

Michigan’s AGBU Manoogian School Graduates Record-Breaking Senior Class

By Harry Kezelian — SOUTHFIELD, MI
Mirror-Spectator Staff — Since its founding by benefactors Alex and Marie Manoogian in 1969, the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School has been one of the premier Armenian educational establishments in the United States. The only Armenian day school outside of California which goes up to 12th grade, the school has been a pillar of the Armenian culture and heritage in the Detroit area.
In 1995, the school succeeded in transitioning see GRADUATES, page 9



“Super Seniors” board showing all the colleges where students have been accepted

Armenian Foreign Minister Explains Resignation

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenian diplomats must not implement policies jeopardizing Armenia’s sovereignty and national security, outgoing Foreign Minister Ara Aivazyan said on Monday, May 31, commenting on his decision to resign.
The decision was announced last Thursday just hours after an emergency meeting of the country’s Security Council which discussed mounting tensions on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.
Speaking at the meeting, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan called for the deployment of in-



ternational observers along contested portions of the frontier where Armenian and Azerbaijani troops have been facing off against each other for almost three weeks. Some opposition figures and other critics of Pashinyan denounced the proposal, accusing him of failing to defend the country against foreign aggression.
Aivazyan made his first public comments on his resignation at a farewell meeting with the Armenian Foreign Ministry staff.
“The reason for my decision to resign was to make sure that there are never any suspicions that this ministry could take some steps or agree to some ideas, initiatives going against our statehood and national interests,” he said in a speech greeted with rapturous applause.
“In general, diplomats are perceived as conformist and adaptable individuals keen to avoid conflicts,” he said. “I believe that in see RESIGNATION, page 3

Pashinyan Proposes Moving Armenian, Azeri Forces to Initial Border Positions

YEREVAN (TASS) — Acting Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan came up with a proposal on May 27 for Armenian and Azerbaijani troops to move to their initial positions on the border and that observers from Russia or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group states be deployed in the area.
The acting prime minister outlined a plan for peacefully settling the border situation in a speech that was broadcast on the politician’s Facebook page.
“On behalf of the Armenian public, I offer to the Azerbaijani government to agree that the armed forces of both countries withdraw from the border area by several kilometers very quickly and si-

multaneously. We propose that the armed forces return to their initial positions and international observers from the Russian Federation or [the countries of] the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs be deployed there instead. This relates to the Sotk-Khoznar section [in the Gegharkunik Province],” he said.
Following this move, the Armenian-Azerbaijani border should be drawn up under the aegis of the international community, Pashinyan said.
“This is the official proposal to Azerbaijan, Russia, and other countries that are co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. If we fail to go along this route, the situation may get out of control,” Pashinyan cautioned.
The situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in the area of the Gegharkunik and Syunik border regions has remained tense since May 12. The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry reported earlier on Thursday that six Armenian servicemen were captured during an attempt by reconnaissance and subversive group to cross into Azeri territory.
Armenia’s Defense Ministry confirmed that the Armenian servicemen had been captured but noted that they had been taken prisoner during the engineering works in the border area of the Gegharkunik Province of Armenia. Pashinyan called the incident an abduction of Armenian servicemen. Yerevan applied to the European Court of Human Rights over the incident.

Janjigian Delves into Wine, Women, Beat Writers and JFK in San Francisco

By Alin K. Gregorian — WASHINGTON — Author Ken Janjigian puts a lot of himself into his work. In fact, in his latest novel, *A Cerebral Offer* (Livingston Press, University of West Alabama, 2020), he combines several of his interests: San Francisco, old bookstores, the Beat writers and even the fear of bridges.
In a recent interview from his home in the Washington suburbs, Janjigian spoke about some of the topics close to his heart and his methods for writing.
“It is a love affair between Harry and the city and I guess off that, the changes that have happened in San Francisco since the turn of the century,” Janjigian explained.
He added, “With this book, one thing I decided to do was to pour in the things I am most passionate about. Wine, Kerouac, San Francisco, the JFK conspiracy. Let me put all these things in there.”
see JANJIGIAN, page 14



Ken Janjigian

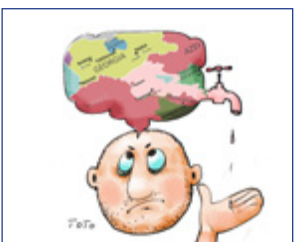
YEREVAN
‘I Believe Our Art and Culture Will Save Us’



GLENDALE
Learning Mission Retools Artsakh War Veterans for IT Work



COMMENTARY
Armenia’s Place in the New Political Order of The Caucasus





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Kocharyan: Armenia's Prime Minister Should Not Have So Much Power

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Former President Robert Kocharyan, the leader of the Armenia bloc running in the upcoming snap parliamentary elections, deplored the parliamentary system of government as an ineffective model for Armenia in an interview to the Russian RBC TV channel on May 29.

"I have also publicly spoken out against the current Constitution. I do not think that the parliamentary system of government is an effective model for Armenia," he told RBC's Ilya Doronov.

The ex-president touched upon the most pressing issues of Armenia's domestic, foreign policies and geopolitics during the interview. Kocharyan underlined that no president of Armenia has had as much authority as the current head of government under the constitution.

"This is inadmissible. In a country where the party system is not established, the parties do not have sufficient high rating to assume a dominant role in the parliament, it is inappropriate to talk about a parliamentary system of government. I believe it was a wrong step. I think we need to take half a step or one step back. The prime minister of Armenia should not have so many powers," said Kocharyan, emphasizing that no counterbalancing mechanisms are in place. The former president stressed the need to revise the system, adding the issue should be discussed with other political forces.

Yerevan Keeps Pushing For Release Of Armenian Prisoners

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenian authorities are "working around the clock" to secure the release of Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan, Aram Hakobyan, a deputy director of the National Security Service (NSS), said on June 1. He declined to give any details of those efforts or say if they have made any progress. The prisoners include six Armenian soldiers who were captured by Azerbaijani forces on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border on May 27. The incident heightened tensions at several portions of the frontier.

The Armenian Defense Ministry initially threatened to take military action to free its servicemen. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan indicated, however, that Yerevan will continue to exercise caution in the border dispute that has prompted serious concern from the international community. "There must be negotiations, only negotiations, there will be no use of force," Hakobyan told reporters. "We have to try to bring back our remaining prisoners as a result of negotiations." Hakobyan said that although Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations on the dispute were stopped on May 19 relevant officials from the two sides continue to communicate with each other.

Ara Asaturyan

'I Believe Our Art and Culture Will Save Us'

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN — One of my few polymath friends in Yerevan is Ara Asaturyan, whom we used to call Arik. A specialist in English, who worked as a translator, he is also a professional pianist, who left aside those two professions and followed his true vocation — dance, choreography and performing.

Asaturyan was born in 1976 in Yerevan, studied at the Yerevan Brusov State Linguistic University, Yerevan Komitas State Conservatory and Yerevan State Institute of Cinematography and Theater. In 2011, he took a postgraduate course at the Choreography Department of the St. Petersburg Conservatory.

Since 2005, he has been active in the Yerevan dance scene, staging a number of big and small performances: "Beyond the Virtual World" (Best Performance award of Gisaneh Youth Theater Festival), "Charents" (music by Grigor Hakhinyan), "Dreams about the Homeland" (inspired by folk songs performed acapella by Parik Nazarian), "Know That I'm Still Alive" (choreographic phantasy to the music of Michael Nyman and poems by Petros Duryan), "Hayrenner" (choreographic phantasy to the music of France-based Armenian composer Lilit Danielyan and poems by great Nahapet Kuchak), "Death and the Maiden" (music by Ludovico Einaudi), "Where, O Death, Is Your Victory?" (co-produced with stage director Grigor Khachatryan), "Hours of Vision" (produced in cooperation with three other Armenian choreographers), "Five Letters" (a ballet made for the Yerevan National Opera and Ballet Theatre).

Ara Asaturyan has staged dances for operas, including "Artsvaberd" (Eagles' Fortress) by Andrey Babaev and "Ring of Fire" by Avet Terteryan (both performed in open air in Shushi), "Carmen" by Georges Bizet as well as for Astor Piazzolla's "Maria de Buenos Aires" tango operetta.

Together with Grigor Khachatryan and Arman Julhakyen, he co-produced a number of ballets — "Hokis" (My Soul), "Amen," "We Promise" (based on Terry George's "The Promise"), "The Dance of Sassoun" and "#44 / Genetic Amnesia."

Ara Asaturyan also cooperated with stage directors, like Armen Meliksetyan ("The Blind" rock opera, "Maria de Buenos Aires" tango operetta, the musical "Mother Courage and Her Children"); Grigor Khachatryan (Euripides's "Medea" (Artavazd national award as the best youth performance of the year), Pierre Beaumarchais's "The Marriage of Figaro," William Shakespeare's "Othello," Rodion Beletsky's "Poison" and Euripides' "The Bacchae"); Nora Grigoryan (Nikolai Erdman's "The Suicide," Alexander Pushkin's "Eugene Onegin" (Artavazd national award as the best youth performance of the year) and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "I Only Came to Use the Phone").

Ara Asaturyan made choreographies for major dance companies in Armenia, like Yerevan National Opera and Ballet Theatre, Barekamutyun Armenian State Dance Ensemble, Yerevan State Choreographic College, Nor Nork Youth Center, Artsakh State Dance Ensemble and A Dream Ballade for Dance Academy Sofia.

Arik, it seems to be inevitable for you to be engaged in the magic world of stage dance, being born in the family of two outstanding representatives of Armenian ballet, even if they were against your becoming a dancer.

Yes, both my mom and my dad were in ballet. My mom, Elvira Mnatsakanyan, was the Prima Ballerina at the Yerevan National Opera and Ballet Theater for over 30 years and is the People's Artist of the Republic of Armenia, and my dad, Ashot Asaturyan, was one of the greatest choreographers of his time. I was in dance since I remember myself. I literally grew up in the theater, watching rehearsals in the hall during the day and performances from my own, personal wing in the evening. And after every rehearsal, it was my minute of glory: I would go to the middle of the hall and start dancing what I had just seen. No matter was it Giselle, Basilio or one of the little swans, I danced it all. Sometimes (of course, it was for a joke only) some dancers or even coaches would ask me to remind them of some movements or even episodes, and those were the happiest moments to me — to be able to dance and to share what I knew with others. My future was clear to me, but my parents turned out to have a different plan. They set extremely high standards in evaluating my abilities as a dancer, and one day they told me: "If you had really outstanding qualities, we would send you to study in St. Petersburg, but the fact is that



you are much better in music and languages, so, we don't want to sacrifice your genuine talents for the dubious future of a corps de ballet dancer." They were both right and wrong. They were right because even though I haven't become an outstanding musician or a high-class interpreter, I have learned and experienced much more as a personality than I would have learned were I in dance only. But they were also wrong because you can't escape your destiny — sooner or later you will go back to your path. In my case, that happened a bit late, but I don't mind. While I was a child, I was really angry with my parents for what they did to me, but now I am grateful because after so many years I am in dance again but with much bigger knowledge and experience — something one really needs to be a good choreographer.

Do your previous professions help you in choreography — if so, then how?

Of course, they do. The years in the Yerevan Conservatory did not make me a brilliant pianist but they gave me profound knowledge of music. It was my father's dream to see me playing the piano on a big stage. When he was a child, his family was too poor to have a piano, so, he had to draw keys on the table to be able to practice at home after his piano classes. One of the six children of a shoemaker in Tbilisi, my father grew up into a graduate of the Choreography Department of the St. Petersburg Conservatory and one of the most intelligent and competent persons I have ever known. He could easily read music scores and was extremely musical in both work and life. His example could not but inspire me. I tried hard to justify his expectations as a musician, and even though I failed to make his dream come true, now I have all I need as a choreographer. My profound knowledge of music helps me a lot. Unfortunately, my father passed away before I decided to become a choreographer, but I do hope that he would be proud of me and of my choice of a dream.

As far as languages are concerned, I think they are essential for every globally thinking artist today.

I have seen the video of your first one-act performance, "Dreams about the Homeland" based on the Armenian folk songs, performed by wonderful American-Armenian singer Parik Nazarian. The innovative interpretations of Armenian rural dances seemed to be a fresh approach in our stage dance, but you did not continue that kind of experiments.

Yes, it was one of my first ballets and it was something of a eureka to me. Armenian dance was not my priority during my first years as a choreographer, but when I first heard the voice of Parik Nazarian, a United State-based Armenian folk singer, I was enchanted. It was like her voice got into me and took me to my own soul. And I had a lot of visions. Perhaps, she broke my genetic codes or something, but I didn't mind. I think every artist at some point of his life needs such visions about his homeland, his roots and ancestors, his own identity. Yes, later I delved into contemporary dance and some other experiments and moved away from Armenian folk dance, but who knows, maybe some day I will hear some new voice and will have some new visions.

Now the advanced synthetic theatrical direction with cho-



ARMENIA

reographic elements seems active in Yerevan scene, and you are one of its few representatives. How do you evaluate the field?

I have been actively cooperating with actors and stage directors for many years. I have had a lot of joint projects with one of my best friends and one of the best stage directors in Armenia, Grigor Khachatryan. Our first experiment was Euripides' *Medea*. And it was the right point from which to start: ancient Greek theater was the cradle of synthetic art, so, all present-day experiments to synthesize arts are just ambitious attempts to reinvent a wheel. The Greeks did it all over two thousand years ago and today we are just doing the same in our own "innovative" ways. I like working with actors, sometimes, even more than with dancers. They are like clay - flexible in mind and soul - and also like sponges - eager to learn and hungrily absorbing all you give to them. I also like working with stage directors, helping them to visualize their ideas. And you learn a lot from them. For many years, I have taught stage movement to young actors at the Yerevan State Institute of Cinematography and Theater and have learned a lot. Theatrical techniques have greatly enriched my style and my perception of choreography. Today I feel like I am standing on the crossroads of theater and dance, but I don't have to choose. It's great to be part of these two fantastic worlds and to try to merge them together using your own fantasy.

Where is a dance movement born - in the mind, in the body, in the heart?

This question must have been given to all choreographers. Now it's my turn to answer it. And I will say... that I have no answer. Now I think with my body, then I move with my heart or feel with my mind. Everything is interwoven and has long become unconscious and instinctive. Sometimes, you have something in mind for years, sometimes, you have an inspiration or an impression, sometimes, you just need to do it. But to me the key is probably music. Music gives all the answers. It opens your mind and your heart and it makes your body move and that's all you need to have something born. But this, of course, is not enough. Once your child is born, you need to raise it and to let it go and live its own life - on stage, on video or in somebody's memory or heart.

They say there is nothing new under the sun, but still can one "invent" new dance movements?

