photo: AA)

Özdağ then called Paylan a remnant and a supporter of the Tashnag [Tashnatsutiwn or Armenian Revolutionary Federation], an Armenian political party in the Ottoman Empire, ASALA [Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia], a militant group active in the 1970s and the 1980s and the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

"You massacred hundreds of thousands of Turks. You stabbed our army in the back. Those who did it suffered the punishment of it. No one touched patriotic Armenians," Özdağ wrote, calling Paylan a "vicious enemy of the Turkish nation."

Parliamentary Bill for Turkish Recognition of Genocide

Paylan also submitted a legislative proposal for Turkish recognition of the Arme-

nian Genocide. "April 24, 1915 was the starting day of the Great Calamity of the Armenian people," Paylan said during a statement at the parliament.

"The Armenian people were exiled en masse from their homeland, country, towns and cities and a vast majority of them were massacred on the migration routes.

"Orphans like my grandmother survived this massacre. Those orphans have been seeking justice for 106 years. My grandmother passed from this world without being able to see justice done.

"My father, who was from the second generation, also lost his life without seeing justice done. As a third-generation Armenian of Turkey, I'm seeking justice in Turkey, at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey."

The law proposal Paylan submitted stipulates the recognition of the genocide, removal of the names of the perpetrators of the genocide from public places and a change in the citizenship law.

Paylan noted that while parliaments of many countries in the world have recognized the expulsion of Armenians as a genocide, what really matters is the recognition by Turkey's parliament.

"When Turkey confronts the Armenian Genocide, it won't matter what other parliaments say. The Armenian Genocide has been a subject of other parliaments, other presidents for 106 years because it's been denied.

"We need to bring the pain of the Armenian people to the land where they belong, to this land, to Turkey. We should confront the pain of the Armenian people and relieve this pain with justice."

Aliyev Threatens to Establish 'Corridor' In Southern Armenia by Force

By Ani Avetisyan

BAKU (oc-media.org) — Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has threatened to use force to establish a "corridor" through southern Armenia connecting western Azerbaijan with the Autonomous Nakhichevan Republic. The comments were met with outrage in Armenia.

"The creation of the Zangezur corridor fully meets our national, historical and future interests. We will be implementing the Zangezur Corridor, whether Armenia wants it or not," Aliyev said during an [interview](#) with Azerbaijani Public TV on April 19. "If Armenia wants to, we will solve this issue more easily; if it does not, we will solve it by force."

"The Azerbaijani people are returning to the occupied Zangezur," he said.

Aliyev's statements instantly sparked outrage in Armenia. Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Anna Naghdalyan [condemned](#) the comments, stating that they "do serious harm to regional peace and stability" and "reveal the false nature of Azerbaijan's recent peace statements."

"Armenia will take all necessary measures to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity," she concluded. The Human Rights Defender of Armenia also released a statement, decrying the comments as reflective of "fascist policy" by Aliyev.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan [accused](#) Aliyev of trying to "abort the process" of the Tripartite peace declaration

and of stepping back from his agreements.

"If Aliyev is speaking about the Zangezur corridor, then, with the same logic, we can talk about the corridor of Nakhichevan, about the northern-Azerbaijani corridor," Pashinyan said, adding that, according to the November 9 agreement, both Armenia and Azerbaijan will get "corridors" with equivalent status for both countries.

Armenian political analyst Eric Hacobian told OC Media there are no credible military threats to "back up his rhetoric," which, he added, was reminiscent of "Saddam Hussein." Hacobian also said that he believes the remarks were not only meant for Armenia, but for a domestic audience as well.

With respect to the possibility of unblocking the transport links between the countries, Hacobian said that "as a matter of policy, anything that opens up the railway lines to Iran and Russia via Azerbaijani territory is good for Armenia." But, he added, "there are limits, and this kind of Saddamesque language could lead to those limits coming into play."

Point 9 of the [Tripartite Peace Declaration](#) stipulates that "the Republic of Armenia shall guarantee the safety of transport links between western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic with a view to organising the unimpeded movement of citizens, vehicles and cargo in both directions. The Border Service of the FSB of Russia shall exercise control over the transport

communication."

It also states that "the construction of new infrastructure linking the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic with regions of Azerbaijan shall be carried out" only "subject to agreement by the Parties [Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan]."

Armenia is currently in a military defence treaty with the Russian Federation and has one Russian military base based in the city of Gyumri. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, in a recent meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, [proposed](#) to have some of the troops stationed in Armenia's southern Syunik province.

The controversy has taken place at the same time as Pashinyan is conducting a two-day visit to Syunik. The trip has been met with protests by local residents who attempted to prevent the Armenian Prime Minister from holding meetings or visiting local military cemeteries.

Pashinyan's spokesperson Mane Gevorgyan [dismissed](#) the protests as being "organised" by "well-known" anti-Pashinyan "circles" and that they had nothing to do with the residents of Syunik. The prime minister had to cut his previous visit to the region short after also being met with protests.

At the time, a number of local mayors in southern Armenia called for Pashinyan's resignation, for what they considered failures in the border demarcation process with Azerbaijan.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UK's Labour Party Statement on Armenian Genocide

LONDON (Public Radio of Armenia) — Catherine West MP has issued a statement on behalf of the Labour Party on the Armenian Genocide on April 24, the first time that a major political party in the UK has ever done so, reports the Armenian National Committee of UK. "After an incredibly difficult year marked with loss and grieving the Armenian people are in my thoughts today as they mark the horrendous events of 1915," she said. "The atrocities committed against the Armenian people in the early part of the 20th century, are amongst the most appalling acts against a group of people the world has seen," the MP said, adding. "Labour stands with the Armenian people in condemning the historic and present acts against them," West added.

Vatican Cardinal: Armenian Genocide Stain on Human History

VATICAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Armenian Genocide is a stain in the history of all humanity, Cardinal Leonardo Sandri of the Vatican said, Catholic News Agency [reports](#). The fact of the Armenian Genocide "forces us to confront both the great evils committed in human history and the small evils we commit in our personal lives," the cardinal said. The Genocide is a "stain in the history of the whole of humanity, not only of those who were the negative protagonists of those days or of those who have remained silent for indifference or complicity," he added. Sandri, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Oriental Churches, spoke in a homily during a Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Catholic Church in Rome on April 24. The Divine Liturgy, said at the Pontifical Armenian College, marked the 106th anniversary of the beginning of the Armenian Genocide in 1915.

EU Commissioner Slams Azerbaijan's 'Disturbing, Humiliating' Trophy Park

STRASBOURG, France (PanArmenian.net) — Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović slammed Azerbaijan's "Trophy Park" as "highly disturbing and humiliating." "I regret to learn that you recently inaugurated the 'Trophy Park' in Baku, which has been open to the public since April 14 and can be visited by everyone, including small children. From the information and the images which are publicly available, I noticed that it shows dehumanizing scenes, including wax mannequins depicting dead and dying Armenians soldiers. I consider such images highly disturbing and humiliating," she said.

Community News

Turkish Political Lobbying Infiltrates State Of Michigan

By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

LANSING, MI — The Armenian-American community of Michigan and Metro Detroit received a shock this past week as the mayors of three major cities in the region signed proclamations declaring April 23, 2021 as “Turkish Sovereignty and Children’s Day.” The shock was intensified by the fact that one of the three cities was Southfield, home to two of the state’s four Armenian churches and the state’s only Armenian day school.

As the local Armenian community attempted to regroup and respond to the situation, a proclamation from the governor of Michigan, Gretchen Whitmer, was also released to the same effect, with a change of verbiage to “Turkish Heritage and Children’s Day.”

The offensiveness of the proclamations is, of course, not due to their celebration of Turkish heritage, but to their timing of the day before Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day on April 24.

The proclamations also caused offense by, rather than discussing the heritage of the Turkish culture in a neutral way, actively promoting the supposed positive contributions of the Republic of Turkey in world affairs with the following statement: “The Republic of Turkey, a *secular democratic state*, has made significant contributions to United States foreign policy in the Balkans, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Caucasus and has played a crucial role in international efforts for peace, prosperity, and stability.” (italics in the original)

Where It Happened

Southfield is home to St. John’s Armenian Church of Greater Detroit, one of the largest parishes of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, and the only Diocesan parish serving Michigan.

The only K-12 Armenian day school in the US outside of California is the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School which along with the museum, library, radio studio, gym, Veterans’ Memorial Building and other community institutions are housed on the same grounds as St. John’s.

In addition, Southfield is home to the Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit with its sanctuary and hall only a few miles away. Suffice it to say that Armenians have a presence in Southfield, even if demographically they have increasingly moved out of the city into other neighboring suburbs.

Not only do Armenians have a major presence, but they have a great relationship with the city of Southfield. Most Southfield mayors and other elected officials in recent history have visited St. John’s and the AGBU School and have even spoken on

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Anahit Sargsyan taking the oath of office

Senator Portantino Administers Attorney Oath Of Office for First Karabian Fellow Anahit Sargsyan

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — State Sen. Anthony J. Portantino (D–La Canada-Flintridge) was proud to administer the oath for the State Bar of California for Anahit Sargsyan, the first Walter and Laurel Karabian Fellow and former Legislative Assistant in his Capitol office.

“Anahit was an outstanding choice to be the inaugural Karabian Fellow,” commented Senator Portantino. “She served our Sacramento office and the 25th Senate District extremely well. I also appreciated her dedication to and support of Artsakh. I had the opportunity to meet her terrific family and the privilege of swearing her into the State Bar of California, where she will continue her stellar service as an attorney,” he added.

Sargsyan was selected as the first Walter and Laurel Karabian Fellow in 2016 and placed in Senator Portantino’s 2016 State Senate campaign. Shortly after, she was hired as a legislative assistant in his capitol office. During her time at the State Senate, she had an opportunity to assist the senator on a number of important projects, including securing state funding for the Armenian American Museum and the formation of the Senate Select Committee on California, Armenia, and Artsakh Mutual Trade, Art, and Cultural Exchange.

Sargsyan earned her B.A. with honors from the University of California, Davis, where she studied history, with an emphasis in Western Civilization. She received her J.D. from



the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law in 2020 and is currently working as an associate at a California law firm’s Los Angeles office, focusing her practice on litigation, elections, state legislation, ethics and conflict of interest, and education matters. While attending law school, Sargsyan worked as a judicial extern at the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and as a litigation fellow at a firm in Los Angeles. She also spent a summer interning at Republic of Artsakh’s Human Rights Defender’s Office in Shushi.

Inspired by her experience of advising Senator Portantino on education policy matters, Sargsyan developed a passion for teaching and mentorship. She worked as a Graduate Student Instructor for the Freedom of Communication course at UCLA and also served as a mentor for the UCLA Law Fellows Program and as Vice-President of UCLA Armenian Law Students Association.

“Working in environments that invest in your growth early in your career is crucial,” said Sargsyan. “I am so thankful to Senator Portantino for his mentorship and to the Karabian Fellowship for the invaluable experiences they have provided me. We have many opportunities to create pathways for Armenian students interested in politics and public service. Being introduced to Senator Portantino through the Karabian Fellowship was the beginning of that path for me. I encourage all young professionals to seek out mentors and programs that inspire them,” she added.

Sargsyan moved to California from Yerevan, Armenia in 2010, where she also studied law at the Yerevan State University. She joined her family in Sacramento, relying on their support to overcome the challenges of being an immigrant and navigating the educational system in the US. Sargsyan maintains strong ties with the realities in Armenia. She remains active in the Armenian American community, supporting various advocacy efforts for the Armenian cause, including those programs that invest in extending access to high quality education for Armenian students.

Left Behind:

UN. Conference Examines the Effect of War on the Women of Artsakh

By Christopher Atamian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK — It is unfortunately all too obvious that in spite of First and Second Wave feminism and some real progress in women’s rights, that we still have a long way to go. Twenty years after the United Nation’s ambitious Resolution 1325 called on governments to help achieve gender equality and put an end to physical and verbal violence against women, the latter remain the overlooked victims in times of war and humanitarian emergencies. Women often have no recourse against verbal and physical abuse and outright rape. Many must also figure out how to support families and raise children when the men in their families have been killed or severely handicapped in combat.

In order to address these issues in light of the 44-Day War, the Armenian Mission to the United Nations recently organized a round table titled “Between War and Pandemic: Voices from the Field.” The event was held remotely due to COVID-19 as part of the UN Commission on the Status Women’s 65th session, in coordination with the work of the UN Women’s Status Committee. The panelists delivered thoughtful presentations aimed at informing the public but also finding solutions to existing issues. Maria Victoria Cabrera-Balleza, the founder and chief executive officer of the Global Network of Woman Peacebuilders (GNWP) spoke first and expounded on the importance of sending relief packages that GNWP send to women in conflict areas around the world that include reproductive products as well as other forms of aid. She decried the exponential increase during COVID-19 of gender-based domestic violence. Another key element in her organization’s work is simply information dissemination so that people are made aware of the problems at hand and so that women know where to go for help. The GNWP is notably implementing peace resolution efforts and aid to Armenia in Tavush and other parts of the country. This type of action plan is being made available regionally, nationally and internationally thanks in part to a comprehensive database that is being put together by the organization. She also hinted that Armenians should stay tuned as the organization is planning new soon-to-made-public relief activities in Armenia.

Cabrera-Balleza was followed by Lucy Snell, a remarkable investigative journalist and Edward R. Murrow Award recipient. Snell has been on the front lines of numerous war zones, including in Syria. It was shocking to hear her say that the shelling by

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COMMUNITY NEWS

UN Conference Examines the Effect of War on the Women of Artsakh

WOMEN, from page 4

Azerbaijani and Turkish forces of Nagorno Karabakh was more intense and destructive than any she had seen because it happened so quickly after the outbreak of the war and due as well to its sheer intensity. The fact that the Turkish-Azerbaijani forces also shelled civilian areas and hospitals meant that the women who were left behind to take care of their families while the husbands were on the battlefield had to risk their lives on a regular basis in order to get food or household supplies. Like several



Lika Zakaryan

sis felt that any moment in time could be their last one alive. As a result COVID-19 was not even a factor in their consciousness as they all huddled together in bomb shelters. Many caught the illness but could not give it a second thought amidst the immediacy of a greater threat to their lives — drones and bombs exploding above.

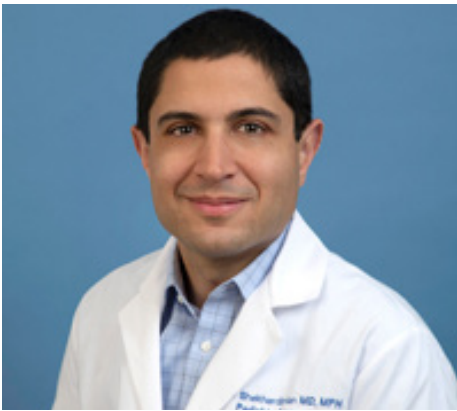
The panel was rounded out by Shant Shekherdimian, Professor of Surgery at UCLA and by political scientist Karena Avedissian.

Shekherdimian volunteered his services and had to literally piece together bodies on a daily basis. But even he emphasized that the true heroes of the war were the women of Artsakh. Left behind they helped him in surgery and themselves performed operations 24/7. He also spoke about the bravery of pregnant women who had to be evacuated from the hospital which was being shelled and transported to Armenia itself. Finally, he emphasized the mental and physical consequences of the war on women who still carry scars from the previous war with Azerbaijan. This was a difficult segment to listen to, so raw were the facts that he related.

Finally Karena Avedissian had perhaps the most surprising presentation. She spoke of the daily abuse that Armenian women are receiving through social media and the internet from Azerbaijani hackers who send on-line messages of hate, thus making the women feel as if they were not safe in their own homes.

The mental anguish this causes them reminds one of cyber bullies in American schools who sometimes drive students to suicide from fear and shame.

In his opening remarks Mher Margaryan, the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the UN, noted that within the UN family, Armenia has consistently raised the issue of strengthening the protection mechanisms and rights of women affected by conflict. While Margaryan’s comments were indeed welcome, this writer found



Dr. Shant Shekherdimian

them to be a bit ironic given the Republic of Armenia’s reportedly poor record in protecting its own women from domestic violence.

