

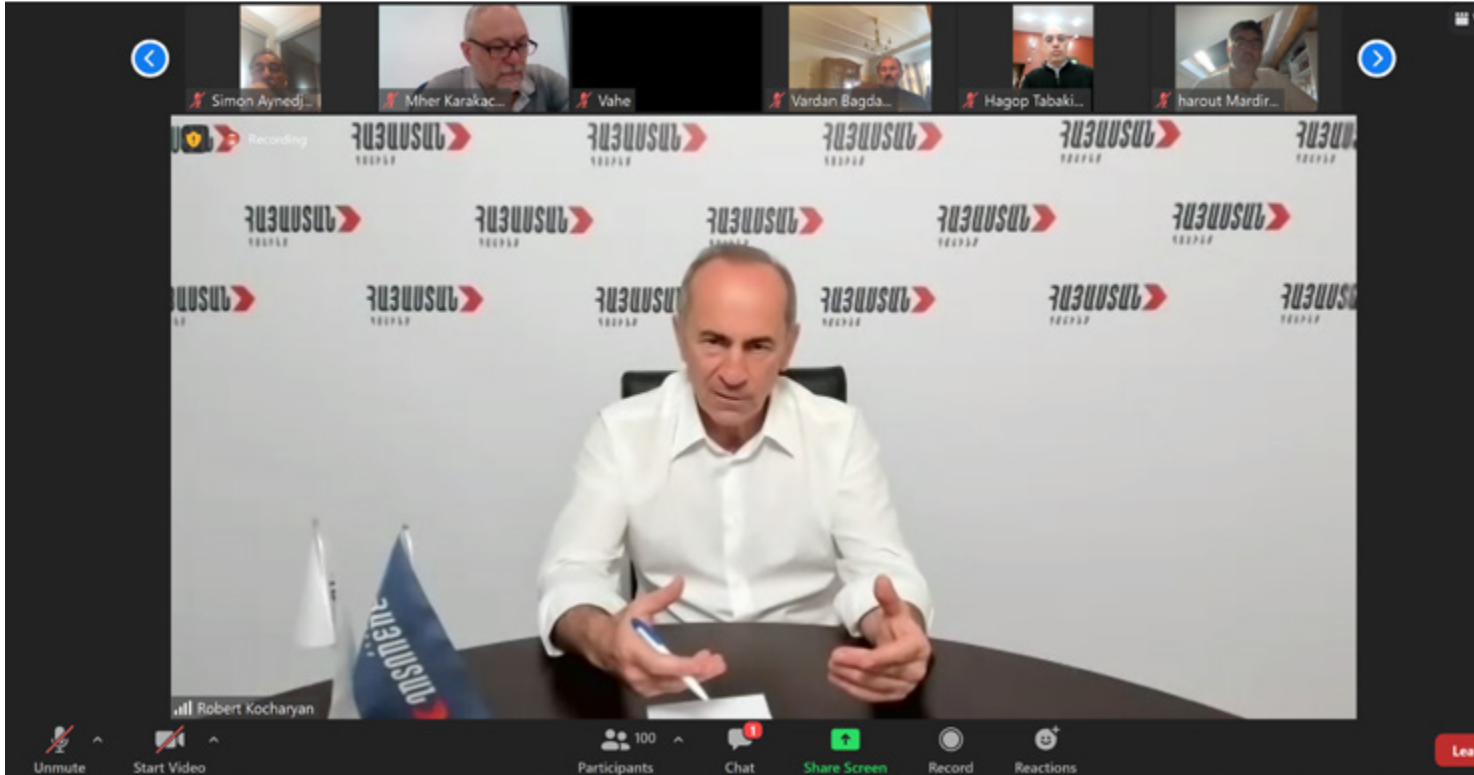
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Presidential candidate Robert Kocharyan during his online press conference

Presidential Candidate Kocharyan Gives Press Conference for Diaspora

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

YEREVAN — Former Armenian president and current presidential candidate for the Armenia Alliance [Hayastan Dashink]

Robert Kocharyan held an online press conference via Zoom for various diasporan Armenian media and representatives on June 11, with the support of his electoral coalition partner, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF). The conference lasted over one

hour and there were 100 participants from various parts of the world at its peak.

The conference was run by public relations and marketing expert Hrachuhi Mirzoyan, herself a candidate in the parliamentary see KOCHARYAN, page 3

Washington Hits Armenia With Aluminum Foil Anti-Dumping Duties

WASHINGTON (Eurasia.net) — The Biden administration has introduced new tariffs on Armenia's largest export to the United States. Last month, the Department of Commerce made a preliminary determination that Armenian aluminum foil is being sold "at less than fair value" in the US — "dumped," in industry jargon. Until a final decision is made in the fall, Armenian foil exporters must pay US Customs a cash deposit equivalent to 188.84 percent of the product value.

Aluminum foil accounts for almost half of Armenian exports to the US, according to UN trade data. It was worth more than \$33 million in 2020. The foil is manufactured by a plant in Yerevan known as Armenal, which see TARIFFS, page 20



Armenal aluminum foil factory

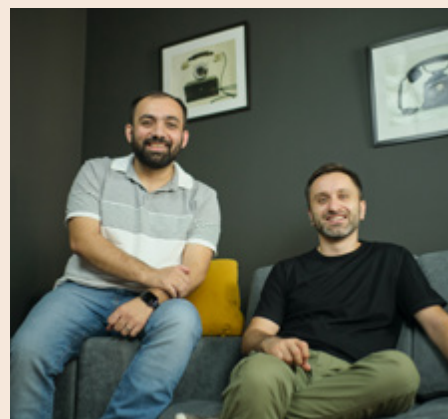
Perfect Silence for Communication

How Krisp Is Creating The Right Environment For Remote Meetings

By Ani Duzdabanyan-Manoukian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Nothing would probably feel more natural than having a remote interview with a high tech professional. And what could make it even more interesting is that no sound or even a whisper can interfere in our conversation thanks to a very pertinent application named Krisp — a noise-cancelling app which removes all the background noise during the call. My interviewee is Davit Baghdasaryan, the cofounder of Krisp, who exactly four years ago in June of 2017, joined his knowledge and experience with that of another tech entrepreneur, Arto Minasyan, to lunch this revolutionary product.

The two met in San Francisco, where Davit was working at Twilio, a telecommunication company, and had been living in Silicon Valley for eight years at the time. "I was traveling back and forth between Armenia and US and because of the time difference I had to work in the evenings. In Armenia, summer evenings are full of noise. I always wished to have a button that I could click and all the noise would go away. And that's how the idea was born to create Krisp," Davit tells me, using his own creation in Armenia.



Arto Minasyan, at left, and Davit Baghdasaryan, co-founders of Krisp

see KRISP, page 9

15 Armenian POWs Freed By Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — In a deal brokered by the United States and Georgia, Azerbaijan set free 15 Armenian prisoners of war on Saturday, June 12, after receiving more information from Armenia about minefields around Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced their release as he campaigned for snap parliamentary elections slated for June 20.

Pashinyan's press secretary, Mane Gevorgyan, said that the POWs were repatriated to Armenia via Georgia.

"The process took place with U.S. and Georgian mediation, for which the government of Armenia thanks the US administration and the Georgian government," Gevorgyan wrote on Facebook.

Azerbaijan said it freed the POWs in exchange for an Armenian military map detailing the location of nearly 100,000 land mines in the Aghdam district east of Nagorno-Karabakh which was handed back to Baku under the terms of a Russian-brokered agreement that stopped last year's Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

"The 15 Armenian captives were turned over on the Azerbaijani-Georgian border with the participation of Georgian representatives," the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken hailed their release. "We also welcome Armenia's decision to provide Azerbaijan with important information that will facilitate humanitarian demining and avoid future casualties," he said in a statement.

"The United States is pleased to support these steps and hopes they will lay the groundwork for additional cooperation. We continue to call for the return of all detainees and stand ready to assist the countries of the region in their efforts to continue cooperation and resolve outstanding issues between them," added Blinken.

The Georgian government reported, meanwhile, that Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili personally see POWS, page 3

Mirror-Spectator Annual Summer Vacation

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* will close for its annual two-week vacation in early July.

The last issue for the *Mirror* will be that of July 3. Publication will resume with the July 24 issue.

Enjoy a safe and healthy summer.

ARMENIA

COAF Provides First Set of Homes to Displaced Families from Artsakh

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CALIFORNIA

Just Beneath the Dirt: Where the Racism of Fresno Began

Page 10





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Levon Aronian Takes 2nd Place in Superbet Chess Classic

BUCHAREST (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian grandmaster Levon Aronian scored 5 points to come in the second in the Superbet Chess Classic on Tuesday, June 15, as did Alexander Grischuk and Wesley So, Chess24 reports.

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, meanwhile, took a quick draw against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in the final round to clinch first place along with the \$90,000 top prize.

The world number two Fabiano Caruana took the eight spot with four points.

ICRC Chief Says Return of Armenian POWs His Goal

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Peter Maurer, the Chairman of the International Committee of the Red Cross, this week responded to the President Armen Sarkissian's letter on the immediate return of all Armenian prisoners of war and civilians held by Azerbaijan.

Maurer has assured that issues raised by the President are at the focus of the organization's and his own attention.

Noting that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has had an active presence in the region since 1992, Maurer said in particular that since the first days of hostilities in September 2020, the organization has provided humanitarian assistance and expressed readiness for further action by the international community, within the humanitarian mandate provided to the ICRC.

Russian Peacekeepers Hold Training Session in Artsakh

STEPANAKERT (Panorama.am) — Members of the Russian peacekeeping contingent continue to perform tasks to monitor compliance with the ceasefire regime on the line of demarcation of the parties in their area of responsibility, as well as ensure the safety of motor transport, transportation of food and various goods along the Lachin corridor, the Russian Defense Ministry reported on June 15.

Also, as planned, the military personnel of the Russian peacekeeping contingent carry out combat training activities, conducting training to repel an attack on an observation post and prevent violations provocative actions against the civilian population.

Upon receiving the signal, the peacekeepers took up defense in pre-designated positions in the shortest possible time. Units of BTR-82A armored personnel carriers were involved in the training to straighten the protection of the observation post.

According to the source, over the past week, no ceasefire violations were recorded in the area of responsibility of the peacekeeping contingent, no provocative actions against Russian servicemen were noted.

Monumental Project for Families Of Armenia's Fallen Heroes

By Florence Avakian

YEREVAN — They gave their ultimate sacrifice for our homeland, and for their devoted service, a grateful nation is showing them its appreciation.

"The Life Insurance Foundation for Servicemen was established in 2017 as a life insurance method which provides monetary compensation to Armenia's heroes with a disability while they were protecting the borders of our homeland, and also to the families of soldiers who are missing or deceased in combat," said Sona Baghdasaryan in an interview from Yerevan.

Sona, who is the program's development director, related that the organization was established in 2017 following the four-day war in 2016 where more than 100 Arme-



Sona Baghdasaryan

nian servicemen were killed. "It started as a one-man operation and grew to a group of ten to fifteen committed volunteers who visited families with mental and emotional needs.

"The families needed recognition, and had financial problems," she noted. "At that time some of the donated funds came from the diaspora. It grew to a dedicated group of 510 volunteers in the last four years, and evolved into a professional institution from January to February 2021

Mandatory Employment Contributions

In 2016, a special law was passed by Armenia's Parliament to establish a fund whereby Armenia's and Artsakh's taxpayers would contribute monetary compensation to the war heroes — a Mandatory Employee Contribution. Some donations also came from abroad, but most of the funds were from Armenia, she stated.

"It is the people of the Armenian nation that pays for the insurance, not the state," she said, emphasizing the point that the government is not involved in the contributions.

Today there are 3,710 active cases where the funds will pay the heroes and families for 20 years. There are two degrees of disability. The first provides \$400 to \$600 for 20 years, and the second pays \$200 to \$400 again for 20 years. The missing or severely injured soldiers are likely to receive the first or second disability. Every ten cases will get \$1.5 million in lifetime compensation. Since the establishment of the Foundation, employees based in Armenia have

contributed \$62 million, each worker giving \$3 to \$30 monthly via their employer.

"It is a life insurance scheme, providing for families so those with children can grow up in Armenia and hopefully stay in the homeland," said Sona.

Today there are twelve paid professionals in the foundation who are experts "with stellar reputations" in finance, banking, crisis management, fundraising, asset management, marketing and law. There are also members of a Board of Trustees who are not paid. The majority of the Trustees come from the diaspora - U.S., Europe and Russia. Their average age is below 35 years.

There are seven members on the Board of Trustees, appointed for five years, she related. "There is no intervention from state authorities in their selection or decision-making procedure. They approve the budget, including the annual budget, and define the procedure for paying the compensation. They also appoint the executive committee and the director of the Foundation.

The members also approve the activities and liquidation procedures, forms, other foundation bodies and the extent of their power. They select the external auditor, and approve the publishing procedure of the quarterly reports of the Foundation.

Already 3450 servicemen family cases have been compensated, between 2017 and 2021, with 3036 cases of those due to the recent September 27 war. The total compensation paid to date totals more than \$72,000,000.

Sona again emphasized that the Armenian state is not giving any funds. "The foundation's funds come from the paychecks of those who earn a salary. The role of the Armenian state is to collect and distribute the funds.

A National Success Story

Why is the Insurance Foundation succeeding? "The motive for this project is not another charity organization. The foundation has been created to pay our tribute to our heroes," she said, stressing each word. "We don't rely on the state. We do it on a sustainable basis. If we don't support the families of our heroes, they will never recover from the cycle of poverty. Our duty is to our nation. This is very real. We are preparing for our future," she declared with emotion.

"Realizing the price paid by our soldiers for the peace and security of Armenia and Artsakh, we compensate for every soldier fallen in combat, missing in combat, severely injured due to combat," she stated, again stressing the mantra of the project.

Sona Baghdasaryan emphasized that "we operate on the principle of complete transparency. In the enactment of this principle, our website provides the possibility to see both a contributor's donations and the mandatory employee contribution. At any given time, it is possible to view the total funds of the Foundation as well as the total amount of compensations."

The principle of transparency is central to the program, Sona again reiterated.

"The collected funds can always be seen. Each cent donated is directed exclusively to the mission of paying compensation to the fallen and disabled soldiers and their family while they protected the homeland's borders."

She continued, saying that "every step of the way, the list of beneficiaries who have received compensation, can go to the annual reports. An annual audit is done by a highly reputable audit company."

"It is our duty to stand by the families of the fallen and missing soldiers, as well as the disabled. It ensures the life and health of serving the Armenian Army today, Sona Baghdasaryan stated, displaying her great passion and dedication.

Personal and National Commitment

For Sona Baghdasaryan, this project ranges from both personal and patriotic concerns. Her 25-year-old brother, who is a lawyer, fought on the front lines in the last war. As a student in the Armenian Military Academy, he was accepted in the artillery division, and will serve for three years, she revealed.

Born and raised in Yerevan, Baghdasaryan is the mother of three children; her eldest son, who is eight years old, will be a soldier in ten years. "I am terrified," she declared.

Her maternal grandfather, born in 1915, was from Sis and Kilis. He fled in an oxcart, and her mother's family repatriated from Lebanon and Aleppo in 1947 to Armenia. Her father's family is from north Artsakh.

Baghdasaryan attended an English public school in Yerevan, then attended the French University in Armenia where she studied law for six years earning an M.A. degree in international business law. There she met her husband, also a lawyer. A specialist in finance and banking, she began her career at Armenia's Central Bank, then received a grant from Boston University in 2011, continuing her studies in international law with her husband. Returning to Armenia, she continued at the Central Bank until she joined the foundation.

"The Insurance Foundation for the heroes is a full time job for me. As an Armenian, it's my duty to make sure how we will live if we don't take care of these heroes. My education and skills need to be put into this project."

She recalled that a volunteer hero had called her and asked, "If I die, can you take care of my family and my children?" Again, she declared, emphasizing each word, "We need to protect our children, our elders and our families so they will stay in Armenia. Our children must grow up in Armenia."

Sona Baghdasaryan, with her advanced education and skills could easily have left Armenia, and found a lucrative position in the diaspora, but she and her family are devoted to the future of their homeland. "It is very important to concentrate on our independent state of Armenia. We need to cherish it and make it a flourishing and strong country."