I don't think that movement is the point here. You can invent a word, but it will have no sense until you put it into a context and make it alive. The same is for a movement. Sometimes, it comes spontaneously from nowhere, sometimes, it requires a lot of pain and effort, sometimes, you put plenty of sense and philosophy in it, and sometimes it has no sense at all. But it must be felt in all cases - only then it has enough energy to move a heart. I don't think you need to understand dance. Just feel it and you will comprehend something much bigger and deeper. Yes, just one simple movement can move the universe, and it doesn't need to be new; it needs to be true.

You seem to be inspired by Armenian literary fig-

ures - Nahapet Kuchak, Petros Duryan, Yeghishe Charents...

Yes, and not only Armenian. I am a poetic soul and I like poets. They are so powerful and so fragile at one and the same time. Poetry is very much like dance to me. It has its own rhythm and its own melody, its own logic feeding on metaphors, allusions, implications, deep flows and inner worlds. I like inventing own stories for my ballets, and poets with their strange and mystic lives offer plenty of fertile soil to my imagination. Usually, I take one interesting detail from a poet's life as the core, with the rest left to the atmosphere of his or her poetry. Among my heroes were Nahapet Kuchak with his sweet and charming sonnets in *Hayrenner*, Petros Duryan with his elegiac poems in *Know that I am Still Alive!*, Yeghishe Charents with his mind-blowing revolutionary odes in *Charents*, Marina Tsvetayeva and Boris Pasternak with their poetic love dialogue in *A Fish Flying in the Dark Corner of a Stage*. And probably there are many more interesting stories to come.

By the way, you were actively involved in poetry translation, making translations from and into Armenian, English and Russian. I read some of your translations from Armenian classical poetry into English, published in *GeghArm* magazine of Stepanakert. Don't you intend to publish your translations in a volume?

I hate routine. For many years, I worked for a news agency translating uninteresting copybook news. It was like a prison for my mind and soul. So, I found an escape - poetic translation. I've already said that poetry is like dance to me and translating a poem is like creating a dance. You feel the rhythm, you hear the melody, you perceive the essence of what is said, sense the elusive odor of the unsaid and there you are - on some unknown planet dancing with myriads of words and meanings. I have translated lots of authors - from Armenian and Russian into English, from Armenian and English into Russian, from English and Russian into Armenian. I have quite a big file. My friends keep persuading me into publishing it. I am not sure yet. To me it's more like a hobby, a kind of an outlet, a glass of good red wine on a sad rainy day. I think that in our virtually material world of web and rap there is no more room for poetry. People perceive the world very materially - they take magic for granted, they feel music just skin deep, they don't read into what they read. So, I wonder: "Does anybody need my poetic translations? Or will it be just some vain self-satisfaction of having a nicely designed volume on a bookstore shelf?"

I sometimes ask that question before publishing my books. Arik, another aspect of your talent was revealed in mono-performances - "The Funny Old Man" by Różewicz and "The Diary of a Madman" by Gogol. Are you going to expand your involvement in drama theater?

It's also something like a hobby. I am not a professional actor, but after so many years of interaction with stage directors and actors, I have seen acting from inside and I liked what I saw. Playing a role, embodying somebody

else or creating someone new is a very interesting process. The funny thing about it is that my first four characters were either old or mad men - aging actor in Chekhov's "Swan Song," a hapless funny old maniac in Różewicz's "The Funny Old Man," a hopelessly love-struck, crazy clerk in Gogol's "The Diary of a Madman," a sadistic psychiatrist in Piazzolla's "Maria de Buenos Aires." It was like a bad spell. I didn't want to play crazy old men anymore. And I decided to make a mono-performance of my own. My last show was "The Winter Road," a story about Franz Schubert, a show where I act, dance and sing and also tell people how hard it was and is to be a devotee of pure art in the everlasting times of showbiz. And the spell was broken! My last role was a charming, enterprising and adventurous cook in a musical version of Brecht's "Mother Courage and Her Children." I very much like the genre of musical and I am always happy to be part of such a project. I have already produced or co-produced a number of musicals and my dream is to stage a really big and beautiful show one day. And, of course, it will have to be good.

A couple of years ago you participated in the foundation of "Practicum-laboratoria" aiming to prepare a synthetic-type universal actor with mastery of both plastic and dramatic theater. At what stage is it now?

Yes, we called that project *Soma*. I and two more choreographers, Aida Simon and Rima Pipoyan, were given carte blanche to create something that would inspire actors and dancers to cooperate and would serve as a basis for a synthetic-type theater in future. In Armenia, we still have no theaters of modern dance, musical or experimental art. Some companies do some experiments, but there are lots of dancing actors and acting dancers who would love to have some platform for new interesting theatrical and chorographical discoveries. Well, each of us created his own work. The premiere was a success. We received lots of compliments and promises, but COVID-19 and the 44-day war put our project on hold. Today, Armenia is experiencing hard times and art and culture are not among the priorities. We will do our job in any case and hopefully, some day it will yield fruits.

You have participated in many international dance and theater festivals representing Armenia. Did you have the chance to work also with our compatriots worldwide?

Yes, in 2019, we had a great project in Paris. It was the initiative of an Armenian actress now living in Paris, Armine Gabrielyan, to make a show involving Armenian artists from different countries. One of her and my good friends, the very talented stage director, Khoren Chakhalyan, who is now conquering theatrical stages in Moscow and St. Petersburg, suggested making a synthetic show about the great Armenian composer Komitas. He was the director; I was the choreographer. The divine music of Komitas was performed by an outstanding Armenian piano player from Germany, Lusine Khachatryan (she is the sister of world renowned violinist Sergey Khachatryan), and fantastic Tamar Eskenian from Switzerland, who plays flute, shvi, duduk and dozens of other wind instruments. So, it was a team of talented Armenians from France, Switzerland, Germany, Russia and Armenia. And all of us spoke, acted, danced, sung, played and had a great time on stage. It was a very beautiful project. The audience in Paris was stunned. Sadly, the lockdown prevented us from taking the show to other places and sharing our emotions with audiences in Germany, Switzerland and elsewhere. I love communicating with Armenians worldwide. Wherever I danced, I met compatriots - Russia, Poland, Moldova, Bulgaria, Mexico. They seem to be very different, some of them don't speak Armenian well, but they are all brothers and sisters. We are a family, no matter where we live. And we must use every opportunity to be together. For the first time I had this feeling some 10 years ago, when I attended the Padus-Araxes Summer Course in Venice due to you, my good friend Artsvi! It was one of the happiest months in my life - and not only because I was in Venice but because I was welcomed into a family of wonderful people from all over the world. It was a big surprise to me to see so many non-Armenians in that family. Those people had been attending that course for many years and some of them are still visiting Venice each year. I never expected that so many men and women from very different cultures love Armenia and want to speak Armenian. That sincere love and devotion changed a lot in my own attitude towards my fatherland and my mother tongue.

As you said, now times are not good for high art, especially in Armenia, but, anyway, what are your current works? I never stop working. This is the only thing I can professionally do for my own self and my country. I am far from politics, fake news and all that hatred in social media. I have this whole world of art and culture with me and I feel comfortable there. I very much want to see our society back in that world one day and I am doing all I can to make this possible.

Armenian Foreign Minister Explains Resignation

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these difficult times we do not have a right to do that, and I am confident that there will be principled diplomats among us who will become role models for our society."

Ayvazyan did not comment on concrete government policies and decisions.

Pashinyan was quick to respond to the outgoing foreign minister's remarks through his press secretary, Mane Gevorgian.

"While we thank Mr. Ayvazyan for his work, we believe our national and state interests require Mr. Ayvazyan to publicly explain who, where and how was going to take some steps or to make decisions contradicting our country's national and state interests," Gevorgian told the Armenpress news agency.

For her part, Lilit Makunts, the parliamentary leader of Armenia's ruling My Step bloc, insisted that shortly before the Security Council meeting Pashinyan informed Ayvazyan about his intention to seek an international observation mission and that the minister did not object to it.

"I cannot say anything about other [possible] reasons [for Ayvazyan's resignation] because I don't know them," Makunts told reporters.

Pashinyan did not formally accept Ayvazyan's resignation as of Monday morning.

He appointed Ayvazyan as foreign minister on November 18 as part of a cabinet reshuffle that followed Armenia's defeat in a war in Nagorno-Karabakh. The 52-year-

old career diplomat had previously worked as Armenian ambassador to Mexico and various European countries.

The Yerevan newspaper *Hraparak* reported on May 21 that Ayvazyan has decided to resign because he disagrees with Pashinyan's handling of the border crisis. Following his resignation, several media outlets claimed that at least two of Armenia's deputy foreign ministers have also decided to step down. The Foreign Ministry did not confirm nor deny the claims.

The crisis began after Azerbaijani troops advanced several kilometers into Armenia's Gegharkunik and Syunik provinces on May 12-14. The Armenian military responded by sending reinforcements to those areas.

Pashinyan said on May 27 that both sides should withdraw their troops from the disputed border areas and let Russia and/or the United States and France, the two other countries co-chairing the OSCE Minsk Group, deploy observers there. He said that should be followed by a process of "ascertaining border points" supervised by the international community.

In a joint statement issued the following day, the French, Russian and U.S. diplomats co-heading the Minsk Group backed the proposed troop disengagement. But they did not specify whether their countries are ready to send observers.

Azerbaijan has not reacted to Pashinyan's proposal so far. Baku maintains that its troops did not cross into Armenia.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Aliyev Transfers Ownership Of Gold Deposits to Erdogan Moneyman

YEREVAN (Mediamax) — Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has signed a decree on the transfer of three gold deposits in the Kelbajar region to Turkish companies, the news organization reported on June 1. According to the decree, the Gashgachay deposit will be transferred to the Turkish company Eti Bakir for exploitation, and the Elbeidash and Agduzdag deposits go to another Turkish company Artvin Maden. The deposits are transferred for the period of 30 years.

These three companies belong to Ahmet Cengiz, one of Erdogan's personal moneyman and shadow manager of his assets. Before the 2020 war, the mentioned deposits belonged to GeoProMining.

Iran Stands for Peaceful Settlement of All Issues in The Region – Zarif

TEHRAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Iran stands for peaceful settlement of all issues in the region, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told reporters in Yerevan on May 26 after his meeting with Armenia's acting Foreign Minister Ara Aivazyan (who has since resigned). Zarif added that the countries' territorial integrity and the rights of peoples should be respected.

"Any escalation that leads to human losses is a matter of concern and we want this issue to be solved peacefully as soon as possible," Zarif said, commenting on the border standoff after Azerbaijan's intrusion into Armenia's sovereign territory.

"We very much appreciate that in these alarming days and circumstances, our age-old friend and neighbor, the Iranian Foreign Minister and my very good colleague Zarif, paid a regional visit and arrived in Armenia today, which testifies to Iran's unselfish intention to work for stability and security in the region," Aivazyan said.

He emphasized that Iran is a very important neighbor and partner that plays a key role in the stability and security architecture of the region. Aivazyan emphasized Armenia's willingness to make every effort to deepen the interstate cooperation with Iran.

Turkey, Azerbaijan Hold Military Conference

BAKU (Panorama.am) — The 13th meeting of the Azerbaijan-Turkey High-Level Military Dialogue was scheduled to take place in Baku on June 3, according to a statement by Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry on May 31, Anadolu news agency reported. The meeting will discuss the current state of bilateral cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey in the security, military, military-technical, military-medical, military-educational, defense industry, and other spheres, the ministry said. Delegations from both the countries will also consider prospects for development.

France's Macron Insists on Azeri Troop Withdrawal

PARIS (RFE/RL) — French President Emmanuel Macron again demanded that Azerbaijan withdraw its troops from Armenia's border areas when he met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Paris on Tuesday, June 1.

Macron also called on Armenia and Azerbaijan to demarcate their border through negotiations and without "any fait accompli on the ground."

"The Azerbaijani troops must leave Armenia's sovereign territory," he said after greeting Pashinyan at the presidential Elysee Palace. "I am calling on the parties to return to the positions held by them on May 11. France is ready to facilitate discussions."

"We stand in solidarity with Armenia and we will continue to do so," he added in a statement to the press made before a lunch meeting with Pashinyan.

Macron was quick to voice strong support for Yerevan after Azerbaijani forces reportedly crossed several sections of the border and advanced a few kilometers into Armenia's Syunik and Gegharkunik provinces on May 12. "They must withdraw immediately," he tweeted after a May 13 phone call with Pashinyan.

The US State Department similarly urged Azerbaijan to "pull back all forces immediately and cease further provocation" on May 14.



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, left, with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris on June 1, 2021

Baku maintains that its troops took up new positions on the Azerbaijani side of the frontier and did not cross into Armenia.

Tensions at the contested border sections rose further after six Armenian soldiers were captured by Azerbaijani forces on May 27. Pashinyan proposed hours later

that both sides withdraw their troops from those areas and let Russia and/or the United States and France, the two other countries co-chairing the OSCE Minsk Group, deploy observers there.

In a joint statement issued the following day, the French, Russian and US diplomats co-heading the Minsk Group backed the proposed troop disengagement. But they did not specify whether their countries are ready to send observers.

Macron said on Tuesday that France will do its best to achieve a "de-escalation and re-establishment of dialogue between the parties." He indicated that the border crisis and the broader situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone will be high on the agenda of his meeting with Pashinyan.

Pashinyan thanked the French leader for having "spoken the language of truth since the outset of the crisis." "This is extremely important for overcoming crisis situations in our region," he told reporters before the talks.

Erdogan under Renewed Pressure Following Mafia Boss Allegations

ANKARA (Panorama.am) — The Turkish government is facing accusations of arming and funding jihadists in Syria. The allegations are just the latest by an exiled mafia boss in a weekly YouTube broadcast that are putting the Turkish president in an increasingly tight spot, Voice of America reports.

Among the many allegations being spread by Sedat Peker on YouTube is one that allegedly implicates the Turkish government of arming and buying oil from Syrian jihadists. In one of his broadcasts Peker explains in detail how key aides of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ran the scheme.

Peker, who analysts say once enjoyed close ties to Turkey's rulers, started broadcasting weekly Sunday videos on a YouTube channel, alleging government misdeeds after he was forced to flee the country.

Analyst Atilla Yesilada says the mafia boss has a growing audience.

"It is huge. He is easily attracting audiences in excess of four and five million per video. And everything he says is scrutinized in the opposition channels. So, I would say everyone knows about what he is saying. Obviously, the most damaging is him opening the 1990s file, the extrajudicial killings," Yesilada said.

Peker alleges former interior minister Mehmet Agar was the head of a shadowy organization known as the "deep state," which is said to have been responsible for a series of assassinations of prominent journalists dating back to the 1990s. Agar is closely linked to Erdogan, and his son Tolga is a parliamentary deputy for the ruling AKP, Turkey's ruling party.