Lucy Varpetian, President of the Armenian Bar Association, was a remarkably informed and effective panel moderator. She began by reading a poem by the late African-American poet Maya Angelou, “Still I Rise.” To my mind this is indeed a perfect commentary on the Armenian condition and the Armenian will to survive:

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?
Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don’t you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I’ve got gold mines
Diggin’ in my own backyard.
You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I’ll rise.

Just as African and Native Americans have been victimized in the US country, so too have Armenians been victimized over the centuries by their Turkic neighbors. The underlying message of the round table: like the descendants of African slaves who yesterday celebrated the verdict in the Derek Chauvin case, so too will Armenians rise again.

Watch the roundtable discussion: <http://webtv.un.org/.../beyond-war-and.../6241643402001/>

Read resolution 1325 on the Rights of Women: <https://peacemaker.un.org/node/105>



Tekeyan Cultural Association Raises \$30,000 for Hrant Dink School

As anticipated, the Tekeyan Cultural Association raised and transferred \$30,000 to Hrant Dink Day School of Istanbul, Turkey, thanks to a handful individual donors who for a long time have assisted the educational programs of our community. Hrant Dink School’s student body comprises sons and daughters of immigrant workers from Armenia. Each graduate then returns to the homeland for higher education and hopefully live and work there.

Hovsep Fund	15,100
James and Marta Batmasian, Boca Raton, FL	5,000
Nishan and Margrit Atinizian, Winchester, MA	2,500
Constantinople Arm. Society, New York, NY	2,000
Avedisian 575 Foundation Inc. Lexington, MA	2,000
Aram Adourian, Concord, MA	1,000
Herman and Arek Hintiryan, Oak Park, MI	500
Sonia Doumanian, Chicago, IL	300
Berc and Armine Araz, Wanaque, NJ	250
Nurhan and Victoria Becidyan, Paramus, NJ	250
Noyemi and Hagop Isnar, Haworth, NJ	200
Sonia Iskandarian, Watertown, MA	200
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COMMUNITY NEWS

Turkish Political Lobbying Infiltrates State of Michigan

LOBBYING, from page 4

various occasions, strengthening the ties between the Armenian community and the municipality. Moreover, Nancy Malkasian Banks served for years as the Southfield City Clerk and currently serves as a member of the City Council. In fact, the City of Southfield also released a proclamation recognizing April 24 of this year as a day of remembrance of the Armenian Genocide.

The other two cities were Warren and Ann Arbor. Though Warren's Armenian population is unknown and probably relatively small, Ann Arbor, the home of the University of Michigan has a small active Armenian community and boasts a very active Armenian Studies Department at the University with two endowed professorships in Armenian Studies, one for Armenian Language and Literature and one for Armenian History. Even some of the ethnic Turkish professors at the University are staunch Armenian allies. Ann Arbor is also known as one of the most liberal towns in the United States.

It was also notable that the three cities were spread across the Detroit Metro area: with Warren in Macomb County, Southfield in Oakland County, and Ann Arbor in Washtenaw County, all three of the suburban counties surrounding Detroit were covered.

It is not known at this time if any municipality in Wayne County, home of the City of Detroit, made a similar proclamation.

The strategic placement of the municipalities including Warren, the largest municipality in Macomb County; Southfield, the home of so many Armenian institutions; and Ann Arbor, the largest city in Washtenaw county and a seat of culture with the University of Michigan; seemed calculated, rather than, for example, representing cities with a large Turkish-American population.

Finally, the proclamation from the governor was also a major surprise. Armenians have always had an outsized presence in the State of Michigan as a whole, with the well-known Manoogian and Mardigian families championing the Detroit Institute of the Arts, one of the premier art museums in the country. But it is not the super wealthy but average donors who have invigorated the State of Michigan since the Armenian community, now numbering around 40,000, began to form in Detroit around 1909 and grew with the rise of the automobile industry.

Armenians started out as factory workers, cobblers, and fruit peddlers, and rose to success as small business owners. (A Detroit Armenian is credited with opening the first automatic car wash in the United States.) Later immigrant waves have had great success in the jewelry business. Today, the community boasts doctors, lawyers, engineers, and other professionals, in addition to musicians and artists. The Armenian community as a whole is well known in the state, with a stellar reputation and has consistently participated in inter-ethnic events, inter-faith dialogue (including a robust, close relationship with the Jewish community going back to the 1960s), the upbuilding of municipalities, universities, and other public institutions, and even getting the Michigan legislature to recognize Artsakh and mandate Armenian Genocide education in the schools.

In addition to all the above, the Armenian community's own Rep. Mari Manoogian (no relationship to the late industrialist Alex Manoogian), a rising star in the Democratic party, is an active member of the Michigan state legislature in Lansing and has been in the past an advisor to Michigan governor Whitmer herself, in addition

to spearheading some of the pro-Armenian actions of the state legislature. In fact, Manoogian was responsible for the municipality of Birmingham, MI, which she represents, issuing a proclamation commemorating the Armenian Genocide on April 24 this year, as well as the unanimous adoption of a statewide proclamation from the legislature in Lansing.

So, how could this all happen?

A Ripple Through the Community

Most community members found out about the proclamations through emails that were sent by various watchful eyes from the community itself. As the news of the mayoral proclamations spread, community activists sent emails in protest to the three mayors and spread the word about the concern. Of the more professionally worded missives was sent by Alice Nigoghosian. Nigoghosian, a book publishing consultant, member of the school board for AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian, was evidently one of the first to find out about

through the passage of a resolution that I introduced, and we will continue to uplift the stories of Michigan's Armenian American community."

Digging Deeper

Although not all the mayors' offices could be contacted in time for this article, Southfield City Council member Nancy Malkasian Banks elucidated what may be a common storyline to the situation in all three municipalities. Banks shared that the office of the mayor of Southfield is largely ceremonial. One of the duties which the mayor has is to issue rote proclamations upon the request of private individuals, organizations or communities. These proclamations could range from recognizing Earth Day to honoring a veteran, from a signed letter to a couple on their 50th anniversary to a proclamation honoring a great-grandmother upon turning 100. Anniversaries for churches and synagogues are common, and every year the Armenian community requests and receives a proclamation for April 24 — this year included.

Importantly, these requests go directly to the mayor's office, who generally signs all of them, and does not have to inform the city council. For that reason, Banks did not know of the proclamation until the emails started to be exchanged in the community and her phone began to ring.

A Turkish-American

organization known as TACAM (Turkish American Cultural Association of Michigan) was responsible for requesting the proclamation, Banks revealed from public documents at her disposal. The documents also showed that TACAM sent a "model proclamation" to the city for them to edit at their discretion. Evidently, Whitmer's office thought that recognizing "Turkish sovereignty" was too strong for an American state government, and they changed it to "Turkish heritage" but the "sovereignty" language was left in by the municipalities.

Southfield mayor Kenson Siver expressed to Banks that he felt he had been used and taken advantage of because this proclamation had been turned into something political, which he did not realize when he signed it. Like so many other proclamations that he signs, he thought it was a simple courtesy for recognizing the Turkish people's contribution in the world. The fact that Siver is a longtime friend of the Armenians and ally of Armenian causes seemed irrelevant — a publicly elected official has to treat all people and groups equally, and to Siver's eyes the proclamation didn't raise any red flags. Above all, since the title describes it as a recognition of "children's day," and Siver has been a teacher and advocate for children his entire life, it would seem prejudiced not to sign such an "innocuous" proclamation.

It seems that "innocuous" is just what TACAM was going for. They didn't send out "model proclamations" asking Michigan mayors to deny the Armenian Genocide, or even to accuse the Armenians of atrocities against the Turks in 1915 or against the Azeris at Khojaly. Those types

of proclamations might have raised red flags which would cause Michigan mayors and the Michigan governor, in most cases Armenian allies, to consult their Armenian friends and colleagues on the matter. Recognizing "children's day" did not seem to fit the bill. Yet, Armenians who deal with the politics of April 24 can read between the lines.

For one thing, it is apparently true that Mustafa Kemal Ataturk declared April 23 as National Sovereignty and Children's Day in Turkey and that this was because the Grand National Assembly of Turkey was first convened on April 23, 1920. Why Kemal chose that date to convene the first assembly seems highly questionable, but leaving that aside, the April 23 date is not even the most important Turkish national holiday. For example, Turkish Independence Day, also known as Republic Day, is celebrated on October 29. Yet we did not hear of any municipalities issuing proclamations for that day.

Secondly, by perusing TACAM's newsletters, many of which are accessible in PDF form online, it is clear that while much of their activity is heritage-based and involves cultural activities for Turkish-American children, they also have a political component which has consistently advocated against recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Moreover, their umbrella organization is ATAA (Assembly of Turkish American Associations) notorious for its denialist lobbying.

In addition, TACAM has purchased acreage of property in the municipality of Wixom, which in 2019 was dedicated as Ataturk Park. Some parts of Ataturk Park are, indeed, innocuous — like the children's play structure and the forested path. But in the heart of the park stands a proud bust of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk — the nationalist strongman under whose administration the denial of the Armenian Genocide was initiated as one of the building blocks of modern Turkey, and whose agenda Turkish-Americans are still carrying out, possibly from the offices in the small building on the premises.

Aftermath

On Sunday, April 25, Siver, along with the Oakland County Executive David Coulter, Representative Mari Manoogian and Southfield City Council member Nancy Malkasian Banks, attended requiem service at St. John's Armenian Church which was followed by a short service of intercessory prayer in honor of the martyred saints of the Armenian Genocide, outside the church in front of a *khachkar* memorial. Fr. Aren Jebejian invited the political figures to speak, and Siver read aloud a proclamation commemorating the Armenian Genocide on behalf of the City of Southfield, handing the document to Jebejian.

In a conversation Siver again expressed his frustration that he had been taken advantage of, noted that he originally signed the Turkish proclamation because the title and most of the language referred to "Children's Day," and staunchly stated that this "would not happen again."

In their speeches, County Executive Coulter praised the Armenian community for their contribution to the region, while Representative Manoogian thanked the Armenian community for "having my back" so that she can continue to advocate for Armenian issues at the state level and so the community can work together to watch out for insidious lobbying like what took place in Michigan this year. Meanwhile, all present came together in a celebratory mood thanks to President Biden's recognition of the Armenian Genocide the previous day.



The opening of Ataturk Park in Wixom, Michigan, in 2019

the proclamations, and sent an "open letter" email to the mayors of the three cities, on which she CC'ed a number of community activists. She politely but sternly criticized the mayors for their actions and attempted to explain why this was offensive for the Armenian community.

The response was underwhelming. The mayors did not seem to understand what was going on. Solidarity with the Armenian cause was expressed, but there was a palpable disconnect.

Then the governor issued her proclamation, which was widely shared on social media, and the local Armenian community was in an outrage. With controversy swirling, Rep. Mari Manoogian, went ahead as planned, introducing the annual resolution to commemorate the Armenian Genocide in the State of Michigan in a speech in the legislature on Friday, April 23, after which the resolution passed unanimously. Then she released a "proclamation" of her own in regard to the governor's proclamation of "Turkish Heritage and Children's Day":

"The timing of this proclamation — which was issued on the eve of Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day — is unfortunate because it aids Turkey's continued effort to deny the genocide of more than 1.5 million Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks and others, and diminishes the mourning of Armenian Americans on an incredibly solemn day. Let me be clear: Michigan not only recognizes the Armenian Genocide, but also mandates the teaching of the Armenian Genocide in our public schools. Our state reaffirmed our commitment to Armenian Genocide recognition yesterday in the Michigan House of Representatives



COMMEMORATING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AROUND THE GLOBE

Armenia Delighted with US Recognition of Genocide

RECOGNITION, from page 1

It doesn't directly signal renewed American interest in the modern Caucasus however.

"Each year on this day, we remember the lives of all those who died in the Ottoman-era *Armenian genocide* and recommit ourselves to preventing such an atrocity from ever again occurring" read Biden's proclamation, which reached Yerevan at 8:00 p.m. local time. Audible outbursts of cheers were set off across the Armenian capital as the news continued to spread, and more Armenian television channels interrupted regular programming to break the historic story.

"For the first time ever, I'm going to pop open a beer on April 24," one cheerful passerby told the *Mirror-Spectator*. "This is no longer a commemoration of our losses, but a celebration of our ultimate victory: survival."

The statement was also welcomed by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

was also met with a barrage of criticism from Ankara and Baku.

Pashinyan hailed Biden's statement as a "a powerful step on the way to acknowledging the truth," and bring justice to the victims of the Genocide and their descendants. He also thanked the American president for setting an "inspiring example" for those hoping to see a just and tolerant world.

Pashinyan also spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin who offered his condolences for the Genocide victims. The two leaders reiterated their commitment to fulfilling the clauses of the November 2020 ceasefire agreement, in particular Clause 8, which calls on the unconditional return of all prisoners of war. Azerbaijan is accused of holding up to 180 Armenian captives, both military personnel and civilians. Azerbaijan acknowledges only about 60 such cases, but denies that they qualify as POWs since they were captured after the ceasefire agreement was signed. This argument violates Article 4 of the Geneva Convention; as confirmed by the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) last week. According to the statement, "Underscoring the concerns expressed by the European Court of Human Rights with respect to 188 Armenians allegedly captured by Azerbaijan the Committee calls upon Azerbaijan to ensure that all Armenian detainees are released without delay into the care of the Armenian authorities."

This point was underscored even further by French Senate President Gérard Larcher who lead a French diplomatic delegation to Yerevan as part of the Genocide commemoration. Referring to a recent bill passed by the French Senate recognizing the Independence of Artsakh, Larcher said added that the motion was more than symbolic, "the document provides a leverage through which the negotiations may lead to a lasting peace."

Larcher was later awarded the Order of Honour by Armenian President Armen Sarkissian.

Back near Tsitsernakaberd, Montreal-born Human Rights lawyer Sheila Paylan — now residing in Yerevan — explained the significance of Biden's statement as adding to incontrovertible outside pressure for Turkey to engage in retrospection surrounding the legacy of the Armenian Genocide in their own identity. "I've always felt that the most important recognition should be coming from Turkey," Paylan said, "but Biden's recognition brought us to a point

where I can possibly see Turkish recognition of the Armenian Genocide within my lifetime."

Eight hundred miles west, in Ankara, her cousin Garo Paylan is preparing to lay the first stones of that foundation. On Monday, April 26, Turkey's only ethnic-Armenian MP for the Kurdish-backed HDP party submitted a bill recognizing of the Armenian Genocide to the Turkish Parliament. "When Turkey confronts the Armenian Genocide, it won't matter what other parliaments say. The Armenian Genocide has been a subject of other parliaments, other presidents for 106 years because it's been denied," Paylan stated on the occasion. (See related story on Page 3.)

For Turkey however, the road to recognition might still be a long one. Responding to Paylan on Twitter, Turkish ultranationalist MP Ümit Özdağ threatened: "When the time comes, you will have a Talat Pasha experience and you must live it."



The leadership in Armenia at Tsitsernakaberd



The commemoration of the Armenian Genocide at Tsitsernakaberd

yan. The prime minister, who had been attending a final concert of the Trilogy of Remembrance, dedicated to the 106th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide with his wife, reportedly sent President Biden a letter expressing gratitude for his act. It

Tekeyan Cultural Association Participates in Genocide Commemoration in Montebello

MONTEBELLO, Calif. — Representatives of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) participated in the 106th Armenian Genocide Commemoration at the Armenian Genocide Martyrs Monument in Mon-

tebello, CA on Saturday, April 24, 2021. The annual commemoration was organized by the United Armenian Council of Los Angeles, which represents over forty religious, political, cultural, benevolent and



Montebello Armenian Genocide monument



Members of the TCA Metro Los Angeles committee with their families

compatriotic organizations.

The service for the canonized saints of the genocide was conducted by the clergy, which included the singing of the solemn "*Hrashatsan*" *sharagan*, which was masterfully composed by the late Archbishop Zareh Aznavourian of the Great House of Cilicia.

Representing the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the Unit-

ed States and Canada in paying homage by laying flowers at the 75-foot-tall monument were Hilda Hartounian, Kevork Keushkerian and Carl Bardakian and TCA West Coast Executive Secretary, Mayda Kuredjian. Also participating were Sevan Deirbadrossian, Shahnour Hovsepian and Hasmig Karayan, TCA Metro Los Angeles chapter committee members.