"This is the joint dream of every Armenian in the world," she stated, reflecting her devotion and commitment.

For individuals who would like to donate to the Insurance Foundation for Servicemen, the tax deductible number in the United States is 501(c) (3). For bank transfers, the email is www.1000plus.am/en/transfer. The email is www.1000plus.am.



ARMENIA

Candidate Kocharyan Gives Press Conference for Diaspora

KOCHARYAN, from page 1
elections for the Armenia Alliance. It was the eighth such conference or meeting that Kocharyan had held that day, and he appeared tired. The ex-president preferred not to give an opening statement but rather to immediately begin to answer questions. Some 40 questions had been collected previously (the *Mirror-Spectator* did not have the chance to participate in this) and then grouped together into similar categories, which primarily dealt with the Armenian economy, relations with the diaspora, the future of Armenia and the way out of the current crisis for Armenia. Much of the former president's comments were devoted to criticizing the present government of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

President Kocharyan cast full blame for the current security crisis on the current regime. In response to a question as to whether it was possible to reject the November 2020 trilateral ceasefire agreement on the basis of the Armenian Constitution, he declared that from a practical point of view, not respecting this agreement will create more problems than accepting it. On the other hand, the questions of how he would deal with the Azerbaijani demand for access through southern Armenia to link with Nakhichevan, or other land and border issues were not discussed.

He stressed that it was necessary to quickly solve the socioeconomic issues of the refugees from Artsakh. In that connection, he mentioned the roughly \$100 million collected during the wartime as part of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund campaign, and the lack of accounting for what has happened to that money. Nonetheless, further sums remain which could resolve many issues for the refugees, he said.

Kocharyan noted two other types of crises for which he stated the current government was responsible: the increase of political tension and polarization in Armenian society, and a downturn in the economy,

including a decline in investments from abroad and an increase in emigration. He said that today's situation, when everyone from 14 years old to the elderly, are pre-occupied with politics, is not a normal or healthy state of affairs.

He declared that the current government does not understand economic policy and declared that if in power, he could assure economic growth and increase the amount of outside investments. He would encourage the use of new technologies, and stated that in a country like Armenia without gas or other great natural resources, there is no other choice.

He said that in the last three years of his presidency, immigration to Armenia was greater than emigration, and said that an Armenia-centered policy should be followed in connection with the diaspora in order to create attractive conditions for repatriation or immigration. He said that restrictions for dual citizens should only be placed on service in the army or police and security bodies. In all other fields he said, Armenia can benefit from the experience and specializations of diasporan Armenians.

Kocharyan stated that the current government in Armenia has said it does not need diasporan institutions but can work directly with the diaspora. This is one of the causes of the diaspora's losing confidence in the current government, he said. He, on the other hand, declared that Armenia's relations must be with an organized diaspora and not with individuals, as having institutional structures in various communities will make it easier for Armenia to work with them.

When asked whether he would recreate a diaspora ministry or a new body for relations with Armenians abroad, he first carefully noted that he did not agree that Armenia must manage the diaspora. He said he did not think that would be possible either. He suggested two models, a diaspora ministry, or a strong structure in the foreign

ministry with one of the deputy ministers responsible for the diaspora. He said while the first approach sounded better to him, and probably sounded better to the diaspora, on the other hand, diaspora relations in general are conducted through embassies and it could create problems if there were two bodies dealing with these relations. He said it was necessary to avoid creating a purely bureaucratic structure.

Kocharyan was asked what measures could be taken to promote the Western Armenian language, literature and culture. He said this question would have to be examined by specialists. He added that he had appointed deliberately during his presidency, especially in the early period, members of the ARF as ministers of culture and education because that political party was particularly dedicated to the preservation of national culture. As the ARF is part of his current electoral coalition, he said that means that his team contains a force or element which will very actively deal with these issues.

Kocharyan, in response to a question about Iran, stated that he is always in favor of deepening relations with it, though Armenia has faced great pressure from other quarters, especially the United States, against this. He regretted that during his regime it was not possible to build a second gas pipeline.

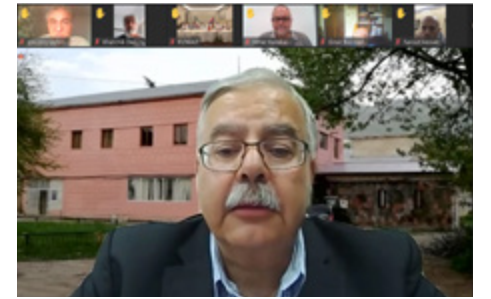
When asked about the struggle against corruption and oligarchy, he proclaimed that there is no one on his electoral campaign's list of candidates who is an oligarch. Instead, he pointed to the current regime, which though in 2018 declared war on oligarchy, now has in its list the most famous oligarch of Armenia (presumably he is referring to Khachatur Sukiasyan, number four in the Civil Contract list of candidates), and there are others. Kocharyan said that thus, the Pashinyan regime has betrayed all its slogans.

In another direct criticism of Pashinyan's

government, he stated that since 2018 it had tried to remove the "national" from Armenian education. He claimed that some Western-based NGOs, which he called "Sorosakan," or connected to billionaire philanthropist George Soros, pursued such goals, causing great damage, and their offices must be obstructed and not permitted to operate in Armenia. He posited that people who worked in those NGOs moved into government structures, including the Ministry of Education, after the Velvet Revolution and were able to introduce their ideas on a governmental level.

A variety of other topics were quickly covered in the conference. Occasionally suggestions were made by participants, who had a limited opportunity at the end of the conference to speak. For example, the idea of promoting news dissemination in non-Armenian languages like the Turks and Kurds do was suggested, and Kocharyan thought this was a good idea in principle. The moderator suggested that further suggestions could be forwarded electronically to the Armenia Alliance in the future.

At the end of the event, Hagop Der



Armenian Revolutionary Federation Bureau Chairman Hagop Der Khatchadurian (Zoom screenshot)

Khatchadurian, Armenian Revolutionary Federation Bureau chairman, thanked Kocharyan for making time for this conference and spoke briefly of the goals of the Armenia Alliance, including a return to a national ideology and establishing an honorable peace.

Armenian Ombudsman Again Slams Pashinyan's Campaign Rhetoric

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia's human rights defender, Arman Tatoyan, again criticized Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's fiery campaign rhetoric on Tuesday, June 15, saying that it is further heightening political tensions in the country.

Tatoyan described as "extremely concerning" the fact that Pashinyan repeatedly brandished a hammer during his campaign rallies held in recent days. He also deplored Pashinyan's threats to "throw on the ground" and "bang against the wall" opposition supporters who would try to illegally influence the outcome of Sunday's general elections.

"The use of phrases such as 'make them lie on asphalt' and 'bang against the wall,' which are addressed to a circle of unknown individuals and are extremely dangerous in terms of human rights, must be stopped," the ombudsman said in a statement. "This unacceptable rhetoric is associated with mass violations of human rights."

The hammer demonstrated by Pashinyan on the campaign trail is meant to symbolize a popular "steel mandate" which he says he needs to continue ruling Armenia with a firmer hand.

"With the steel mandate we will take out all rusty nails, including in here Ararat [province]," the premier told on Monday supporters rallying in Masis, a small town just south of Yerevan.

Pashinyan doubled down on his rhetoric on Tuesday as he held campaign rallies in southeastern Syunik province where most

town and village mayors have been openly defying him since Armenia's defeat in last year's war in Nagorno-Karabakh. He described them as "rusty nails" that will be taken out by his hammer after the elections.

"With this mandate we will break their [bank] accounts, destroy their firms and shove each of these criminal upstarts into holes on your behalf," he said, brandishing the hammer.

In Tatoyan's words, Pashinyan's recourse to this analogy has triggered "dangerous discussions" on social media, with hardcore supporters and opponents of the current Ar-

menian government openly threatening violent reprisals.

"Politicians regarded as candidates for the post of Armenia's prime minister must be especially careful about words used by them and take into account all their figurative meanings," the ombudsman stressed.

Former President Robert Kocharyan and his political allies leading the opposition Hayastan alliance commented scathingly on Pashinyan's hammer when they campaigned in Masis on Tuesday.

"We are coming not to smash the hammer on their heads but to make the country

prosperous," Kocharyan said at an indoor meeting held there.

One of his associates, Ishkhan Saghatel'yan, sounded less conciliatory. "On June 20 we will wrest the hammer from his hands and you know what we will do," he told local supporters.

Tatoyan had already denounced Pashinyan and his rivals last week for resorting to inflammatory campaign rhetoric. He singled out the prime minister's pledges to "purge" the state bureaucracy and wage "political vendettas" against local government officials supporting the Armenian opposition.

15 Armenian POWs Freed by Azerbaijan

POWS, from page 1

helped to arrange the deal by negotiating with Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

The Armenian-Azerbaijani agreement brokered by Russian President Vladimir Putin last November calls for the unconditional release of all prisoners held by the conflicting sides.

Russian peacekeepers deployed in Karabakh after the six-week war have arranged several prisoner swaps in recent months. No Azerbaijani prisoners

are known to be held in Armenia or Karabakh at present.

A total of 88 Armenian prisoners of war (POWs) and civilians have been freed to date. More than 100 others are believed to remain in Azerbaijani captivity. Yerevan regularly demands their immediate release.

Baku says that they are not covered by the truce agreement because they were captured after it took effect on November 10. Azerbaijani officials have branded the remaining Armenian detainees as

"terrorists."

At least 16 of them are facing what the Armenian Foreign Ministry condemned last week as "trumped-up criminal charges."

"It is evident that Azerbaijan is using the captured people as political hostages and tools to pursue other goals," the ministry said in a June 4 statement. It accused Baku of concealing "the real number of prisoners" and "denying the captivity of dozens of Armenian servicemen and civilians."



INTERNATIONAL

COAF Provides First Set of Home to Displaced Families from Artsakh

YEREVAN —Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) has secured permanent housing for 13 families from Artsakh who were displaced because of the attack by Azerbaijan last year. Two of these families, the Margaryans and Chirkinyans, moved into their new homes located in the villages of Debet and Dsegh (Lori region of Armenia) on June 11. The implementation of the initial phase of the project meets the housing needs of more than 100 people from Artsakh.

COAF's "Moving Mountains" fundraiser held last December was partially devoted to building houses for displaced families in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. The organization aims at building and renovating a total of 10,000 square feet of housing area at the cost of \$430 per square foot, adding up to 13 homes with an average living space of 750 square feet. The homes are fully furnished with running water, heating, electricity, internet and appliances such as refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, televisions, and kitchenware.

"COAF's response to the crisis has been swift in terms of mobilizing resources and providing displaced compatriots from Artsakh with shelter and humanitarian aid," stated Korioun Khatchadourian, managing director of COAF. The organization's founder Garo Ar-



The new house of the Chirkinyans from outside



Family portrait of the Margaryans in front of their new house in Debet village

men has also stressed the urgency of providing housing in Armenia proper so that the tragedy of a community of Armenians living in trailers (domiks) for decades like they have since the 1988 earthquake is avoided.

In addition to providing housing, COAF is actively taking steps to ensure displaced families from Artsakh are smoothly integrating into their newfound communities. Access to COAF's education, healthcare,

social and economic programs has been a major component of the services being provided to youth and adults alike.

"A variety of criteria were assessed and brought into our final choice of families to receive housing. But providing homes to those who had intentions to leave Armenia and Artsakh played a decisive role in our decision-making process because it allowed us to keep them in the country," says Project Manager Ovsanna Yeghoyan.



Margaryans at home in Debet village



Handing the keys of their new house to the Margaryans

The Chirkinyans moving into their new home



Armenian Church Hits Back at Prime Minister Pashinyan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The Armenian Apostolic Church rejected on Monday, June 14, what it called "unfair accusations" voiced against it by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan during the ongoing parliamentary election campaign.

Pashinyan attacked the church during at least two of his campaign rallies held late last week.

"They are telling us that we are trying to discredit the Armenian Apostolic Church and traditional values," he told supporters rallying in the town of Sevan on Saturday. "No, those values are discredited by corrupt clergymen."

Pashinyan claimed that those clergymen are part of Armenia's traditional political, intellectual and spiritual elites that "did everything" to prevent the 2018 "velvet revolution" that brought him to power or

make it a failure. He said the country needs another revolution to get rid of these elites.

The church responded to the accusations with a statement released by its Echmiadzin-based Mother See.

"The attitude of the current government towards the national and spiritual values of the Church is known to our people," it said. "The behavior of the Acting Prime Minister towards the Church and the clergy should be considered in this context."

"The Armenian Church, despite all kinds of obstacles and the attitude of the authorities, will continue to implement its soul-saving, patriotic mission in the life of the Armenian people," added the statement.

Last Thursday, the ancient church's supreme head, Catholicos Karekin II, and

bishops based in Armenia expressed "deep concern" over they described as "hate speech" spread by political forces running in the June 20 snap elections.

In a joint statement issued after a meeting in Echmiadzin, they urged all election contenders and "especially the ruling party" to refrain from offensive statements and threats of violence, warning that such rhetoric could lead to violent unrest.

Armenia's human rights ombudsman, Arman Tatoyan, likewise denounced Pashinyan and his rivals for resorting inflammatory rhetoric on the campaign trail. He singled out the prime minister's pledges to "purge" the state bureaucracy and wage "political vendettas" against local government officials supporting the Armenian opposition.

Pashinyan has had frosty relations with

Karekin II throughout his three-year rule. They deteriorated further late last year after Karekin II joined President Armen Sarkissian, opposition leaders and prominent public figures in calling for his resignation after Armenia's defeat in the autumn war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

In January, Pashinyan and his associates declined to attend a Christmas mass celebrated by the catholics in the country's largest cathedral.

And on April 24, the Armenian pontiff and other high-ranking clergymen were conspicuously absent from an official ceremony to mark the 106th anniversary of the Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey. For the first time in many years the annual ceremony attended by Pashinyan and Sarkissian did not feature a traditional prayer service.



INTERNATIONAL

Electoral Campaign in Yerevan as Seen in Billboards

YEREVAN – The sampling of images of billboards seen here, taken by photographer Hovanes Boyadjian, provide a glimpse into the pervasiveness of the current electoral campaign in Yerevan. It is not meant to be a complete catalogue of candidates but merely a visual excursion. The elections will take place on June 20.



INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Chancellor Merkel Visits
Berlin TUMO Center

BERLIN (Public Radio of Armenia) — On June 17, German Chancellor Angela Merkel was scheduled to pay a visit to the TUMO Education Center in Berlin as part of the Digital Education Initiative. The chancellor launched the “Digital Education Initiative” together with Federal Education Minister Karliczek in order to improve digital learning, teaching and training across the entire educational path.

Federal Minister of Education, Anja Karliczek and the CEO of the KfW Banking Group and Dr. Günther Bräunig, were also scheduled to attend the event.

TUMO Berlin opened its doors in Charlottenburg, right in the heart of the city, in fall 2020. On a visit to Armenia in 2018 German Chancellor Angela Merkel paid a visit to TUMO Yerevan. The stage was set for further cooperation.

Armenian Captive
Sentenced to 20 Years In
Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (PanArmenian.net) — In a ruling condemned by Armenia, a court in Azerbaijan sentenced a Lebanese-born Armenian national to 20 years in prison on June 14 seven months after he was detained by Azerbaijani forces in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The 41-year-old Viken Euljekian travelled to Karabakh with a Lebanese-Armenian friend, Maral Najarian, on November 10, hours after a Russian-brokered ceasefire stopped last year’s Armenian-Azerbaijani war. They were detained in the Karabakh town of Shushi (Shusha) and taken to Baku. Euljekian, who lived in Shushi and worked as a taxi driver before the war, was accused of being a terrorist and mercenary and illegally entering Azerbaijan. Najarian risked similar accusations before being released and repatriated in early March.

Euljekian, who has dual Armenian and Lebanese citizenships, was found guilty after a short trial condemned by Armenia’s government and human rights groups as a travesty of justice. Liparit Drmeyeran, an aide to Armenia’s representative to the European Court of Human Rights, said Euljekian did not have access to lawyers chosen by him and the Azerbaijani authorities failed to substantiate the charges leveled against him. Drmeyeran said the Armenian government will appeal against the verdict in the Strasbourg-based court. “We are convinced that Azerbaijan has violated Viken Euljekian’s rights,” he told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service.