Agar has denied the allegations. Erol Onderoglu of Reporters Without Borders says there is a need for government transparency.

"This should be part of a parliamentary investigation first, but I think that it will never be possible without the Turkish government naming some state actors in this period. So, transparency today should calm public opinion today and show respect to victims' families," Onderoglu said.

But Erdogan is dismissing the allegations.

Speaking to his party's deputies, the Turkish president claimed the accusations are part of an international conspiracy to oust him.

But Peker's allegations continue, accusing the son of Erdogan's close confidant, former prime minister Binali Yildirim, of cocaine smuggling, and turning Turkey into one of the biggest hubs for importing and distributing drugs into Europe. Yildirim dismissed the allegations.

Analysts point out Erdogan is experienced at weathering political storms. But analyst Yesilada says, unlike in the past, Turkey is in the midst of an economic crisis and record-low opinion poll ratings for Erdogan.

"These are all unmistakable signs of Armageddon for Erdogan approaching. It will really take a miracle to repair the reputational damage that is caused by the Peker videos. The picture that emerges is that this is a government set for personal benefit and for the benefit of cronies and [one that] has completely lost interest in the voters," Yesilada said.

Peker is promising more YouTube videos that he says will share more intimate secrets he claims he learned from spending two decades in the inner circles of the ruling party.

Mkhitaryan Extends Roma Contract

ROME (Public Radio of Armenia) — AS Roma has announced that Henrikh Mkhitaryan has extended his contract with AS Roma until June 30, 2022.

Mkhitaryan, 32, joined the Giallorossi in the summer of 2019 and has since gone on to make 73 appearances for the club in all competitions – scoring 23 goals.

"Over the last two years at Roma I've fallen in love, both with the club and the city, thanks in large part to the incredible passion of the fans," Mkhitaryan said.

"The club's ambitions are very high and I am proud to have the chance to play my part as we take on all the challenges that await us next season. Daje Roma!"

The Armenia international scored 14 goals over the course of the 2020-21 campaign, providing a further 13 assists.

"We are very pleased that Henrikh has decided to continue his adventure with Roma," said Tiago Pinto, the club's General Manager.

"As he has already shown with his performances on the pitch, his quality will be very important in helping the team reach their targets next season."



After Versailles: International Conference to Draw Lessons Of 1915

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — Can we learn from history? Has the vow of “Never again!” found fulfillment? Or has one historic catastrophe merely paved the way for an even more tragic repetition? These crucial questions are at the center of an ambitious and timely initiative launched by the AGBU Europe in partnership with the Lepsius House in Potsdam, the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS) and the Roma organization Phiren Amenca.

“Ideas & their Consequences: Genocide and International Justice after 1919” is the name of the project, co-funded by the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union. It begins with a series of online events in June, followed by an international conference in late August. The aim of the initiative is to examine two opposing processes that unfolded in Europe in the wake of



Lepsius House

World War I: on the one hand, the concepts of humanitarianism and international justice came into being and took on concrete form, and on the other, radical extremist political ideologies emerged anew, with the potential for unthinkable savagery. The Ottoman genocide of 1915 plays a central role in the proceedings. As the invitation states, that watershed event will be presented as an integral part of European history, that it “inspired horror, compassion, fascination and passionate debate in European countries before, during and after its occurrence, and that it profoundly influenced political thinking in Europe.”

The speakers represent leading academics who have researched both trends characterizing the interwar period, the history of humanitarianism and international justice and the history of radical ideologies and political violence. Opening the series of webinars (held in English, <http://www.lepsiushaus-potsdam.de/>) on June 2 is Dr. Rolf Hosfeld, historian and Director of the Potsdam Lepsius House. A member of the German Writers’ Union since 1982, Hosfeld has published numerous articles as well as fifteen books, some of which have received awards. His biography of Karl Marx won the Das politische Buch (the political book) prize in 2010. His history of the Armenian genocide appeared in 2005 and 2009, and a 2015 revised edition was translated into Turkish (2018) and Armenian (2021). He has also edited, co-edited and contributed to works on Johannes Lepsius and the German Empire.

In the webinar he will present “The Rise of International Law: The Talaat Pasha Trial in June 1921.” This is the centenary year of the event that made legal history, providing Raphael Lemkin with the inspiration to develop the concept and term of genocide. Hosfeld examines the background to the trial that Hannah Arendt referenced in her book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, and explores the contribution it made to the forging of international law.

Stefan Ihrig, Professor of History at the University of Haifa, looks into the way German nationalists and the

Nazis drew destructive conclusions from the genocide, shaping ethnic policies that were to be implemented in the Shoah. His theme on June 3 is “The Original Sin of Europe’s Dark 20th Century: (Re)Integrating the Armenian Genocide into European and World History.” The intense debates that raged in post-war Germany contributed to the process leading to the Shoah and thus suggest the need to reconceptualize basic assumptions about 20th century history. Ihrig is the author of *Ataturk in the Nazi Imagination* (2014) and *Justifying Genocide – Germany and the Armenians from Bismarck to Hitler* (2016).

On June 4, a panel discussion will take the matter out of the past and consider its implications in relation to the current situation in the Caucasus. Organized by the Lepsius House and AGBU Lebanon, this event, entitled “Embattled Dreamlands,” focuses on the history of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Prof. Ronald G. Suny from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and Dr. David Leupold from the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin look into the renewed outbreak of conflict from various vantage points. Reviewing the developments from the Ottoman and Soviet eras to the ongoing geopolitical confrontation, the experts seek to sharpen our understanding of the consequences that derive from the wanton destruction of cultural heritage monuments, and to explore perspectives for bringing peace to a region devastated by crises and war.

In August, the threads of the discussion will be picked up again, this time in a three-day conference held at the European Academy in Berlin. There several more renowned historians will join the speakers’ rostrum. Following welcoming remarks on August 27 by Nadia Gortzounian of the AGBU Europe, Rolf Hosfeld will deliver the keynote, “‘No peace to end all violence’: Nationalism, Imperialism and Internationalism after 1919.”

The following day starts with a panel on “Atrocities against Civilians and the Rise of Humanitarian Movements.” Melanie Tanielian, from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, will address the theme, “Violence, Aid and Non-State Actors: Humanitarian Intervention in Nineteenth-Century Anatolia.” In her studies of society and culture during the first World War, Tanielian has devoted attention to the role of philanthropic institutions, including German missionaries, social Protestantism and humanitarian work in the health sector.

Charlie Laderman, a lecturer at King’s College, London, will speak on “The Anglo-American Struggle to Save the Armenians and Remake Global Order.” Laderman, who has taught at the universities of Texas and Cambridge, has probed the relationship between the United States and the world in the 19th and 20th centuries. He has examined the interplay between U.S. foreign and domestic policy, as well as relationship among imperialism, humanitarianism and liberal internationalism.

The lecture by Hilmar Kaiser from Yerevan State University will deal with “The Armenian Origins of the Near East Relief” and Roy Knocke, Deputy Director of the Potsdam Lepsius House, will present “Fridtjof Nansen: The Plight of Statelessness as an International Challenge.” Kaiser is a genocide researcher who has dedicated particular attention to the role of leading officials. Among his publications are “Extermination of Armenians in the Diyarbakir Region” (2014) and several articles, for example, in the *Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies* (2010).

Knocke, who lectures at the University of Potsdam, has studied the moral and socio-philosophical aspects of genocide and published on Franz Werfel, as well as on forms of extremist political violence in the 20th century.

The second panel, dedicated to “Post-Versailles Europe,” chaired by Hosfeld, will feature a speech by Hans-Lukas Kieser from the University of Newcastle, Australia on “Mass Violence: The Elephant in the Room at the Conference of Lausanne.” Kieser, who is also an honorary professor at the University of Zurich, has studied the late Ottoman Empire as well as the Republic of Turkey. He is the author of “Talaat Pasha. Founder of Modern Turkey, Architect of Genocide” (2018) and co-editor of “The End of the Ottomans: The Genocide of 1915 and the Politics of Turkish Nationalism” (2019).

Momme Schwarz is a research assistant and doctoral candidate at the Saxonian Academy of Sciences, Leipzig, where he is engaged in the “Encyclopedia of Jewish Cultures” project. His lecture will deal with “Jewish Minority Protection during the Interwar Period – The Comité des délégations juives and the Schwarzbard trial.”

Chalak Kaveh, associate professor of history at Volda University College, Norway, will speak on “The Apex of European Traditional ‘Gypsy policy’ in the Interwar Period – A History of Policy Radicalization.” Kaveh, a

genocide studies researcher, is the author of ‘*Vagrancy Plague*’: *The Treatment of Roma and Romani groups by the Norwegian Police and Judiciary 1900-1960* (2016) and former editor of a genocide studies publication, *Etter Lemkin*.

Ihrig will follow with a lecture on “Learning from the Turks – Interwar Germany, the Nazis and the Quest for Violent Solutions.”

Attendants will have the opportunity to visit an exhibition at the Lepsius House on “Johannes Lepsius and the Armenian genocide.”

The final day of the conference will open with a panel on “The Origins of International Justice,” chaired by Ronald Grigor Suny, a distinguished professor with positions at several universities, among them in Michigan, Chicago and St. Petersburg, Russia. A scholar in Russian, Armenian and Caucasian history, he has conducted research in the history of nationalism and imperialism, ethnic conflicts and genocide. Among his publications are *Looking Towards Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (1993), *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (1998) and *They Can Live in the Desert But Nowhere Else: A History of the Armenian Genocide* (2015).

“The Impact of the Istanbul Experience on International Criminal Justice” is the theme treated by Gurgun Petrossian, from the Friedrich-Alexander University, Erlangen-Nuremberg. Petrossian has engaged in extensive study of law, in Yerevan, Heidelberg and Erlangen-Nuremberg. Since 2016 he has been a research assistant and lecturer there in the field of International Criminal Law. In 2019 he became chairman of the German-Armenian Lawyers’ Association.

Hülya Adak, gender director from the Sabanci University and visiting professor at the Free University of Berlin, will talk about “Andrei N. Mandelstam and the History of Human Rights between the World Wars.” In addition to gender and women’s studies, Adak has worked on European, Ottoman and Turkish literature, including drama and film.

“Violence against Women and Children in the Context of the Development of International Law” will be discussed by Edita Gzoyan, Deputy Scientific Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan. Gzoyan is the author of numerous articles and a book, as well as country editor for the “Central and Eastern European Review.”

On August 29, Roy Knocke will chair the fourth panel dedicated to “Remembrance and Transnational Justice in the 20th and 21st Century.” Fatma Müge Göçek, professor of Sociology and Women’s Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, will examine “The Complexity of Denialism in Turkey during the Interwar Period.” Göçek, who has concentrated on the comparative analysis of politics, history, gender and collective violence, has published widely. Her book, *The Transformation of Turkey: Redefining State and Society from the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Era*, appeared in 2010 and five years later, “Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present and the Collective Violence against the Armenians.” At present she is engaged as co-editor of works on cultural violence and violence against the Kurds in current day Turkey.

Gerd Hankel, an expert in international law at the Hamburg Foundation for the Promotion of Science and Culture, HSFWK, will discuss “The Relationship between International Criminal Justice and Remembrance.” Hankel has dealt with the issue of German war crimes in two key cases: he collaborated on the exhibition of the Wehrmacht crimes, “Dimensions of the War of Annihilation 1941-1944,” and authored a book on *The Leipzig trials: German war crimes and their legal consequences after World War I* (2014). His work extends to study of the Rwandan genocide.

The theme of a lecture by Michael B. Elm, from the Tel Aviv University and Free University of Berlin, is “Remembering the Great War in the Middle East. Constructing Cultural Trauma in Aljazeera (English) Documentaries.” Elm has specialized in media and memory culture. He conducted his doctoral work at the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main on the presentation of Holocaust testimonies in feature and documentary films and will publish a book on film depictions of the first World War in Europe and the Middle East.

The conference will conclude with a panel of Dr. Hosfeld, Prof. Suny and other participants. The organizers plan to circulate the proceedings in an information packet, to conduct video interviews with the speakers and to arrange for a travelling exhibition. In addition, there will be follow-up sessions in Paris, Cologne, Valence, Milan and Brussels. And reports on the single events will appear in these pages.



Community News

Bill Allowing Local Agencies to Divest From Turkey Receives Overwhelming Support From Cal. State Senate

SACRAMENTO — California Senate Bill 457, a measure introduced by California State Sen. Anthony J. Portantino (D – La Canada Flintridge) and Senate Republican Leader Scott Wilk (R – Santa Clarita), passed the Senate Floor 35-0. The bill requires the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) and the State Teachers' Retirement System (STRS) Boards of Administration to allow school districts and cities to opt out of investment vehicles issued or owned by the Republic of Turkey.

"SB 457 would impose much needed economic consequences on a regime that continues to engage in an ongoing campaign of genocide denial," stated Portantino. "Public employees in my district who are members of CalSTRS and CalPERS are descendants of Armenian Genocide survivors and had to relive the intergenerational trauma during the recent Artsakh war, in which Turkey was heavily involved. I believe divesting from Turkey sends a strong message to the world that California does not do business with genocidal regimes and countries with a history of civil and human rights abuses. It is consistent with our basic humanitarian principles," he added.

The State of California has a long history of divesting from countries that violate human rights. In 1986, Governor George Deukmejian condemned South Africa's apartheid policy by signing California's divestiture law, aimed at pressuring the government to end its system of racial segregation. In 2008, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a Sudan divestment bill due to the ongoing genocide in the Darfur. And the University of California system successfully divested from Turkey in 2017.

In addition to its ongoing campaign of denial of the Armenian Genocide, Turkey provided strong military support to Azerbaijan in the 2020 Artsakh war, transported thousands of mercenaries from Syria to support Azerbaijan against Armenian citizens, and continues to support Azerbaijan's refusal to return prisoners of war to Armenia. Furthermore, Turkey withdrew from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, better known as the Istanbul Convention.

"SB 457 sends a message to the Turkish government that silence is not an option and until the Turkish government acknowledges its shameful history, California will stand in solidarity with our Armenian brothers and sisters," said Senate Republican Leader Scott Wilk. "I look forward to the day when this important bill becomes law."

Senator Portantino drafted SB 457 after discussing with Glendale City Councilmember Ardy Kassakhian the initiative he brought forth to the Glendale City Council to divest investment dollars from the Republic



Learning Mission student receives new laptop

Learning Mission Retools Artsakh War Veterans For IT Work

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

YEREVAN/GLENDALE — The disastrous 2020 Artsakh War mobilized Armenians throughout the world during and after the fighting. Despite the generally negative aftermath, creative efforts to help Armenia recover, and especially to help the individual victims of the war, continue to multiply. Learning Mission is one such grassroots effort, driven by the passion of its founders and volunteers.