COMMEMORATING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

April 24 in Germany: Against Genocide, Then and Now

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — The Working Group for Recognition: Against Genocide, for Understanding among Peoples (AGA) issued a call for a vigil on April 24 opposite the Turkish Embassy in Berlin. Among the 250 persons who joined were participants in a demonstration organized by an Armenian association, HayStab. As became clear from the posters, leaflets and statements, the focus was not only on the demand for Turkey to assume historical responsibility for the genocide, but also on Germany’s involvement, Azerbaijan’s military aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh and its continuing refusal to release prisoners.

The main message was: “Never Again!” The lesson must be learned from the genocide against the Armenians and other Christian minorities during and after World War I, against European Jews and Roma during World War II, and again later, in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Myanmar.

Dr. Gerayer Koutcharian, co-founder and long-term member of AGA, traced the long line of continuity from 1915 to the recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

For Koutcharian, Turkey started the 44-day war in 2020, “apparently to conclude what it had begun in 1915, namely, to establish a Greater Turkish Empire, from the Adriatic to the Chinese border, in which all Turkic peoples are united under one flag.” The speaker expressed dismay at the Russian and Iranian non-response to such “pan-Turkish aggression,” not to mention that of Christian Europe and



Ani Serobjan (middle)



Paul Roth

America, then and now.

Koutcharian went further, to assert that in point of fact, whether passively or actively, the world had been party to the aggression: there were weapons from NATO or Israel, volunteer fighters from Pakistan and Afghanistan, Islamist terrorists, political support through British Petroleum, as well as lawmakers in the German and European parliaments and the press. From the 1915 genocide to the present, he went on, most of “our historic homeland — West Armenia — has been destroyed,” and few people know where it — renamed East Anatolia —even is. “Now East Anatolia, that is, the Armenians living there, is slated for disappearance.”

Prof. Tessa Hofmann, AGA co-founder and genocide researcher, addressed the reasons for the vigil. April 24, a “day of mourning,” she explained, marks the 106th anniversary of the beginning of the genocide. It started with elitocide, “the deliberate extinction of the intellectual and political leadership of the Armenians.” A month earlier,

she recalled, 200 prominent Greeks had been arrested and a list prepared for the Armenian elite; “Scarcely any of the arrested survived the year 1915.”

Hofmann described how the proceedings in the capital that day were the blueprint for actions against members of the Armenian intelligentsia throughout the Ottoman Empire, who would be arrested, tortured, driven out and murdered. The rest of the population then followed, sent on death marches to destinations in Mesopotamia, “where the survivors would be thrust into concentration camps, and starved or died of epidemic diseases.”

“In only 19 months,” she reported, “1.5 million of a total 2.5 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire died,” specifying that these figures come from an estimate reckoned by the German Embassy in Constantinople.

Nor was the criminal enterprise of the Young Turks limited to the Armenians, she added; Greeks as well as As-



Setrak Davityan and Ambassador Ashot Smbatyan (with flowers), Archbishop Yegishe Avetisyan (right)

syrians (Aramaer) were targeted and, following the war, the Kemalist regime in its so-called liberation struggle “continued the massacres and deportations of its Young Turk predecessors against Ottoman Christians, including a second elitocide against the Greeks in the Pontus region.” Then, with the Lausanne Treaty, the Turkification of Turkey proceeded.

In sum, between 1912 and 1922, she said, “about three million people died, merely because they belonged to Christian populations in Ottoman territory.”

In the morning of April 24, Armenian Ambassador Ashot Smbatyan took part in a wreath-laying ceremony at a khachkar near the Catholic Saint Hedwig’s Cathedral in Berlin-Mitte. In Frankfurt, the Society of Genocide Opponents (VV) organized a vigil, in Wiesbaden the Mesopotamian Assyrian Society held a commemorative event, and similar gatherings took place in Bremen and Jena.

The Personal Dimension of Trauma

On Sunday, April 25, an ecumenical commemoration took place at the Evangelical Luisenkirchhof in Berlin-Charlottenburg. The cemetery is the site of the Altars of Remembrance, dedicated to the memory of the Armenians, Pontic Greeks and Aramaeans who perished in the genocide. The Promotional Society for the Ecumenical Monuments for Genocide Victims of the Ottoman Empire (FÖGG), which erected the altars, and the Armenian Church and Culture Community in Berlin hosted the event. Smbatyan and counsellor Setrak Davityan represented the Armenian embassy and Archbishop Yeghishe Avetisyan offered requiem prayers. Attending the ceremony were about a hundred Berliners, among them members of the Armenian, Greek and Syrian-Orthodox communities.

Ani Serobjan, a member of AGA and doctoral candidate at the Humboldt University, in her address, explained the meaning of the Armenian word “aghet” as describing “the traumatic experience of the survivors, an experience of destruction suffering, helplessness and loss. Hunger marches, nocturnal raids, murder, forced labor, rape and years of wandering left people with incredibly deep wounds.”

Public attention to the genocide in the immediately aftermath was lacking in Germany due to wartime press censorship, she said. The importance of remembering, she stressed, lies in the need and power to prevent repeating such atrocities. Serobjan reiterated the significance of Raphael Lemkin’s work to conceptualize “genocide” and its subsequent codification as a crime against humanity in the 1948 United Nations convention.

So long as 1915 is denied, the more the need for active remembering, and what Adorno called coming to terms with the past. “That means,” Serobjan said, “the motives and mechanisms that led to genocide must be processed, worked through and made conscious.”

A particularly relevant point in her presentation was that it does not suffice to remember the genocide once a year. Rather “in cultural and political education, it has to be dealt with as a fundamental theme.” In German schools, however, the fact of the Ottoman genocide is virtually ignored, due to fear of the response on the part of parents with Turkish roots.

A related problem in Germany exists in the justice system. “How can it be allowed,” she asked, “that perpetrators of organized mass murder are present in numerous public places and even honored as folk heroes, as patriotic martyrs?” Here she was referring to the scandalous fact that Mehmet Cemal Azmi Bey, who was responsible for deportations of Greeks, not only has a school in Trabzon-Arsin named after him, but his grave — memorial — lies in a cemetery in Berlin-Neukölln. “The hero worship of genocide planners, organizers and executors, who were convicted in their own country’s courts after the first world war, remains unchallenged here in current-day Berlin.” Even the person most responsible for the genocide, Mehmet Talaat, a cult figure in Turkey, has devotees who honor him annually in Berlin.

The Spiritual Dimension

The final speaker was Paul Roth, a deacon and social education worker who is active in an ecumenical initiative, “Armenienhilfe” (Armenian Aid). Roth began by commemorating the thousands of dead in Nagorno-Karabakh, a war that is “at least indirectly” a consequence of the genocide, and Stalin’s “fateful decision” to annex the Armenian-populated region to Azerbaijan.

Roth introduced himself as someone born “long after the end of World War II and engaged for the last 40 years continuously with studying Nazism, the Shoah and all forms of anti-Semitism.” Although he bears no personal guilt for the crimes of German Nazism, he feels “a great respon-



sibility” to come to terms with these past crimes, in the interest of preserving democracy and human rights.

Through his curiosity about Armenia and its history, he began working with Armenienhilfe, which provides sponsors for Armenian children with only one parent. Since 2015, he has traveled to Yerevan yearly, and visited Tsitsernakaberd. If

The German Empire was Ottoman Turkey’s wartime ally and did everything to preserve the alliance, even if that meant the demise of the Armenians, as then-Imperial Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg had put it. Since the Germans knew and tolerated the crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Young Turks, Roth considers them complicit. “Johannes Lepsius, Armin T. Wegner and Franz Werfel and a few others are our little fig leaf,” he said, “behind which however we cannot hide. And unfortunately,” he continued, “even the official representatives of the German churches kept quiet at the time.” Their “misconstrued patriotism” produced anger in him as a Protestant, and shame in relation to Armenians.

For Roth, it is not “why?” but, “what for? To what end?” Here, a bridge is built to the future, one looks forward even though the relevant event lies in the past. This condition of being in a “continuity of witnessing” spans generations, despite the fact that hardly any survivors are alive today. This “transgenerational remembrance” goes beyond, occurring in the present and binding past with the future.

To ensure that humanity learn from the past to shape the future, Roth said such gatherings as these in Berlin were “like mustard seeds, which must grow, to bear fruit. They are just as important as our prayers and exertions in our houses of worship and communities, our collaboration and engagement for a democratic, social and peaceful cooperation among persons, peoples and religions.”



COMMEMORATING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

France Honors 1,500,000 Armenians Exterminated in 1915

By Jean Eckian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PARIS — On Saturday April 24, 2021, around 4,000 French Armenians came to listen to leading public figures of the French Republic, such as the mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo, the president of the Ile de France region Valérie Pécresse and the spokesperson of the French government Gabriel Attal.

Each of these dignitaries brought strong support to the Armenian cause and against denial. In the morning French President Emmanuel Macron came in front of the Armenian Genocide Memorial, in front of the statue of Reverend Komitas, where he gathered alongside the Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo, the Ambassador of Armenia

scribed on the republican calendar by Emmanuel Macron. Let us be in thought with those and those who maintain the memory and fight against denial.

“As the war has once again marred the Caucasian soil, we know how fragile the situation is. France’s position is invariable, inflexible: it is and will remain alongside the Armenians in their desire for peace. We will be there to help and ensure it.

“Some believed they could silence the Armenian Genocide, stifle the cry of the innocent.

“They failed. France, for 20 years, has recognized it in its texts, and Emmanuel Macron has kept his commitment to include the commemoration of April 24 in the Republican calendar.

“Education today is the mother of bat-



Gabriel Attal (photo Jean Eckian)



Mayor Anne Hidalgo of Paris (photo Jean Eckian)

Hasmik Tolmajian, as well as the co-chairs of the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations in France, Ara Toranian and Mourad Papazian.

President Macron said: “On April 24, the Armenian Genocide commemoration day, we are not forgetting. We will fight together against negationism, hatred, violence. The French people and the Armenian people are forever linked.

Government spokesperson Attal declared: “On April 24, we commemorate the Armenian Genocide, a national day in-

cles. We must lead it, firmly, resolutely, without making the slightest concession to those who, for political reasons, try to manipulate the minds of the younger generations to lessen or deny the scope of this genocide.

“We will be there to help the Armenian people to support their heritage. We will be there to help the Armenians find theirs.”

Hidalgo stated: “On April 24, in front of the statue of Father Komitas, we honor the memory of the victims of the Armenian genocide perpetrated 106 years ago. Never



From left, Mourad Papazian, Emmanuel Macron and Ara Toranian (photo Jean Eckian)



Gabriel Attal (photo Jean Eckian)



Dignitaries listening to the speeches (photo Jean Eckian)



Paris demonstrators (photo Jean Eckian)

forget.” She continued, “This commemoration is very special since it follows a war. The goal of this war: the eradication of any Armenian presence in Nagorno-Karabakh, even an invasion of Armenia itself.” She denounced this and announced that a square in Paris will bear the name Armenia.

Pécresse exclaimed: “This April 24, 2021 is not an anniversary like any other: the United States recognizes the Armenian genocide, 20 years after France, thanks to Jacques Chirac. It is up to us to continue to protect Armenia from the attacks of its enemies, because an unbreakable bond binds us!”

Ara Toranian, co-president of the Coor-

dination Council of Armenian Organizations in France, said: “100 years after the genocide of 1915, the ideological model which led to the worst is still there, with its cocktail of pan-Turkism and jihadism which constitutes the political matrix of the AKP [Justice and Development Party] of Mr. Erdogan and his epigones in power in Baku.”

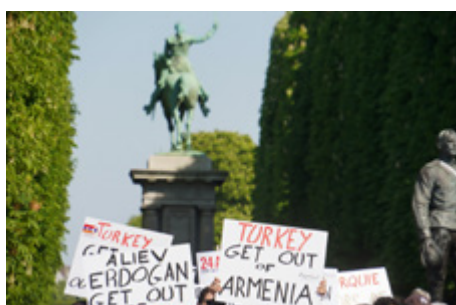
Mourad Papazian, fellow co-president of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations in France, said he was sad: “because the hardships we experienced between September 27 and November 9 have shown that in 2020, we can leave a people behind, to be massacred.”



Mourad Papazian (photo Jean Eckian)



Some of the demonstrators (photo Jean Eckian)



Demonstrators with placards (photo Jean Eckian)



Ara Toranian (photo Jean Eckian)



COMMEMORATING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

After the Biden Statement, Will Turkey Move Closer To Admission of Guilt?

ADMISSION, from page 1

Prof. Richard Hovannisian, the longtime holder of the Modern Armenian History Chair at the University of California, Los Angeles, for whom the chair was renamed after his retirement, as well as the author of several books on Armenian history, offered a long view of the Genocide as well as its denial. As probably the foremost senior living Armenian historian of the modern period, he was interested in what might happen next.

"It's been a very long struggle and many of us for years have been advocating in dif-



Prof. Richard Hovannisian

ferent ways. We have suffered a tremendous loss that is probably irreparable. The denial of the crime has only left the wounds open and exposed," he said in an interview on April 25. "It is important that the leader of the largest and most powerful country acknowledge it."

A professional historian who has written or edited numerous books, including the four-volume *The Republic of Armenia*, and participated in innumerable conferences, Hovannisian parsed the words used by Biden.

"The statement itself was very carefully crafted, very diplomatic, trying to satisfy the president's pledges and his conscience while trying to minimize the affront to the denier state."

He noted that Biden referred to the Ottoman era and not Turkey in the statement. "No blame is being cast on the current Turkish state and leadership," he explained.

Hovannisian said he was not sure about the long-term effect of the statement, but he was happy it happened. "I didn't expect that. I am pleased that at my age, when I've been speaking about it for 50 years," the words came out of the president's mouth.

"So this is somewhat of a vindication of that. I've received a number of emails thanking me for this achievement," he said, adding that it was not through his efforts alone. "We are all little drops. If there are enough drops and enough resistance, that turns into a stream," he noted.

And still, he will not give up on the subject.

"What happened 106 years ago makes me shudder," he said.

Fellow Californian Dr. Eric Esrailian, added, "After 106 years, we were finally able to cross this solemn threshold to honor our ancestors. I am grateful to Kirk Kerkorian for his dedication and support. We outlined an organized plan years ago with our films and social impact campaigns to specifically secure U.S. government recognition. I am also grateful to all of the hard-working people who contributed to our effort - both publicly and privately. They know who they are, and they know the incredible magnitude of what has just happened."

Esrailian heads the Promise Institute for Human Rights at the UCLA School of Law, created through a \$20-million gift from the estate of the late Kirk Kerkorian, and is the producer of the film "The Promise" on the

Armenian Genocide. He is also Chief of the Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Division of Digestive Diseases at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA.

Turkish Reaction

Hovannisian pondered the possible reaction of Turkish leader, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. "Mr. Erdogan is apparently considering this [a response]. It is not terribly surprising," he said.

"Congress for its own reasons recognized the Genocide" in 2019, Hovannisian noted. "There was a groundswell of vocal support at least for recognition."

Hovannisian said he expected the reaction of Turkey to be milder than the one to the resolutions in Congress.

Hovannisian cautioned against treating either Presidents Ronald Reagan or Biden as the first ones to remark on the Armenian Genocide. In fact, he said, "go back to Woodrow Wilson. The word wasn't there," he explained, when Wilson referred "to the murder of a nation." Even President Calvin Coolidge referred to the mass murder of the Armenians and for his efforts received a rug from Armenian orphans.

Prof. Bedross Der Matossian, the president of the Society for Armenian Studies, in a statement said, "The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) hails President Joseph Biden for recognizing the Armenian Genocide in his April 24 address. Despite taking place far from the United States, the Armenian Genocide is part of United States history. The US archival record is testimony to that fact, as many US diplomats and missionaries who witnessed the process of the Genocide have intensively reported the events and raised their voice condemning the acts of atrocities. The most prominent of these figures was Henry Morgenthau, US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire (1913-1916), who wrote and lobbied his government to intervene on behalf of the Armenians. Amb. Morgenthau had access to detailed accounts of the condition of the Armenians in the provinces and the atrocities that were perpetrated against them during the War. He commented on the Armenian deportations and their destruction saying: 'When the Turkish authorities gave the orders for these deportations, they were merely giving the death warrant to a whole race; they understood this well, and, in their conversations with me, they made no particular attempt to conceal the fact'."