Euljekian is one more than 100 Armenian soldiers and civilians believed to remain in Azerbaijani captivity. Yerevan regularly demands their immediate release, citing the terms of the truce agreement. Baku has branded the remaining Armenian detainees as “terrorists” not covered by the agreement.

At least 42 of them are facing what the Armenian Foreign Ministry condemned last week as “trumped-up criminal charges.”

Turkish President’s Visit to Shushi a New
Attempt to Display Force, Artsakh MPs Say

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL and PanArmenian.net) — The presidents of Azerbaijan and Turkey, Ilham Aliyev and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, signed on Tuesday, June 15 a declaration in Shushi on allied relations between the two states.

Aliyev described the document as “historic” and revealed that it concerns all areas of cooperation between the two countries, including in the field of defense.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s provocations are a challenge not only to Armenia and Artsakh, but also Russia and Iran, the factions represented in Artsakh’s National Assembly said in a statement on the occasion of Erdogan’s visit to Shushi on June 15.

“After the genocide of Western Armenians in 1915 and the occupation of the historical cradle of the Armenian people, Turkey has been trying to do the same to Eastern Armenians for the last hundred years,” the MPs said, adding that those plans have always failed due to the organized struggle of the Armenian people.

“Taking advantage of the favorable international and regional conditions, on September 27, 2020, Turkey and Azerbaijan, by treacherously attacking the Artsakh Republic with the involvement of international terrorist groups, again tried to subject Armenians to genocide,” the statement reads.

Thousands of people were deprived of their homeland, destroyed, and hundreds of national-Christian monuments were desecrated due to the forcible deportation of the Armenian population from its historical homeland.

“We view Erdogan’s uninvited visit to the occupied territories of Artsakh, particularly the once prosperous capital of Shushi, as a threat and a new attempt to display force. It is a continuation of the opening of the “trophy park” in Baku, which implies the adoption of new policy of psychological and moral pressures on the Armenian people in the post-war period,” the National Assembly said.

“Erdogan’s provocative action is an attempt to thwart Russia’s peacekeeping activities in the region, a devilish plan to shatter the fragile stability,” the MPs said, adding that “such a step by the President of Turkey is a new challenge not only to Armenia and Artsakh, but also to Russia and Iran.”

They appeal to international structures – the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, particularly the Russian Federation – to curb Turkey’s aggressive aspirations, which are fraught with new dangers.

They also call on all Armenians to unite to resist these new challenges in these difficult days.

Armenia similarly strongly condemned the joint visit of the Presidents of Turkey and Azerbaijan to Shushi as “an outright provocation against regional peace and security.”

The Foreign Ministry of Armenia noted that the trip was preceded by the destruction of the religious, historical and cultural heritage of the forcibly displaced indigenous Armenian population, including the desecration of the St. Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Cathedral targeted by the Turkish-Azerbaijani forces during and after the war against Artsakh, as well as the complete destruction of the memorial commemorating the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

“Such actions of the Turkish and Azerbaijani authorities, aimed at consolidating the consequences of the use of force against the people of Artsakh, significantly

undermine the international efforts to establish stability in the region and are utterly unacceptable. Restoration of the rights of the Armenians of Artsakh, which includes

statements coming from the official Ankara and Baku on their intentions to normalize the relations with Armenia and the Armenian people.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Shushi (AzerTac photo)

de-occupation of the territories of the Republic of Artsakh and safe return of the displaced population, is essential for overcoming the Turkish-Azerbaijani genocidal threat against the Armenian people,” the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

“These provocative actions clearly reveal the false and misleading nature of the

“We once again emphasize that the elimination of the consequences of the recent Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression against Artsakh should be undertaken within the comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship.”

Biden, Erdogan Upbeat about Ties
But Disclose no Breakthrough

BRUSSELS (Reuters) — US President Joe Biden and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan sounded upbeat after their first face-to-face talks on Monday, June 14, although they did not announce major breakthroughs in the relationship between the two allies, at odds over Russian weapons, Syria, Libya and other issues.

“We had a positive and productive meeting, much of it one-on-one,” Biden told a news conference after their meeting in Brussels.

“Our teams are going to continue our discussions and I’m confident we’ll make real progress with Turkey and the United States,” he added.

Erdogan characterized his talks with Biden on the sidelines of a NATO summit as “productive and sincere.”

“We think that there are no issues between US and Turkey relationship that are unsolvable and that areas of cooperation for us are richer and larger than problems,” he said.

Despite their publicly optimistic tone, neither provided any details on how exactly they would mend the relationship or lay out steps that would help ease tensions between the NATO allies.

Turkey, with NATO’s second-largest military, has angered its allies in the Western military alliance by buying Russian surface-to-air missiles and intervening in wars in Syria and Libya. It is also in a standoff with Greece and Cyprus over territory in the Eastern Mediterranean.

As president, Biden has adopted a cooler

tone than predecessor Donald Trump towards Erdogan. Biden quickly recognized the 1915 massacre of Armenians as genocide - a position that angers Turkey - and stepped up criticism of Turkey’s human rights record.

Washington has already removed Ankara from the F-35 fighter jet program and imposed sanctions over Turkey’s purchase of the Russian S-400 surface-to-air missiles.

One area where Erdogan hoped to showcase a central Turkish role in NATO is Afghanistan, where Ankara has offered to guard and operate Kabul airport after US and NATO forces withdraw in coming weeks. NATO head Jens Stoltenberg said Turkey would play a key role but that no decision was made at the Monday summit.

At the start of the main leaders’ session at NATO, Biden spoke to Erdogan at length in a small group before they took their seats.

Later in the day, the two leaders and their top aides sat mostly silently on opposite sides of a conference table, ignoring questions shouted to them by journalists briefly invited into the room.

Erdogan also met French President Emmanuel Macron. Ankara and Paris have been at odds over Syria, Libya and Turkish criticism of the fight against what Macron calls Islamist separatism, among other issues.

“President Erdogan confirmed during our meeting his wish that the foreign mercenaries, the foreign militias, operating on Libyan soil leave as soon as possible,” Macron told a news conference afterwards.

Community News

Armenian Assembly Outlines Priorities Before House Appropriations Committee

WASHINGTON — On June 11, the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) outlined key priorities before the House Appropriations Committee in testimony by Congressional Relations Director, Mariam Khaloyan.

The Assembly reinforced the bipartisan call for \$100 million in aid to Armenia, as well as robust assistance to Artsakh. “The Assembly strongly supports the bipartisan letter by 66 of your House colleagues” and urges “\$100 million in Fiscal Year 2022 for Armenia’s development and recovery after Azerbaijan’s ruthless war, which continues today with ongoing border incursions in violation of Armenia’s sovereignty,” stated Khaloyan, emphasizing the brutality of the 44-day war against the Armenian people launched by Azerbaijan in the midst of a pandemic, with the full and open support of Turkey and Turkish-recruited mercenaries, on September 27, 2020.

Regarding aid to Artsakh, the Assembly specifically requested \$50 million and commended the work of the Armenian community and international organizations in helping the Armenian people. The Assembly also expressed its appreciation to journalists, who traveled to Artsakh in the middle of the pandemic to cover the war.

The testimony also highlighted the importance of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act and, given the war, the use of jihadist mercenaries by Azerbaijan, the destruction of vital infrastructure including hospitals and schools, and the deliberate erasure of Armenian cultural and religious heritage sites, the Assembly stressed that providing US assistance to Azerbaijan sends exactly the wrong message.

“The America that we know and cherish would not support the recruitment and deployment of jihadist mercenaries, condone ISIS-style beheadings and bodily mutilations, stand for the targeting of cultural and religious sites, or think that the opening of a ‘Military Trophy Park’ in Azerbaijan’s capital, Baku, replete with Armenian mannequins featured in a dehumanizing manner and an entrance made with helmets of killed and captured Armenian soldiers, is acceptable. It is not,” stated Khaloyan.

“We urge you not to allow US taxpayer dollars to be used to support Azerbaijan and that starts with upholding the letter and spirit of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act [and] further recommend that Congress ensure that no military assistance be provided to Azerbaijan,” Khaloyan added.

The Assembly also indicated its strong support for H.Res. 240 calling for the immediate release of all prisoners of war (POWs) and civilian captives being unlawfully held by Azerbaijan.

As to the peace process, the Assembly was clear: “The United States see APPROPRIATIONS, page 8



Tatul Hakobyan presenting his book

Tatul Hakobyan Presents His Book on Artsakh War at Tekeyan Cultural Assoc. California Event

By Ani Duzdabanyan-Manoukian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

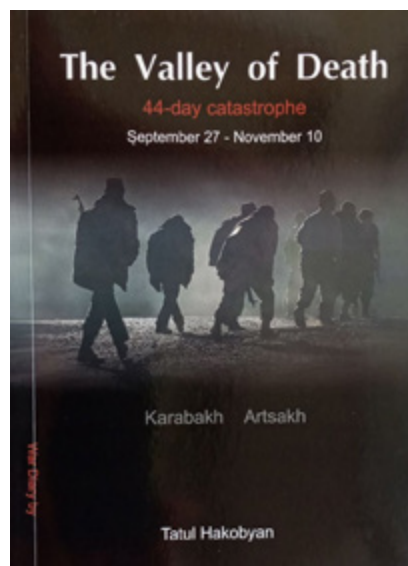
ALTADENA, Calif. — “I am going to talk about views that are not very popular and many of you may not agree with me, but I am very much convinced in my views. Also, considering historical facts, I must repeat my views,” announced Tatul Hakobyan. A journalist, writer and the coordinator at the Ani Armenian Research Center, he spoke on June 11 at a presentation of the English translation of his new book *The Valley of Death, 44-Day Catastrophe*. The event was organized by the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA), with the participation of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, Armenian Rights Council of America, Armenian Society of Los Angeles, Iraqi Armenian Family Association of Los Angeles, and the Organization of Istanbul Armenians, at the TCA Beshgeturian Center in Altadena.

Hakobyan presented his views to the gathered diaspora members regarding the terrible defeat of the 44 days of Artsakh war, exclaiming: “I can give you 100 reasons. But there is one main reason why we lost the second time in our history.” He gave a prior historical example first before stating his views, asserting, “The first time was in 1920 when our American friends, one of the main allies at that time, were telling us to find a common ground with our neighbors and not to rely on them [the allied powers]... Instead, we were determined that the future of Armenia will be decided in Sèvres or other places, and not in Armenia with its neighbors. We went to war and were terribly defeated, losing 30 square kilometers — the city of Ani, the entire Kars province and the biggest city of Armenia at that time, Alexandrapol.”

He then went on to declare: “I think that the main reason for the recent defeat is that we didn’t estimate our strengths correctly. As a political principle, we chose not realism, but the dream of having a big, bigger and biggest Armenia. We didn’t listen to friendly countries who were telling us to speak with Azerbaijan and to accept painful but dignified compromises.” Hakobyan expressed hopes that after this defeat Armenians won’t have another one in one hundred years and won’t rely on “wishful thinking” as a political principal in the future.

Hakobyan talked about the current situation in Artsakh, Armenia, and specifically in Syunik province, intentionally presenting them separately because of the unique situations for each, stating: “For the first time since 1991 we delegated the security of Artsakh to Russia. Will the Russian peacekeepers leave in five years, in ten years or will they stay? Or can our ally Russia one day make an agreement with Turkey and again sacrifice that Armenian territory? These are questions that we need to think about incessantly.”

Hakobyan emphasized the urgency of time, since no one knows what the political see PRESENTATION, page 8



Attorney and Assembly Intern Alumna Lauren Garry-Boggio Highlights Career Path as Part of Summer Speaker Series

WASHINGTON — Attorney and Assembly Intern alumna Lauren Garry-Boggio was the second featured speaker of the Armenian Assembly of America Internship Program’s Summer Speaker Series on Thursday, June 10.

Assembly Programs Director Joseph Piatt served as moderator and introduced Garry-Boggio, who is the current attorney-advisor in the Wireline Competition Bureau at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Garry-Boggio, who was a participant in the Terjenian-Thomas Assembly Internship Program in 2002, thanked the Assembly for the “wonderful experience” she had among fellow Armenian American students.

“The Assembly is a huge reason why I came to Washington, D.C., permanently in 2004,” she said. “I urge all college students to participate in the program so you can meet Armenian Americans and experience D.C. professionally and personally, especially since you are instantly part of a community and have a built-in network.”

Garry-Boggio, who was a law clerk to the Honorable William S. Colwell in the Office of Administrative Law Judges at the Department of Labor and also worked for Comcast Corporation and in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives, highlighted her professional path, which began with an internship for former Representative Patrick J. Kennedy (D-RI) on Capitol Hill, a place she described as a “great place to begin a career in D.C.,” where she was exposed to a variety of issues, from telecom to women’s rights to education.

After realizing she wanted to focus on policy, Garry-Boggio worked as a legislative correspondent for Senator Olympia J. Snowe (R-ME) and as a legislative assistant for the House Natural Resources Committee, shortly after receiving her B.A. degree from Bowdoin College. She switched to the private sector three years later to work for Comcast Corporation, while pursuing her MBA and then J.D. from American University in the evening. Garry-Boggio then worked for a law firm and the Department of Labor as a law clerk, followed by the FCC’s Attorney Honors Program, where she gained “excellent professional development.”

The guidance she provided for college students revolved around the themes of networking, working hard, being persistent and finding a mentor.

“Go after what you want and don’t listen to outside noise because people will always have opinions,” said Garry-Boggio, who reiterated the importance of building a strong network.

“It’s so important to meet with as many different people as you can and learn about their careers and how you can grow professionally,” said Garry-Boggio. “You should push yourself and gravitate toward issues that interest you.”

see SPEAKER, page 8

COMMUNITY NEWS

Tatul Hakobyan Presents His Book on Artsakh War at TCA Event

PRESENTATION, from page 7
situation will look like in the world in four-and-one-half years. He was certain that

Armenia needs to fix its armed forces and its economy and be ready even for painful developments. "We are our only ally with our realism," he noted, and continued: "Right now, the status of the Republic of Artsakh has no significance for me. There are two important measures for Artsakh right now: security and the number of the Armenian population there."

Speaking about Syunik province, Hakobyan related that on the road built during the 2000s from Goris to Kapan and to Meghri, about 70 km. now passes through the territory of Azerbaijan. In order to drive south, one is forced to see Azerbaijani flags, road signs and soldiers. "This indicates that the Armenian-Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republican borders were restored," said Hakobyan.

The rest of the Republic of Armenia is in the throes of election preparations. In his opinion, these are intellectually the lowest level of political races and debates in Armenian history. He said: "There are three main political parties that are participating in these elections and all of them are constantly using street language. But the most dangerous part will be possible civil resistance or civil war. At the minimum, two participants are ready to destroy one another. We don't know how this all will end."

Nevertheless, Hakobyan hopes to wake up in a peaceful Armenia on June 21, after the elections.

After the last war in Artsakh, many things changed in the diaspora as well, which had participated in many ways during the war and in its aftermath. During his book tour in March and April in the US, Tatul Hakobyan met with Armenian community members. He thinks that now the diaspora is in a confused state while facing a reality different from what was presented to it during the last two decades. He said, "We need to make new talking points with the diaspora. We need to stay away from the 'toasts and wishful thinking' and try to ensure the presence of the diaspora in the political life of Armenia."

Hakobyan said that the diversity of the diaspora needs to be used properly so that the diaspora can have a serious stake in the future of Armenia. To achieve significant results, collaboration needs more often to be between various organizations and even individuals. He said: "It must be mutually beneficial. The diaspora Armenian has to be sure that investing in homeland is not only an act of patriotism but also doing a business in a normal business environment. I don't want to hear stories in every corner about how much someone lost in Armenia. We don't need huge conferences with long speeches and applause. We need specific steps that needs to be taken by the consul-

ates, ambassadors and community organizations."

The Valley of Death, 44-Day Catastrophe is a collection of various articles and publications, and a factual and often emotional diary, that Hakobyan kept during the war in Artsakh, when he witnessed the horrors and struggle of his compatriots. The book includes the list of cities and villages that were lost during the war.