Its initial founder and chief executive officer is the dynamic Rouben Gargaloyan, a full stack senior software architect and technical leader based in Glendale. Born in Armenia, he received his education at Yerevan Polytechnic University before moving to the US in the late 1990s.

Gargaloyan said, "We decided to create the Learning Mission organization right after the Artsakh War, when we realized that our loss was in many ways technological. We could not keep up with the technological advancements of our enemies, and that resulted in the catastrophic losses of our country. As a computer professional, I realized that there is a lack of computer and internet technology education in Armenia."

He spoke to many IT CEOs of companies in Armenia and they all told Gargaloyan the same numbers: every year there is a 30-percent increase in demand for IT professionals in Armenia. This is a vast demand, Gargaloyan concluded.

There actually are a variety of organizations that provide such education in Armenia, but most, if not all, require prior background such as in mathematics or related fields. What is unique about Learning Mission is that it primarily serves veterans of the Artsakh War, many of whom who were gravely wounded and remain handicapped, unable to do many conventional jobs requiring mobility.

Gargaloyan said, "We give preference to people who have severe injuries: no legs, no hands, no eyes, and others who would pretty much have no future with these types of injuries. We give them hope. We are giving them a chance. Their background is not important."

He continued: "Our great experiment is essentially to find people who only have an interest in learning. The only condition that we set is are you really serious, are you motivated to get this education? When the answer is yes, we don't ask any further questions about preparation and background. We could sense when a person was really motivated." Many of the candidates have zero background in technology but the goal is to give them a jumpstart, with a critical mass of knowledge that allows them

see VETERANS, page 10



Rouben Gargaloyan

Armenia General Consul Baibourtian Visits Washington, Oregon

GLENDALE — On May 15, the visit of the Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles Ambassador Armen Baibourtian to the states of Washington and Oregon began. On May 15, the priest of the Holy Resurrection Armenian Church in Redmond, Wash., Rev. Vazgen Boyajyan, and the Parish Council hosted a meeting with Baibourtian, presenting information about the church and the community affairs.

Baibourtian outlined the functions of the Consulate General of Armenia as well as current and future programs. He also noted the importance of establishing strong bonds of cooperation between the Armenian community of Seattle and the Homeland, along with the Armenian Consulate General in LA.

On the same day, Baibourtian met with professionals from the Armenian community of Washington working in various spheres, but mostly in companies with headquarters in Seattle, such as Google, Microsoft,



From left, Deputy Secretary of State of Oregon Cheryl Myers, Secretary of State of Oregon Shemia Fagan and Ambassador Armen Baibourtian

Amazon, Nordstrom, etc. During the meeting, Baibourtian presented the existing U.S.-Armenia cooperation in the fields of IT and high-tech and its prospects, as well as the avenues of providing support to the entrepreneurs wishing to invest in Armenia or develop economic cooperation. Various opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation were also discussed.

Baibourtian also answered numerous questions from the audience present at the event.

On May 16, Baibourtian visited the Armenian Saturday School adjacent to the Holy Resurrection Armenian Church in Seattle, where he got acquainted with the school's activities and its future programs. After a tour of the facilities and a thorough conversation with the principal and the teaching staff, he offered the assistance and support of the Consulate General of Armenia in LA to the school, in particular, through providing school textbooks and literary materials from Armenia.

On the same day, Baibourtian met with representatives of the Armenian community of Washington State at the Holy Resurrection Church. Rev.

continued on next page



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

Fr. Vazgen Boyajyan and the visit's coordinator in the community Razmig Keutelian introduced Baibourtian as well as Varazdat Pahlavuni, Counselor of the Consulate General of Armenia. In his speech, Baibourtian presented the activities carried out by the Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles for the benefit of Armenia

and the Armenian people. He touched upon the challenges and priorities of Armenia's foreign policy, and noted the importance of the role of the Armenian community in Washington in the context of Armenia-Diaspora cooperation and the community's bonds with the Consulate General and the Homeland. He answered numerous questions from the audience.



Ambassador Armen Baibourtian and Rev. Vazgen Boyajian speak with parishioners outside Holy Resurrection Armenian Church in Redmond, Wash.



At the Saturday school of the Holy Resurrection Church in Redmond, Wash.

On May 17, Baibourtian and Pahlavuni held a series of meetings with representatives of the Armenian community of Seattle upon the latter's request. During the meetings, issues were discussed related to charitable and economic input programs, both through the community and individually in Armenia. The Armenian community of Washington State consists of around 8,000-10,000 people.

On May 18, Baibourtian met with Schuyler F. Hoss, director of International Relations and Protocol of the Governor of State of Washington.

During the meeting, the interlocutors discussed the possibilities and prospects of cooperation between Armenia and the State of Washington in sectors such as information and high technologies, environmental protection, the establishment of sister city relations between the cities of the Washington State and Armenia, etc. In the context of the California-Armenia cooperation, Baibourtian referred to the Framework Agreement on Cooperation between Armenia and the State of California as a successful model. An agreement was reached to develop a similar agreement with the State of Washington. The meeting was also attended by Pahlavuni.

On May 19, Baibourtian met with the Secretary of State of Oregon Shemia Fagan in Salem, the capital city of Oregon. She is the second highest-ranking official of the state executive branch in succession to the Governor of Oregon. Fagan noted that after assuming her present position in January 2021, this is her first meeting with the head of a foreign diplomatic mission. Baibourtian congratulated her and briefly introduced the Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles, as well as the cooperation programs with the State executive and legislative authorities. During the meeting, the interlocutors discussed the areas of cooperation between the State of Oregon and the Consulate General of Armenia, and exchanged views on the Armenian community of Oregon and the ways of its advancement. The meeting was attended by Deputy Secretary of State of Oregon Cheryl Myers and Pahlavuni.

On May 19, Baibourtian met with the Parish Council of St. Kevork Armenian Church of Oregon in Clackamas, OR chaired by Mher Sharyan. He presented programs aimed at strengthening ties with the Homeland, in particular, concerning the youth. Concrete cooperation projects between the Consulate General of Armenia and the Armenian community of Oregon were discussed, and also the means for the involvement of the community in the programs organized by the Consulate General. On May 20, the Consul General met with the representatives of the Armenian Community of Portland at St. Kevork Armenian Church of Portland.

Baibourtian presented the activities of the Consulate General, and the relationship developed with the state executive and legislative bodies, regions and cities of the Western U.S. He underlined the importance of cooperation between the Armenian community structures and the Consulate General for the benefit of the Armenia-Diaspora agenda. The interlocutors also noted the role of the Armenian community of Oregon in expanding the cooperation with the state authorities. The representatives of the community expressed satisfaction with the strengthening of the ties of the Armenian community in Portland with the Homeland through the Consulate General. The Armenian community of Oregon consists of around 1,500-2,000 people.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

NAASR to Honor Edward Avedisian and Remember Vartan Gregorian at its ‘Building For Eternity’ Virtual Gala

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) invites the public to join its first-ever virtual gala on Wednesday, June 16, at 7 p.m. Eastern/ 4 p.m. Pacific for its “Building for Eternity” Virtual Gala, honoring Edward Avedisian, NAASR Board member and principal benefactor of NAASR’s spectacular new Vartan Gregorian Building.

“We are honored to recognize Ed for his outstanding dedication and distinguished service in advancing education in the US and Armenia,” said Yervant Chekijian, NAASR’s chairman of the Board. Avedisian is an extraordinary philanthropist, who serves as a member of NAASR’s Board of Directors, a member of the Board of Trustees of the American University of Armenia, and a member of the Board of Directors

of the Armenian Missionary Association of America. NAASR’s new headquarters bears Vartan Gregorian’s name at the request of Avedisian. “These two remarkable individuals share a fundamental belief in the transformative power of education, which is also at the core of NAASR’s mission,” said Mr. Chekijian. “We hope you will join us on June 16th in celebrating the accomplishments of Edward Avedisian, and together we will ensure that NAASR is ‘Building for Eternity.’”

A special *In Memoriam* remembrance of Vartan Gregorian (1934-2021) will also take place during the evening with a tribute from Noubar Afeyan, co-founder and chairman of Moderna, founder and CEO of Flagship Pioneering, and co-founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative.

“We had hoped Vartan Gregorian would

be with us and celebrate the evening, but instead we bear the deep loss of a towering intellectual, remarkable humanitarian, and sincere friend,” said Sarah Ignatius, NAASR’s executive director.

Gregorian’s lifetime of scholarship and philanthropy includes serving as president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, president of the New York Public Library, president of Brown University, professor of Armenian and Caucasian History and professor of South Asian history, University of Pennsylvania, and co-founder of Aurora Humanitarian Initiative.

Attendance at NAASR’s Virtual Gala is free, but registration through Zoom is required. (<http://bit.ly/Build4Eternity>). Proceeds will go toward closing the small gap remaining on the building and toward safeguarding its financial well-being by creating an Eternity Endowment Fund. To donate or sponsor online now or during the Gala visit <http://weblink.donorperfect.com/EternityGala>.

The Virtual Gala organizing committee consists of Arlene Saryan Alexander, Yer-



The late Dr. Vartan Gregorian with Edward Avedisian (photo by Carnegie Corporation of New York)

vant Chekijian, Sarah B. Ignatius, Marc A. Mamigonian, Margaret Mgrublian, Sylvia L. Parsons and Judith Saryan.



The new NAASR headquarters

OBITUARY

Sira Gulekjian

Tekeyan and AGBU Supporter

ZUG, Switzerland — Sira (Siranouche) Gulekjian, a dedicated member of the Tekeyan Cultural Association and Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), passed away on March 3 in Zug, Switzerland in the presence of her family members.

Sira was born in Beirut on May 3, 1939 to Krikor of Izmit and Nver Gulekjian of Tarsus, Turkey. At a very young age, she lost her father. She attended the Genats Elementary and Achinag Secondary Armenian Schools in Beirut, and following graduation, took several courses at the American University of Beirut (AUB). She eventually served as executive secretary from 1961 to 1972 in the geology and archaeology departments of the university.

She was athletic by nature and as an adolescent, she participated for about seven years in Beirut’s AGBU-affiliated Armenian Youth Association’s girls’ basketball team. She also served as chair of the Zareh Nubar Ladies Club.

She married and was blessed with an energetic daughter, Tania. As a result of the Lebanese Civil War, she went to Belgium to be with her brother Dr. Jacques Hagop Gulekjian, and then subsequently moved to the United States.

As her daughter Tania and the latter’s



husband, Carlos Mobayad, had moved meanwhile to Zug, Switzerland, she moved there in 2010 to join them, and was very happy to enjoy the presence of her three grandchildren. Sira remained in Zug under medical care for some time until her death.

Requiem services will be conducted on June 13 at Tenafl’s St. Thomas Church in New Jersey.



The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada would like to thank the following individuals for their donations to its Sponsor a Teacher Program in memory of Nora Azadian, along with the individuals mentioned in the prior two weeks’ issues of the *Mirror-Spectator*.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

AGBU Manoogian School Graduates Record-Breaking Senior Class

GRADUATES, from page 1

from a private school to a publicly-funded charter school authorized by Central Michigan University, opening its horizons to the broader community with its doors open to all, while keeping its close ties with the Armenian community and Armenian history and language (Western) as a requirement of the curriculum. Its strong ESL (English as a Second Language) program, devel-

Velhan said “Seven years later, I feel like I’ve never been at a different school.”

Among other positive aspects of Manoogian, she mentioned that the way faculty and students interact and with the small size of the school, “it brings us closer together.” The school was a “very welcoming environment,” Velhan stated, and “it’s not like a [regular] public high school where there are thousands of students and

I’ve learned the culture, language, dance, history. If I didn’t attend Manoogian I don’t think I would be able to say that. I attend camps on the East Coast and many of my Armenian friends from the East Coast and elsewhere, they might speak the language but they stopped going to Armenian School in 5th grade. I think having to take Armenian all the way through high school, I was able to remember the language more. And I can now carry this to the future and teach it to my kids.”

As for the school’s atmosphere, “the teachers have seen me grow up, and being in the same class with other kids, we’ve all grown together as a family,” Calukyan says. “And we’ve known each other for so long, people consider it like a family. I love Manoogian and I never would decide to go somewhere else.”

Azar has been at the school since kindergarten. She has participated in SNHS, NHS, volleyball, dual enrollment and other activities and opportunities. Azar is planning to attend U-M college of engineering.

and other activities. He plans to attend University of Michigan Business School and pursue a career in finance. His dream is to return to his hometown of New York City for a career on Wall Street.

Born to parents from Armenia and raised in the Russian/Armenian section of Brooklyn, Tokmajyan states, “Growing up I knew Armenians, my family had a lot of Armenian friends, but I didn’t necessarily know the culture. But at Manoogian I got a new connection to my Armenian roots, because here they actually taught you the history. I learned to read and write mostly after coming here, and that really connected me.” He further stated that “Another thing is you have the same teachers over and over again. You get to know them so well. It’s a deeper connection that something you’d get at a regular high school. They almost become our friends to a point. I think it allows us to better learn, too.” When asked to elaborate, Tokmajyan explained that because of the close relationship, students have a deeper sense of respect for the teachers. Students do their work and participate in part because they don’t want to let down the teachers that have taken them under their wing for so many years. They can interact easier with teachers and get more help with studies while at the same time maintaining a professional student-teacher relationship.

A School That Nurtures Talent

As a further testament to school’s success, Velhan shared the following story. “When I came I was younger, I didn’t know what I wanted to go into. I wasn’t really a science person. But ever since I came into the High School taking all these classes and participating in extracurricular activities, it brought out the student and the person in me and allowed me to grow. Whenever students want to do something, they have the chance to be the initiators. Last spring when school shut down and everything was online, another student and I came up with an idea to start a Science NHS. The school has been focusing on STEM for a long time but more with technology and robotics, so we wanted to add something aside from Project Lead the Way and AP Biology, we wanted to add an extracurricular for those who are interested in science. So we founded [the Science National Honor Society] by creating a 10-slide presentation and presenting it to [High School Principal] Dr. Torosian and [High School Head Teacher] Mrs. Kadri.

They let us go through with the idea and now we are doing our first science fair. The school allows you to do anything you want in terms of academic growth. If the school can’t give it to you in school they’ll do it outside of school.” [The latter in reference to the dual enrollment programs with Lawrence Tech and Oakland Community College].

Having survived the Covid pandemic under

the able leadership of High School Principal Dr. Hoses Torosian and Lower School Principal Sonia Kalfayan, the Manoogian School has given an astounding graduating class to the world this year, and continues on the path of academic excellence in the American context as well as pursuing the preservation of the Armenian culture and heritage.