Rouben Adalian, director of the Armenian National Institute, in Washington noted, "President Biden's Armenian Remembrance Day not only positively affirms the Armenian Genocide, it also clearly contextualizes the need for remembrance and affirmation within the framework of US foreign policy that holds human rights as one of its central pillars. Armenian Americans who have aspired to see their government clarify its position on the Armenian Genocide have also been doing so as advocates of genocide prevention. President Biden's statement registers a major advance in that direction. It also follows upon the resolutions adopted by the House and Senate in 2019 that also affirmed the Armenian Genocide and at the same time called for the encouragement of human rights education. Armenian Americans should follow through on the legislation and take up the responsibility of promoting human rights education and do their part in raising awareness of the importance of genocide prevention."

For Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian in Massachusetts, the statement was personal. "The historic failure to recognize the Armenian Genocide stood as a blemish on America's moral leadership and a painful erasure of what our families suffered. The violence perpetrated in Artsakh just months ago was a chilling reminder

that this all could happen again. Yet it never deterred us. Every April, for 106 years, we gathered in commemorations around the world - the living embodiments of William Saroyan's words. We remembered our dead. We prayed and read aloud the names of family members who were separated, tortured and brutally murdered. We spoke about the survivors who scattered across the globe and built incredible communities with thriving civic, cultural, commercial, and spiritual life. Brave souls like my grandparents who fled Marash during the Genocide. They spent years apart in Syria and France before reuniting in Massachusetts with the help of the American Red Cross. They had the indomitable souls of Armenians and the patriotic pride of new Americans. Like many of you, I have spent decades advocating for this cause because of them. I wanted their pain, their struggle, and their success to be validated through formal recognition of the Genocide. Sometimes it was hard not to get disheartened. Yet in the past year - difficult in so many of its own ways - I saw hope in our cause."

Hovannisian differentiated the statement by Biden from that of Reagan in 1981, noting that the latter referred to the Armenian Genocide in passing and that "it was not a focal point" of the statement. Ronald Reagan referred the Armenian genocide in passing in a statement on the Holocaust in 1981, but it was not followed by a formal recognition.

Barack Obama promised Armenian Americans he would take that step but reneged once in office, unwilling to upset an ally. In 2019, both chambers of Congress declared their own recognition, despite Donald Trump's efforts to stop them.

Hovannisian gave a lot of credit to Biden for standing up to the pressures of the office. "Barack Obama buckled under the economic and political and international pressure," Hovannisian said. The "Cold War kind of atmosphere" stopped him from keeping his promise to use the word genocide.

Perhaps that giving in was another motive for Biden, Hovannisian conjectured. "Joseph Biden didn't want to be an Obama man. He would strike out on his own, besides following his conscience" and perhaps regretting that "he was vice president for eight years and could not bring his executive to use the world."

"It is a kind of repentance," Hovannisian said.

He put Samantha Power into the same category, noting that the former Obama foreign policy advisor and later United Nations ambassador, regretted that the administration did not recognize the Genocide.

Of course helping the Armenian cause are the fraying Turkish-American relations. "Turkey is a frequent critic of the US and Israel," Hovannisian said. "It has a leader that has not endeared himself to most of the rest of the world."

He also pondered whether it is strictly necessary to pursue gathering evidence and seeking recognition from other countries at this point in our history.

"[Prof.] Henry Theriault started to act on the assumption that the Armenian Genocide has already been recognized and we now should be working on restitution," he noted.

For Turkey, he said, it was restitution - the "what are you going to do about it" - that comes after the global recognition of genocide. As examples Hovannisian recalled the issue of the ethnic Japanese-American citizens that were put in concentration camps in the US during World War II, as well as the issue of African-Americans who suffered as a result of generations of slavery.

The Biden statement might be important because "you get a major power to persuade Turkey that it should take some reparative

action." For example, he said, what is happening with all the Armenian monuments in Turkey?

"We should teach them to face history and to put the record straight and take palliative steps," Hovannisian continued.

Of course, now it is hard to think about any Armenian issue without noting the immense damage done to Armenia and especially Artsakh from September to October 2020 by the combined forces of Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Hovannisian recalled that at the beginning of the war, some suggested that this was a continuation of the Armenian Genocide but he thought, instead, it was more akin to the events of Kosovo, which had suffered from ethnic cleansing, meaning that the primary goal was taking the land, and the murders were secondary.

Now, he said, he has changed his mind. "The violence that went on and the celebration of the killings and the monument with the helmets of all the killed Armenian soldiers" shows a "bloodthirst" that harkens back to the Genocide.

"They [the Azerbaijani leaders] are boasting that we are going to come after you. They have done it with the approval and support of Turkey, Mr. Erdogan and his team," he added.

"The threat of genocide is alive all over again," he noted. "You think the worst has come and gone and it's time for repairs. After World War I, we believe so many promises and pledges." Sadly, he said, Armenia has little to give others.

Legal Edge

There is another bright spot for Biden recognizing the Genocide and that is with regard to its legal applications in the US.

"One of the good points about it is that when we are going into legal battles in California, the opposition has argued that this goes against US policy," Hovannisian said. Now, he added, that argument that California courts can't recognize the Genocide because the US doesn't recognize it is one that may become moot.

"It is one immediate positive side effect," he added.

Los Angeles attorney Brian Kabateck, who has represented several descendants of Armenian Genocide survivors in US courts, agreed.

"President Biden recognizing the Genocide is not just important to me as a grandson of survivors, but because it may mean that we can renew our quest for civil justice. Our team of lawyers brought lawsuits starting in 1999 to recover unpaid life insurance benefits, stolen bank accounts and seized land all resulting from the Genocide. Some of these lawsuits were against insurance companies and banks and some against Turkey directly and indirectly. After recovering almost \$40M, the Ninth Circuit invalidated the law based on the then President's refusal to acknowledge the Genocide. Because the statute that paved the way to those suits included a direct, unabashed reference to the Genocide, the statute was ruled unconstitutional solely because the president had never recognized the Genocide and the statute invaded his providence to do so. That ruling was later upheld but the United States Supreme Court when it denied review but only after the Obama Administration weighed in asking that it be ruled unconstitutional. In a batch of emails authored by Hillary Clinton and disclosed during the 2016 election, we found emails between her and the Turkish foreign minister specifically discussing our lawsuits and addressing a Turkish government request to stop them. Shame on all the Presidents who came before, Republican and Democrat, liberal and conservative. They all bowed to Turkish pressure - until now," said Kabateck.



COMMEMORATING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Huge Turnout for Boston April 24 March for Justice

By Kenneth Martin

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BOSTON — On April 24, 2021, as Armenians everywhere were preparing to commemorate with marches, prayers and protests the 106th anniversary of the beginning of the 1915 calamities in Turkey that led to the attempt to slaughter a nation, President of the United States Joseph Biden officially recognized the dark chapter in human history and the reality as a genocide.

Armenians across the globe were stunned and elated, especially those living in the United States, where efforts took more than 100 years to gain recognition for the extermination of their ancestors as more than just an ancient feud between Armenian and Turks.

In Boston, “Demonstrate & Commemo-



Homenetmen Scouts



rate: A March for Justice,” organized by the Massachusetts Committee to Commemorate the Armenian Genocide that seeks to educate on all genocides, especially the Armenian Genocide of 1915, and to advocate for recognition and prevention of such tragedies worldwide, had announced plans for the day. Organizers fearing fewer attendees for the start of the program were elated to see large numbers of Armenian-Americans from Greater Boston and beyond crossing Boston Common carrying American and

Armenian flags and homemade signs prepared to march all the way over Beacon Hill to the Armenian Heritage Park for the planned program. Many attended because

during the Genocide. The march route proceeded down historic Beacon Hill to City Hall Plaza and from there past Faneuil Hall and Quincy Marketplace to the Armenian



Anais Astarjian

Heritage Park on the Rose Kennedy Greenway.

The crowd flooded the circular maze enclosure of the park and surrounded the immigrant monument dedicated to the Genocide as State Representative and Master of Ceremonies David Muradian Jr. led off the program. Prayers by the Armenian clergy

106th Genocide Anniversary Event in Montreal Organized by Youth United Committee

MONTREAL — On Saturday April 24, an impressive and emotional, open air Armenian Genocide 106th anniversary event was held, attended by some thousand Montreal community members, in spite of highly windy conditions, around the Armenian Memorial monument in the Marcellin Wilson Park.

It was noteworthy that the event was entirely organized by a community Youth United Committee with members from the Tekeyan Cultural Association and Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, the Armenian General Benevolent Union and YP, Nor Serount (Social Democratic Hn-

Genocide had just been circulating.

Following the singing of the Canadian and Armenian national anthems, respectively by a star of the 2021 Star Academie, Zara Sargsyan, and popular Armenian singer Martin Yorgantz, and well-targeted introductory remarks in French and English by Marie-Laure Cimetier, Noushig Kadian and Maral Elliott, successively, Canadian Members of Parliament Alexandre Boulerice, Mario Beaulieu, Quebec Deputy, Christine St. Pierre, and municipal politicians Mayor Emilie Thulier, Mary Deros and Denis Coderre expressed their solidarity with the Arminian Cause, recall-



Bishop Abgar Hovagimian and the clergy presiding over the ceremony

chagian Party), St. Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral, Sourp Khatch Church, St. Nareg Armenian Catholic Church and the First Armenian Evangelical Church.

The event was presided by the Primate of Canada Bishop Abgar Hovagimian and it was held under the auspices of Ambassador of Armenia in Ottawa Anahit Harutunyan, who could not be present because of the current interprovincial Covid travel ban. Several Canadian federal, provincial and municipal political representatives participated in the event.

An exhilarated resolution to prevail could be seen on the faces of the young and old Canadian-Armenian community members, as the news of US President Joe Biden's historic proclamation and recognition of the

ing that Canada had recognized the Armenian Genocide some 18 years ago. An appropriate recitation and songs program was presented by Martin Yorgantz, Miriam Baghdassarian (Quebec Voice finalist), and Silva Bekarian. A multitude of posters were held up by young people in the large crowd filling the beautiful park, where one could read next to statements condemning Turkey for its continued denial, statements condemning the Canadian arms sale to the Turkish-Azerbaijani perpetrators of the recent criminal war against Artsakh.

This highly emotional successful event was concluded by a religious program, readings from the Bible by the clergy, and closing recitation of the Lord's Prayer, presided over by Bishop Hovagimyan.



Massachusetts State Rep. David Muradian Jr.

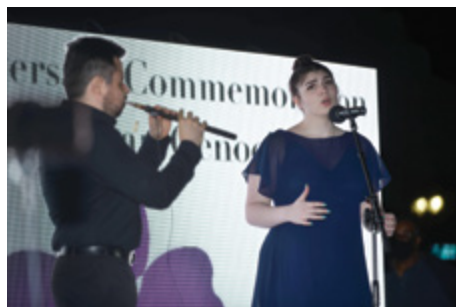
they had heard the news that President Joe Biden had finally done what so many American Presidents and administrations had failed to do.

The announcement by President Biden also activated local media organizations to shake off the warm and fuzzy afternoon and pay more attention than usual to Armenians and the event and send television news crews, still photographers, and print journalists to provide coverage.

After a brief greeting and presentation by AGCC leaders Anais Astarjian and Herman Purutyan the Armenian Scouts carrying flags and banners led the demonstration up to the State House on Beacon Hill where they laid a wreath in memorial of those lost



Sheriff Peter Koutoujian



Lucia Papikian of Waltham High School sings



Armenian POWs were not forgotten

from various parishes, the American and Armenian national anthems performed by Ani Zargarian, recorded greetings by national, state and local officials were presented on a billboard sized video panel. A surprise appearance by former Mayor of the City of Boston and United States Ambassador the Vatican Raymond Flynn, statements by Middlesex County of Massachusetts Peter Koutoujian and State Representative Steven Owens representing the 29th Middlesex (parts of Watertown and Cambridge).

Performances by duduk performers and a soulful performance by vocalist Lucia Papikian, a Waltham High School student, of *Dle Aman* and *Groong* by Komitas left the audience spellbound.

Muradian ended the evening just past 8 p.m., by reading a proclamation from Governor of Massachusetts, Charles Baker.

Arts & Culture

Armenians Meeting in The Most Unexpected Places

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

It is a fact that despite being relatively few in number, we Armenians are everywhere. Even in the most unbelievable places, in the least populated regions of the world, we learn about the distant presence of an Armenian or some Armenian traces. Once writer Vahram Mavian recorded similar meetings in his two books, *There are Armenians Everywhere* and *The Remnants of Armenians*.

For years I have heard from different people, in William Saroyan’s terms, “small Armenian stories” about meetings with Armenians or Armenian-related people in the most unexpected places, each one - a complete short story or a short film, which hereby I present to the readers.

Himalayan Guru and the Armenian Woman

From the stories of Hayk Isakhanian from Yerevan, who has visited India for couple of times:

“I am in the Himalayas, North India, in Uttarakhand province, city of Uttarkashi, practicing yoga with a local guru. Once I injured my shoulder and asked my teacher what exercise I could use to get my shoulder in order. And I was surprised when he said: “A good way to relieve shoulder pain was taught me by a woman from Armenia, who came to me years ago.”

Zhingyalov Hats in the Tantric Temple

Hayk continues:

“I was in India again, again in the Himalayas. I was looking for a Tibetan teacher to master their various techniques. I was sent to a Tantric temple not far from Dalai Lama’s city, which is one of two most important Tantric temples. I arrived at that very interesting, beautiful place to attend a ceremony. A large number of Tibetans came, as well as many tourists. I was about to enter the temple, but suddenly I heard from behind in Armenian:

‘Baryev, akhpierr, vontsyas? [Hello, brother, how are you?]

I could not believe my ears. The Himalayas, Tantric temple, and suddenly... Armenian words, but with Russian pronunciation. I turned back. A strong man with a shaved head, 45-50 years old, approached me and extended his hand.

‘Is it written on my forehead that I am Armenian?’ I asked him.

‘Akhpierr (brother),’ he said and continued in Russian, “our group is from Ukraine, but I am from Hadrut!”

I hugged the Ukrainian from Artsakh very tightly.

‘Are you from Yerevan?’ he asked.

‘I am, but my grandfather was also from Artsakh.’

see P LACES, page 13



Hitting the High Notes

Cello Artist Arpenik Hakobyan’s Star Shines Bright in Cirque Du Soleil

By Ani Duzdabanyan-Manoukian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

ATLANTA — “Anything is possible: I might end up in Broadway! I never limit myself,” laughs Arpenik Hakobyan while having her big cup of decaf (it’s late afternoon in Atlanta, GA). That makes me feel relieved to drink my tea without any awkwardness on the other side of the screen (it’s gloomy in Los Angeles and I still feel sore after my Covid-19 vaccine).

Very recently NPR broadcasted Arpenik’s own song, *Together with Me*, for a whole week in its World Music segment. Right before the pandemic started, Arpenik signed her contract with Cirque Du Soleil for a new show. In 2019 she released her first CD. And as if this wasn’t enough on her list of accomplishments to discuss, just days ago she became a US citizen, gaining freedom of movement as an artist. “I have a nice career that a lot of musicians would look forward to, but if it wasn’t possible for me to be able to live in the US, I couldn’t pursue my career as a musician,” Arpenik exclaimed frankly.

Arpenik started auditioning for Cirque Du Soleil in 2016: it was a dream job, but it wasn’t her time yet. Someone else was accepted at that time. Then in 2018 Cirque Du Soleil approached Arpenik with a proposal for another show. But this time she was busy with her own concerts. Finally, in 2019 she was able to join the world-famous crew and perform in front of audiences of many thousands.

“They reached out to me saying that I was the perfect candidate for the new show. It all happened in five days,” Arpenik remembers. She even created a brand-new song specifically for the audition — *Sweet Dreams*. In 2020, Arpenik auditioned for a new show called *Under the Same Sky*, which didn’t premiere because of the pandemic.

Cello, precaution and singing: Arpenik has the entire skillset for the job. She said, “In Cirque Du Soleil you have to be a multi-instrumentalist. Also, there is acting; there could be a dance... You have to be a flexible person to work there. That’s the profile of the job, and I perfectly fit that profile. I love it. I always wanted to be that way.”