Armen Baibourtian, Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles, highly recommended the book at the presentation stating that other books that will be published about the 44 days of war will definitely refer to this work. "Until now many questions [about the war in Artsakh] are not clear to me, as to many other people. We all need to understand the reasons and, I think it's important to note that it is crucial to learn our lessons from history. We all as a nation need to find the right solutions to overcome the crisis and to pave our way to the future that we want to have. We must do it with specific steps and everyday work. We must learn from today's event as well," said Baibourtian.

Along with *The Valley of Death* other books on the first Artsakh war and Armenian-Turkish relationships written by Ha-



Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles Armen Baibourtian speaking at the Tatul Hakobyan book presentation, with Tomik Alexanian of the Armenian Society of Los Angeles in the background

kobyan were presented at the Tekeyan Cultural Association.

Mayda Kuredjian, TCA West Coast executive secretary, opened the event with words of welcome, while Tomik Alexanian of the Armenian Society of Los Angeles introduced Armen Baibourtian and Tatul Hakobyan. Mihran Toumajan, member of the TCA Metro LA Chapter executive, conducted the question-and-answer session with Hakobyan at the end of the event.

Armenian Assembly Outlines Priorities Before House Appropriations Committee

APPROPRIATIONS, from page 7
should not allow the corrupt and authoritarian regimes of Azerbaijan, Russia, and Turkey to sideline US leadership and leave the world's first Christian nation and fledgling democracy in peril," said Khaloyan.

Noting the decades-long blockade of Armenia by Turkey and Azerbaijan, the Assembly urged "report language requiring a full accounting of the steps that the Administration is taking and will take to end the only blockade in the world of a democratic country."

The Assembly also urged Congress to address the significant imbalance in US security assistance provided to Azerbaijan (over \$100 million in security assistance was provided to Azerbaijan in fiscal years 2018 and 2019) compared to Armenia, and

prevent any further misuse of US funds.

Khaloyan concluded by expressing her sincere gratitude to Congress for its assistance to Armenia and Artsakh throughout the decades, namely the support that the US provided after the 1988 earthquake in Armenia, as Armenia moved towards independence in 1991, during Artsakh's struggle for freedom and democracy, and through "America's proud record of humanitarian intervention during the 1915 Armenian Genocide."

"Affirmation of the Armenian Genocide enhances America's credibility and re-commits the United States to the worldwide cause of genocide prevention," Khaloyan stated and urged "Congress to ensure that no US funds will be used to deny the Armenian Genocide."

Attorney and Assembly Intern Alumna Lauren Garry-Boggio Highlights Career Path as Part of Summer Speaker Series

SPEAKER, from page 7
She recommended working after college to obtain hands-on professional experience, which can only enhance the knowledge learned in graduate school.

"I appreciated law school and what I was learning there because I knew how it would help me going forward," said Garry-Boggio, who also recommended students work in different fields to see where their interests lie.

"Lauren Garry-Boggio spoke in-depth about her career from her internship days to the present time, both in the private and public sectors, which I found immensely helpful," said Emily Hale, who is studying political science and public relations at the University of Miami. "I appreciated her enthusiasm and her honesty in sharing the successes and challenges of her career."

Register to attend next week's speaker series on June 17, at 6:30 p.m. Eastern Time, where Dr. Rouben Adalian, Director of the Armenian National Institute, will speak about the significance of President Biden's affirmation of the Armenian Genocide.

The Terjenian-Thomas Assembly Internship Program, which will take place virtually this summer, provides college students of Armenian descent an opportunity to gain exposure to the policy-making process in our nation's capital for eight weeks each summer.

Since 1977, the Armenian Assembly of America has assisted over 1,200 participants in securing placements in prominent congressional offices, government agencies, media outlets, think tanks, and non-governmental organizations in Washington, D.C.



The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada would like to thank D. Robin Newman and Eugene C. Newman of West Bloomfield, MI, for their donation of \$25 to its Sponsor a Teacher Program in memory of Nora Azadian, along with the individuals mentioned in the prior four weeks' issues of the Mirror-Spectator.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

How Krisp Is Creating the Right Environment for Remote Meetings



The Krisp team in Armenia

KRISP, from page 1

Krisp is a simple application that can work on any device, giving the communicators privacy. But there is much innovation and complex technology behind it. As Davit says: “Everything is based on machine learning or, as people like to call it, artificial intelligence. With this we pioneered the use of machine learning to recognize human voice and remove other noises in real time.” Serving over 1500 enterprise customers inside and outside the US, Krisp was honored with five prestigious awards from *Forbes* and *Times*. Its most recent recognition is the Webby Award, for excellence on the Internet, presented annually by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences.

Krisp had come just in time when the pandemic hit the business world in 2020, forcing everyone to find new working strategies while being in lockdown. Davit says that company’s revenues grew 13 times and the customer base around 10 times during the pandemic. The affordable price allowed companies and even individuals to use it widely (the minimum monthly plan costs only \$5).

More than one year after the Covid-19 pandemic the world is adapting new working models: some companies are creating hybrid offices, where the employees can choose to work from home or in the offices. Others are creating open-office concepts where a noise-free environment is simply vital. Davit sees lots of opportunities for Krisp in all these models, especially when the company is working on new “very cool features” like sentiment analysis. This feature will allow to distinguish the exact emotions of the participants during the conversation. The feature is intended for various business environments that are dealing with customer service as call centers.

With \$18 million in investments, Krisp is primarily focused on the US market. However, the company has a huge significance for Armenia. Davit is convinced that through a world-renowned company, Armenians can prove to themselves and to everyone else that they are a nation with developed scientists in technologies, mathematics and physics. “Krisp is not the only one, but definitely an example of talent that exists in Armenia,” Davit adds proudly.

For years Armenia served as an outsourcing country for major high tech companies, which established branches there and used the working potential of young minds for their own success. Now thanks to startups like Krisp Armenia is becoming a product creator gaining the most competitive places in the world market. “Outsourcing is diminishing and products are on a rise, which is great! The amount of impact that product companies can bring with the investments, is way bigger than outsourcing,” says Davit.

He remarked that investors in US feel more confident in funding companies they already know about. Also, the role of the diaspora is very noticeable: the prominent example is TUMO Center for Creative Technologies, which has been created and funded by diaspora Armenians. Another important aspect is that the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises (UATE) with its mastermind Karen Vardanyan undertook the process of integrating informational technologies in the curriculum of the educational system by creating and operating 575 Artmath Engineering Laboratories in schools of Armenia, Artsakh and Georgia.

All these developments are contributing to promote the next generation to become a “technology nation,” as Davit Bagdhasaryan calls it optimistically. That’s exactly the reason that he moved back to the homeland four years ago, he says, “seeing a great opportunity, both emotionally fulfilling and also the prospect of creating and having an impact.”

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Just Beneath The Dirt: Where the Racism of Fresno Began

By Mark Arax and Aris Janigian

FRESNO (*Fresno Bee*) — We stood before the school board last week thinking it might be a good time to start a conversation about how Fresno became one of the most racially partitioned cities in the nation and how, as an outcropping of that history, there was an elementary school in the northwest part of town still named after a powerful white supremacist.

As authors whose books have uncovered the past, we knew the emotionally charged ground we were about to turn over. This was a dirt that grew everything. Burdened though our history was, we thought where better to begin a community's education, if not its reckoning, than at the school board itself?

In the days before the meeting, we went to the county assessor's office and found examples of the exclusionary real estate codes that for a half century had kept people of color from living beyond the ghetto.

Oddly, it had been no different for our tribe, the Armenians. Survivors of the 20th century's first genocide, we had come to this Valley to start over, only to be forbidden to live freely by these same "Caucasian-only" codes. It did not matter that we were a people of the Caucasus, the original "white man," you might say. In the estimation of official Fresno, which pulled every trick to keep us confined, first to the rural farm and then to the south side of town, we were "black Turks."

As the two of us, shirttail cousins, rose up separately to address the school board and Superintendent Bob Nelson, we recited an especially vile paragraph from a real estate document dated July 20, 1939. On that day, a husband and wife finalized their purchase of a lot near First and Normal avenues. Among the restrictions they were forced to sign was this one:

"Neither the said premises nor any building thereon shall in any manner be used or occupied by Asiatics, Mongolians, Hindus, Negroes, Armenians or any natives or descendants of the Turkish Empire, and said grantee agrees not to sell or lease said property, nor to convey by deed, any portion of said property except to persons belonging to the Caucasian race, and agrees not to lease, sell or convey... the whole or any portion of said property to any Armenian or to any descendant of an Armenian or to any lineal descendant of an Armenian, save and except [those] employed as servants by the residents."

The very next sentence read: "No poultry or livestock of any kind shall be kept on said premises." And that's where we Armenians belonged in the eyes of Fresno's civic leaders 60 years after the first Armenian had arrived here in 1881 — in the filth, with the barnyard animals.

This restriction, which stayed in effect until the early 1960s, was everyday business for the developer, a man who platted his tracts across Fresno. He was the same boomer who in the middle 1910s began carving out the 12,000 acres of Fig Garden. His full-page ads boasted: "Fresno's choicest suburban property will be sold under rigid restrictions — this is a point we cannot emphasize too strongly. Those who buy [here] will be fully protected from resale of property to undesirables."

The developer was Jessie Clayton (J.C.) Forkner. The city had an elementary school on Valentine Avenue named after him. How was it that Fresno Unified, without the least bit of vetting, had chosen to honor a brazen white racist by putting his name on the district's newest school in 1980? How could his name still be standing in the year 2021?

The board members and Nelson did not answer us. In fact, none of them said a word. Trustee Terry Slatik applauded our call to "wipe the stain of Forkner off the



Armenian grape pickers in the early 1900s (photo: *Fresno Bee* file)

paper and stucco of Fresno Unified." Trustee Veva Islas nodded. The rest took pains to show little or no interest or displayed outright contempt.

Even if our revelation had caught them by surprise, they might have acknowledged the gravity of the history we had brought before them. They might have pledged to address the injustice in the near future. After all, this was a school board that had embraced the causes of inclusion, equity and racial and social justice as a moral charge.

Had they taken their roles seriously, they might have asked us that night, or in the week since, why such a particular animus had been directed at the Armenians? Why



Fresno developer J. C. Forkner (photo: *Fresno Bee* file)

had Forkner, in his list of excluded groups, repeated again and again the Armenians? What offense had they committed to earn such revulsion? The answer, we would have told them, was hidden just beneath the dirt. "People are trapped in history," James Baldwin wrote, "and history is trapped in them."

Armenians to Fresno

Who were these Armenians who began to trickle into Fresno in the early 1880s? Chester Rowell, the great

Progressive editor of the *Fresno Morning Republican*, a champion of the newcomers, set about to educate his readers. They were an ancient people, the first nation to accept Christianity in 301 A.D., the first grape culture, one that had its own distinct branch on the tree of languages and alphabets.

They had fled persecution and massacres in their homeland in Turkey, and many of the first wave of exiles had come to the San Joaquin Valley with educational degrees and money, enough dough to buy 25,000 acres of farmland by 1910. Those who arrived penniless went to work in the fields and fruit packing houses alongside the railroad tracks downtown, where they built their red-brick church and raised their families. Chinatown, the city's first confined enclave for "undesirables," sat west of the tracks. Next door was Volga German town inhabited by a tough breed of Germans who had fled persecution in Russia and despised the Armenians.

This was a time when great white patricians, men such as Theo Kearney and Wylie Giffen, were attempting to organize growers of raisins — the Valley's biggest industry — into a cooperative. Some semblance of sanity needed to be applied to the math of the raisin, they reasoned. The world had a stomach for only so many tons of the sun-baked grape, a fact that many growers, operating as individuals, seemed not to appreciate as they kept on planting their vines from one county line to the other.

If the Japanese grower was stubbornly independent, the Armenian grower could be downright difficult. Yes, the idea of a co-op made perfect sense, farmer joining hand with farmer to share the costs of packing, marketing and ways to deal with the surplus crop. But what also made perfect sense was selling your raisins to an Armenian packer you knew from the old country, a tribesman who'd pay you 3 cents more per pound.

The recalcitrant Armenians angered the high-minded Kearney, a shrewd Irishman from the society parlors of San Francisco who dreamed of establishing a Jeffersonian model of yeoman farming on the hot plains of Fresno. The cooperative he envisioned — a benevolent monopoly — was a new flourish to this dream. The Armenians, 6 percent of the population producing 15 percent of the raisins, stood in his way.

Kearney went after them, their loyalty to their fellow Armenians, their determination to regulate their own affairs. In Rowell's newspaper, he wrote: "The danger that threatens us comes from another quarter. I refer to the Armenians. These people have come from a land of oppression to a land of liberty... [and they've] set themselves up against the fundamental principles of our people. If they are so stupid as not to see the danger, shall we make no effort to avert that danger?"

Kearney would end up dying a lonely man at sea before he could bring his dream to completion. He had succeeded, though, in planting the seeds of hate toward Armenians. Those seeds would sprout in 1912 with the formation of the Sun-Maid raisin cooperative under the leadership of Wylie Giffen, a giant grower and banker who regarded himself as the bighearted overseer of Fresno. When it came to the Armenians, he brooked no dissent.



COMMUNITY NEWS



Martin Theo Kearney (photo: Fresno Bee file)

To be a successful cooperative — indeed, an agricultural monopoly that enjoyed full government exemption from anti-trust laws — Giffen believed that Sun-Maid needed to enlist not just a majority of growers but close to every single one of them. To get farmers to sign on the dotted line, he did not hesitate to preside over a campaign of terror, employing tactics eerily borrowed from the Ku Klux Klan.

Under the cover of darkness, Sun-Maid's "Night Riders," bearing torches and weapons, visited growers who were refusing to join. Some of the farmers were white, some were Japanese, but most were Armenians whose obstinance had long gotten under the skin of the bankers, lawyers, civic leaders, evangelical preachers and businessmen devoted to Sun-Maid. The loyalists even included some Armenians, who were pressured time and again to bring their reluctant kinsmen into the fold.

In this way, Armenian was set against Armenian — at the very time of the Armenian Genocide.

During the co-op's membership drive, Fresno held its breath. There was a parade on behalf of the raisin, and workers were given days off to rally support. Preachers asked their flocks, "What would Jesus do?" The answer resounded: "Jesus would sign up with Sun-Maid, too." Schoolchildren whose parents were Sun-Maid true attacked Armenian classmates whose parents were not. Teachers did nothing to stop the beatings. Armenian holdouts, cursed as "Black Turks," were cornered on their ranches, lassoed with rope and dragged through the vineyards by horseback.

Some Armenian raisin families relented and signed; others refused. So vital was the campaign's success to the well-being of the county that each day's tally of how many growers had signed became front-page headlines: "Seventy-percent." "Eighty-percent." "Ninety-percent."

On the night of April 27, 1923, a mob numbering 100 men showed up at the Apkarian farm, carrying torch lights and shouting threats to burn the place down. "Sign. Sign," they chanted. Inside the farmhouse were Nazaret Der Torosian, his pregnant wife and their 2-year-old son. He was there to protect Apkarian, his neighbor, who was so terrified of the Night Riders that he had fled town, leaving Nazaret alone to stand watch.

Torosian was just such a man: a farmer and wrestler made of iron whose feats of strength and nimbleness were

so uncanny that he was later immortalized in a William Saroyan short story. Fearless, bent into a window, he held a 30-40 military rifle and shouted back: "You have come far enough! One more step and I will fire."

Saroyan's uncle Aram, who would later defend Torosian in court, described what happened next: "In a body, the mob kept moving toward the house paying no heed to the desperate voices inside."

Torosian shot into the pack and the pack dispersed. One Night Rider took a bullet in the knee and lost his leg. The sheriff and district attorney, who might as well have been on the payroll of Sun-Maid for the reflexive way they protected the co-op, arrested and charged Torosian. At trial, attorney Saroyan, dressed head to toe in white, implored the jury. "If you convict this man, you will be inviting anarchy and mob rule." Torosian was freed.

The Sun-Maid drive of 1923 was a rousing success. The wealthiest of the Armenian growers — the Melon King, Grape King, Cucumber King — broke bread with Giffen and Sun-Maid and congratulated themselves for bringing hundreds of Armenians into the co-op's fold at the last minute.

The hate would find a new form. On 80 Calaveras Avenue, just off Blackstone, an Armenian widower had bought a house using the name of a non-Armenian. He thought his secret was secure until one night in the 1920s members of the KKK came calling. They burned a cross on his front lawn.