To find out more about the school visit <https://manoogian.org/>.



Dr. Hoses Torosian with Manoogian Students Meeting Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan and other members of the Detroit Economic Club

oped originally for the children of Armenian immigrants, has attracted the children of other immigrant groups to the school.

With the difficulties of the Covid pandemic, many schools have struggled to keep their students engaged. Manoogian not only succeeding in weathering the pandemic, but the Class of 2021 ended up being one of the most successful groups of graduates to date.

Graduating Class

The senior class of 2021 has 33 students. Nearly half have a 4-year cumulative GPAs of over 3.5, a new record for the school. Nearly half are part of the National Honor Society. Eight students have been accepted to the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor with full four-year scholarships. In total the class has received acceptances from 85 universities, and been awarded a total of \$4.446 million in four-year tuition scholarships, both of which are new records for the school as well.

One student, Yuliya Velhan, was accepted at Brown University with a full ride, including lodging and books. Velhan’s success story has made the school especially proud, as she has not only been accepted into an Ivy League college, but also came to the US from the Ukraine in 6th grade without speaking a word of English.

A group of four students were chosen as co-valedictorians, including Velhan and fellow students Karine Calukyan, Elaine Azar, and David Togmajyan. All four have full-ride scholarships, with Velhan planning to attend Brown and the other three, the University of Michigan.

Velhan was initially intimidated by having to learn Armenian as well as English for the first time. However, with the help of Manoogian’s ESL (English as a Second Language) program, she was thriving by high school with membership in several extracurriculars, including being president of the robotics team, SNHS (Science National Honor Society), NHS (National Honor Society) and captain of the Cross Country team.



Manoogian Students Senior Trip to Armenia

you get lost in the crowd, nobody knows you. Here everybody knows you and everybody’s willing to help you.”

At Brown she will double major in public health and computational biology. She has also been accepted in Brown’s “Presidential Scholars” program which will provide her with two summers of paid research internships. She plans to utilize this program to pursue a career in public health. Velhan says that public health has always been an interest of hers, but that it was really pushed forward by the pandemic of the past year and a half.

Calukyan has attended Manoogian since Pre-K. She grew up in the Armenian community and has been a past president of the Armenian Youth Federation – Detroit Junior Chapter, member of the local Hamazkayin “Arax” Dance Troupe, and played basketball for St. John’s Armenian Church in the Orthodox League. At Manoogian, she was the captain of the girls’ basketball team and pursued dual enrollment opportunities which the school offers with Lawrence Tech University and Oakland Community College, as well as “Project Lead the Way.” The latter is a special set of STEM courses provided by the school, taught by highly qualified teachers in the areas of human body systems, computer science, and engineering principles. Project Lead the Way is claimed to be the nation’s leading provider of K-12 STEM curriculum.

Calukyan stated “the school opened my mind to science” and she plans to attend U-M Ann Arbor in the pre-Med program, hoping to eventually specialize in neuroscience. In regard to how the school shaped her, she states, “from the cultural aspect,

Her goal is to study biomedical engineering with a focus in tissue engineering and regenerative medicine. In layman’s terms, she shares that this means working with stem cells and doing oncology research to help cancer patients with damaged tissue regain the use of the affect areas of their body.

Azar stated, “Since I came, the school has been a welcoming environment, like a home away from home. All the teachers



Science Awards Won By Manoogian HS Students

have a flexible teaching style and know what to do for your benefit.”

She further shared that due to the small size of the school, teachers are able to work one-on-one with students and help them understand the lessons better. She also said that the school provides a community environment that is always supporting students.

Tokmajyan was born in New York and came to Michigan in the 7th grade. He has participated in cross country, SNHS, NHS,

COMMUNITY NEWS

Learning Mission Retools Artsakh War Veterans for IT Work

VETERANS, from page 6

either to continue at the higher education level in Armenian schools or universities, or just be prepared for a job interview.

Gargaloyan founded the nonprofit organization right after the war in November 2020, and did some initial fundraising. He registered it in California. After this, he said he and his good friend, top Silicon Valley technologist Armen Solakhyan, went to visit Armenia to assess the situation in mid-January 2021.

While in Armenia, the two put together two classes, with 24 people total. The students were found through various channels. Gargaloyan had friends in Armenia supporting such students individually monetarily so they brought them to him. Afterwards, word of mouth brought more students.

How It Works

Gargaloyan took charge of teaching the first class while his godson Aleksander Hakobyan, a graduate of the Slavic University of Yerevan who is an established mathematician, took the second one. They established good relationships with some IT companies which helped obtain computers, so that they purchased 18 laptops and computers to give to students who lacked them. They promised to pay each student a \$50 a month stipend to offset Internet expenses so that they can focus only on their education. Furthermore, Gargaloyan said, they promised to double their stipend if they pass a midterm exam.

After returning to the US, the two contacted IT organizations for support and prospective employment of Learning Mission graduates. On February 9, Gargaloyan conducted his first lesson. Since then, they offered the students programming lessons of two hours twice a week, and English lessons twice a week as well. The latter was necessary for them to keep up with IT technology as most explanatory material is written in English. When a third group of IT students was established, another IT instructor was found so that now two instructors are based in Armenia and one in the US.

The IT teachers are always available to their students to provide help and answer questions. They socialize with them as well. There is a user group through Telegram created for each instructor, and a YouTube channel with lessons for those who were unable to attend a particular live session.

Gargaloyan's wife Narine Shakhramanyan, with great experience in the Foreign Language Academies of Glendale (FLAG) dual language immersion teaching program, and five other instructors, including a professor of San Jose University and graduates of language universities, began giving the English lessons. Five of the six English instructors are located in the US, so they have early morning classes to account for the time difference with Arme-

nia. The sixth English language instructor, Zaruhi Shahinyan, a graduate of Yerevan's Bryusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences, is also one of the two coordinators in Armenia. She was tempo-

ring and expressed an interest in AutoCad, a software used for architectural and engineering drawings. This skill is highly remunerated and useful, so a class for this is being established at present. A volunteer

down. It was very hard for them. Now we can laugh and joke together."

Learning Mission coordinator and English instructor Zaruhi Shahinyan declared, "This generation is different from us. They are 18-years-old. It is unclear whether one of them will be able to walk again, but he still has such ideas in this condition. They have passed through such an awful journey, at 18-years-old, something that none of us have experienced."

One of the students was stuttering due to the enormous stress he experienced during the war. He had remained two hours underground. He was in a deep depression and he did not walk, when Shahinyan first met him. They gave him a laptop but he did not even know what a computer file was. He was living in very poor circumstances but wanted to learn programming. The second or third visit he began to smile. Then once he telephoned and did not stutter even one time, Shahinyan said. He did not realize it himself at first. In only four months he reached great heights in programming and applied to the programming division of the Slavic University, where Shahinyan's son teaches. With his improved circumstances, there is not even a trace of stutter left.

Gargaloyan said, "The students understand that we love them. We have very strong personal attachments and help them with issues in their daily lives." For example, one student's leg was completely destroyed and had terrible wounds. His restroom was outside the house. It was a nightmare every time he needed to use the bathroom. The Learning Mission team found sponsors to build a bathroom inside the house. They delivered beds for other students, a table and chair for a student who had nothing in his house at which to sit, and even helped one student who wanted to raise chickens.

Shahinyan observed, "The boys are so proud. Many live in the provinces. It is very expensive, around \$70 round trip, to go to Yerevan. I found out that this is the reason that one of the students, Garo, did not go



On the occasion of the 103rd anniversary of the victory of the Battle of Sardarapat, the Yerevan Botanical garden invited the Learning Mission veterans to a tree planting. The heroes from Learning Mission were given the opportunity to plant the tree of victory. Among the invited were also the soldiers presently serving in the army.

rarily visiting Boston in May but will be returning soon to Armenia. The second coordinator is Armen Gasparyan.

Shahinyan said, "After the war, I wondered what we could do. We wanted to do something for these youth but didn't have that much money. Rouben thought of it, and it was a very good idea. We never expected that we would become so close to these youth. When you see their eyes shine, then you say to yourself, so it is good that I am living."

On top of all the other lessons, Gargaloyan said, "We found it extremely important to educate in history and culture, so every month we have an open public event, which we record, and have studies of Armenian history." The speakers for the monthly events are from a varied background. Nana Minasyan, the wife of famous composer and musician Ruben Hakhverdyan, teaches the history of Armenian art and literature. One of the students in the program happens to be a teacher in a school in Goris and had studied with Artak Movsesyan, so he also lectures. He plans to eventually publish a series of historical studies. Another student traveled throughout Armenia to explore historical sites and gave talks with pictures of archaeological findings in Armenia. A Yezidi student will give more information on his community to the students. It is an ad hoc process, Gargaloyan said, each month, on new topics outside of IT and English.

In general, the goal is to deepen the students' knowledge of their history and heritage. Gargaloyan said that many aspects, such as the origins of Armenian architecture and art, are not taught in the public schools, where the curriculum is getting more and more basic.

The technology classes gradually were expanded, based on practical experience. Gargaloyan said that some of the students had difficulty in advancing in program-

ing and expressed an interest in AutoCad, a software used for architectural and engineering drawings. This skill is highly remunerated and useful, so a class for this is being established at present. A volunteer

Morale and Creating a Community

The goal is to study the students and see what their interests and capabilities are in order to direct them towards well paying



Learning Mission student receives a computer for his classes

jobs in Armenia. Beyond that, there is the element of reinforcing morale. Gargaloyan said, "Our students really friendly with each other and help one another. That is very motivating for us personally, when we saw that we are not only educating people but building a community. Essentially, we created a family that is extremely strong."

This sense of support had a great impact on the students. Gargaloyan noted, "When I initially started, they were extremely



Learning Mission student receives new laptop

to the hospital. I asked him why don't you go? You are in pain. I telephoned and telephoned. Finally I understood that it was the cost. We sent a vehicle and said, we don't want to hear anything from you. Now once a month he goes to the doctor. And despite his pains, he still follows his classes."

The students are from all over Artsakh and Armenia, including from Artik, Armavir, Jermuk, Vanatsor, and Yerevan. There are two or three women taking courses who were active during the war and could not be refused. They are the only non-veterans. There is also some ethnic diversity with a member of the Yezidi community who is one of the top students. There are a few older middle-aged students in their late forties as well as the young ones finishing their teens, but the majority are in their mid-twenties.

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Zaruhi Shahinyan (photo Aram Arkun)



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While most students stick to the program, there are some exceptions. Shahinyan said that the instructors would always wonder whether it might have been due to them, so they tried a thousand times to speak with them, but whether it is family issues, laziness or just not a suitable subject for them, four or five gave up and left.

The glue that holds all the programs and activities together is the dedication of two coordinators in Armenia, who receive only a very, very nominal fee to support their gas mileage and other expenses. One coordinator works fulltime while the other also teaches English and so does have an independent source of income. The coordinators visit students in hospitals, where they bring little gifts or cake.

They arrange events. They gather the students together with specially fitted buses and vans, as many can't walk or go out of their house normally. For example, Ruben

an said this sister organization will simplify financial operations and make them even more transparent.

He stressed, "We have complete transparency. Every penny sent there is documented, but currently, in order to distribute stipends, I have to send physical money to our coordinators who distribute it to the students. We want to establish business to business interactions to make this more traceable and transparent."

The success of Learning Mission is leading continually to more people finding out about it, even via Facebook, and asking to be included. Simultaneously to this growth, the donation stream subsided. Gargaloyan suspects this is a psychological issue of people becoming tired of donating. Another problem is that the original team is so busy with education that it does not have enough time to work with the media and improve its website to gain more public recognition.



Some of the students of the Learning Mission attended an event at the Tsitsikyan Musical School

Hakhdverdyan gave a concert to raise funds for the Learning Mission and a lot of the students attended. Another time, they were taken to a soccer game.

Gargaloyan said, "All of these efforts are borderline heroic, or maybe just heroic. We can't afford paying them big salaries. I am trying to increase our funding to sustain the coordinators and pay decent salaries so they can stay and do their work fulltime without looking elsewhere for a source of income." As Learning Mission expands, more coordinators will be needed.

In May there were 48 students and two pending ones, so that there will be 50 in all. Among the current students are five advanced individuals who were placed on a special track with daily lessons. An engineer who works at Google prepares them for job interviews at a major European company in Armenia, which will be happening very soon.

Gargaloyan also remarked that a job placement agency in Armenia has agreed to help place Learning Mission students after they reach a certain level of competency in the program. Shahinyan added that one of their first students has now opened his own programming business and wants to take Learning Mission's new graduates.

Finances

Learning Mission has a board of directors including Gargaloyan, Shakhramanyan, Solakhyan, Shahinyan, Astrik Vardanyan, Elena Bakamjian, Fr. Gomidas Zohrabian, Diana Sanamyan and Izabella Harutyunyan, and a youth board led by Hayk Gargaloyan and Zare Arakelyan. Learning Mission is a 501c in the US, and soon will have a chapter or branch established in Yerevan. Gargaloy-

To help solve this problem, interns are being sought in Armenia for the summer to help with public relations.

It should be also noted that all the instructors have their own regular daytime jobs aside from their Learning Mission volunteer work. All proceeds go to students directly for their stipends or computers. There are



Fundraising for Learning Mission in California

no offices as all classes are held online, so no infrastructure costs. The only payment outside of students is to the coordinators for gas mileage.

There are monthly donors who contribute to support one or two students and there have been major one-time contributions which have jumpstarted the program. Now Learning Mission is targeting IT corporations in the US with executives of Armenian origin to help it expand further.

Gargaloyan stressed one more thing: "We are really removing ourselves from any party affiliation in Armenia. We make it very clear that we do not support any party. There are 150 of them in Armenia. We are neutral."

Shahinyan marveled at the strength of the students and stressed her determination to continue to help them as much as possi-

ble. She exclaimed, "Students study with the same discipline with which they served during the war. They cannot be broken. I cannot imagine what would have to happen for them to be broken in life. At first, when I would go to see them, I would begin crying. The tears started flowing, but they gave us *dukh* and inspiration."

Gargaloyan reiterated his determination to continue the work he started, and hoped that more financial resources would be found to expand this hands-on program. He said, "We will be doing it and change Armenia. We do change Armenia. We are educating people as we speak and we have proven success stories." For more information, see <https://www.learningmissionarmenia.org/> or <https://www.facebook.com/LearningMissionArmenia>.

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Arts & Culture

Artsakh, A Small Country That Now Only Exists In Cinema

PARIS – Nora Martirosyan’s film, “Si le vent tombe” [Should the Wind Drop], shot before the Turkish-Azerbaijani forces attacked Artsakh and Armenia, has just been released in French cinemas. This film is now an archive of free Artsakh. It tells the story of an international expert, Alain Delage (played by Grégoire Colin), who arrives in the self-proclaimed republic to assess the airport, brand new: the building is a national pride, but due to political imbroglios, it has never been able to start official operations.