Despite her choice to pursue a non-traditional career as a cello musician, Arpenik’s professional background lies in classical music. She started her musical education in Armenia first in the Sargis Aslamazyan Music School No. 1 and then with the famous professor Medea Abrahamyan. She continued her higher education in the Yerevan State University of Theatre and Cinematography and later on studied in Belgium and the US.

see HAKOBYAN, page 13

Review of Misak Medzarents: *The Complete Lyric Poems* by James R. Russell

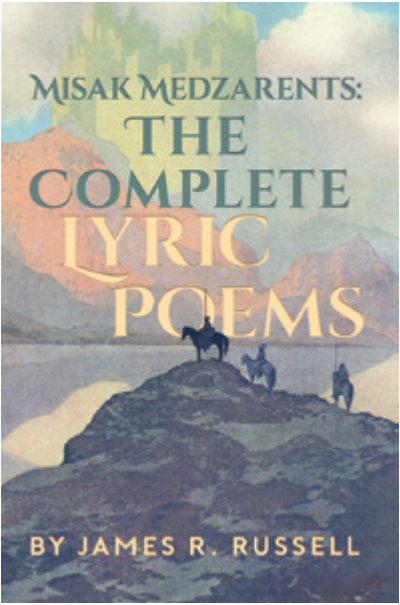
By Jesse S. Arlen
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

«Ի՛նչ երջանկութիւն, տերեւի մը խառշափին մէջէն տեսնել տիեզերական զօրութեան զաղտնիքը, ու այդ փոքրիկ մասնաւորէն մեկնիլ դէպի անհունը:»

“What joy, to behold in the rustle of a leaf the secret power of the cosmos, and to depart from that particular thing for the infinite (li).” *

So writes twenty-one-year-old Misak Medzarents, while describing his poetic vision in response to a critical letter received from Fr. Vartan Arslanian after the publication of *Dziadzan* (Օրաձաւն / *Rainbow*), the poet’s first book of verse, in 1907.

Medzarents is the kind of poet that teaches us to stop, to look and attend to what is always around us, and to see it as if for the first time. Reading his poems, we are led to wonder anew at the miracle of day-to-day existence, as for example in one of his first poems, M 18: *Arevakal* (“The Sunrise Liturgy”). In this poem, a paean to the rising sun, we behold with pure wonder the giving way of darkness to light at dawn, as “nature awakens, fire-born (13),” illuminating the shapes and colors of the fields and flowers and rivers and mountains surrounding the poet’s home village



(Armenian Series no. 12. The Press at California State University, Fresno, 2020)

of Pingyan (Բինկեան). From awe and wonder at the local and particular — the rustling of a leaf driven by the wind, the buzzing of a bee about a blossom, the silkworm’s nibbling of a mulberry leaf, the shepherd’s crook and song at the head of his bleating flock — Medzarents finds the way to the universal, to the infinite, to God who “is in every place,” as he says in the same letter quoted above.

see REVIEW, page 14



ARTS & CULTURE

Arpenik Hakobyan's Star Shines Bright

HAKOBYAN, from page 12

She elaborated: “I adore classical music, but I was always the person who would play [something] a little different. This is why I choose jazz. In Cirque Du Soleil I am a jazz musician,” even though it’s not a “main stream choice for a cello.” Arpenik is convinced that in this way she has her own place in the music industry that truly belongs to her.

The choice to play cello came by accident – or maybe not, as she likes to think, she explained accompanied by a deep smile. She was seven and a half, when her mother (did I mention that she is Lida Hakobyan, an actress and director!) decided that she needed to take violin classes. When Arpenik arrived to the music school for the admission exams, she was very much impressed upon hearing the word cello in Armenian. “When they asked me if I wanted to play a violin or a cello, the word cello [in Armenian] sounded so fascinating and beautiful, that I said ‘I want to play cello’ without even knowing what that instrument was,” remembers Arpenik with an innocent laugh.

Arpenik inherited her artistic background from her mother. She was on the stage with her from a very young age performing in different plays. Her personality started to take shape right there in the theater, where she was always encouraged to enjoy freedom of expression. But this entire precious framework needed to be re-fined abroad, which Arpenik finds the only way to be successful in art and in any other

profession in general.

She said: “I had different teachers and each one of them promoted different schools. During the years that I studied in Belgium, I learned everything about the sound of the cello and techniques. In the US, I was introduced to jazz music: how to express myself, how to let go and all the things that I didn’t learn in Belgium. In Armenia I had a rough Soviet structured education; I studied piano, solfeggio, harmony, theory and cello. It was very good for a beginning, because when I continued to study in the conservatory, I was one of the few who knew a lot about music already. All these were incorporated into me.”

Between constant travel between Armenia and the US, Arpenik is waiting for life to get back to normal after the pandemic, when she expects to continue her career with the Cirque Du Soleil tour of 2022 in North America, through both Canada and the United States. She continues providing music classes (now online) to various students, children and adults, who want to learn how to play cello or to ameliorate their skills.

In Armenia, she is continuing her humanitarian initiative, creating job training programs for women. She started it last year. It will primarily help women who either lost their husbands, fathers or brothers during the war in Artsakh, or are obliged to take care of those who became disabled in their family, and are now the main breadwinner. This program is teaching women to become culinary experts and helping them



to find employment after graduating.

“They [these women] now need to find their way, because there is absolutely no other choice. I would like to be able to help these women to not only be empowered by the sense of security coming from an education or a career, but also mentality-wise:

to show that they can [do it] and they don’t have to be afraid to step up and make a decision. And if they are lacking any tool, they can reach out for help.” Arpenik considers herself a “bridge” between investors and educational training programs that can provide long-term support.

Armenians Meeting in the Most Unexpected Places

PLACES, from page 12

At this word we hugged each other again and entered the temple.

The service started, we were all sitting folded, but we did not see or hear what was happening – my new acquaintance and I were talking non-stop. At the hottest moment of the service, when the bells were ringing, the Ukrainian asked me:

“Brother, do you like *zhingyalov hats*?”

Zhingyalov hats is the traditional Artsakh dish — a very delicious flatbread stuffed with herbs. We started to laugh loudly. The Tibetan clergy, who were very forgiving and tolerant, were already looking back and scolding us.

“The Armenian Lions”

Another story from Thailand, told to Hayk Isakhanyan by Hrant, an Armenian businessman from there, now deceased. When he had just gone to Thailand, once the Armenians living in that region decided to start a joint business in Taiwan. Once in Taiwan, they met a group of young businessmen. When the latter found out that they were Armenians, they put them in the van and drove through the jungle without saying where they were taking them. The men could have escaped, but there was nowhere to run. Finally, they reached a village and were invited to a hut, in front of which a very old man sat. The Taiwanese people said something to the old man, helped him to his feet, and the old man bowed before the Armenians. Everyone was amazed at why this respectable old man over 100 bows before these 30-40-year-old foreigners. And the old Chinese man explained that when he was young and participating in Chinese revolution, there were some “Armenian lions” fighting side by side with the Chinese.

The old man not only carried that mem-

ory, but also told the young people around him about it, passing it on from generation to generation, so that now, when these young people meet Armenians for the first time, they consider it necessary to take them to that old man.

The Grateful Vietnamese

An Armenian named Artashes traveled with a friend in Vietnam. In one of the big cities they accidentally deviated from the main street. Suddenly a group of motorcyclists appeared and surrounded them. The guys understood that they would definitely be robbed, but the question is whether they will stay alive. Artash said his friend in Russian: “Oops, we are lost!” At that word, one of Vietnamese, pointing his finger at the guys asked in Russian: “Are you Russians?” “Armenians,” they answered. At that word, the strong-built Vietnamese ordered something to his fellow guys, put the Armenians on motorcycles and drove them somewhere. Our guys thought that if they were going to kill them, where are they taking them now?

And they were taken to a luxurious restaurant, they were honored and after a while, when they already gained courage they asked what all this tribute means. At that time, the strong-built Vietnamese told that he had studied in Moscow and that once he had been attacked by Russian skinheads. And only a few Armenian students arrived and rescued him.

“Sir, I am not a whore!”

From the stories of my dear professor P. H.: “I was in France for a conference. In the hotel I was making my bed every morning. One day the cleaner, a black woman, entered the room and began to speak with me. I became very nervous, as I did not understand a word and telephoned my

French-speaking colleague who was staying in the same hotel and said:

‘Come and see what this whore wants from me!’

Suddenly the black woman said in Armenian: ‘*Baron, yes poz chem!* (Sir, I am not a whore!)’

I almost died of shame! I began to apologize endlessly, until she explained in fluent Western Armenian that by making my bed in a wrong way, I doubled her job. When I could bring myself to look into her eyes, I dared to ask where she has learned Armenian. The woman, who forgave me generously, said that she worked for many years in the house of Armenians, who taught her to speak the language.”

“Barev, Rubik!”

The late film director Ruben Gevorgyants from Yerevan told that during the Soviet years they left for India with a group of tourists. In one province they were told that the next day they would go to a mountain village and meet a local guru.

The next day, when they reached that village, this guru came and seeing Gevorgyants, exclaimed in Armenian:

“*Barev* (hello), Rubik!”

Gevorgyants answered him:

“*Barev, Rubik!*” and they hugged.

The KGB employee (they always accompany Soviet tourists) immediately approached and asked what language he spoke to the guru and what they said to each other. Laughing, Gevorgyants said that this guru actually is his old acquaintance Ruben Filyan, a writer from Yerevan, who had moved to India a few years ago.

A Fijian Armenian?

My neighbor Armen Babayan told us how once his aunt Shoghakat’s husband,

Mikhail Berkovich, a mariner from Vladivostok, traveled to Fiji island in the 1960s with the Soviet delegation and met with the mayor of the capital Suva. The latter was interested in the guests’ families. Hearing that Berkovich is married to an Armenian woman, after the meeting he approached him and said: “So your wife is Armenian... you know, I am Armenian too.” Berkovich later told his wife that he would expect anything except meeting his wife’s compatriot on the island of Fiji.

I tried to find out the name of that mayor, but so far did not succeed. Probably that can refer to one of the members of the Suva city council, among whom there were six Europeans in the 1960s.

An Iceland-ahay -

My eldest son traveled to Iceland in 2018 with his girlfriend. They were standing in line at the Reykjavik airport and talking, when a young girl in a uniform, an airport employee, approached them and asked in Armenian:

“Are you speaking Armenian?”

She looked just astonished.

“May I see your passports?”

She started examining the Republic of Armenia passports thoroughly.

“This is the first time I see Armenian passports,” said the girl and told that she was born in Iceland and her parents had moved to Iceland from Vanadzor. She also offered her assistance to her compatriots...

Thus, from Fiji to Iceland, over the Himalayan mountains, there are traces of Armenians, close and distant memories about the Armenians, which in these cases, as we have seen, are positive.

Nevertheless, blessed is the nation that does not have to emigrate and stays in its ancestral country, making it develop and flourish in every way.

Review of Misak Medzarents: *The Complete Lyric Poems*

REVIEW, from page 12

Thus in the young poet’s more mature poems, such as the “I would be... (*Ėllayi...*)” cycle and M 131: *Inch’ arpets’ut’eamp...* (“With what intoxication...”), which conclude his second and final book of verse published during his brief lifetime, *Nor Tagher* (Նոր Տաղեր / *New Lyrics*), Medzarents’ pantheistic nature mysticism achieves its finest expression.

(Pantheism, as differentiated from pantheism — where God and the universe are identical — describes the belief that the Being of God encompasses and permeates the whole universe, such that all things



Misak Medzarents

exist in God and God exists in all things, while at the same time the Divine Being remains transcendent and greater than the universe.)

In these poems, the poet transcends the limits of his bounded and circumscribed ego-self — through the mantric chanting of *Ėllayi, Ėllayi...*, “I would be, I would be...” — to achieve union with “all shapes and forms, all colors gleaming / all essences and all elements (253).” Thereby the young poet, whose body was consumed by tuberculosis at age twenty-two, who hailed

from an overlooked corner of the globe, the late singer of an ancient and now all but forgotten civilization, not only transcended personal despair over his impending individual death through identification with the life that unites all beings but also created works of beauty which endured and survived the genocidal will that in the years after his death destroyed all but scattered remnants of his culture.

Now for the first time, thanks to this complete translation of his lyric poems into English by James R. Russell, Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies at Harvard University (Emeritus), Medzarents’ poetry may be read alongside the great poetic works of world literature, in whose company Medzarents rightfully belongs. The volume under consideration here is the fruit of over fifteen years of attention Prof. Russell has paid to translating and commenting on the works of this great Western Armenian lyric poet, and the scholar’s many years of labor are evident in the high quality of the final product.

Fifty pages of introduction orient the reader to the context and historical setting of Misak Medzarents’ life and works. Assuming an uninitiated reader, Dr. Russell gives a brief tour of the physical and cultural geography of Western Armenia in general and Medzarents’ home village of Pingyan in particular, which formed the inspiration and setting for many of his poems. He also walks the reader through the major events, elements, and diverse religious and cultural currents that contributed to the over 2500-year history of Armenian life in the region. Due and detailed attention is also paid to the literary, epic, folk, oral, and imaginative cultural inheritance on which Medzarents drew for the writing of his lyric poems. Thus, by the time readers reach the first poems, they are well equipped with the necessary background information to approach and appreciate them in all their local flavor and specificity. Readers of Armenian may turn to the back half of the volume, where they will find a facsimile reproduction of Albert Sharurian’s critical edition from 1981 so as to be able to read the Armenian original in

conjunction with Dr. Russell’s translations and commentary.

Each of the over one hundred poems is accompanied by a commentary. These range in length from a short paragraph highlighting various aspects of a poem’s theme or content, e.g. M 21: *Hivan-*

linguistic traditions treated a similar theme or topic. In so doing, this volume actually places Medzarents’ poems side-by-side with the great works of world literature.

Prof. Russell also pays attention to Medzarents’ reception in the subsequent Eastern Armenian literary tradition (no



Map of Pingyan in Sivas Province, Ottoman Empire from Robert Hewsen, Armenia: A Historical Atlas, University of Chicago Press, 2001

ti hevk’er ts’aykerk (“The Groans of the Sick (Night Song)),” M 24: *Teghin varter* (“Yellow Roses”), to very dense and detailed commentaries spanning many pages (the longest treatment is given over to M 32: *Gaydzer* (“Sparks”), and is over fifteen pages long).

In the commentaries, one enters as if into the classroom with Prof. Russell. At times he is the erudite linguist and philologist, unpacking the intricate sound devices and patterns of Medzarents’ original Armenian verse (e.g. M 13: *Kisherin yerazank’ ě* (“What the Night Dreams”)) or expounding the resonances of words or phrases in the classical form of the language that Medzarents knew well (e.g. M 17: *Astgher ě* (“The Stars”)). At other times, he is the classical Armenologist, drawing on Medzarents’ pre-modern Armenian precursors, such as Nersēs Shnorhali, Grigor of Narek, or P’awstos Buzand, to illuminate the intertextuality at work in Medzarents’ poems (e.g. M 18: *Arevakal* (“The Sunrise Liturgy”), M 82: *Arrdvan arevin mēch* (“In the morning Sun”), M 127: *Irigunēs*, (“This Evening”)). Elsewhere, he is the comparative literary scholar, interpreting Medzarents’ poems alongside those of more familiar poets from the British and American literary traditions, such as William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, Dylan Thomas, Hart Crane, and Allen Ginsberg. Several of these poets Medzarents himself knew and read, likely in French translation. Medzarents was also an avid reader of French poetry, although French poets receive perhaps less attention than they deserve in Dr. Russell’s commentaries. He makes up for this lacuna by providing comparisons (and original translations) of the works of poets from other literary traditions, such as Yehuda ha-Levi (Hebrew) in the commentary to M 17: *Astgher ě* (“The Stars”) or Constantine Cavafy (Greek) in the commentary to M 45: *Khonch irigunn arakōrēn...* (“The Evening, Fatigued, Swiftly”). Indeed, one of the striking features of the book is the inclusion of whole poems or lengthy excerpts from the poetry of all the writers mentioned above, such that readers may encounter and compare how two poets from different literary and

attention is paid to post-genocide Western Armenian literature), focusing in particular on Yeghishē Charents’, who played a pivotal role in the publication and diffusion of Medzarents’ poetry in Soviet Armenia, as well as Russian/Soviet writers like Vladimir Mayakovsky. At times, attention to Soviet authors borders on the idiosyncratic, as for example in the brief commentary to M 59: *Vayrgyanner*, “Moments,” where space is given to mentioning a poem by Mayakovsky but omits discussion of Raymond Bouyer, despite that poem beginning with an epigraph containing a quote from Bouyer, or in M31: *Sirerk* (“Love Song”), when mention is made of how Charents mocked the poem in question. Elsewhere, the engagement with Charents is illuminating, as for example in M 56: *Hovin ants’ k’ ě* (“The Wind Passes”), where that poem of Medzarents is read alongside Charents’ 1922 poem *K’amin*, “The Wind.”