Racist Treatment

We strolled into the county Hall of Records the other day and asked for Paul Dictos, the assessor-recorder. He greeted us with a recipe for Greek yogurt and a long list of racist real estate deeds he'd been compiling. The earliest restriction was dated Oct. 15, 1914; the most recent was dated May 20, 1952.

From one to the other, we could see how the brushstrokes of hate were applied. The first exclusions targeted "Asiatics" and "Subjects of the Turkish Empire" and "Negroes," even though only a few hundred blacks resided in the county at the time. Their exclusion, of course, was a vestige of the Old South, the racist residue of confederates drawn to the Valley by the dream of small agricul-

This is how the racist campaigns of Sun-Maid became codified in the buying and selling of real estate throughout Fresno County. This is how the exclusions stamped and sealed by the county recorder bled into our governmental and social institutions. This is how the overt racism of the deeds became the covert racism of redlining. The exclusion of Armenians was, in fact, a model.

Up until the late 1950s, our people were told not to apply for jobs at Fresno State, The Fresno Bee, Fresno Unified, the police department and sheriff's office. Because Volga Germans controlled patronage at City Hall, much of the bureaucracy was closed off to Armenians, too. We were blackballed from the Shriners, Masons, Elks Club, the LARCS Club and Sunnyside Country Club.

When our two fathers, Ara and Andy, moved our families to new Fig Garden in the 1960s and '70s, we knew we had finally arrived somewhere, but where? On this same ground, we saw a street and a school named after J.C. Forkner. So buried was this history we didn't think a thing of it.

Rename Forkner School

The pain our forebears passed on was immense, yes, but immense was also their shame. You see, if your people are wiped out, it's a humiliation — on a vast scale. A humiliation so hideous and irreversible that, in a way, you want to keep it hidden, even to yourselves. This feeling was passed on to the children of the survivors, our parents, and this is why this history has never before been told, though it is surely and widely known.

We are not bitter toward Fresno, much less America; indeed, we worked hard to show our gratitude. There were ugly people and policies out there, yes. In Fresno, there still are people who hate Armenians, or maybe, at this point, a better word is "resent" us for our success. But ultimately America was bigger than housing tract covenants or racist business people, or even current school board members. We believed in America, and when it was all said and done, America believed in us.

Most Armenians don't seek an apology from Fresno, though we deserve one. We don't come as damaged souls looking for sympathy. We simply ask this city to acknowledge our history, the struggles we endured, to honor us



Members of the Arakelian family harvest melons in the early 1900s (photo: Friends of the Fresno Fair-Armenian Exhibit)

tural colonies. "Asiatic," on the other hand, was a term of racist developers, real estate agents, bankers and home buyers who desired a definition so expansive it could exclude Chinese, Japanese, Hindu and Armenian. In a document dated Dec. 23, 1919, we came across the exclusion of "Mexicans."

No restrictions were more obsessed with the Armenians than those of Forkner. If we wondered why, the answer was right there in the records. In 1922, Forkner's partner in the development of Fig Garden — the grandest planting of mansions and figs in history — was Sun Maid's Wylie Giffen himself. The two men had melded their money and minds.

When it came time to procure their 600,000 fig trees, they had nowhere to go but to the Fig King, Henry Markarian, an Armenian. In other words, our fig trees were allowed into Fig Garden but our flesh and blood was not.

for what we've done, and for how far we've come. The immense contributions we've made, the marks of invention, professionalism and artistry we've left and continue to leave on this city, are undeniable.

This is why we ask that a school in Fresno finally be named after an Armenian. This is why we ask that J.C. Forkner Elementary be renamed in honor of H. Roger Tatarian, the legendary journalist and teacher and one of our finest native sons.

If Fresno fails this moment, if it again turns its back on the Armenians, it will be turning its back on itself.

(Reprinted with permission from the authors. Mark Arax's latest book, *The Dreamt Land: Chasing Water and Dust Across California*, is a national bestseller. Aris Janjigian's latest novel is *Waiting for Sophia at Shutters on the Beach*.)

Arts & Culture

15 Incredible Places to Visit in Armenia Plus, Stay, Eat, Play

By **Vic Gerami**

YEREVAN – Armenia is one of the fascinating places in the world. An underrated nation for decades, until recently when European tourists found out about its rich millennia-old history, ancient monuments, majestic countryside, the lush highlands, and much more. I just came back from Armenia. It was my third time there and the most memorable.

One of the oldest nations in the world, Armenia is a destination for all kinds of travelers. The small country in the farthest part of eastern Europe has incredible natural beauty, cultural wealth, and artistic tradition.

Armenia is home to the oldest churches, cathedrals, and monasteries in the world. Most are UNESCO World Heritage sites. Mount Ararat and Ararat Valley, where Noah's Ark landed, are there; pagan temples such as Garni, first century; the world's



The author in Armenia

oldest winery, 6,100 years old. Yerevan is 2,802 years old: the capital of Armenia, it is vibrant and full of life. Jermuk: World-renowned natural hot springs. Music: Armenia has a rich music tradition, from symphonies to opera, jazz, to hip hop. Tavush: World's longest zipline, 2,680 meters. World-class casinos, and ski resorts, wine and cognac: Armenia is known for its wine and cognac on the world stage, ancient astronomical sites, petroglyphs, hiking, caving, paragliding, rock climbing, hot air ballooning, canyoning, rafting. Lake Sevan: High altitude lake and a resort town with beautiful monasteries and nightlife. Annual festivals, museums, galleries, and of course incredible food for foodies with discriminating taste.

The best news? Armenia is very inexpensive for North American and European travelers. I highly recommend staying at the heart of Yerevan near Republic Square, the shopping district, the best restaurants, and nightlife. Armenians are very friendly, hospitable, and love visitors.

Most people in Armenia speak English to various degrees. A lot of expats from the US live there, so language is not an issue. Below are my 15 favorite places to visit in Armenia and hotel recommendation, restaurants, and nightlife.

see TRAVEL, page 14



Conductor Maik Gruchenberg (Ars Musica photo)

Ars Musica to Perform in Armenia

By **Muriel Mirak-Weissbach**
Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

BERLIN — In 1988, after massive earthquakes struck Armenia, leaving behind a trail of death, injuries, crumbled buildings and shattered lives. “That December,” Ambassador Ashot Smbatyan would later recall, “many came to our aid, from all over the world. But the help that came from the Suhl concert moved me in a special way.”

The Armenian diplomat in Berlin was referring, 30 years later, to a concert of the Boys Choir from the Thuringian city of Suhl. German television had broadcast the news of the horrendous earthquake, with dramatic footage of the devastation it had caused. Then-choir director Hubert Voigt, on learning of the natural catastrophe, had gone to Pastor Hans Michael and asked if he could organize a benefit concert on short notice. At the time, in East Germany before reunification, it was forbidden to hold concerts in the Hauptkirche St. Marien, the main church in the city. Nonetheless, the pastor spoke to Bishop Christoph Demke in Magdeburg, who relayed the request to the State Secretary for Church Affairs in Berlin, and eventually permission was granted. Invitations went out, posters (made by the pastor and his wife) appeared in the city, and the event took place just ten days after the earthquake. On December 17, 1988 a thousand people (more than the pews could accommodate) gathered for a concert where the Suhl Boys' Choir,



The Ars Musica Choir (Ars Musica photo)

as well as the Suhl Horn Quartet, presented a program of Christmas music. Between tickets and donations, the concert raised the remarkable sum of twelve thousand marks. The funds were immediately transferred the following Monday to a solidarity committee bank account, earmarked “Caucasus” for immediate relief. Voigt did not emerge from the initiative unscathed; he faced disciplinary measures, and no further concerts were allowed. It was only after the fall of the Berlin Wall, just one year later, that the churches opened up officially for music, and the boys' choir could sing freely, there and elsewhere.

Three decades later in 2018, the Ars Musica choir performed an Advent concert in the Suhl Kreuzkirche under the direction of Maik Gruchenberg. Ars Musica was officially founded in 1994, its original members were men who grew up in the Suhl boys' choir, and it expanded to 60 singers, all with musical experience as youngsters. It was on this occasion on December 23, 2018 that Ambassador Smbatyan, one among 1000 guests, made his remarks. He expressed his special appreciation of the Armenian pieces that the choir included in its program. “In my entire diplomatic career, I have never experienced a choir singing Christmas music from my homeland,” he said, adding praise for the singers' excellent Armenian pronunciation. The 4800 Euro raised at this concert, enhanced by the choir members to 5300 Euro, arrived soon thereafter in Litsck, where

see ARS MUSICA, page 13

INTERVIEW

Tomáš Palonder

‘My Armenian Legacy Is Deeply Rooted in My Soul’

By **Artsvi Bakhchinyan**

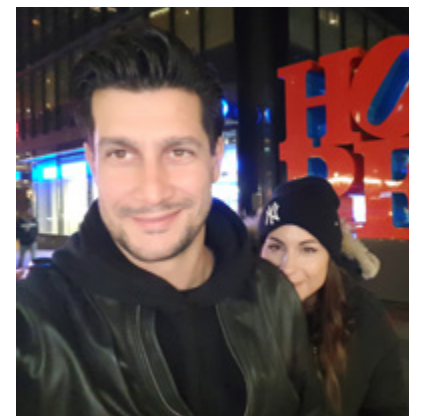
Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN/BRATISLAVA — Tomáš Palonder, is a 40-years-old Slovak actor, singer and moderator. He was born in Moscow to a Slovak father and an Armenian mother. He graduated from the Department of Music and Drama at the Bratislava State Conservatory and later studied acting at the Academy of Performing Arts.

Since 2000, he has acted in a number of television series, commercials and was the moderator of the television show “Deka,” and later also of the live show “Dekabox.”

Today, he is best known for performing at the La Komika Theater, Theatre agency Mystik, GUnaGU Theater, the Aréna Theater and Teatro Wüstenrot, and as a former singer for two Bratislavan bands, Bruno Benetton and Love 4 Money.

He regularly lends his voice to characters in television and radio commercials for dubbing. He comments on documentaries in Slovak, English and Russian versions and occasionally moderates various cultural and social events. In 2010, together with Marcel Palonder, accompanied by Street Dance Academy, they performed as Palonders at the Eurovision Song Contest in Slovakia with the song *Slová slov*. Since 2019, he has been the voice of Radio Slovakia.



Dear Tomáš, I admire people with “art in their blood.” Your father František Palonder is a director, screenwriter and playwright, your uncle Marcel Palonder is a singer, musician and music teacher. Your becoming actor and singer was destined or in the beginning you wanted to choose another profession?

I naturally gained interest in the field of art thank to my family, always wanted to act in the theatre and make some music. It's my life. I'm forever thankful to God, that I'm able to make living of something I dreamed about since my childhood, although I have to admit it is a very difficult path.

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ARTS & CULTURE

Tomáš Palonder: ‘My Armenian Legacy Is Deeply Rooted in My Soul’

PALONDER, from page 12

Charles Aznavour once said: “When I am tiring of singing I act and vice versa.” Is it the same with you?

Unfortunately, I cannot choose too much. I don't like art that is primarily entertaining for masses. I have my specific taste in everything I do and this makes things a bit more complex. For example, my former music endeavors earned me very little money. It was as more of a hobby. As an actor you can have some earnings unless you are brutally versatile, therefore I record voiceovers in English, Slovak, Czech and Russian languages. I act in various theatre plays, comedies & dramas. When I receive a role in TV, I usually accept it. I host various events. It is a lot to take.

You act in both dramas and comedies. Which do you prefer?

To me a comedy is drama and vice versa. Chekhov's plays are a caricature of people that surrounded him, yet his plays are not staged as comedies. Everyone sees his stories as a heavy psychological load, which is true, but at the same time there is a lot of sarcasm. Oscar Wilde or Moliere also made jokes in their plays that were extremely sharp. I honestly love both genres and I can proudly present myself as very capable comedy as well as a drama actor. For example, the role of Travis Bickle in my favorite film “Taxi Driver” (1976) is painfully dramatic yet in many occasions childishly funny. The roles of Robin Williams were comical yet in the movie “Awakenings” (1990) he just gave me chills, big time!

One of your bands, Bruno Benetton, was once very popular among Slovakian youth. What is the rock music scene now?

Well, today's music scene is not my cup of tea. Bruno Benetton involved too much travelling and too many concerts for way too little money. However, it was an amazing experience.

The language of rock music is English; your lyrics for your group are also in English. Do you think that other languages, including Slovakian, can fit into rock?

Yes there is a huge number of great Slovak songs with Slovak lyrics. Great Slovak bands to me are: Isabelle, Tublatanka, Elán, Vidiek, Metalinda, and interesting singers



Tomáš Palonder

with amazing Slovak lyrics are: Richard Muller, Peter Lipa, Dezo Ursiny, Sona Hornakova! Beata Dubasova to name just a few. I love them. To me English is a bit easier to work with. English words have multiple meanings. That is what I need.

You worked for three years in UK and the US, but you preferred to come back to Slovakia.

Yes, of course. I have no brothers no sisters here and at that time I didn't even a cousin. My grandfather on my father's side got ill and my grandmother from mother's side also needed a lot of assistance. I packed my bags and got back to Bratislava to help my family.

I think that your being half-Armenian

makes you a bit different from the ordinary actor's family both from outside and inside - am I right?

Let's be honest here. No one cares about my Armenian roots here. Half of the population here have no idea what Armenia is, therefore some thought I'm half-Tatar, Romani, Jewish, etc. They have mistaken me for everything. My appearance is not too favored here. I receive zero offers for film roles here as well as in the Czech Republic. I'm excluded no matter how good my English, Czech or Russian is. Finally, I have teamed up with a young actor's agent and I really hope to finally receive some interesting film roles.

Your paternal grandfather, Artashes Movsisyan, was originally from Artsakh (Karabagh), your grandmother Varvara, from Tbilisi. Have you been in Armenia and what does this heritage mean partial to you?

My Armenian legacy is deeply rooted in my soul. I have a deep respect for Armenian culture and history; I always read relevant articles on these topics. Still, I feel European; I like European civilization very much. My paternal grandfather was of German descent and my paternal grandmother from a Hungarian family.

In an interview you said that you found out that the grandmother of your paternal grandmother was also an Armenian with the surname Salvian. Although this does not sound Armenian, could you please provide some details about her?

She was a refugee from the Ottoman Empire. Her mother has seen her birth certificate in Hungary; it is written in the Armenian language. We only found out this a few years ago, when looking through old family photos. We couldn't believe such a coincidence. This means I have more than 50 percent Armenian blood.

Your mother, Ludmila (Movsisyan) Palonderová, works in Slovakia's Ministry of Culture, where she fosters the development of Armenian-Slovakian cultural contacts. What particular Armenian projects has she initiated?

She organized an exhibition devoted to Armenia, and, in 2015, a concert of Slovak singers at Spendiaryan Opera and Ballet Theater in Yerevan, as well as the visit of our Minister of Culture of the Slovak Republic, Mr. Marek Madaric. She has also organized performance of Armenian folk dancers at our most prestigious folklore festival “Východná.” Especially in this regard, I am beyond proud of her. She is an extremely talented and devoted organizer. Everyone loves her for that! True, hard-working, Armenian beauty!!!

Are you in touch with Armenians in Slovakia? Who are more or less famous names among them?

I can mention the following names: a good friend of mine of one is the greatly talented Armenian singer and pianist Karine Sarkisyan, who lives in Slovakia and was born in Yerevan. Then there is also an interesting figure, the director of Slovak TV news section, Vahram Chuguryan or another great professional, Rafael Avnikjan, a great and renowned choreographer. Also, Mr. Gevorkyan, a very successful entrepreneur and owner of a steel factory in Slovakia, or Bagrat Hakobyan, the Armenian ambassador to Slovakia.

Thank you, Tom, for your answers. I wish you will continue your mother's promotion of Armenian culture in Slovakia. In general, every Armenian living in foreign countries can become a kind of ambassador for Armenia.

Thank you very much for reaching out, Artsvi! I'm trying to do my best. Although my home is Europe, whenever it is possible I always support and promote Armenia. It is very personal matter to me even if I don't speak Armenian. This relationship is strong and without any discussion. What I'm also very happy about is the fact that my father Frantisek always hugely admired Armenian culture and history even before he found out about his great-grandmother being the Armenian Salvian. I also would like to wish you the best of luck and good health and good cheery people around wherever you occur!