Imbued with poetry and surrealism, the story is invented, but the airport, lost in the vast mountain ranges of the Caucasus, does exist, as does its difficulties in opening.

“Physically I had everything, the fields, the buildings, the president, but on Google Earth I had nothing,” says Nora Martirosyan to explain the state of mind in which she made this



film, to meet a need for recognition. “In my fiction this is what I say: the hope of recognition is symbolized by this airport. It is an institution capable of linking a non-existent country to the world,” she says.

This is the first film by Nora Martirosyan. Selected at the Cannes Film Festival in 2020, it is the only fiction film shot in Nagorno Karabakh.

“There were Armenians in this land. Armenia wanted to look towards Europe. As an Armenian I have the feeling that history is starting over again, as in 1915 with the genocide, when the international community did not want to see what was happening.”

The film premiered in Yerevan on March 10, 2021. The French media has welcomed this story of a small country that only exists today in cinema.



Nora Martirosyan with actor Grégoire Colin (All rights reserved)



Nora Azadian with her portrait of a poetess from Armenia (1968)

Nora Azadian – The Artist

By Dr. Gary Belian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

DETROIT — Visually rich, emotionally gratifying, the art of Nora Azadian stems from European and Armenian sources. Although French influence is apparent in her art, most of her recent work is emphatically expressionist. Restless, dark colors, being disturbed by uneven white illuminations.

Born in Egypt, she became the prize student of the renowned painter Ashod Zorian and later graduated from the ABC School in Paris. She has influenced a generation of painters, some of whom have distinguished themselves in the Middle East and Europe.

Nora was noted for her figure paintings and picturesque watercolors, lyrical, poetic, almost exotic with nostalgic overtones.

The talent of Nora Ipekian Azadian stems from her childhood experiences. She was brought up in a family circle of intellectuals and artists, an environment conducive to artistic pursuits. Her greatest enthusiasm comes from the encouragement of her husband Edmond Azadian, the well-known intellectual and public figure.

The exhibition entitled “My Armenia” is an outgrowth of the artist’s recent visit to the motherland. Its intent is not merely to reflect the brilliance and pageantry of contemporary Armenia, but to reflect on its past heroic achievements.

In order to understand Nora’s “My Armenia,” let us refer to the historical background of the land.

Situated at the crossroads of the East and West, Armenia witnessed endless fights of independence and on its soil the destinies of great nations were tested.

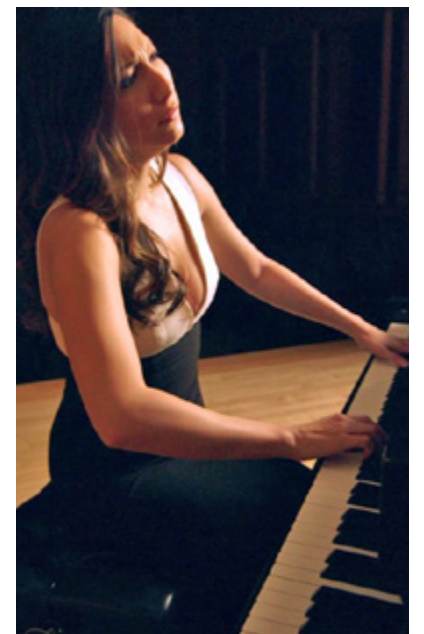
After adopting Christianity in 301, Armenia remained faithful to the Nicene Creed and severed all ties with
continued on next page



Nora and Edmond Azadian in front of the Vahan Tekeyan statue at Yerevan’s Vahan Tekeyan School

Friends of Armenian Culture Society to Present Two Virtual Concerts Online

BOSTON — Due to ongoing live concert restrictions, the Friends of Armenian Culture Society (FACS) will not be able to host what would have been the 70th Armenian Night at the Pops this year. However, as the Boston Pops has emerged from a pandemic live performance hiatus with its online Spring Season concerts, FACS is pleased to announce that in cooperation with the BSO, pianist Tanya Gabrielian will make an appearance with the Pops in a program called “Boston Pops Celebrates Mother’s Day: Honoring Women.” The concert will feature music by and about women, and Gabrielian is featured in a performance of Clara Schumann’s piano concerto under the direction of conductor Keith Lockhart.



Pianist Tanya Gabrielian (Photo courtesy of Boston University)

Hailed by the *London Times* as “a pianist of powerful physical and imaginative muscle,” Gabrielian has captivated audiences worldwide with her gripping performances. Tanya shot onto the international stage at the age of twenty with back-to-back victories in the Scottish International Piano Competition and Aram Khachaturian International Piano Competition. She currently serves as an Assistant Professor and Chair, Piano at the Boston University School of Fine Arts.

In a follow-up concert, produced by FACS, Gabrielian will join forces with violinist Haig Hovsepian (soloist at Armenian Night in 2018), and cellist Kee-Hyun Kim of the Parker String Quartet, in a concert title A Tribute to Arno Babadjanian, to mark the 100th anniversary of his birth. They will present the iconic Piano Trio in F# minor by the legendary pianist-composer.

Both concerts are available for viewing online on June 5 from 8 PM - Midnight only. FACS presents these concerts free of charge as a community service and in appreciation of its supporters.

To receive the link for viewing, please send a written request to FACSBoston@gmail.com.



ARTS & CULTURE



"Egyptian Motherhood," oil on canvas

from previous page

the Byzantine Church; thereafter, being at the mercy of the powerful Byzantine Empire and the neighboring enemies of Christianity. Churches were erected, monasteries with fortress-like walls, outside cities and towns, on mountain slopes. These acted as cultural centers and as a protection in times of war and foreign suzerainty.

Most of these architectural edifices are in ruins, most of the neighboring peoples have passed into oblivion, but the Armenian people have survived, rebuilt their cities and glorified their churches.

These ruins and the reconstructed edifices are a testimony of a people who had the courage to defy the mighty Byzantine Empire, and repulse the neighboring enemies of Christianity.

Nora's "My Armenia," the Armenia of all the Armenians, is an important glorification of our country, its past, its present and its future.

The visit of Nora Azadian to the homeland was a revelation. She penetrated the reality of dream and spirit to become a great visionary artist.



"The Lonely Church," from Nora Azadian's "My Armenia" series

The use of color became bolder; she rejected bright colors in favor of somber tones imparting a somber mood. Her brushwork became turbulent, more vigorous, which imbues atmosphere and enlivens the picture surface.

From Naturalistic Landscapes to Mystic Subjects

From naturalistic landscapes, Nora turned inwards to mystical subjects. Her imagination transformed Armenian history and culture, its churches and architectural remains into a wholly personal, original poetry.

With sensuously painted somber colors, permeated by unearthly light, Nora shaped nature's essential forms and rhythms into a few superbly designed powerful masses.

Thematically related edifices, the churches, monasteries, castles, have a metaphoric significance; the link between the past and the present.

Eloquent in its simplicity of statement, the architectural monuments represent the entire history of a nation. A symbol of faith, a symbol of belief in survival, a symbol of triumph over destructive forces.

Nora took the colors of Armenia with all its splendors. Earth tones, browns, oranges, blues, in harmonious combinations are applied onto the canvas, ranging from subtle waves of color, to hold lines, with actively stroked pigment. An uninhibited use of color to define forms and express feeling with a coordination of pictorial tension throughout the surface of the canvas. Her moods range from poetic to enigmatic. With a characteristic spontaneity, mysticism and a complete disregard for "truth to nature."

The colors of Armenia are also reflected in her "rhythm of momentum," where undulating bands of color travel across the canvas, a simplification of peaks and valleys, and the rolling nature of the country painted in swiftly executed rhythmic movement.

Strong Colors – Simplification of Form

Strong colors, simplification of form with the elimination of detail recall the work of the Fauves, especially Maurice de Vlaminck, one of her idols, whose flat areas of color and vigorous brushstrokes are evident in some of her paintings.

Some of the work is not premeditated, but rather resembles a spontaneous outburst, a release of hidden energy painted rapidly with expressionistic vigor, recalling the brushstrokes of Franz Kline and the spatial arrangement of Pierre Soulages, where the gradation of her energetic brushstrokes also results in the impression of three dimensions.

These paintings carry the emotional impact of the abstract expressionists.

In her recent painting "The Fortress," she goes even beyond the Fauves. There is a new violence and aggres-



"Armenian Church," from Nora Azadian's "My Armenia" series

siveness of attack, in the manner of de Kooning. The paint is vigorously applied onto the canvas in the heat of the execution and the loaded brush is allowed to drag and sweep across the canvas, trailing meteoric splashes and drips; characteristic means of execution of gestural abstractionism.

Her strong colors are softened with touches of white paint which create an interplay of light and shadow.

Nora's paintings of Armenian landscapes and edifices indicate that she is not immune to the glory and romanticism of the Armenian legendary ruins.

The solemn architectural façade of a cathedral, isolated churches and monasteries, in silent rural suburban flatlands, on mountain tops and mountain slopes, represent vestiges of a past civilization, which served to fire the creative imagination of the artist.

As part of the composition, trees, much simplified in their outline and even distorted in their form, occupy a



Landscape, from Nora Azadian's "My Armenia" series

humanly void milieu, emphasizing a setting of desolate barrenness, and the meager remnants of past grandeur.

An unattainable church, perched on a mountain top, is symbolic. Appropriately titled "Elevation," it represents the ambitions, the beliefs, and the aspirations of the people.

In "My Armenia," Nora sought to create visual equivalents, not just for dreams or immediate perceptions, but also for a wide range of experiences including anguish,



Sculptor Reuben Nakian, left, with Dr. Gary Belian at Nora Azadian's "My Armenia" exhibition

hope, alienation, suffering, passion and historical sentiments.

Her urban landscapes show her ability to perceive monumentality in the remnants of the churches and monasteries. She magnified the brushstrokes, the paintings became denser and the energies more explosive.

These historic edifices were unveiling the tragic past of her people.

This exhibition bears witness to the artist's spiritual life and deep national convictions; it is a tribute to her skill, imagination and taste.

Around her monumental landscapes, bathing in Armenian colors, she creates an entire panorama of scenes which tell the story of an ancient civilization which left for posterity a rich legacy of historical and artistic achievements.

(This article originally appeared in the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* in 1980.)



ARTS & CULTURE

Janjigian Delves into Wine, Women, Beat Writers and JFK in San Francisco

JANJIGIAN, from page 1

And something else for readers to take away from it is “the love of movies and of course the changes with the movie theaters.”

As the proprietor of a failing movie theater in San Francisco, Harry Gnostopolos navigates his way out of a failing relationship and into another unstable one, as he tries to save his beloved theater, and falls into the orbit of his eccentric writer friend, Jackson Halifax. (See review.)

The San Francisco of the past, which at one time was synonymous with free love and hippies, is now rife with seven-figure real estate and internet moguls.

Janjigian said that for him the bohemian history of San Francisco is an inspiration, and that he enjoyed living in the city in the 1990s before its complete gentrification.

Janjigian moved to the Bay Area after he finished graduate school and found work at the Depot Café and Bookstore in Marin County.

“I moved to San Francisco and worked in a bookstore and my coworker who became a great friend and still is, admired the poets and increased my appreciation of the Beats,” Janjigian explained.

“If I had my way, I would have continued doing that. I lack the courage to be irresponsible in real life,” he said. “It takes a lot of courage to do that.”

“I am there [in San Francisco] almost every year. I would like to retire there,” he said, adding with a laugh, “retiring in the most expensive city.”

The Cabrillo, the theater Harry owns, in the foggy Richmond district of the city, has seen better days and his girlfriend, the practical Dana, wants him to sell it and for them to leave the city and head elsewhere. However, Harry well and truly has left his heart in the city.

He explained, “Harry is a pretty nostalgic guy and doesn’t want to let go of the past. For better or worse. Those things seem to tie in with his reluctance to go forward with a lot of things.”

At the core of the book is an “inconsistent up and down romance,” he explained.

Janjigian draws vivid characters who are stuck in the midst of some serious choices. When asked where his characters come from, he referred to another writer, Jhumpa Lahiri, who had said in an interview that “she had no idea how this process worked and it just happened.”

He went on, “I would agree with that. At least for this novel, it started when I lived in San Francisco and I really, really loved this movie theater and neighborhood in San Francisco. That movie theater still exists today in the Richmond district.”

In fact, the Cabrillo, in the Richmond district, seems to draw inspiration from the Balboa theater in the same district, showing quirky movies in a beautiful setting.

It is not the just the lead character and his circle that are enamored of the Beat writers; consider Janjigian a fan. “I got turned on to the Beats by a film professor and turned on to some Avant Garde film classes at Clark [University in Worcester]. The whole environment was quirky. I had not read any Beats or [Jack] Kerouac until he had us read *On the Road* in connection with a film called ‘Heartbeat,’ based on the autobiography of Carolyn Cassady,” the wife of Beat writer Neal Cassady.

(“Heart Beat” explores the love triangle of real-life characters [Neal Cassady](#), [Jack Kerouac](#), and [Carolyn Cassady](#) in the late 1950s and the 1960s. It chronicles Kerouac writing his seminal novel [On the Road](#), and its effect on their lives.)

Since then, he said, he has “tried to look at the flaws of the Beats, including the lack of women.”

Still, through writing, he can still be close to that ideal. “Writing allows me to explore those lives,” he noted.

“I admire that bohemian life but I like a little bit of comfort,” he said with a chuckle. “They tend to have a lot more interesting lives.”

Janjigian has put in another piece of himself in the book: Gephyrophobia, the fear of bridges. It is one that has been a part of Janjigian’s life for years.

“Like a lot of writers I utilize that anxiety and fear,” he said. And did he think if he wrote about it, he would be able to master it? “That would have been the ultimate goal, to exorcise it.”

“Interestingly, when I lived in the city and worked in Marin County at the Depot Bookstore. I commuted back and forth over the [Golden Gate] bridge five days a week for over two years and had no issues. I didn’t have the phobia,” he recalled. Slowly, “I had a little nervousness starting to develop over some high bridges.”

In time, when he and his wife moved to Maryland, the phobia came on with a vengeance. “When my wife and I

moved to Maryland, my wife and I went over the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and I had a full-blown fear kicked in,” he recalled.

Now, “I just avoid really, really high bridges,” he added.

Life During the Pandemic

The pandemic made a huge difference in Janjigian’s life. First, a small book tour with stops in Boston and San Francisco was scrapped, and second, because of all the free time, Janjigian was able to write a screenplay about Kerouac, like his protagonist, Harry, “in a case of write imitating art,” as well as a novel.