Prof. Russell’s commentaries do not follow a predictable or formulaic structure. This is to be highly commended, as adherence to a rigid format would not only have been artificial but would have made for tedious reading. Instead, due to the commentaries’ variance in length, unpredictable content, and diverse topics of focus, the reader remains curious and engaged, and eagerly turns the pages to discover what fascinating new insights or connections may come next.

It is unfortunate that the book suffers from conflicting aims or *raisons d’être*. On the one hand, the scholar-translator hopes to present the poems of Medzarents to a global audience. However, they have been issued in a publication series that, while respectable in Armenian circles, does not have a following outside of the Armenian or Armenological community. Furthermore, due to the lengthy commentaries and inclusion of a facsimile of the Armenian critical edition, one ends up with a hefty tome of 600+ pages. These features, which although they make the book a great contribution to Armenian studies and Armenian literature, when taken together, unfortunately all but ensure that this volume will not bring Medzarents’ lyric poems to the attention of a global (non-Armenian)

continued on next page

CALENDAR

ON-LINE EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

JUNE 16 — SAVE THE DATE: BUILDING FOR ETERNITY~ NAASR’s Virtual Gala.
Join us as we honor Edward Avedisian, NAASR Board member and philanthropist, during NAASR’s Building for Eternity Virtual Gala, on Wednesday, June 16, 2021, at 7 p.m. Eastern, 4 p.m. Pacific. Avedisian is the principal benefactor of NAASR’s new Vartan Gregorian Building and will be recognized for his outstanding dedication and distinguished service in advancing education in the United States and Armenia. He is Director of NAASR, a Trustee of the American University of Armenia, and a Director of the Armenian Missionary Association of America. Special guest, New York Times bestselling author Chris Bohjalian in a unique conversation with Dr. Khatchig Mouradian, Armenian and Georgian Specialist at the Library of Congress.

RHODE ISLAND

MAY 7-28 — Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church of Providence continues programming the Armenian Cultural Hour programs, every Friday at 7:30 p.m. The program can be livestreamed on the church’s Facebook page by everyone at <https://www.facebook.com/armenianchurchprovidence>
May 7 - ARMENIA The Land of Noah, Documentary in English
May 14 - Armenian music and songs (Concert from Montreal, Canada)
May 21 - Our Youth Talents, issue two
May 28 - Celebration concert, dedicated to 100th Anniversary of the First Republic of Armenia



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Middle Eastern Lentil Soup From Analida's Ethnic Spoon

"The idea for this Middle Eastern lentil soup came to me after eating a similar soup in a restaurant that was gloriously flavorful and comforting. One spoonful and I was in love with how it tasted," says Analida Braeger. She's the brilliant writer, creator and recipe developer at Analida's Ethnic Spoon food blog, where French, Italian, Latin American, Spanish, Moroccan, Thai, Vietnamese, and Middle Eastern recipes are featured.

"This recipe has a few basic ingredients, but it is so delicious, you would think otherwise. The idea to use allspice was my son's. I agree that it gives a lot of depth to the overall flavor. The lemon infusion at the end brightens up the flavors and enhances the taste. One great thing about lentils is that they don't take as long to soften as other beans, so this Middle Eastern soup can be made in very little time."

Middle Eastern Lentil Soup Recipe

Lentil artifacts have been found on archeological digs on the banks of the Euphrates River dating back to 8,000 B.C., and there is evidence of the Egyptians, Romans, and Hebrews eating this legume. Today, lentils are a very popular food, and have taken a prominent place among edible legumes, for farmers as well as restaurants and home chefs. Common types of lentils are green and brown; whereas, black, yellow, red and orange lentils are often seen in Middle Eastern cooking. Analida's favorite lentil soup recipe is simple yet it has exotic flavors you won't soon forget, she adds.



INGREDIENTS:

1 cup dried green lentils, rinsed
1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
1 large onion, diced
1 medium stalk celery, diced
2 medium carrots, diced
2 garlic cloves, minced
7 cups vegetable broth, more if needed
3 teaspoons cumin
1 teaspoon Kosher salt, to taste
1/8 teaspoon allspice
2 tablespoons fresh squeezed lemon juice, more to taste

PREPARATION:

Gather all ingredients and have them measured, chopped and ready to go: lentils, olive oil, onion, celery, carrots, garlic, vegetable broth, cumin, salt, allspice, and lemon juice. This is a simple, quick recipe so it is good to have it prepared for last minute lunches and light dinners.

In a soup pot, heat the olive oil on medium, and add the onions, carrots, celery and garlic. Sauté until the onion is translucent. Add 4 cups of the vegetable broth and stir. Add the lentils and bring to a full boil; cook until the vegetables are soft.

The lentils will expand; check the carrots with a spoon and see if they are soft. Add the cumin, salt, and allspice. Reduce the heat to low and allow to simmer for 30-40 minutes. Using an immersion blender break up the solids until mostly smooth.

Add the remaining vegetable broth, and simmer for an additional 15-20 minutes, stirring. Add the lemon juice before serving.

For this recipe, go to:

<https://ethnicspoon.com/middle-eastern-lentil-soup/>

Analida Braeger at Analida's Ethnic Spoon

Go to Analida's Ethnic Spoon Store for cookware, appliances, spices, kitchen tools and gadgets at:

<https://www.amazon.com/shop/ethnicspoon?linkCode=w61&imprToken=O7mS-Su-QzLA2JTSY-ioiIA&slotNum=0>

For videos, go to:

<https://es-la.facebook.com/ethnicspoon/videos/analidas-ethnic-spoon/324471108203293/>

Sign up for Analida's free recipe newsletter at: <https://ethnicspoon.com/contact/>

A portion of Analida's site revenue is used to fight world hunger as part of the Catholic Christian faith and mission. Please consider a sustaining gift to <<https://www.marysmealsusa.org/en/>> Mary's Meals and read their story of hope they bring. Mary's Meals is a registered charity, formerly known as Scottish International Relief, which sets up school feeding programs in some of the world's poorest communities, where hunger and poverty prevent children from gaining an education. To contribute and support, go to: <https://www.marysmealsusa.org/en/>

Review of *The Complete Lyric Poems*

from previous page

readership. On the other hand, from the perspective of Armenian studies, despite the great erudition of the commentary and the almost overwhelming number of fascinating lexical and linguistic insights and broader literary connections, there is little engagement with previous scholarship on the poetry of Medzarents or references made to Armenological scholarship apart from the author's own previous work. Finally, while the book admirably aims to bring attention to Western Armenian literature and the endangered Western Armenian language — the author specifically mentions this as one of the principal reasons he turned to Medzarents in the first place (xxxvi n. 20; as well as the poetry of Medzarents' precursor, Bedros Tourian, which Dr. Russell previously translated and commented on) — most Western Armenian readers will be disappointed to be presented with Medzarents' poems in Soviet orthography. Many, like the present reader, will choose rather to read from the 1986 Antelias edition (or search for online

editions of the poems at digilib, Google Books, wikisource, or elsewhere).

Despite these drawbacks in terms of manifesting and negotiating the conflicting elements of the book's vision, the volume as a whole is to be greatly applauded and is deserving of the highest accolades. Not only will readers without knowledge of Armenian now be able to read one of the greatest of Armenian poets, but they may do so with a guide to illumine for them the literary references, resonances, and poetic devices in Medzarents' poetry. Readers of Armenian too will find that their understanding of Medzarents is greatly enriched by encountering the lyric poet in Prof. Russell's English translations and with his commentaries, which are expansive, ever opening up onto new interpretative vistas as connections are made with poets of various literary traditions, even as they remain grounded in the poetry of the Armenian text itself and the historical context in which the poems were written.

And now, the reviewer has space for nothing more to say but *tolle, lege* — 'pick up the book and read' — and listen to Medzarents sing in English and summon us, we wandering wayfarers of the far-flung Diaspora:

On a road in the plain
Or at the foot of the mountain
I would be the hut and wait
For the wayfarer to come.

And I would call to my embrace
The unbidden traveler
On his lonely road,
On the winding road of gold;
To greet my guests I'd be
The rising cloud of the chimney's smoke.

And I would call to my caress
The wayfarers in their weariness;
And instead of a word of greeting
I would give a thousand things good.
A thousand things good I'd give to them:
The warmth of a crackling hearth,
The grapes of the fertile plains,
All autumn's fruits,
And wine, and milk and honey...

And in the night I'd listen
To the song of the eventide guest
Before the crackling fireplace;
And at night I would supply
A slumber replete with dream
To the guest of the evening.
At dawn I would listen to the song of praise,

Fervent and heart-stopping,
Of my guest of that evening.
And as I looked out at the sunrise
And all the next day I would think
Of my evening guest's journey.

And all the winters long
With joyous invitation
I would stand by the side of the road
And to the poor man caked with snow
Like a father I would spread
Both arms wide.
The sweet incarnate
Summoning would I ever be.

Ah, I would be, I would be!
On a road in the plain
Or at the foot of the mountain
I would be the hut and wait
For the wayfarer to come.

— M 115: *Hiwghē* ("The Hut")

* Page numbers/numerals in parentheses refer to the pagination of the volume under review. The "M + a number" are used to identify titles of poems in the volume under review, which also correlate to the page numbers of the critical edition of Medzarents' poems.

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Editorial

Biden Snatches Victory for Truth from Jaws of History



By Edmond Y.
Azadian

The suspense is over. Since President Ronald Reagan referred to the Armenian Genocide indirectly in 1981, the Armenian community in the US has been going on a rollercoaster, raising its hopes with each presidential election and being disappointed every April 24.

For the Armenian people, the issue of genocide is the blood of its 1.5 million human beings; it is the loss of an ancestral homeland and desecration of cultural heritage. Yet, for the politicians, it is nothing more than a political football. That is why they can forget or renege on their promises so easily, so conveniently, talking about the overarching issues.

Donald Trump, perhaps, was the only presidential candidate who did not pledge recognition and nor did he deliver anything. But his White House responded diligently to the actions of the US House of Representatives and the Senate, which passed overwhelming resolutions recognizing the Armenian Genocide. Indeed, the White House spokesperson, after the 2019 adoption of the Congress resolution, announced that the president had not changed his opinion on the issue.

The recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the international community has been a tremendous challenge, while it has travelled a tortuous course in the power corridors of the United States. Although the US government had recognized

Then Vice President Biden confided at that time that he would have recognized the Genocide had he been in the position to do so. Today Ms. Power is back in power as the USAID chief, and she may have absolved herself in crafting President Biden's historic statement.

Now that the magical word is finally out, many parties and groups and official quarters are claiming their share of glory.

For example, in Armenia, the blame for the recent defeat has been thrown like a football from one leader to another, while all lay claim to the credit for Biden's statement.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is pushing the narrative that the US finally recognized the Armenian Genocide during his administration. We wish there was a connection and it were true. To the contrary, we had been very critical of the Armenian government for its apathy toward taking a stand and making an official appeal to the US president to finally use the "G" word, in the face of the Recep Tayyip Erdogan government which had mobilized its full resources to force President Biden to change his intention.

Indeed, the very same week, before the proclamation, President Erdogan held a tumultuous forum inviting many scholars from different countries to disqualify the massacres as a genocide. Following that forum, President Erdogan chaired a government session with the same goal.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and Presidential Spokesperson Ibrahim Kalin, as well as Erdogan himself, made threatening remarks that Biden's statement would create problems in Turkish-American relations and also deteriorate relations between Turkey and Armenia, where, in fact, none exist.

After the proclamation, the same sources stated that Biden's act does not make any difference for Turkey. A simple common-sense question would be: if it does not make a difference, why all the commotion?

As far as the Armenian government is concerned, there were no commensurate initiatives to counter Turkey. On the contrary, many government officials refuse to publicly qualify Turkey as the enemy while others underplay its significance for Armenia and the Armenian case, except for the delayed reactions by Foreign Minister Ara Aytvazyan and Ambassador to US Varuzhan Nersesyan.

The reason the 46th president of the US defined the events that had happened to our people as a genocide, rather than a massacre, was because all the stars were properly aligned.

In the first place, deteriorating Turkish-American relations proved to be one of the determining factors. Since the founding of NATO, US-Turkey relations have experienced ebbs and flows. Now, they are at crisis-level as Turkey has taken the US and NATO for granted one too many times. It has used the cover of NATO to pursue its own nationalistic and Turanic agenda, always believing that invoking the NATO charter's Article 5 will scare away any serious pushback if it gets into deep waters and is attacked while pursuing its agenda. Erdogan's Middle Eastern antics have been too transparent to be ignored forever by a US administration.

Second, President Biden meant what he said, that human rights matter for him and for America. As a candidate, he had openly advocated courting Turkey's opposition, yet President Erdogan took that as political rhetoric and continued his human rights abuses in Turkey. Biden's proclamation sends more than one message to Turkey. In addition to looking back to the dark pages of history, he is holding Turkey responsible to live up to NATO and European Union standards. We believe firmly that it also draws a red line against Turkey's threatening

continued on next page



the Armenian Genocide in 1948 when it signed the UN Genocide Convention (though it took another 40 years before it ratified it), in recent years, it had become a taboo word in the American political lexicon, always held back not to offend NATO ally Turkey.

The latter has managed to become such a powerful country that it can survive with impunity and gag the world's greatest powers, forcing them to remain silent when the issue comes to the Armenian Genocide.

Armenians were most hopeful for the Obama presidency, because his pledge was delivered to the Armenian community through Samantha Power, the most forceful advocate of universal human rights and most knowledgeable on the issue of the Genocide, particularly as enunciated in her book, A Problem from Hell: America in the Age of Genocide.

In all fairness, President Obama's memorial statement was the most descriptive of US presidents, while he showed exceptional courage by admonishing the current Turkish government to reckon with its past, delivered in a speech right in the Turkish Parliament in Ankara.

Samantha Power later apologized to the furious Armenian community and recently issued a statement circulated in the media, revealing a conversation at the ceremony in the National Cathedral during the centennial of the Armenian Genocide.



COMMENTARY

To Armenians, Biden's Recognition of the Genocide Means the World

By Peter Balakian

In his Saturday statement commemorating the slaughter of the Armenian people on their indigenous lands by the Ottoman Empire, President Biden said the word “genocide,” marking a moment for which Armenian communities across the globe have been clamoring for decades.

Until Biden, no American president has had the courage to use that term for fear of angering modern-day Turkish leaders and damaging relations with a powerful ally, even one with an abominable human rights record. But when Biden said “We remember the lives of all those who died in the Ottoman-era Armenian genocide and recommit ourselves to preventing such an atrocity from ever again occurring,” his words affirmed historical fact and embodied moral truth.

Beginning in 1915, more than a million Armenians were killed by the Ottoman Turks. Over a period of several years, property was confiscated, land stolen, women and children were abducted and raped, and many Armenians were forced to convert to Islam. Armenian cultural institutions, including more than 2,000 irreplaceable, architecturally unique churches were destroyed. Armenians have sought justice for these atrocities for over a century.

For decades, successive Turkish governments have denied the reality of the Armenian Genocide, pressuring other nations to deny this history: Ankara has tried to stop movies about it from being made, tried to stop the words “Armenian Genocide” from being included in museum exhibits and tried to prevent the history of this tragedy from being taught in schools. This assault on the truth has been, as international lawyer and scholar Richard Falk has said, a “major, proactive, deliberate government effort to use every possible instrument of persuasion at its disposal to keep the truth about the Armenian genocide from general acknowledgment, especially by elites in the United States and Western Europe.”