Ars Musica to Perform in Armenia

ARS MUSICA, from page 12

the secondary school was in urgent need of renovation. The H. Tumanyan middle school, built back in 1918, provides education for a thousand children from the Gegharkunik region, including German language courses. Thorsten Weiss, chairman of Ars Musica, delivered the funds personally in April 2019, and soon thereafter the auditorium had freshly painted walls, a parquet floor, a fully renovated stage and modern seats for future audiences.

Now, Ars Musica is planning another concert tour in Armenia. As chairman of the Thuringian men's choir and Rotarian from Erfurt, Weiss is organizing the initiative in cooperation with the German Embassy in Yerevan and Ambassador Smbatyan in Berlin. Alexan Ter-Minasyan, who is Honorary German Consul in Gyumri and very active in the cultural life of the region, is actively supporting the effort.

To launch the tour, Ars Musica will perform on July 18 in the German city of Halle, which has a partnership with Gyumri. Gyumri will host a concert on August 22, and diplomats as well as local political leaders plan to attend both events. Other concerts will take place at the small monastery in Tatev, on August 17, and two days later in Garni and the Geghard monastery. They will perform in Yerevan on August 20 and 28, the latter concert in the Komitas Museum. On August 21, they will sing in Echmiadzin, on the occasion of the 70th birthday of Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II Nersissian. And on August 27, they will be in Litschk, to inaugurate the newly renovated auditorium at the Tumanyan school.





ARTS & CULTURE

15 Incredible Places to Visit in Armenia *Plus, Stay, Eat, Play*

TRAVEL, from page 12

Yerevan

By far the largest city in Armenia, the capital Yerevan is a great place to start for anyone wishing to explore Armenia. The city is home to the grand Republic Square, while climbing the Cascade to see the city's monument to Soviet victory in the Second World War is a must. Yerevan is a deeply historic city and visiting the Armenian Genocide Memorial is a must to learn more about the nation's troubled past. The vernissage flea market is worth visiting too – it is open at the weekend – while a walk through the Hrazdan gorge is also highly recommended. Much of what Armenia offers can be explored during day trips from Yerevan, known as the City of Cafes. Yerevan is also home to Levon's Amazing Underground World, one of Europe's most unusual attractions.

Lake Sevan

Lake Sevan, found in the heart of Armenia, is the country's largest lake and a beautiful place to visit during a break in the country. The lake is surrounded by some stunning monasteries – the most impressive of them being arguably the Sevanavank Monastery – providing a glorious scenic backdrop to a relaxing trip. Windsurfing is among the recreation activities available at the lake, which also has a wide choice of excellent seafood restaurants along its shore. Lake Sevan has several famous beaches. As the country has no coastline, this is the best place in Armenia to sunbathe, with Sevan Bay and its surrounding mountains providing spectacular scenery.

Gyumri

The second-largest city in Armenia, Gyumri is well worth visiting for anyone heading to the country for the first time. Perhaps the best place from which to enjoy the sights of Gyumri is from the Black Fortress on the hill that overlooks the city, while the massive Mother Armenia statue can also be found nearby. Many of the most important cultural institutions of Armenia are in Gyumri, such as the Dzitoghtsyan Museum of Social Life and National Architecture of Gyumri and the Aslamazyan Sisters House-Museum and the Sergey Merkurov House-Museum. The Kumayri Historic District is Gyumri's oldest area, with a thousand ancient buildings found here.

Amberd Fortress

Dating back to the seventh century, Amberd Fortress is one of Armenia's most stunning places to visit. Formerly among the Armenian kingdom's primary military-defensive points, the fortress can be reached about an hour from the capital city of Yerevan. However, snowfall can make the fortress inaccessible during the winter months, with the weather usually improving by late May. The view from the top of the fortress is truly breathtaking, while the building itself is also stunning. Amberd Fortress is a short trip from the village of Byurakan, home of the Byurakan Observatory.

Kardahunj Observatory

Often referred to internationally as Armenia's version of Britain's Stonehenge, Karahunj is one of the most fascinating places to visit during a break in Armenia. Located close to the city of Sisian in the Syunik province, Karahunj is made up of well over 200 massive stone tombs. At the same time, the main area sees 40 stones standing in a circular formation, supposedly built in honor of the Armenian main God, Ari, named after the sun. A small museum in Sisian is dedicated to findings that have been made at Karahunj, which is claimed to be the oldest observatory of its kind in the world.

Khor Virap Monastery

Views of Mount Ararat can be enjoyed from all over Armenia. Still, perhaps the best scenery of the mountain can be found from the Khor Virap monastery, which is also worth visiting in its own right. This location is one of the most important historical sites in Armenia's history. Gregory the Illuminator was imprisoned for 14 years before he cured King Trdat III of his disease. The king then converted to Christianity, paving the way for Armenia's religious future. As such, Khor Virap is a popular spot for Armenian weddings today, while the underground chamber in which Gregory the Illuminator was held can be visited during a trip to Khor Virap, which is among Armenia's most visited pilgrimage sites as a result.

Areni Wine Country

As grapes and vineyards have been cultivated here for over 6,000 years, it should come as no surprise to learn that the Areni wine country boasts some of the nation's most delicious wines. Set among some stunning mountainous scenery, the vineyards blanket entire mountainsides and valley slopes, with charming little farmhouses



The monastery of Khor Virap with Mount Ararat in the background

and wineries punctuating the countryside.

While its fantastic local produce is what most people come for, the region also has some fascinating sights for you to enjoy, such as the ancient church of Surp Astvatsatsin and the Areni-1 Caves, which are home to a fascinating archaeological site.



Temple of Garni

Garni

Located just a short distance away from Yerevan at the foot of the Khosrov Forest State Reserve, Garni is an enjoyable place to spend some time. Most people visit primarily to see its magnificent first century AD pagan temple and delightful monastery. Perched atop a cliff edge overlooking breathtaking hills and mountains, the Temple of Garni displays some beautiful Hellenic architecture.

Geghard Monastery

Lying on the outskirts of the picturesque town of Garni, Geghard Monastery is a very popular day-trip destination from the capital. It is certainly worth visiting if you have the chance. Carved out of the mountainside, with majestic peaks overlooking it, the famous monastery has a beautiful church for you to wander around.

Several gorgeous chapels showcase some elaborate and intricate carvings, with some parts of the complex dating back to the fourth century.

The monastery's scenic setting is stunning. It's no surprise that it has long been a place of pilgrimage, with people having visited the site long before Christianity first found its way to Armenia. A must-see when in Armenia, Geghard Monastery certainly won't disappoint with its incredible rock-hewn churches and chapels and beautiful setting in the Azat River gorge.

Tatev Monastery

Yet another one of Armenian monasteries with a spectacular location in Southern Armenia, the fortified Tatev Monastery was built in the early 9th century at the edge of the deep gorge in the southern part of the country. It always played an essential role in the spiritual, cultural, and educational life of the country.

Tatev Monastery used to be the seat of a bishop. At the end of the 14th century, the most prominent university in



Tatev Monastery

Southern Caucasus was established, teaching students numerous sciences. You can visit three churches (Saints Paul and Peter, Saint Gregory the Illuminator, and Holy Mother of God), a library, a refectory, a bell tower, mausoleum.

Wings of Tatev

The world's longest nonstop reversible cable car soars through spectacular scenery to the medieval Tatev Monastery. Wings of Tatev stretches over 3.5 miles between the Armenian village of Halidzor and the famous Tatev Monastery, a center of education and religion in the Middle Ages. The aerial tram holds the Guinness title as the longest nonstop double-track cable car in the world.

The cableway soars over the deep Vorotan River Gorge, offering breathtaking views of the landscape as you approach the monastery, which sits perched on a large plateau at the edge of a cliff over the stunning gorge. The



Wings of Tatev



ARTS & CULTURE

monastery complex dates back to the 9th century. It is an architectural and historical icon of Armenia, though the structure itself can be overshadowed by the out-of-a-fairytale natural landscape surrounding it.

Echmiadzin Cathedral

Echmiadzin is the equivalent of the Vatican for the Armenian Apostolic Church. Armenia is very proud to be the first nation to adopt Christianity as the state religion. Today, over 90% of the residents are of the Christian faith. Echmiadzin, also called Vagharshapat, is the center of the religion. The priests come to study here. It's also a UNESCO site.

The main church contains the Treasury, which holds the most valuable relics owned by the Armenian church. Among the items on display is the 'Holy Lance,' the spear that pierced Jesus' side, a bit of Noah's Ark, illuminated bibles, and two wall hangings that had small bits of the cross.

Several other churches make up the Echmiadzin compound, including two churches named for women and the ruined Zvartnots Cathedral.

It's effortless to visit Echmiadzin from Yerevan. There are inexpensive and very regular *marshrutkas* (minibuses) that leave from the western bus station. They will drop you in the center of town, and the churches can be visited on foot.

Jermuk

A spa town and home of a mineral water factory, Jermuk has plenty of posh hotels and wellness centers. It's the site of the largest waterfall in Armenia, known as the Mermaids Hair Waterfall.

A windy road reaches it into the river valley, followed by a short walk along the riverside. The waterfall runs down into the river, and you can climb several meters up the side of it.

In the town itself, you can take a walk past the Hyatt Hotel and Verona Resort and fill your water bottles free from the streams that go into the valley. One spring gives warm water.

Not to be missed is a trip to the geysers up in the hills above the town. There are plenty of drivers with 4x4s who will drive you up there. It's a bumpy journey up rutted tracks, across stony fields, and through streams with rocky beds.

There are no facilities there, just fresh air, bubbling water, a stream, and trees. The geyser is a pool with a rock in it, and it's from there that the water bubbles up, creating a jacuzzi every few minutes or so.



The author pointing to abundant native fruits

cient Manuscripts, is an incredibly rare and exclusive treasure due to its collection of manuscripts and the activity that it now exercises. It holds the history of Armenian and foreign nations' written cultures.

The word "Matenadaran" means "holder of manuscripts," or "manuscript collector." Today, however, the Armenian public associates the word "Matenadaran" with our nation's spiritual and cultural richness and pride, embodied in the structure of the manuscript repository.

The Matenadaran has consolidated about 23,000 manuscripts, including almost all ancient and medieval Armenian cultural and sciences – history, geography, grammar, philosophy, law, medicine, mathematics, cosmology, chronology, divination literature, translated and national literature, miniature painting, music, and theater. The Matenadaran also holds manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Greek, Ethiopian, Syrian, Latin, Tamil, and other languages. Many originals, lost in their mother languages and known only by their Armenian translations, have been saved from medieval translations.



Grand Hotel Yerevan

The water wasn't that warm (compared with Iceland), and it's rust-colored. You can wild camp nearby, but be aware there may be bears!

On the way back, you can ask for a detour to see the Jermuk Deer statue, which overlooks the town and gives good views.

Dilijan National Park

Dilijan, 100km northeast of Yerevan, is the greenest place we have been in Armenia. This small town is surrounded by lush vegetation and alpine forest and is a great place to kick back for a day or two.

Dilijan was a peaceful retreat for creative types (composers, writers, etc.) when Armenia was part of the USSR. Several Soviet-era memorials are scattered around town, including one of the most impressive war memorials we have seen to date.

Museum Complex of the Matenadaran

Matenadaran – the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of An-

The Matenadaran's museum complex is in the institute's old, original building. What was formerly a single exhibition hall now consisting of fifteen halls in which thousands of temporary, changeable, and exclusive exhibits are on display. Manuscript, fragments of manuscripts, documents, old, printed books, precious bindings, individual miniatures, and more are shown from Matenadaran's database of roughly 23,000 manuscripts.

Stay...

Grand Hotel Yerevan

I would typically give you a few options for hotels, but it would do you a disservice. I've been to Armenia before and stayed at fine establishments, but nothing can compare to the **Grand Hotel Yerevan**. It is an elegant and modern hotel for travelers, sightseers, and those who are ready for an unforgettable experience. The charm of the 1928 neoclassical building that houses the hotel is timeless. The luxury hotel is located in the center of Yerevan. Due to its prime location, Grand Hotel represents the embodiment

of modern and ancient Armenian history and culture. Despite being an exceptional hotel and ideally located in the heart of town, their rates are very reasonable. [Editor's Note: This and the following sections reflect the author's personal opinion and not an endorsement by the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.]

The private open-air pool (seasonal), situated on the hotel's roof, is a perfect place for relaxation. Here you can enjoy sunny Yerevan while lounging in comfortable deckchairs, having a cocktail, and trying delectable hot and cold dishes from the bar.

Nairi Restaurant at the Grand Hotel

Nairi Restaurant offers an enjoyable and classy atmosphere where you can unwind and enjoy the panoramic view of Charles Aznavour Square. Room service is available 24/7.

While creating the menu of the Nairi Restaurant, they set out to introduce the guests to traditional Armenian cuisine. They set up a unique gastronomic experiment – to find harmony in the tastes of Armenian and Italian cuisines. The goal is achieved with special dishes that combine tradition and innovation. Italian Michelin star-rated chef revised the most colorful Armenian recipes and created for you a one-of-a-kind experience based on a careful selection of Armenian ingredients. This mix of tradition and innovation will delight you with unforgettable taste and exclusivity.

Dolmama

The best way to describe **Dolmama** is to say that it is the Spago of Yerevan. I'm not very particular with food and don't make a big fuss. It's rare for me to say that one specific dish was extraordinary. But Dolmama just did just that for me. I am a vegetarian, so there aren't many options for us no matter where you go. It's easier to eat in Armenia for vegetarians than in most other nations.

Jirair Avanian founded Dolmama. He set out to recreate classic Armenian dishes with a modern twist without disappointing the connoisseurs of traditions. As Einstein once said, only those who attempt the absurd can achieve the impossible — and Jirair has managed to balance the tastes and feelings embodied by centuries of tradition while bringing in a new look and feel for Armenian food. Jirair has invented new ways to serve the traditional Armenian stew khachapuri, how to give new meaning to the beloved Armenian dolma, and how to make people really pause in awe after biting into well-known dishes!

Play...

The Beach Yerevan

The Beach is Yerevan's newest hotspot where the who's who of the city's crème de la crème gathers nightly. It is in the penthouse of a building overlooking the Vahakni Neighborhood of Yerevan. Vahakni is an American-style suburb built on the northwest edge of the city by American-Armenian homebuilder Vahak Hovnanian.

Although on the top floor of the building, sand is poured throughout the bottom to make you feel on the beach. There are fire pits, lounge chairs, small bites, and plenty of cocktails.

El Sky Bar

El Sky Bar is a perfect spot for those who like to spend their evenings in glamorous places with panoramic views over the city. Located on the 7th floor of Yerevan Plaza Business Center, El Sky Bar includes indoor and outdoor rooms and frequently organizes various thematic parties with cool DJs. If you happen to visit Yerevan during the hot summer months, El Sky Bar is a great place to unwind and enjoy a refreshing drink on the rooftop terrace.

Fly...

I had flown to Armenia and other transatlantic destinations many times through different routes and airlines. But my most recent flight experience stands out as the best overall. I flew **Air France** business class, and it made all the difference. The route, through Paris, was short and effortless. The plane was brand new and state-of-the-art. The service was impeccable and the food delicious.

Armenia's beautiful four-seasons make it a place to visit year-round. Whether you are a history buff, antique enthusiast, skier, wine & cognac connoisseur, outdoorsy, foody, or want to see one of the most magical places on earth, Armenia has it covered.

A noted journalist, a columnist, Vic Gerami is also a radio show host and media contributor who is also publisher and editor of The Blunt Post. Gerami is the host and producer of his prime-time radio show, THE BLUNT POST with VIC on Independent Radio KPFK 90.7 FM (Pacifica Network). He is a contributor to some of the most prominent publications in the nation, including The Advocate, Windy City Times, IN Magazine, OUT Traveler, The Fight, and Bay Area Reporter.