He explained, “I started that right after the novel was published in November. In December I started writing and I am just going through the final draft. It’s called ‘Kerouac.’ We will see what is next with that.”

He added, “I wrote a novel, *Confluence at Café Zurich*, and it involves the character Jackson, and a previous theft, which is alluded to in *A Cerebral Offer*.”

Janjigian had some advice for aspiring writers. “I subscribe to the simple Hemingway advice: travel. It forces you to meet other people and experience different things. It’s the greatest thing a writer can have.”

The other piece of the puzzle is to write every day. “I never don’t write. When I sit down to write, I always write something. It’s whether or not it’s a keeper or not. Even if it’s just a half an hour, it’s important to keep that rhythm going.”

Janjigian was born and raised in Massachusetts. He lived in Watertown with his family, before moving to Belmont

and graduating from Belmont High School. He attended Clark University in Worcester and later got his master’s degree at Leslie University in Cambridge.

“I was finishing grad school at Leslie University and teaching full time while,” he said. The life of the expat tickled his fancy. Therefore, he decided to take some of the courses to finish his degree at St. John University in Rome.

Of his year living outside Rome near the beach, he recalled, “I loved it. It was fantastic. I would have stayed longer if I had the ability to.”

“I met my wife in 2005 and we moved down here [to Washington, DC] in 2009 for her job. She is a scientist working for the Journal of the National Cancer Institute,” he said.

They tried moving to San Francisco but it did not happen and therefore they decided to go where the jobs were.

Now, Janjigian is the assistant dean at American University. He supervised the creation and launch of the English Language and Training Academy (ELTA). Prior to joining AU in 2012, he taught at UMBC, Northeastern, and Harvard University’s Institute for English Language. At Brandeis University he helped launch their ESL pathway program.

He has had two other books published, *Gone West* (collection of novellas), *Defending Infinity* (novel), in addition to *A Cerebral Offer*.

He and his wife live with their three cats.

To purchase *A Cerebral Offer*, go to Amazon or visit <https://www.spdbooks.org/Products/9781604892581/a-cerebral-offer.aspx>

BOOK REVIEW

A Cerebral Offer

When an Exciting Offer Comes Your Way

By **Alin K. Gregorian**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

So you are bored with your girlfriend and want to break up but surprise: she confesses she has been cheating on you with her work “friend.”

Poor Harry Gnostopolos is having a bad time of it. And his girlfriend’s betrayal is just the start.

Shortly thereafter, he reconnects with his friend, Jackson Halifax, a writer who hit the big time and then disappeared from the literary scene. Harry finds out that Jackson, in the couple of decades since they last met, has owned and operated a vineyard and also been a boxer. Oh, and in addition, he commits odd crimes, big and small, for a mysterious Madame X who leaves cryptic instructions.

Harry — as well as we the readers — wonders if indeed he is telling the truth or if his tales spring from his creative mind.

Harry, who has made one film in his youth, is coming to grips with the fate of his failing old-yet-charming movie theater, which his accountant warns repeatedly, is going under. It is at this juncture that Jackson presents Harry with a cerebral offer that he can’t refuse: commit a huge crime and then make enough money to keep the theater going and possibly make a life with a new partner, Nadine, a gorgeous émigrée who is as fascinated with the Beat writers as Harry is.

Harry is almost relieved that his long-term partner confesses that she has cheated on him; now he can devote himself to chasing this mysterious woman without suffering from pangs of guilt.

What will Harry do? Can they pull it off? Can Jackson be trusted? And why the hell is Harry afraid of bridges and will he cross one?

Ken Janjigian pours a lot of himself into *A Cerebral Offer*. The book is rife with movie references, from “Casablanca” to “Cinema Paradiso” and “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest” to obscure films on Beat poets. His protagonist wishes he were like Jack Kerouac and the other Beatniks, admiring their willingness to thumb their noses at the conformist and suffocating post-World War II America and head to warmer and more receptive climes to get high and reach a higher truth.

A Cerebral Offer is a fast read. The characters hurtle toward each other at the speed of light and the reader may feel like having a word with Harry about him losing his head over the young woman he has just met and the offer for riches his old, unstable friend presents.

Janjigian offers beautiful descriptions of the City by the Bay, almost making it one of the characters in the book. He captures all of it: the fog, the romance, the old-timer hippies and Beatniks and the new money.

Even President Kennedy’s missing brain makes an appearance. What is the real story of his assassination? And what happened to his remains? Those questions occupy a good portion of the book. And of course, *A Cerebral Offer* includes plenty of references to Oliver Stone’s “JFK.”

Ultimately, this is a book about exorcising past demons and looking ahead. Can one ever recreate the experiences of one’s youth? Which option is better, the slow and boring or the risky and risqué? We see Harry as he tries to navigate a passionate love affair which may lead nowhere as well as his enduring passion for his beloved city and the movie theater to which he has dedicated his life.

He offers plenty of visual cues, thus making it a good candidate for a movie treatment.

We can only hope Harry can find his happily ever after and stays out of trouble.



ARTS & CULTURE

Books

Stop the Evil, Or Apocalypse Now

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES — Prior to reading Micheline Aharonian Marcom's *The Brick House* (Awst Press, 2017), a novel that explores the horrors of the modern city through the irrational world of dreams, I had stumbled upon Marcom's latest novel, *The New American* (Simon and Schuster, 2020), which, with its more conventional narrative structure and recognizable details of the phenomenal world outside, I had found to be perhaps a trifle too much on the surface for Marcom. I had read Aharonian's trilogy of novels dealing with the Armenian Genocide and its aftermath, as they were coming out, and remember being seduced by Marcom's depiction of the internal landscape of her characters and also by her deviations from ordinary discourse to shake the reader into the significance of the crime. Discovering *The Brick House*, which also journeys into the interiority of her characters to make sense of their lives, was like rediscovering Marcom.

The world of *The Brick House* is a strange world with a logic of its own. A dilapidated, neglected brick house sits on top of a hill on a moor in a remote peninsula in an unspecified location. (The closest we get to the specifics of its location is North America and the Pacific Ocean.) The caretaker of the house is old and indifferent. The furniture in the seven rooms lining a long corridor painted in a "foul green paint" is tattered, unwelcoming. "When one speaks of the brick house, one must also speak of the light that does not shine. The electric lights are lighted but they do not illuminate the darkness: the foul green paint extinguishes the light; the closets extinguish the light; the despair and loneliness, the closed heart of the traveler who visits with his sombering fear," writes Marcom.



Travelers from the city are lured to the brick house through a chance encounter with a stranger, who approaches them in a supermarket and speaks to them of a house on the moor, where they are invited to spend a night, to "die," and to return restored. The visitors to the house are lonely, fearful and panicky, plagued by feelings of "dissolution and separateness." They are "city men" come to get away from the pollution of their "noisy and busy" city lives, the banalities of their conversations about "cruel bosses and the rising cost of goods and petrol," and the horror of "an agreed-upon vision of the world" they share with their spouses. These desperate souls are described as pilgrims on a pilgrimage to an unreachable end.

Something is clearly amiss in "the new desert city," and Marcom is determined to understand "the cause of causes" that created the "unrivered," "unforested" "concrete immensity." There are hundreds of colorful vehicles on



the "huge concrete overpasses," but "no animal or plant life" one can see. "The noise from the cars and the noises of the helicopters and aeroplanes in the machined sky above her [the unidentified traveler] fill the air with their din and strip her naked (for although her body remains clothed, *her soul is bared*, she thinks, with this onslaught to her ear)" (*italics mine*). Citizens in this metropolis are "forced to buy" goods, with the promise "of happiness and good health and order," from "loud advertisements calling to [them] to own things."

To expose the soullessness of this "cold grey city," "designed for the dimensions of the automobile and not to the scale of man," Marcom transports the reader into the



Images from *The Brick House* by Fowzia Karimi



world of dreams, a world that cannot be reached through the "heaps of data and information" and "conclusive evidence." Hers is a craving for a knowledge that goes

beyond the "explicable cause and effect" of the rational world. Invoking the irrational world thus becomes an essential tool to expose "the lie," and to restore life to its "normal version," its natural state. Indeed, the sacred past, when nature was pure, is repeatedly invoked. Ironically, it is the dream, the "notreal," that helps purify the earth. *The Brick House* forces the reader to ask some fundamental questions: Is technology indeed a good thing when, rather than enhance our humanity, "progress and convenience" make us lose our souls? The travelers dream the nightmare of the "red plastic stirrers, yellow, white, and green bags" they deposited in large plastic garbage bags, and which found their way into the middle of the ocean, into "the insides of bones tangled up in polyurethane wrath" of the fish, and ultimately into our bellies. Dreams become, as stated in the epigraph to one of the chapters in the book, "the guiding words of the soul." C.G Jung

The Brick House has the urgency of "Stop the madness, or apocalypse now." Marcom has the audacity to "dream the rivers behind the unrivered lands," and to see "the sky uncitied-electrified and gloriously starry in the black night." She has the even greater courage to celebrate a *new* world and a *new* blue lake (with still no designation in language. The novel concludes with *new* lovers dreaming of a *new* "yet unwritten book" in an indecipherable tongue . . . even if the question remains, "For whom?" (*italics mine*).

In Marcom's fictional world, tossing away the material world of money and reason, along with the goods the city-dwellers have accumulated, is possible. Once unreachable, "Mount Ararat in the unreachable country," is now within reach, for the dream leads "upward toward starlight." It ushers "the immanent world, palpable, the high mountain of Ararat, exact and holy, that when climbed once more leads outward as if into a continuously murmuring sea." The dream of "the sky black-brown" morphs into that of "the green and blue dome of the old heavens." The madness has been stopped. The transformation has been made possible through the irrational world of these dreams. No need to usher in the "apocalypse now."

By invoking "the high mountain of Ararat" and "the story of the Urartian queen who seduced the young king east of the Rhine," Marcom returns to her Armenian roots, just as she had done earlier with her trilogy of novels on the Armenian Genocide.

A valuable addition to the volume are the illustrations by Fowzia Karimi which, in their own whimsical way, represent the dreams and the fantasies of the travelers. These drawings, done in the tradition of Armenian illuminated manuscripts, are also a tribute to Aharonian's Armenian heritage.

Marcom has an amazing gift with words. The economy and the power of expression of her "An agreed-upon vision of the world" is impossible to miss. Her abundant use of colors enhances the imagery and adds to the vividness of what is represented. This is how Aharonian describes



the polyethylene world of the city: "See all of the factories in all of the cities producing the small, colored plastic pellets of which all other plastic goods eventually will be formed. They are no bigger, these pellets, than the black eye inside the coho salmon's newly laid orange egg. Reds, blues, yellows, greens, oranges, and whites . . ." The bold liberties Marcom takes with language, on the other hand—"an undirted road," "the river unrivered," "the forest unfrosted," "uncitied-electrified"—bring the reader closer to sharing her outrage at the massacre of nature.

Aharonian cares deeply. She understands that a good world is necessary to sustain the "small cosmic *human* heart," and that remaining *humanized* is necessary for the soul (*italics mine*). *The Brick House* enacts the possibility of preserving that goodness. Yes.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Clarice Krikorian's Basterma With Eggs

Within every culture, there is always one celebrated dish that could easily represent all the rest without debate. For many Armenians and other nationalities, that dish is basterma with eggs (also spelled basturma, pastirma, bastirma, and pasterma). This recipe is courtesy of Clarice Krikorian of Fresno, California, and is featured in *A Taste of Fresno Armenian and American Cuisine Cookbook* from the Ladies Society of St. Paul Armenian Church in Fresno.

This seasoned, air-dried beef has been prized throughout Middle Eastern as well as Eastern European countries for centuries, and plays a major role in Armenian, Syrian, Egyptian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Greek, and Lebanese cuisine. The first recorded mention of basterma is said to be between 95-45 BC in Armenia during the reign of Tigranes the Great. It is believed that the technology of air-drying meats was first developed to preserve basterma being traded from ancient Armenia to China and India.* Armenians believe that it dates back to when fighters relied on those highly seasoned logs of cured meat as a protein source. The war survival food evolved into an appetizer delicacy, and one of the leading highlights of the country's culinary repertoire.



Ben and Clarice Krikorian

Basterma is made by salting meat (eye of round or beef tenderloin), which is then washed with water and dried for 10 to 15 days, depending on the recipe. Salt and blood is pressed out of the meat, and it is coated with chemen (chaiman, cemen), a fragrant red spice paste made with fenugreek, allspice, cayenne pepper, garlic, salt, crushed cumin, paprika, and black pepper that gives it a robust aroma and taste.

"My recipe for basterma with eggs is simple. Just fry some basterma slices in a skillet in butter, add the well-beaten eggs, salt and pepper to taste (you may want to go easy on the salt as basterma is on the salty side), cover, and wait until the eggs are set. I serve this with pita bread, cheese and fresh sliced tomatoes," says Clarice. "The taste the basterma adds to the eggs is unforgettable. This amazing cured beef has been a part of Armenian cuisine for centuries, and is a family tradition and favorite," she adds.

Since 2010, Clarice (a retired registered nurse) and her husband, Ben (a CPA and church organist) have made it easier for California State University, Fresno (commonly referred to as Fresno State) students who choose to follow their passion and study the arts and music. In 2010, the couple established two scholarships at the College of Arts and Humanities at Fresno State (an orchestra scholarship and a piano scholarship) which benefit music students studying those disciplines. Clarice is a member of the Arts and Humanities Advisory Board at Fresno State, the CSU Summer Arts Community Board, and also serves on the board of the Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee of Fresno. Ben and Clarice are the parents of four grown children and have three grandchildren.

"Basterma is special. It is the most popular appetizer for our holiday celebrations and gatherings, and is a favorite of my children and grandchildren," says

Clarice.

Sliced paper-thin and served as a cold mezze appetizer, basterma can easily be incorporated in other recipes, too. Basterma sandwiches are usually served between crusty slices of bread with dill pickles, tomatoes, and cheese. In the old days, whole dinners were prepared from this Armenian delicacy, and the tradition of making scrambled eggs with basterma has been preserved to this day. This beloved dish can be served for breakfast, or as a brunch or a light lunch/supper with crusty bread, pita bread, olives, parsley, tomatoes, peppers, and string cheese. Basterma is a "force of nature," observed the late Pulitzer Prize-winning *Los Angeles Times* restaurant critic Jonathan Gold, and is often accompanied with cognac, beer or brandy.