These efforts represent the final stage of genocide, in which a perpetrator attempts to rehabilitate itself — a double killing, as Holocaust survivor and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel explained — because if we allow victims of genocide to be forgotten, “the dead will be killed a second time.” And the long battle against Turkey’s denial has been psychologically damaging to Armenians, myself included, in incalculable ways. With empathy, my Jewish friends often say: We can’t imagine how we would feel if Germany did to Jews what Turkey is doing to Armenians today.

In “Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence — from domestic abuse to political terror,” Judith Herman notes that “After every atrocity, one can expect to hear the same predictable apologies: it never happened; the victim lies, the victim exaggerates ... and in any case, it is time to forget the past and move on.” In the case of mass violence, culpable regimes often quickly manufacture narratives to falsify their human rights abuses, defend their actions and blame their victims and, in doing so, strive to create a false reality in which to entrap the survivor culture and smash it into silence.

The Turkish government’s export of its denial of the truth has been virulent and protracted. Its behavior has continued to abuse people of Armenian descent around the world by preventing the process of healing for survivors and their communities. It is an assault on the rituals of commemoration necessary for burial of the dead, who, because of their violent deaths, never had their last rites. Ankara’s denial has robbed generations of Armenians of a chance at restoring moral order. And beyond the tragedy for the Armenian community, this denial paves the way for future genocides by sending the message that governments won’t be held accountable for atrocities.

In recent years, however, Turkey’s campaign has been rebuffed and eroded by the dedication of activists around the world and the work of scholars of many nationalities.

And the record is overwhelming: As the International Association of Genocide Scholars wrote to Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2005: “We want to underscore that it is not just Armenians who are affirming the Armenian Genocide but it is the overwhelming opinion of scholars who study genocide.” Countries in Europe, the Middle East, North America and South America have passed Armenian Genocide resolutions, among them, Germany, France, Russia, Syria, Argentina and Canada. In doing so, they have made a statement about the importance of accountability in the wake of human rights crimes. The United States joined this group with Congress’s passage of Armenian Genocide resolutions at the end of 2019, though President Donald Trump rejected the nonbinding measures.

Germany’s acts of apology and reparation to the Jewish people and Israel are benchmarks. The message is powerful and simple: Genocide demands acknowledgment, accountability, and acts of repair and reparation.

Decades of service to China’s government didn’t save my Uyghur dad from prison

The Turkish government has stalked the Armenian people for over a century to prevent their healing and to rob them of their dignity. It has stooped low to try to stop other nations from acknowledging and representing the truth of the Armenian Genocide in their various educational and cultural arenas. The denial has been poisonous, holding Armenians hostage in a wilderness of grief and shutting them out of their place in history.

Because Armenians are not politically powerful, and because Armenia has struggled against continued Turkish and Azerbaijani assaults on its very foundations, Armenia needs the support of powerful leaders, and Biden is such a leader. Armenian Americans are passionate, hard-working, patriotic citizens, and it means a great deal to the Armenian community to finally see our president affirming the truth.

By naming the Armenian Genocide, Biden is affirming that America stands for moral order and historical truth; he is confirming the human dignity of the survivor culture; and his acknowledgment is a major step toward real justice — which is as necessary as air for those who have been violated, harmed and wronged. His words acknowledge that not only is genocide a scourge, but that failure to reckon with past wrongs endangers us all by emboldening would-be genocidaires. Indeed, just before invading Poland in 1939, Hitler said, “Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?”

In his landmark April 24 statement, Biden has confirmed the Armenian people’s tragic past, and has spoken to the necessity of human rights and justice for all people. His moral leadership reverberates around the world.

(Peter Balakian is a professor at Colgate University and the author of several books, including *Ozone Journal*, winner of the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for poetry and *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America’s Response*, winner of the 2005 Raphael Lemkin Award.)

Biden Snatches Victory for Truth from Jaws of History

from previous page

posture along Armenia’s borders.

Last but not least, it expresses the US discontent about hasty political arrangements between Russia and Turkey, bypassing the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, especially as they did during the Armenian-Azerbaijan war. Biden declared, in essence, “America is back.”

The tremendous campaign that the Armenian-American community mounted through its news outlets, lobbying groups, political parties and prominent leaders and celebrities certainly helped with this point.

Unfortunately, the least credit should be assigned to the government of Armenia, despite the excuse of COVID and the devastating war.

Tatoul Hagopian, a prominent journalist and scholar, has published a timeline of Armenian-Turkish relations, outlining the trials and tribulations around the issue of Genocide recognition during the last 30 years.

The documents presented there do not confine the blame of inaction only on the current administration in Armenia; we can see that Turkey’s skillful diplomacy has fooled Armenian leaders many times.

The Turks governed an empire for more than six centuries, conducting diplomacy with European, Russian and Persian empires. That experience has filtered down to the current era.

We find out in those documents that President Levon Ter-Petrosian resisted incorporating the Genocide issue in the first constitution, then he gave in to strong pressure to include it. President Robert Kocharyan has always been ready to trade the Genocide issue with the lifting of blockades of Armenia. Most damning is the video clip circulating now in social media where President Biden an-

swers an Armenian youth in a gathering: “The Turks have to come to the realization of what the reality is. And what we got to do is, you know, this. The compromise that is going on, we have worked at for a while. The Armenian president [Reference is to Serzh Sargsyan] called me and said, ‘look, do not force this issue now while we are in negotiations. That is the past right now, so anyway, it’s a ... [unclear].’ The reality has a way of intruding, OK?”

Even if that video clip turns out to be fake, its content is in line with Sargsyan’s actions and policies while in office.

In 2005, secret negotiations were being conducted between Armenia and Turkey. That eventually led to the Zurich Protocols in 2009 which also included the formation of a joint panel of scholars to reach to a conclusion about the events. President Sargsyan took the Turkish bait. Ter-Petrosian adamantly opposed the formation of that panel because it would intrinsically imply that Armenians are placing the veracity of the Genocide in doubt.

In response to Biden’s proclamation, the Turkish leaders have expressed themselves with fire and fury. Ibrahim Kalin has stated that Turkey will respond at a time of its choosing, in a way it sees as appropriate. Interestingly, Turkey has not recalled its ambassador from the US, which indicates that at this time Turkey needs America rather than the other way. Instead, it has just summoned the US ambassador to Turkey for a stern talking-to.

In addition to those fiery statements, President Erdogan has sent a message to His Grace Archbishop Sahag Mashalyan, Patriarch of Istanbul, but his audience is Armenia and the US. Erdogan states in his message that Turkey has always offered to improve relations with Armenia and that it is repeating that offer again. Mr. Erdogan believes evidently that Mr. Biden or the world community have very short memories. Yet how can he reconcile his offer to improve relations with Armenia with his statement in Baku on December 10, 2020, where he evoked the memory of Enver Pasha, a genocide perpetrator, adding: “We are here to realize our forefathers’ unfinished plans.”

To confuse the issue and to sound fair, the issue of joint panel of scholars will be brought forth again and again. Fortunately, it was not formed during Serge Sargsyan’s administration.

Every time the issue resurfaces, the Armenian side has to remind the participants of the Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) experience, which was formed in 2001 and continued its work until 2004, comprising Turkish and Armenian representatives. In February 2002, an independent legal opinion commissioned by the International center for Transitional Justice, at the request of TARC concluded that the Ottoman Genocide of Armenians in 1915-1918 “include[d] all of the elements of the crime of genocide as defined by the [Genocide] Convention and legal scholars as well as historians, politicians, journalists and other people would be justified in continuing to do so describe them.”

After learning of this verdict, the Turkish members of TARC walked away as it was not the acceptable answer.

Any other panel that Mr. Erdogan would like to form will be no different than TARC. He wishes to reinvent the wheel and force the participating scholars to spin their own wheels in place to come up with a pre-ordained conclusion absolving Turkey rather than studying history.

Turkey will certainly retaliate against Mr. Biden’s proclamation, which in reality is less damaging than the F-35 program it lost out on.

Indeed, the US had temporarily frozen the F-35 combat aircraft program. Recently, the Biden administration cancelled it completely, ironically to a muted reaction from Ankara. Under that program, Turkey would have acquired 100 stealth war planes, in addition to the right to manufacture parts, injecting much-needed cash into Turkey’s moribund economy.

President Erdogan is smart enough to consider Turkey’s tenuous situation in many parts of the world and its crumbling economy. Erdogan’s cautious actions and smart moves may serve Turkey’s interests while containing his threatening shadow on Armenia’s borders.



COMMENTARY

Armenian Democratic Liberal Party
Global Media Consortium Expresses
Gratitude to President Biden

Armenian-Americans, over one million in number, along with millions of Armenians in Armenia, Artsakh and other countries throughout the world, have waited decades for a US president to take back the mantle of international champion of human rights and morality for the victims and survivors of the Armenian Genocide which the United States bore when this tragedy took place. Now, President Biden, you have taken the decisive step of using the word genocide formally to describe those events, which is an important reinforcement to the already predominant scholarly and international diplomatic and legal understanding.

The United States defended Armenian human rights from the times of the 19th century Ottoman Turkish massacres. During the World War I period it attempted to assist as much as feasible and served as an important source of reliable information on the genocide. US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau worked personally on the scene in the Ottoman Empire, while President Woodrow Wilson later pursued a US mandate for Armenia and drew the borders of an Armenia which never could be realized as the political situation changed. The Near East Relief organization raised aid for Armenians throughout the United States and no doubt saved many lives both during and after the genocide.

President Biden, we are grateful and proud that America once again is a defender of truth and human rights, especially today when Armenians in Artsakh and Armenia are facing a threat to their very existence. You kept your word as a presidential candidate and did not bow to expediency and political pressure.

This is the final capstone to the affirmative action taken by the US House of Representatives and Senate in 2019, and will be a shield against the continuing efforts of deniers of truth in history to benefit from past crimes. It will also serve as a mighty lesson to future planners of genocide, who will see that there is a price to pay for such crimes.

Armenians not just in the United States but throughout the world thank you and will not forget your historic statement.

Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Consortium of Newspapers

Armenian Mirror-Spectator Boston
Baika Boston
Abaka Montreal
Azg Armenia
Zartok Beirut
Nor Ashkharh Athens
Sardarabad Buenos Aires
Arev Cairo

April 24, 2021

ADL Letter to President Biden

APPRECIATION, from page 1

For many years, this tragic event of history remained a casualty of political expediency, until you came to stand tall and with the highest degree of honesty and truthfulness defined this mass atrocity with the name that it deserves.

The United States, which personifies the principles of human dignity, has historically stood by the victims and survivors of the Armenian Genocide, beginning with US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, a witness of the tragedy in 1915, and President Woodrow Wilson, whose arbitration of the rights of minorities and wisdom to support the Sèvres Treaty defined the trampled rights of the victims of this great tragedy, all the way to the Near East Relief organization, which provided care, food and hope to the survivors of the genocide.

Your noble proclamation on this occasion raises you to the level of all our American leaders who have made history by enunciating and giving life to American values.

Your proclamation comes to certify and complement the legislative actions undertaken in 2019 by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States.

This timely action by the executive and legislative branches of the world's most powerful nation is a most proper moral and historic lesson to the deniers of the Armenian Genocide.

The descendants of the perpetrators of the Genocide in Turkey are still in a state of denial. Even more, the armed forces of the Republic of Turkey, along with its ally Azerbaijan, have been concentrating their troops along the borders of the Republic of Armenia, with the open threat of bringing to its completion the annihilation of the Armenian people which had begun 106 years ago.

America's courageous stand draws red lines for any power of ill will harboring genocidal intentions towards the Armenian people.

The Armenian people all around the world will mark this historic occasion with gratitude and remember it forever.

Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Supreme Council
Boston, April 24, 2021

‘Of Course it’s Genocide’: How
Biden Fulfilled a Promise To
Armenians that Obama Wouldn’t

By **Natasha Korecki**

It was the first year of Donald Trump’s presidency when Aram Hamparian was headed out for lunch near Embassy Row and recognized a member of former President Barack Obama’s national security team.

The Armenian American who serves as executive director of an Armenian advocacy group braced for an awkward encounter.

It was Obama, after all, who left the Armenian community crestfallen when he reneged on a campaign promise that the United States would formally recognize as genocide the slaughter of up to 1.5 million Armenian civilians nearly a century earlier.

But as the two chatted, Hamparian didn’t get another excuse. What he heard from the former national security official was remorse.

“We were on the wrong side of that issue,” the former official said. “We should have gotten that right.”

That former official was Antony Blinken.

Now, Blinken serves as secretary of state and he has helped right a wrong that Obama alums — from President Joe Biden on down — have long regretted.

Today, on the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, Biden has done what no other U.S. president had done, largely out of fear of alienating Turkey — formally designate the now century-old massacre as a genocide. The slaughter began in 1915 during the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, primarily in what is modern-day Turkey.

It was Biden himself in 2009, then vice president, who called Hamparian’s group, the Armenian National Committee of America, to break the news of Obama’s decision to back off of his promise, citing a vow from the government of Turkey, a NATO ally, that it would improve relations with Armenia. Despite years of pressure, Obama refused to make the designation official, choosing instead — on his last Armenian Remembrance Day in office — to call it a massacre and the “first mass atrocity.”

Interviews with current and former diplomats, elected officials and Armenian American leaders familiar with how Biden made the decision tell the story of a new president and the upper ranks of his national security team, many of whom carried regret over having failed to recognize the atrocities when they were previously in power.

On the campaign trail in 2019, Biden was at a Boston-area fundraiser hosted by Larry Lucchino, former Boston Red Sox president and CEO, when he saw Anthony Barsamian, co-chair of the Armenian Assembly of America, and reached out his hand.

“I know how important the Armenian Genocide is to you. Of course it’s genocide,” Biden said, according to Barsamian. “I didn’t even need to say anything. He led with that.”

After Biden’s election, members of Armenian groups were invited on two calls with the Biden team, one during the transition and another weeks after Biden took office, according to a person on the call who described the conversations to POLITICO. The second call, headed by Philip Reeker, acting secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, focused in part on the genocide but stopped just short of making a full-blown promise.

The Armenian community had heard promises before.

In 2000, then-House Speaker Dennis Hastert was on the cusp of bringing a resolution before Congress but reneged after phone calls from then-President Bill Clinton and his policy appointees urged against it — a move that ultimately cost one of his GOP colleagues, Rep. James E. Rogan (R-Calif.), his seat.

Weeks later, Rogan paid the price in his district, where there is a large Armenian community, losing reelection to then state Sen. Adam Schiff.

For Armenians, it was a long road with barriers small and large. They fought with newspapers for years to stop referring to the slaughter as an “alleged” genocide or for putting the word genocide

itself in quotes.

But they also grew savvy after decades of Washington inaction, realizing that if an incoming president didn’t come through in the first year of his tenure, it was almost certain not to happen.

For the last several months, this meant a major push in Congress and frequent contact with their legislative champion, Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.). Menendez had carried a 2019 resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide, which was viewed as a watershed moment after Congress overwhelmingly approved it.

Menendez hammered away at the issue in the confirmation hearings of Blinken and U.S. Agency for International Development nominee Samantha Power — an Obama alumnus who has publicly expressed regret over not recognizing the Armenian genocide during that tenure. While Menendez upped the public pressure, the senator was convinced Blinken and his team wouldn’t back out of the designation — even if they wanted to. On the campaign trail, the president and his top aides had signaled that the official designation was a priority, making a promise a year ago today to recognize the genocide. Menendez felt the administration was boxed in, according to a source familiar with the senator’s thinking.

An already frosty U.S. relationship with Turkey may have also given the administration a bit more license to make the genocide designation official. Biden previously caused a stir with Turkey after referring to Erdogan as an “autocrat.” Last year, the U.S. imposed sanctions on Ankara after the Turkish government purchased air defense systems from Russia.

Biden has long vowed to make global human rights a priority. In less than 100 days, his administration has authorized sanctions on top Russian government officials in retaliation for the poisoning of Alexei Navalny, harshly criticized China over the clamp-down on democracy in Hong Kong, and warned governments from Ethiopia to Myanmar about the consequences of endangering civilian lives.

On Friday, Biden talked to Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan — the first time they had spoken since Biden took office — to inform him of the impending designation. The White House’s official readout of the conversation, however, did not include that crucial detail.