Books

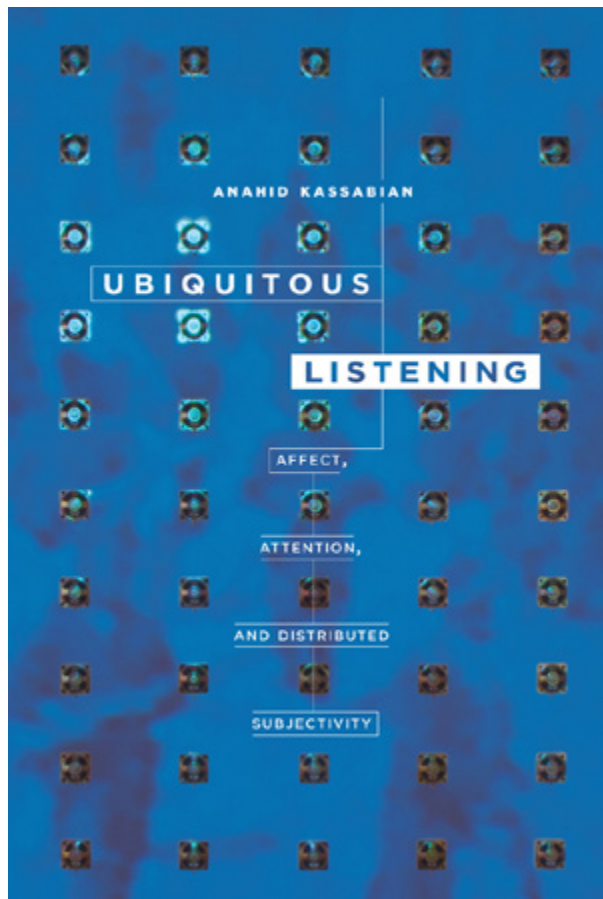
Anahid Kassabian's *Ubiquitous Listening: Ubiquitously Brilliant*

Reviewed by Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Few books shine quite so spectacularly as Anahid Kassabian's ground-breaking *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention, and Distributed Subjectivity*. Kassabian has held important positions in academia, including the James and Constance Alsop Chair of Music at the University of Liverpool and previously chaired the Literary Studies Program at Fordham University in New York City. Published in 2013 by The University of California Press, this slim but powerful volume introduces readers to innovative new ideas while repositioning the field of music study itself in light of post-Kantian philosophy. Taking a cue from distributive computing, Kassabian takes music analysis from a purportedly objective position to a more pluralistic, distributive "we/they." It's an important distinction which posits that we listen or hear in a distributive way, partially at times and more attentively at others. Yet we always remain apart from the music itself and an "other place(s)" that it takes us to — sometimes simultaneously. By theorizing Muzak and the music — or noise — that one hears every day in places like Starbucks and department stores, Kassabian manages to introduce an entire new field of study — her second or third such prestidigitation — while calling attention to the background music that we usually dismiss. Along the way she also beautifully analyses the work of three Armenian video artists — Diana Hakobyan, Sonia Balassanian, and Tina Bastajian, placing an emphasis on the aural/sound track as much as the visual elements in each video. She then turns her attention to three Armenian jazz bands — The Armenian Navy Band, Night Ark, and Taksim — and explains how her relationship to these three internationally renowned music groups helped her to re-insert herself into an Armenian culture that she had turned away from because of its conservative and patriarchal nature.

Kassabian's ability to weave Armenian culture in and out of otherwise mainstream observations and analyses is the least of her talents. After finishing her book, I found myself paying special attention to the music that surrounds me — at Starbucks, in my local pizzeria, and overheard on speakers on the A Train — paying special attention to



sound, now ubiquitous, now everywhere. The point, of course, is that the music has always been there, we just usually integrate it into our everyday experience to the point that we don't notice it anymore. And hidden away in our everyday experience of ambient or ubiquitous hearing is a fascinating double history — one "hi" and one "lo" — in mainstream terms. The "hi" version takes us back to the turn of the 20th century and French composer Erik Satie's "Musique d'ameublement" and on up through John Cage who with his partner, the choreographer Merce Cunningham, emphasized environmental sound.

The other parallel, "lo" history belongs to General George Owen Squier who created Wired Radio — or

Muzak as we now know it — and its many "stimulus progression patents."

Though Kassabian does not quite position him thus, I kind of see Brian Eno as navigating a fascinating world between the Saties and Cages on the one hand, and Muzak on the other.

Along the way, Kassabian also considers films such as the Wachowskis' "The Matrix" series and "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider," where often computer-simulated image and sound, rather than traditional plot and acting, propel the action forward. While these are not always the most felicitous adventures in the cinematic arts, they are definitely a new trope or type of filmmaking, perhaps in parallel with more traditional modes of cinema on the one hand, and completely experimental ones on the other.

In a related instance, Kassabian looks at the veritable onslaught of campy musical episodes in TV series such as "Family Guy" and "Buffy, the Vampire Slayer," which helped in the mid-1990s to mid-2000's in recapturing viewer attention after a period of what I call "TV fatigue."

Since Kassabian's book was published, the "Original Series" concept on channels such as Amazon and Netflix have in a sense morphed film and TV by providing high-level filmed entertainment, told over 4-to-6 episodes, where attention to history, plot development and such hold greater sway.

The sixth and last chapter of Kassabian's book, "Would you like some World Music in Your Latte?," is to my mind perhaps the most interesting because it examines the notion of entanglement, i.e., how our identities are in fact fluid and change from even hour-to-hour. I'm drawn to this chapter not least because Kassabian uses The Olive Garden as an example — a restaurant chain that I have always had a secret craving to eat at but never in fact walked inside.

My craving continues to this day in spite of the fact that by all accounts the food served is mediocre and overpriced and in spite of the fact that I have eaten in five-star Italian restaurants in New York and elsewhere — including Italy! — and that my mother was Italian and cooked up a pretty mean dish of pasta. Interestingly enough, if I recall correctly, the Olive Garden did in fact get into trouble at one point for claiming in a commercial that their chefs were sent to Tuscany for "authentic" training in all things Italian — a plain untruth, but one which should perhaps shock no one at this point in the ad game. Yet knowing all this, I am still tempted by the atmosphere created in their ads, and the supposedly "authentic" Italian music that is able to ubiquitously induce a craving that is really a 360-degree entertainment experience (of which music is one key element) in even the sharpest of cultural critics. (And images and music of what, exactly? Supposedly Italian guests having an Italian blast of it God knows where listening to purportedly Italian tunes?)

Finally let's backtrack a bit to Chapter 5 and a surprising anecdote where Kassabian relates attending a "Kef

continued on next page

CALENDAR

ON-LINE EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

JULY 14–AUGUST 15 — The Armenian Heritage Park will hold a series of events during the spring and summer:

•**WEDNESDAY, JULY 14 at 4pm TEA & TRANQUILITY ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY, Boston** Meet & Greet the Boston Mayoral candidates at the Park. Walk the Labyrinth. View the Abstract Sculpture. Tie a Ribbon on the Wishing Tree. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

•**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11 at 4pm TEA & TRANQUILITY ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY, Boston** Meet & Greet at the Park. Walk the Labyrinth. View the Abstract Sculpture. Tie a Ribbon on the Wishing Tree. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

•**SUNDAY, AUGUST 15 at 2pm LABYRINTH WALKING WELLNESS program. ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY, Boston** Meet & Greet at the Park. Introduction to the many benefits. Walk the labyrinth. A part of The Greenway Fitness program. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

JUNE 21 — Gregory Hintlian Memorial Golf Tournament at Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston. Monday. Hospitality/Registration is from 9-10:30 am. 10:30 AM "Shotgun" start. Lunch at the 9th hole. Dinner (casual dress) is at 4:30 pm. Location: Marlborough Country Club 200 Concord Rd, Marlborough, MA 01752. Register Online: The Gregory Hintlian Memorial

Golf Tournament 2021 - Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston (htaac.org) or call the church office 617.354.0632

NEW JERSEY

NOVEMBER 13 — Save the Date: **Saturday, 12 Vocations, Fulfilling the Promise of St. Nersess Seminary. Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary and the vocations of the first 12 priests who graduated from St. Nersess and St. Vladimir's Seminaries and were ordained. This is the first in a series of events to recognize the alumni of St. Nersess, both ordained and lay, who are in service to the Armenian Church, in any capacity. The celebratory dinner will be held at the Old Tappan Manor in Old Tappan, N.J. For more info, go to www.stnersess.edu.**

RHODE ISLAND

JUNE 25-JULY 25 — The Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church of Providence hosts the Armenian Cultural Hour every Friday at 7:30 p.m. online. Whether or not you have a Facebook account, you can find the **LIVESTREAM** of the event through the parish's Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/armenian-churchprovidence>

June 25 - "To the Light" concert, featuring Soloists and Symphony Orchestra of the Armenian National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet, Harutyun Arzumanyan, Music Director & Conductor

July 4 - Vahan Artsruni concert "Modern Fusion, Progressive and Song Gender"

July 11 - Hekimyan Band from Yerevan

July 18 - "Flutes & Sopranos", featuring Soloists and Symphony Orchestra of the Armenian National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet, Harutyun Arzumanyan, Music Director & Conductor

July 25 - Favorite Armenian Songs, featuring Armen Hovhanessyan & Salbi Mailyan



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Stewed fruit

A Hundred Years And Still Cooking

Recipes from First Armenian Presbyterian Church of Fresno

“Dried fruits and nuts were often set out in bowls after dinner or when guests stopped by for a Sunday afternoon visit in many Armenian homes in Fresno in those early days,” remembered the late Victoria Jamgochian. Victoria’s famous stewed fruit recipe is another way the San Joaquin Valley’s harvest bounty was enjoyed by Armenian immigrants and their families throughout the year.

Two of Victoria’s favorite recipes are reprinted below. They are featured in a remarkable collection that includes recipes by the pioneering women who first settled in Fresno more than 120 years ago: *A Hundred Years and Still Cooking*, from the First Armenian Presbyterian Church (FAPC) of Fresno Fidelis Women’s Society Centennial recipe collection. Victoria passed away in Fresno on July 15, 1980. She was a native of Harpoot; her husband Donabed was a native of Diyarbekir. She arrived in the United States in 1913; he arrived in 1910. They were married in Parlier on October 2, 1914 with Reverend M.G. Papazian, early-day pastor of Fresno’s Pilgrim Church, officiating. Victoria’s maiden name was Tutunjian.

As the introduction to *A Hundred Years and Still Cooking* says, “This cookbook is a combination of our best in Armenian and American cuisine. Meals are a big part of our lives because we enjoy the work, we relish the fellowship, and we

savor the finished product. It is our desire to keep our Armenian heritage alive through the foods of our parents, grandparents, and forebears. We also believe it is important to include foods that are important to us as Americans. We hope you enjoy the goodness of these recipes spanning five generations of members at California’s oldest Armenian church.” Food writer Barbara Hansen, a James Beard Award winner, reviewed *A Hundred Years and Still Cooking* in the January 14, 1998 edition of the *Los Angeles Times* under the headline, “Leaves from Fresno.”

The FAPC was established on July 25, 1897, it is a member congregation of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and Armenian Evangelical Union of North America. Forty immigrants from Marzovan chartered the Fresno congregation in a rented hall on July 25, 1897. The boyhood church of authors William Saroyan and A.I. Bezzerides and filmmaker J. Michael Hagopian, FAPC today is a multi-generational evangelical congregation drawn from the Old and New Worlds.

The First Armenian Presbyterian Church of Fresno was founded in 1897.

First published in 1993 by H. Markus Printing, this significant 496-page volume cookbook includes instructions for preparing 636 different recipes, a “Cooks in the Heavens” and “Cooking for the Multitudes” sections, a glossary, index and references. To order copies of *A Hundred Years and Still Cooking* for your friends and family, please send a check or money order for \$35.00 each to: First Armenian Presbyterian Church 430 S. First St., Fresno, CA 93702, Attention: Marine or write to: fapc3@fapc.net.

STEWED FRUITS

- 3/4 cup dried apricot halves
- 3/4 cup prunes with pits
- 5 cups water
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup raisins, rinsed and stems removed
- 1 small cinnamon stick

PREPARATION:

Rinse apricots and prunes, and place them in a 4-quart sauce pan together with 3 cups of water. Set aside for 1 hour. Place the saucepan over high heat and bring to a boil, then lower heat to a simmer and cook gently for 10 minutes. Add remaining water, sugar, raisins, and cinnamon. Cook an additional 20 minutes or until fruit is soft. Remove from heat and discard cinnamon stick. Let fruit cool, then refrigerate. Serve chilled.

Serves 6.

GATNABOUR (Rice Pudding)

- 1 cup water
- 3/4 cup rice
- 1 quart milk
- 1/2 cup sugar
- Pinch of salt
- Cinnamon to taste

Wash and then cook rice in 1 cup boiling water until water is absorbed. Heat the milk, add the sugar and rice, and cook on low heat for approximately 45 minutes, stirring constantly. Pour into individual dishes or Pyrex bowl. Cool and sprinkle with cinnamon. Serves 8.

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from previous page

for Kerry” fundraising event in 2004 in support of the then Democratic presidential contender John Kerry. The concert included Gor Mkhitarian, John Bilezikjian, and Cascade Folk trio — all excellent acts. It was surprising first to find an overwhelmingly progressive and Democratic Armenian crowd and surprising as well for the success that these three disparate acts had in bringing together perhaps equally disparate elements of the Armenian diaspora.

I would like to merge the image of this concert with another point that Kassabian makes elsewhere — namely that one’s identity as an Armenian — or any other such notion of self — is never really fixed. The author understands herself as being somehow differently Armenian in different contexts: more progressive in some, more feminist in others; more assertive in some and more defensive in others. “We” are in a sense all ubiquitously Armenian while experiencing what that means in multitudinous ways — just as our identity changes depending on who

we are with in general and what music may or may not be surrounding us. If I am not misreading just as the three jazz bands (The Armenian Navy Band, Night Ark and Taksim) that she examines elsewhere served as “points of Armenian re-entry” for Kassabian, this concert helped to focalize the idea that she, having been away from the Armenian community at one point, had in fact still remained Armenian, if differently so.

Along the way in these engaging essays Kassabian also considers the ever-changing technological landscape-at-large, which includes an almost limitless number of apps (iPhone, Android) that recognize, identify, teach and generate music. Kassabian divides these music-related apps into nine categories, but I am sure that today, even more exist! These can of course be subsumed under the increasing trillions of gigabytes of entertainment/content/other information produced daily by companies or by individual users sitting at home or in cafés at laptops like the one that I am currently using in order to write this review. And finally, as with reader reception theory in literature, the

fascinating question of “do we hear” or “do we listen” (and how do we interpret either/both) unearths another can of theoretical worms that I think must bring neuro- and cognitive sciences in to get at a better idea of why and when we actually process heard information—and how.

All these things and more are unravelled, presented, analysed and debated in just a 120 -page book. How does Kassabian achieve all these things? I think in the end by doing what all truly good scholars and writers should always do: by asking the right questions and by judging without being judgmental. It’s an admittedly difficult task, but one that “Ubiquitous Listening” achieves with brio. Anyone who loves music or who simply has an inquisitive mind will take joy in reading this truly original and whimsical work.

Purchase “Ubiquitous Listening”: <https://www.abebooks.com/9780520275164/Ubiquitous-Listening-Affect-Attention-Distributed-0520275160/plp>

Learn more at Anahid Kassabian’s Web Page: <http://anahidkassabian.org>



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Editorial

Delinquency in Diplomacy



By Edmond Y. Azadian

The war has destroyed Armenia's morale. People are grieving their losses and the entire country is licking its wounds. Seventy-five percent of the territory of Karabakh is lost and Armenia's southern region, Syunik, is under Azerbaijani threat but the Armenian political parties seem to have forgotten the losses and danger at hand and are instead fighting over whatever has been left.

It is an odd situation in the sense that people are trying to overcome the trauma inflicted on the country and pretend that the normal course of life is already being restored.

The electoral campaign is so intense that the parties involved have created their own world and they have lost their connections to regional problems which have their own pace of development. So much detachment from regional problems may lead one day to a rude awakening.

Although in the bigger picture two major camps (that of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and former President Robert Kocharyan) are confronting each other, upon further scrutiny, the mosaic may reveal a more nuanced picture; there are 22 parties and four alliances but it is believed that all those parties eventually will become subsidiaries of the two main camps.

Kocharyan is in an alliance with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) and a group from Syunik called Reborn Armenia (Veratsnvogh Hayastan) and his camp is characterized as the comeback vehicle of the old regime. That is not entirely true, because there was an effort by the country's first president, Levon Ter-Petrosian, to bring together all the former presidents to stop his former disciple, Pashinyan, but they failed to agree with each other. Kocharyan has gone his own way and it seems he has been able to connect with disgruntled residents.