Today’s designation marks decades of efforts by the Armenian community, an advocacy effort that was often outmanned and outspent by Turkish lobbyists who showered Washington powerbrokers with cash and warned that the genocide recognition would jeopardize relations with a key ally.

But Biden’s decision was also decades in the making.

“This is something that he’s expressed to me on numerous occasions for 20 years,” said Dick Harpootlian, a longtime Biden friend. Harpootlian, a South Carolina state senator and former Democratic party chair who is also of Armenian descent, grew up with family members recounting atrocities to him. Harpootlian brought the issue up nearly every time he’d see Biden, he said. “He had no hesitancy in referring to what happened as a genocide.”

On Saturday, when the president’s statement finally came, Biden didn’t mince words.

“We remember the lives of all those who died in the Ottoman-era Armenian genocide and recommit ourselves to preventing such an atrocity from ever again occurring. Beginning on April 24, 1915, with the arrest of Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Constantinople by Ottoman authorities, one and a half million Armenians were deported, massacred, or marched to their deaths in a campaign of extermination,” the president said. “We do this not to cast blame but to ensure that what happened is never repeated.”

(This piece originally appeared on the e-news magazine Politico on April 24, 2021.)



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Finally, President Biden Acknowledges The Genocide! What's Next?

After the United States avoided the issue for 40 years, ever since President Ronald Reagan mentioned the Armenian Genocide in a Presidential Proclamation, President Joe Biden used the term Armenian Genocide, despite the gag-rule imposed on the United States government by the denialist rulers of the Republic of Turkey! For good measure, President Biden used the word genocide not once, but twice, in his “Statement on Armenian Remembrance Day.”

Last year, when Biden was a presidential candidate, he promised to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. But, since Armenian-Americans were deceived so many times by previous presidents who had not kept their campaign promises, they were cautiously optimistic about Biden's commitment.

Even though the United States had repeatedly recognized the Armenian Genocide starting from 1951 when the US government submitted an official document to the World Court; the House of Representatives adopted three resolutions in 1975, 1984, and 2019; the US Senate adopted unanimously a resolution in 2019; and President Reagan issued a Presidential Proclamation on April 22, 1981, President Biden's acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide in 2021 is a major step forward with several positive consequences:

1) As the mass murder of 1.5 million people is a very emotional issue, the descendants of Armenian Genocide victims felt a deep sense of satisfaction that the genocide suffered by their ancestors is formally and correctly acknowledged by the President of the United States.

2) This most recent and authoritative acknowledgment by the American President will enable US Courts to go forward with lawsuits making claims by Armenians on genocide era-demands from the government of Turkey. In the past, such lawsuits were dismissed by Federal judges who claimed (wrongly) that since the US government had not acknowledged the Armenian Genocide, individual states like California could not pass laws allowing these lawsuits to proceed. Nevertheless, if the courts decide that President Biden's statement on the Armenian Genocide is not sufficient to allow the filing of such lawsuits, then Armenian-Americans would be obliged to push for the adoption of a proposed law, not a commemorative resolution, which needs to be adopted by both Houses of Congress and signed by the President into law. That should be the final word on fulfilling the legal requirements for filing lawsuits against Turkey.

3) As the United States is a superpower, pronouncements by the President have a major effect on other countries — particularly Great Britain, Australia and Israel. Therefore, it is expected that several countries would follow suit in recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

4) President Biden's acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide comes at a particularly sensitive time for Armenians worldwide following the disastrous defeat in last fall's Artsakh War by the hands of Azerbaijan, Turkey and Islamic Jihadist mercenaries. President Biden's April 24 statement will boost the spirits of Armenians and could create an atmosphere of goodwill by world powers towards the just resolution of Artsakh's status and the protection of its population.

5) The struggle for genocide recognition is also a political battle by the country that perpetrated that mass crime on one hand and the descendants of the victims on the other. The Government of Turkey, as in past years, did everything in its power to prevent the United States from acknowledging the Armenian Genocide. Turkey paid millions of dollars to American lobbying organizations to deny the genocide, pressured and threatened the United States with dire consequences should it acknowledge the genocide. Nevertheless, Turkey suffered a devastating political blow. Turkey's arrogant President, thinking that no country can go against his wishes, was sternly put in his place by the President of the United States. I am sure President Erdogan spent a sleepless night after President Biden called him on April 23, advising him of his decision to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. Hopefully, the humiliated Erdogan understood that the world does not rotate around Turkey.

Let us now see what the Turkish government may do in retaliation. Will it temporarily recall its Ambassador from Washington, threaten to cut off commercial ties, or block the US Government from using the Incirlik airbase in Turkey? I hope Erdogan will take all of these steps and many more. With such actions, Turkey will exacerbate US-Turkish relations, provide worldwide publicity to the Armenian Genocide, and drive its failing economy into bankruptcy. This could lead to internal turmoil and the eventual removal of Erdogan from the presidency during the next election, if not sooner. Interestingly, in a lengthy televised speech to the Turkish nation late at night on April 26, besides his usual lies on the Armenian Genocide, Erdogan dared not announce any actions against the United States in retaliation to Biden's April 24 statement. Thus, Erdogan displayed his utter humiliation and impotence.

As usual, not having been able to bully the United States to abandon its plans to recognize the Genocide, Turkish leaders are now resorting to their usual tricks by stating that the US recognition does not mean anything. If it meant nothing, why did Turkey spend millions of dollars on lobbyists for several decades and pressure the US government, threatening dire consequences?

Rather than continuing the lies and denials for over a century, it would be much better for Turkey to simply acknowledge the crimes of its predecessors, ask for forgiveness, and make amends for the horrendous damages caused to the Armenian people. Turkey would do well to follow the example of Germany after the Holocaust. Germany apologized for Hitler's mass crimes, erected memorials for the Holocaust victims and paid billions of dollars in reparations. This is what a civilized nation does when its leaders commit a grave crime.

In the meantime, Armenians in the Diaspora and Armenia should pursue their demands through legal channels by filing multiple lawsuits against Turkey in various country courts and the European Court of Human Rights, seeking restitution for the damages caused by the Genocide. The Government of Armenia, on the other hand, should take Turkey to the International Court of Justice (World Court), where only governments have standing to file lawsuits.

Finally, this is the appropriate moment to remember and acknowledge a great friend of Armenians, former US Ambassador to Armenia, John Marshall Evans, whose diplomatic career was cut short in 2006 after he told the truth about the Armenian Genocide during a visit to California. It would be only proper for the Biden Administration to appoint Evans as the next US Ambassador to Armenia. This is the least the US government could do, after the President issues an official apology to him.

Recognizing Armenian Genocide Was Long Overdue, But It's Not Enough

By Stephen Smith

On Saturday, President Biden took the long overdue step of recognizing the Armenian genocide. Between 1915 and 1923, 1.5 million Armenians were systematically murdered by the Ottoman government in modern-day Turkey. That the President of the United States finally used the word ‘genocide’ is a critical and historic step.

It is also cold comfort. America has been on the wrong side of history for over a century. Imagine if the British government denied the Holocaust for 106 years in order to normalize relations with Germany? It would mean Jews would still have to wait to 2051 to hear a British Prime Minister find the courage to say the word ‘The Holocaust.’

Saturday's announcement by President Biden is thus both a welcome change from past administrations — and a sign of how obstinate the United States has been on this issue until now.

Does the word genocide matter? Yes. In 2004, I attended the Stockholm Forum on the Prevention of Genocide as an advisor to Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson. Attended by 1,000 delegates from forty-five national governments, the forum was in many ways a success. Among other concrete measures, the conference prompted then-Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Anan to announce a new permanent position of Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide.

But as I left, I found a young woman in tears. She told me through her sobs that she was deeply upset that every single delegate had studiously avoided applying the word “genocide” to what her Armenian ancestors had suffered. It was ninety years after the genocide at that point. She looked at me and said, ‘What about me?’

Many in the Armenian community are relieved and encouraged by the Biden administration's declaration. But I am not celebrating. I am calling to account multiple administrations for the pain they caused, for political integrity traded for political expediency,

for collaborating with the deniers of history, for allowing American Armenians who survived the genocide to go to their deaths with no justice, no recognition.

Historical memory of genocides matters, as the trauma and pain carry forward for generations.

In April 2015, I was in Yerevan, Armenia for the centennial of the genocide. I watched as ten-year-old descendants of genocide victims stood in their school dresses, read poems, and lit candles. As I was leaving, descendants of that genocide walked up the hill. They weren't coming to lay wreaths. They were coming to ‘be’—to live with the memory of their ancestors who had been murdered for no reason except that they were Armenian.

President Obama did not attend the event, but there was much anticipation that he would at last call the Armenian genocide by its name. But like so many U.S. presidents before him, he declined to name the genocide. I sat listening to System of Down, the rock band that has told the story of the genocide through their music. Like the young woman I had met a decade earlier in Sweden, I began to cry.

Here's what the word genocide means to the woman at the 2004 conference, to the Yerevan memorial visitors, to the Armenian diaspora: It means that the loss of lives, family, property, home, churches, identity, and dignity has finally been defined. What happened to the Armenians 106 years ago was genocide. There may be no justice for a single Armenian child, and it is unlikely there will be restitution of a single home, but recognition does rehumanize those who were dehumanized. It tells the world that they were the victims of senseless, systemic hatred, and that while their families perished in a hateful action, their descendants can live with purpose.

President Biden had the decency to do the right thing. But let us hope that his statement is a first step. Importantly, there has been remarkably muted media coverage of his words; at our institute, which houses 1,900 testimonies of Armenian genocide survivors, we have not had a single call from news outlets asking to use the testimony of those that lived through the Genocide. To give the word a voice. That's because, after a century of denial and ugly geopolitics, the Armenians who perished are all but forgotten. I believe the U.S. government owes the Armenian community a museum equal to the U.S. Holocaust Museum—and it owes a commitment to tell and retell the story of what happened, so that it may never happen again.

(Stephen D. Smith is Finci-Viterbi executive director of the USC Shoah Foundation. The first episode of “The Memory Generation” was released on April 15, 2021, and can be found at <https://www.memorygenerationpodcast.com/episodes> This commentary originally appeared in the *Jewish Journal* on April 25.)

COMMEMORATING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Nevada Community Commemorates Armenian Genocide with Somber Program

LAS VEGAS — Despite 40-50 mph gusty winds, members of the Armenian-American community gathered at Sunset Park Armenian Genocide Memorial Monument for a Candlelight Vigil on April 24, 2021. This year, Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day was particularly significant with President Joe Biden’s formal recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

The Candlelight Vigil, Hosted by the Armenian American Cultural Society of Las Vegas (AACS) with the participation of all Las Vegas Armenian Churches and organizations, honored the 1.5 million martyrs on the 106th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. AACS Board Member and Master of Ceremony, Hermann Brumm invited Las Vegas Homenetmen Artsakh Chapter scouts for the flag presentation as Naree Asherian sang both Armenian and American anthems.

The invocation was led by Very Reverend Sasoon Zumrookhdian of St. Geragos Church, Rev. Artsakh Badoyan of St. Garabed Church and Pastor Sam Agulian of the Armenian Evangelical Church, accompanied by Der Vahan Gosdanian and Der Nareg Matarian.

On behalf of the Armenian National



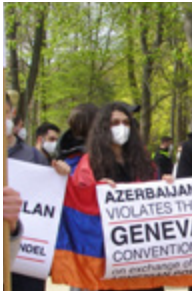
Committee of America - Nevada chapter, Lenna Hovanessian Esq. co-chair, welcomed Nevada elected officials, dignitaries and representatives of various organizations who participated in the vigil. Mrs. Hovanessian thanked President Biden’s formal recognition of the Armenian Genocide, ending denialism. Hovanessian also honored the 5,000 martyred soldiers of the 44 Day Artsakh War of 2020 under Azerbaijani and Turkish aggression. Prior to

inviting Nevada Lieutenant Governor Kate Marshall to the podium, Hovanessian highlighted the importance of the current bill about Holocaust and Genocide education to be adopted by the Nevada Assembly.

Nevada Lieutenant Governor Kate Marshall had specifically flown from Carson City to participate in the vigil. In her remarks she thanked President Biden for acknowledging the Armenian Genocide and affirming Armenians’ right to justice

and recognition of the truth. The lieutenant governor also expressed her support to teaching the truth about the Armenian Genocide by adopting the Holocaust and Genocide Education bill.

Clark County Commissioner Jim Gibson, City of Las Vegas Councilwoman Victoria Seaman and Councilwoman Michelle Fiore also took the podium in support of the Las Vegas Armenian-American community and presented Certificates of Recognition. Demi Falcon and Gerri Shroder, representing Nevada Nevada Lt. Gov. Congresswoman Dina Kate Marshall Titus and Susie Lee addressed the vigil. Nevada Assemblyman Andy Matthews, District 37 was also present and expressed his support in adopting



Flag presentation by Las Vegas Homenetmen Artsakh Chapter Scouts

the Armenian Genocide Education Bill, and Assemblywoman Annie Black, District 19, presented a proclamation.


Lenna Hovanessian acknowledged the presence of the Honorary Consul of Lebanon in Las Vegas, Mr. Philippe Ziade, and expressed the Armenian community’s gratitude to Lebanon, where hundreds of thousands of Armenian lives were saved after the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Ziade spoke highly of the Armenian community in Lebanon as exemplary and ingenious people who contribute to society wherever they are with hard work and integrity.

Anti-Defamation League, Nevada Regional Director, Jolie Brislin, Jewish Nevada Organization President and CEO, Stephanie Tuzman, also addressed the vigil expressing their support to the Armenian community. Also present were Heidi Sarno Straus, Chair of the Holocaust Education Task Force, Esther Finder, advisor to Nevada Governor’s Council on Holocaust Education, and Noa Jensch of the Israeli American Council. Also present were Commissioner Danny Tarkanian and Dr. Sabri Atman of the Assyrian Genocide Research Center.

The evening concluded with prayers by the clergy and guests placing flowers and candles at the “Eternal Circle” of the monument.

Prior to the vigil, two new Guinness World Record were set by father and son Hratchia and Hakob Arakelian. On April 24, 2021 at Sunset Park, they successfully set two new weightlifting records where Hratchia lifted 11,100 pounds in 3 minutes with 37 squats and Hakob lifted 7,400 pounds in 1 minute with 40 squats. Both records were dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

—Adroushan Andy Armenian



The Tekeyan Cultural Association Is Rolling Up Its Sleeves Again

Before the 44-day war, we supported the development of the strategic Berdzor corridor and made large investments in the region. Berdzor and its neighboring regions (Kashatagh) have now fallen into enemy hands. All of a sudden, its residents, students and teachers were forced to become refugees and are now helplessly scattered all around Artsakh and Armenia. They have lost everything and their living conditions are less than desirable.





The good news is that once more Tekeyan is engaged to make their lives better, so that they remain in Armenia and become part of the nation-building process.

This time though the help will be achieved through investments and not through donations. The creation of a **sustainable economy** is the aim of this appeal.

Through small contributions / mass funding we will create income-generating opportunities for the displaced families. Tekeyan of Armenia in association with a local reputable NGO (Shen or Syunik or Kashatagh) will make investments in agriculture and/or housing to create income or comforts for their beneficiaries. The recipients get these funds conditional that they give back on an annual basis the equivalent in produced goods of 5% of the amount of assistance they have received.

Contributors in this funding will be gratified to:

- a) Alleviate the hardship of these forcefully displaced families
- b) Receive a 5% annual return – goods which in turn will be redirected to schools or other needy institutions.



THIS IS A MODEL OF SUSTAINABLE ASSISTANCE, YEAR AFTER YEAR

Participations are tax deductible. Checks to be made to

Tekeyan Cultural Association, memo Berdzor refugee assistance				
\$100	\$250	\$500	\$1000	other \$ _____
Send donation to		Tekeyan Cultural Association, 755 MOUNT AUBURN STREET, WATERTOWN, MA 02472 USA		
Name: _____		Address: _____		

Or use the online donate method

CLICK HERE

For additional information CALL TCA HEADQUARTERS AT 617 924-4455

For example: Collected funds will buy Bee Colony +/- \$US 150, Bee hive +/- \$US 50, Calf +/- \$US 200, Fruit treesapling +/- \$US 5 ... etc.