In his most recent public debate, Ter-Petrosian saw a silver lining in the participation of so many parties, which may splinter the vote and not allow any single party to achieve a full mandate, eventually leading all the winning parties to find accommodation in a national unity government. That is a positive way to look at the situation, but the hatred, animosity and acrimonious language are so intense that one is at a loss to see the prospect of workable cooperation after June 20.

In this overheated and polarized atmosphere, one voice of reason stands out, that of Edmon Marukyan, the head of the Bright Armenia party. He appears to be a true statesman who might be able to bring the Pashinyan and Kocharyan camps together for a viable government. But in the heat of the fireworks, his voice is drowned by partisans of the two who believe that their side has the monopoly on the truth.

Pashinyan is running through his own party, the Civil Contract, and is no longer in his former alliance, My Step. His representatives put out their own polls, suggesting that Pashinyan's camp will net 60 percent of the vote but the best estimates suggest the party can barely hit 30 percent, which is still ahead of all remaining groups.

Pashinyan has a lame duck government, which even in normal times, could hardly meet the citizens expectations. But with the war losses and the threat of further losses in Armenia proper, his task is all the more difficult.

The main danger to the country remains regional developments, yet Armenia is so caught up in the fever of an election campaign that it seems not to notice that those changes will come to shape its future.

The sooner normalcy is restored in the country, the better it is because the country has to face up to those challenges and formulate a cohesive foreign policy which might help it navigate these difficult times.

One regional development which may eventually help Ar-

menia is the return of Iran as a major player in the Caucasus. Tehran has been suffering under the imposed sanctions, allowing Russia and Turkey a free hand to advance their own interests. Now that the implacable Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is removed from power, Washington has more flexibility in dealing with Tehran. That will not only allow it to reactivate the nuclear deal, which President Biden had pledged to do, but it will also check Russia and Turkey in their joint deals in the Caucasus.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Iran, which had observed strict neutrality during the war, has been flexing its muscles. The expectation is that Iran will respond to Biden's move in its own terms; that is, two days after Armenia's elections, Iran will hold its own presidential election. President Hassan Rouhani, who was considered a liberal by Iranian standards, can no longer run as a candidate and perhaps the next candidate will be the one who can take advantage of Washington's overtures.

However, Iran has already drawn its own red line, announcing that it will not tolerate any border changes in the region. It did not even hesitate to state that any change might lead it to use military force. But even more interesting is the news that Tehran is ready to offer a corridor to Azerbaijan, over its own territory. That eventually will relieve tension on Armenia and undermine Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's plan, which Armenians believe is to impose the Azerbaijani corridor linking Baku to Nakhichevan, through Syunik.

President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan is keenly aware of these possibilities and is pushing to impose on Armenia certain arrangements before the latter is rearmed and bolstered by powerful supporters. Aliyev has stated that he has offered

Armenia a peace deal which Yerevan is refusing to consider and that Armenia will regret the decision in the long run.

Of course implied in that statement is the threat that if Armenia fails to sign a peace treaty on Azerbaijani terms, it will end up facing another war.

But what is in that peace treaty that Armenia is refusing to consider? Azerbaijan will recognize Armenia's territorial integrity in return for Armenia recognizing Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, including Nagorno Karabakh.

Azerbaijan has also other reasons to enter into hasty arrangements with Armenia. While Baku is contending that it has resolved the Karabakh issue by force, pressure is building on the other side, by the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, to return

to negotiating under the framework of the OSCE, where certain principles would apply.

One of those principles was the refusal to use force to resolve problems.

Azerbaijan has already violated that principle. France, in particular, is very eager to play a role as a peacemaker and its parliament has already adopted a resolution to declare Karabakh an independent entity.

During Pashinyan's visit to Paris and Brussels earlier this month, President Emmanuel Macron and European Union President Charles Michel called for the immediate and unconditional release of Armenian prisoners of war under the terms of the November 9 declaration. They also asked Azerbaijan and Armenia to reposition their armed forces along the lines they were at on May 11.

The most interesting development is the US's forceful entry into the Caucasus. While at this writing, we do not have the results of the Biden-Erdogan meeting, Acting Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Philip T. Reeker's visit to the region and his unequivocal statements already signal that America is back and here to play a role.

Reeker has reiterated the statements made by France and the EU regarding prisoners of war and border issues.

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COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan's Six-Month Roadmap of Promises: What Was Completed and What Was Not?

On November 18, 2020, a few days after the end of the Artsakh War, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan published a roadmap of promised actions in the following six-months. The Prime Minister also promised that “In June 2021 I will deliver the performance report of this roadmap, and the public opinion and reaction will be taken into account for deciding future actions.”

Now that seven months have passed from the Prime Minister's roadmap of 15 promises, I would like to review his accomplishments and failings. Regrettably, Pashinyan has not kept his specific promise to deliver in June 2021 a report on his performance vs. his promises. Such a report would have been very useful for the voters in Armenia to decide whom to support in the June 20, 2021 parliamentary snap elections which will select the next Prime Minister.

Rather than engage in mutual accusations and insults, the various political parties should have addressed the important issue of Pashinyan's promises both kept and not kept. He said in November 2020 that he considered himself “the number one responsible person for the situation. I am also the main responsible person for overcoming the situation and establishing stability and security in the country.”

Let us now see if the Prime Minister has indeed succeeded in “overcoming the situation” resulting from the war and “establishing stability and security in the country.”

Here is Pashinyan's 1st promise: “The restoration of the Karabakh negotiations process in the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship format, with the emphasis of prioritizing the status of Artsakh and return of Artsakh residents to their places of residence.” I would say this promise is mostly unfulfilled as the Minsk Group remains ineffective in settling the conflict. The status of Artsakh is unresolved. Azerbaijan is ignoring the Minsk Group, as it considers the Artsakh issue resolved by force. Russia believes the status is an issue for the future. Most of the refugees have returned to Artsakh, although several thousand still remain in Armenia.

Pashinyan's 2nd promise: “Ensure the return of the residents of Artsakh to their homes. Entirely restore normal life in Artsakh. Restoration of damaged homes, apartments and infrastructures in the territories that are under the control of the Nagorno Karabakh authorities.” Normal life has not been restored in Artsakh, as thousands of people have lost their homes which are in the territories occupied by Azerbaijan. Others have their homes destroyed or damaged. Most Artsakh refugees have returned from Armenia. Artsakh's authorities have restored some of the infrastructures. This is also a mostly unfulfilled promise.

Pashinyan's 3rd promise: “Ensure social guarantees for the families of killed servicemen and citizens.” This is a mostly fulfilled promise.

Pashinyan's 4th promise: “Restoration of residential and public buildings and infrastructures in the territory of Armenia that were affected during the war.” There has not been major damage inside Armenia. Nevertheless, the government has given financial assistance to some border villagers who lost their homes. Mostly fulfilled.

Pashinyan's 5th promise: “Ensure social guarantees, prosthesis process and professional training for servicemen who suffered disabilities.” Some of these actions have been taken, partially with the help of Diaspora Armenian doctors. No mention is made of caring for the thousands of wounded soldiers and civilians, some of whom are still waiting for treatment. Promise mostly fulfilled.

Pashinyan's 6th promise: “Speedy return of captured servicemen and ci-

vilians. Ensure social guarantees for their families. Speedy clarification of the fates of those missing in action. Ensure social guarantees for their families.” A few dozen of the about 200 captured Armenian soldiers and civilians have been returned, although not “speedily.” In fact, since the war, Azerbaijan has taken 70 additional Armenian prisoners of war. The fate and number of missing soldiers remain uncertain. The families of the missing have been compensated. Promise mostly unfulfilled.

Pashinyan's 7th promise: “The development of a psychological rehabilitation system for people who participated in the war and overall the entire society.” This is a promise mostly unfulfilled, particularly the part about “the entire society.”

Pashinyan's 8th promise: “Confirmation of a military reforms program and launch of reforms.” There has been only talk of reforms, but no actual reforms. Promise unfulfilled.

Pashinyan's 9th promise: “Overcoming of the coronavirus pandemic and elimination of its consequences.” The government's handling of the coronavirus has been a disaster. Equally disastrous has been the extremely late and slow vaccination process. So far 4,488 Armenians have died of the coronavirus and 223,723 infected. Those who died from the virus exceed those who were killed in the war. Failed promise.

Pashinyan's 10th promise: “Restoration of the economic activity environment.” Economic activity has been as dismal in Armenia as in the rest of the world. Promise unfulfilled.

Pashinyan's 11th promise: “Activation of programs for solving demographic problems.” Another unfulfilled promise. No progress in this regard. On the contrary, emigration has increased.

Pashinyan's 12th promise: “Amendments of the Electoral Code and adoption of a new law on political parties.” The electoral code has been amended, some with immediate effect and others as of next year. The new electoral process is so complicated that most people in and out of Armenia are completely confused. The law on financing of political parties has been amended. Promise is mostly fulfilled.

Pashinyan's 13th promise: “Introduction of the institution of specialized judges, as the first step in creating the Anti-Corruption Court. Launch of implementation of the illicit asset confiscation law.” Progress was made on the institution of specialized judges dealing with corruption. It remains to be seen if it has any effect on eliminating corruption. Promise mostly fulfilled.

Pashinyan's 14th promise: “Holding permanent thematic consultations with representatives of Armenia's political and civil society organizations.” There has been some consultation between the Prime Minister and several political parties, although such consultations have been selective and not permanent. No meetings have been held with civil society organizations. Promise mostly unfulfilled.

Pashinyan's 15th promise: “Holding permanent thematic consultations with Armenian organizations and individuals in the Diaspora. Involvement of individuals and organizations of Armenia and the Diaspora in the above-mentioned processes.” This has been a total failure. A promise unfulfilled. There have been no occasional, let alone permanent, consultations with Diaspora Armenian organizations and individuals. Despite the Prime Minister's repeated promises, he has not acted to amend the laws to allow Diaspora Armenians to assume high offices in the government. It has also not made a plan to tap the experience and expertise of Diaspora Armenians, except when it comes to seeking donations with little reporting about their expenditures.

The Prime Minister has Mostly Fulfilled: 5 promises; Mostly Unfulfilled: 5 promises; Unfulfilled: 5 promises. You be the judge.

In my opinion, Armenia has two main tasks to accomplish as soon as possible: 1) Strengthen the military immediately. 2) Elect a government of technocrats who have the leadership qualities and expertise to run a country on the brink of collapse.

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In addition to those, the US was instrumental in the release of 15 prisoners of war to the embarrassment of the Russian side, which has been exasperating its Armenian allies by not enforcing the November 9 agreements with Azerbaijan.

These actions do not necessarily mean that the US is favoring Armenia. It is rather signaling to Moscow and Ankara that the time for their unilateral actions is over.

Another sign that the US is taking notice of the region is that Secretary of State Anthony Blinken again activated the waiver on Section 907 of Freedom Support Act for direct aid to Azerbaijan by the US, which was specifically designed to defend Armenia against Azerbaijani aggression.

As we can see, the Caucasus is under rapid transformation and Armenia has to take advantage of the opportunities that may arise. But Armenia's foreign policy establishment is in collapse after the resignation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ara Ayvazyan and his deputies this month.

Protocol requires that the foreign minister greet Mr. Reeker at Zvartnots Airport in Yerevan. But Armenia embarrassingly did not have a foreign minister. What is more ominous was that Mr. Pashinyan himself acted in the role of the foreign minister, while diplomacy is not his forte. If Mr. Pashinyan truly loves Armenia, he should stay away from assuming any diplomatic mission.

Many potential changes in the region favor Armenia which needs a team of able and experienced career diplomats to secure Armenia's position in the region.

Unfortunately, thus far, Armenia is delinquent in its diplomacy.

Cilicia2.0 Wants Diaspora to Be Protector of Armenia

The following call to arms is written by Ara Gavur of the US as an open letter to the Armenian Diaspora:

Dear Diaspora brother and sister,

Pain may twist your heart and soul watching Armenia sink in the circus of own clowns pretending to be politicians.

Shame may torture your mind watching them tear apart what's left of our Fatherland while splashing in the puddle of own making.

Despair may overtake your spirit, as you feel utterly powerless and incapable of reversing the impending doom.

You may think remoteness is what renders you helpless.

You may think distance is what leaves you disarmed and exposed to the blows.

Dear brother and sister, what if we are capable of consolidating the Diaspora itself into a solidified, united force that yields us the very Fortress which gives birth to our Reconquista?

What if we are able to reshape our Diaspora into a proactive multi-faceted national unit, capable of acting as an independent factor, pursuing own Agenda on the global stage, protecting our

Kin, and projecting power potent enough to force others to respect our interests?

What if we are capable of transforming our Diaspora into the very Ազգ-Բախալի we always longed for and always failed to build due to the utter incompetence, corruption of heart, and sheer stupidity of the rulers in our Fatherland?

Dear brother and sister, your inaction is what breeds your fear.

Your initiative - is what will shape your Destiny.

We may not be a factor in Armenia.

We can, however, make Armenia a factor.

By converting our Diaspora into the Ազգ-Բախալի of the Armenians.

By building a new Fortress on a shore invulnerable to the encroachments of our enemies.

By heralding from atop its tallest tower and into every ear near and afar:

“We may not be born in Armenia, but Armenia was born in us. You may have forgotten what we've left behind, but our mountains remember us. And we shall return to them.”

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Join us at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/cilicia2.0>



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 Syunik NGO will make investments in agriculture to create income for their beneficiaries. The recipient gets assistance conditional that within 2 years they give back on an annual basis the equivalent of 10% of their produced goods to other needy families.



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 Donate online



For Additional Information

Call TCA Headquarters at 617 924-4455

Sweden to Send Observer to Monitor Parliamentary Elections in Armenia

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Ambassador Patrik Svensson of Sweden in Armenia met with Eoghan Murphy, the head of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE ODIHR) Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Armenia and Stefan Krause, Deputy Head of OSCE ODIHR EOM.

As the Swedish Embassy in Yerevan reported, the parties discussed the ODIHR EOM's solid preparatory work ahead of the elections. Sweden will be sending short- and long-term ODIHR observers to monitor the elections. Additionally, members from the parliament will arrive separately joining the OSCE parliamentary assembly EOM, as well as the Council of Europe parliamentary assembly EOM. The Embassy will in its turn observe the elections by visiting many polling stations on election day, the source said.

Washington Hits Armenia With Aluminum Foil Anti-dumping Duties

TARIFFS, from page 1 is owned by Russian aluminum giant Rusal. The Commerce determination is based on a complaint brought last year by an industry group arguing that aluminum foil manufacturers in Armenia and four other countries had "injured US producers" with "aggressively low-priced imports."

In its September filing, the Aluminum Association told Commerce that after Washington imposed anti-dumping enforcement actions against China in 2018, Armenia, Brazil, Oman, Russia and Turkey quickly moved into the American market with aluminum below fair market value.

"Between 2017 and 2019, imports from the five subject countries increased by 110 percent to more than 210 million pounds," the Aluminum Association said in September.

Armenia faces the stiffest penalty of the five, said the US International Trade Commission, at the 188.84 percent rate. When a final decision is made, the rate could change: "If the final rate is different or if an order is not imposed, cash deposits will be refunded or changed as appropriate," a Commerce official told Eurasianet.

The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), in Washington, assailed the "counter-productive proposal" in a June 10 press release, arguing instead for closer management of bilateral trade.

"Armenia is a major taxpayer that contributes meaningfully to Armenia's budget, directly employs over 700 skilled workers in the Arabkir region, and indirectly supports the livelihoods of thousands of families across Armenia," ANCA said.

The timing could not be worse for Armenia, where the economy has been walloped by the pandemic. Output fell 7.4 percent last year, according to government figures. With the ongoing political crisis and an unresolved conflict on its eastern border, the IMF expects a painfully slow recovery.

MIRROR SEEKS SUMMER INTERN

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is seeking an intern for a six-week program this summer

(mid-July through August). The intern will receive a weekly \$150 stipend provided through the Armenian Students' Association of America's Internship Program.

The intern should be in college or graduate school. If interested, please contact Aram Arkun at tcadirector@aol.com or call 617 924-4420