As *Saveur Magazine* says, "Think outside the board. Yes, fanned-out slices of carpaccio-esque basturma look fabulous on a charcuterie board, but basturma is equally delectable sandwiched between fluffy slices of Armenian matnakash or your favorite bread—just add pickled veggies and perhaps a scrabble of chechil (Armenian string cheese). Chopped into tiny bits, basturma also adds a pleasant funk to tossed salads and a meaty depth to omelets (wrap the egg up in lavash for the Armenian version of the breakfast burrito), garlicky mashed potatoes, and even mac 'n cheese."

"Though saddle salami makes for a colorful tale, it's more probable that basturma hails from the Byzantine city of Caesaria Mazaca (now called Kayseri) in present-day Turkey, where the ancient technique of pastron (salt-curing) is said to have been perfected by Armenians in Late Antiquity. In fact, basturma-making was such a popular vocation among medieval Armenians that Basturmajian ('basturma maker') became a family name that's still in use today." — *Saveur Magazine*



In their 1893 report the British Foreign Office note that Kayseri, which they call Cesarea, "is specially renowned for the preparation of basturma (pemmican)." And according to director and writer Nigol Bezjian, Armenians who survived the 1915 Genocide brought basturma with them to the Middle East. Bezjian recalls that his grandmother used to prepare "basturma omelets fried in olive oil with pieces of lavash bread." He notes that Armenians from Kayseri were particularly renowned basturma producers. In Palestine, where Armenians have lived for 1,500 years, Armenian families gather on New Year's Eve and eat traditional foods including basturma, çığ köfte and a traditional Anatolian confection called kaghtsr sujukh (քաղցր սուջուխ).*

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine (add more, if needed, to avoid eggs sticking to pan)
- 8-10 slices of basterma
- 5 large eggs
- Salt and pepper, according to taste

PREPARATION:

Place bulgur in a large bowl and cover with warm water, toss with a fork, and leIn a large frying pan, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the slices of basterma to the pan, reduce heat to low. Cook for 20-30 seconds on both sides.

In a small bowl, scramble the eggs and add the salt and pepper. Pour the eggs over basterma. Cover and cook eggs on low heat until the eggs have set.

Garnish with chopped mint, parsley, onions, red pepper or paprika, depending on taste. Serve hot with a crusty bread or pita bread.

Serves 2.

ORDER TODAY: To purchase *A Taste of Fresno Armenian and American Cuisine Cookbook* for holiday gifts for family or friends, contact: St. Paul Armenian Church, 3767 N. First St, Fresno, California 93726, (559) 226-6343. Each cookbook costs \$20.00 plus shipping and handling. All checks should be made payable to: St. Paul Armenian Church Ladies Society.

You can purchase basterma and soujouk (a dry, spicy and fermented sausage) in most Middle Eastern markets and stores, as well as online, including at the famous Ohanyan's Bastirma & Soujouk Mfg., located in Fresno, California:

Ohanyan's Bastirma & Soujouk Mfg.

3296 W. Sussex Way

Fresno, California 93722

(559) 243-0800

Closed Saturday and Sunday.

<https://ohanyans.com/>

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ARTS & CULTURE

Cello Concerto by Hayg Boyadjian Gets World Premiere in Yerevan

YEREVAN — On Saturday May 22, 2021 Lexington Grammy Nominee composer Hayg Boyadjian’s concerto for violoncello and orchestra, after a year’s delay due to the pandemic, was premiered at the Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall with a limited audience present due to the virus precautions still prevalent in Armenia. The Armenian State Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Ruben Asatryan with solo virtuoso violoncellist Aram Talalyan premiered Boyadjian’s concerto in three movements, a challenging composition for which the two musicians rose up to the challenge.

Both Asatryan and Talalyan are familiar with Boyadjian’s music, having in the past performed other works of his. Boyadjian wrote this demanding concerto with Aram Talalyan in mind knowing well his virtuosity.

Boyadjian describes the influences that shaped his life and his musical language.

“My cello concerto is a fusion of several musical elements or ingredients. They take root on my life’s cultural backgrounds, I am first of Armenia descent; French by place of birth, Paris; Argentinian by formation, having lived my youth in Buenos Aires; and finally from age



Violoncellist Aram Talalyan

twenty two having lived in the USA. There are as one can see two components to my person, eastern cultural and western cultural influences. These are transformed into a



The concert

musical language that is uniquely my own.

“In my cello concerto as it is in many of my compositions any elements of those mentioned above are used to make my compositions having a unique sound unlike any other composer. The first movement of the concerto includes a good number of passages in dance rhythm, short Armenian folk like melodies. It is a movement full of excitement where the solo cello is always in a struggle with the orchestra, but manages to hold the upper hand most of the time. “The second movement in contrast is more subdued, the cello and the orchestra become a duo in conversation and the music to some degree lyrical, again with some Armenia folk like motives. The third and last movement is an agitated race between the different sections of the orchestra and the solo cello. There are almost no motives but a rush of notes giving the impression of an ocean with continuous crashing waves nonstop. By the end of the movement the waves have calmed down and the ocean is peaceful,” Boyadjian concluded.



Conductor Ruben Asatryan

CALENDAR

ON-LINE EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

JUNE 9–AUGUST 15 — The Armenian Heritage Park will hold a series of events during the spring and summer:

- Wednesday, June 9 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, June 13 at 2pm LABYRINTH WALKING WELLNESS program ARME- NIAN 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
- Sunday, July 11 at 2pm LABYRINTH WALKING WELLNESS program ARME- NIAN 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
- 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 Ribbon on the Wishing Tree. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org
- Wednesday, August 11 at 4pm TEA & TRANQUILITY ARMENIAN HERI-

TAGE 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. ARME- NIAN 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 16 — NAASR Building for Eternity Virtual Gala. Wednesday, 7pm-EDT (4pm- PDT). Distinguished Honoree EDWARD AVEDISIAN. Extraordinary philanthropist, musician, educator, NAASR Board member, and principal benefactor of NAASR’s new Vartan Gregorian Building, recognized for his outstanding dedication and distinguished service in advancing education in the U.S. and Armenia. Special In Memoriam, VARTAN GREGORIAN (1934-2021), President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, President of the, New York Public Library, President of Brown University, Professor of Armenian and Caucasian History and Professor of South Asian History, University of Pennsylvania, and Co-Founder, Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. Tribute by Noubar Afeyan. Attendance is free but registration is required at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_-oxRI-UeKQ2WPgFVoDFXIGQ. To sponsor or donate, <https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/weblink.aspx?name=E332049&id=39>

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



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST

Edmond Y. Azadian

STAFF WRITER

Harry Kezelian III

CONTRIBUTORS

Christopher Atamian, Florence Avakian,
Taleen Babayan, Artsvi Bakhchinyan,
Raffi Bedrosyan, Christine Vartanian
Datian, Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, Philippe
Raffi Kalfayan, Ken Martin, Gerald
Papasian, Harut Sassounian, Hagop
Vartivarian

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CORRESPONDENTS

LOS ANGELES: Ani Duzdabanyan-
Manoukian, Kevork Keushkerian,
Michelle Mkhlian
YEREVAN: Raffi Elliott
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PARIS: Jean Eckian
SAN FRANCISCO: Kim Bardakian
CAIRO: Maydaa Nadar

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| U.S.A. | \$80 one year |
| Canada | \$125 one year |
| Other Countries | \$200 one year |

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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Editorial

Armenia's Place in the New Political Order of the Caucasus



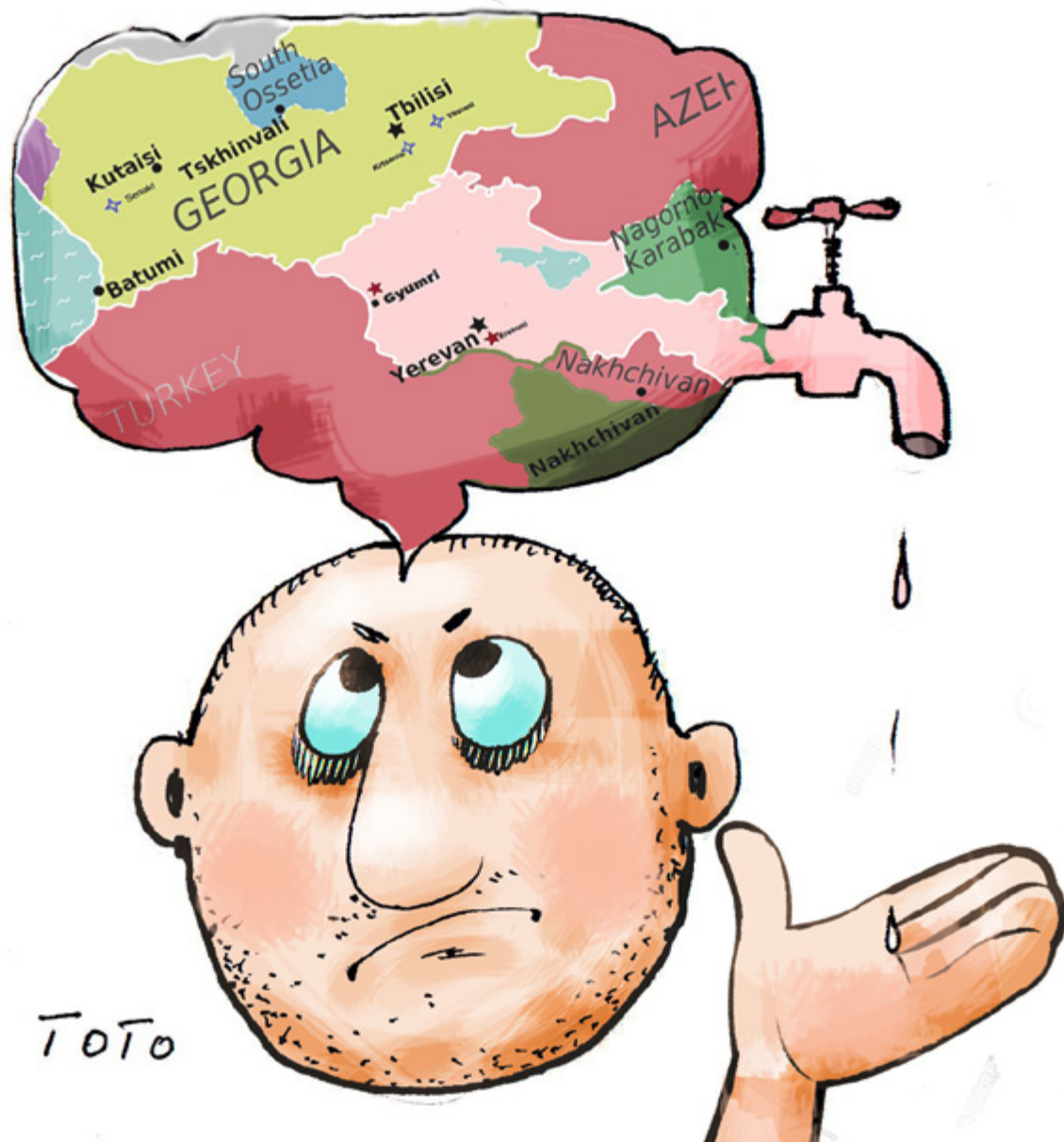
By Edmond Y.
Azadian

allies elsewhere.

Both Turkey and Azerbaijan have ambitious plans in the region. Turkey's goal is to drive a wedge between Russia and China, projecting its power in order to ultimately bring under its sway all the Turkic nations in Central Asia. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, has other plans for expansion, by integrating southern Azerbaijan — Northern Iran — and “Western Azerbaijan” — Armenia.

Despite their misgivings with both countries, the Western powers and Israel look favorably on these plans, if not even encouraging them.

Turkey was not a major factor or concern in the region until President Recep Tayyip Erdogan revealed his pan-Turkic, imperial ambitions and began testing Russia's strength and resolve to hold its ground. And as all confrontations between Ankara and Moscow have demonstrated since — in the battlefields of Syria, Libya and Karabakh — Russia gave in to Turkey's thrust and parry and settled for damage control.



However, Turkey is pushing for more by arming Ukraine with its Bayraktar drones and questioning Russia's legitimacy in Crimea.

Erdogan's spokesperson, Ibrahim Kalin, even threatened that Turkey could cause Russia to explode from within, by activating the 25 million Muslims living there. The administration of Vladimir Putin has maintained an uncharacteristic silence, proving the potential truth of that threat.

Besides the 25 million Muslims, it looks as if Putin's circle is also beholden to the Azerbaijan oil lobby in Moscow. Lragir.am reports that Azeri dictator Ilham Aliyev has funneled a

\$10-billion bribe to Putin cronies through a friend of the Russian president, Ilham Rahimov, to assure Armenia's defeat in war.

This news could be dismissed as a rumor, were it not for the precedent offered by Aliyev to former Armenian leaders Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan (\$6 billion) to settle the Karabakh problem.

The fact that Russia has failed to exercise its obligations under the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) towards Armenia can be explained by two reasons or a combination thereof; one is that Aliyev's bribe has played a role, or second, that Russia is afraid of a confrontation with Turkey which might exhibit cracks in its power structure.

Since May 12, Azerbaijani forces have crossed Armenia's borders in Syunik and Gegharkunik and they have stayed put despite strong statements from the European Union, the United States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other world powers. And if anything, they have increased the number of their soldiers on Armenian soil from 300 to 600 and then to 1,000. They have also killed one Armenian soldier and captured six others right in front of Russian peacekeeping forces. Russia has made commitments to the Turkey-Azerbaijan tandem and those commitments embolden Baku's hand.

In view of the upcoming summit meeting of President Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin in Geneva on June 16, Erdogan is making a countermove to visit Shushi on the same day, most

probably to warn Russia not to give in at that meeting and thus veer from their original agreement.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan seems to be equally powerless: his appeal to the CSTO did not receive a response and he made a desperate gesture of proposing to move Armenian and Azerbaijani forces to equidistant positions and inviting Russia or other international observers to monitor the delimitation and demarcation process on the border. The OSCE responded immediately, much to Moscow's chagrin. On the other hand, the EU foreign ministers are on their way to the Caucasus to

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COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Top Economist Exposes Erdogan's Lies on Bankrupt Turkish Economy

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is completely ignorant about economics, met with the chief executive officers of 26 major American companies and told them many falsehoods about the Turkish economy. The reality is that the Turkish economy is bankrupt and millions of Turkish citizens are on the verge of starvation, while the coronavirus is raging like wildfire, making Turkey the fifth largest country in the world in terms of infections.

Here are some of the lies Erdogan told the American CEO's:

"None of the problems experienced in many countries and the disruptions in the supply chain have been experienced in Turkey. At a time when many economies in the world came to a standstill, we continued our investments in both the public and private sectors.

"Thanks to the efforts of our private sector, the support of our state and dynamic epidemic measures, our economy closed 2020 with growth. With a rate of 1.8%, we became the country with the highest growth in the G-20 after China.

"Despite the serious economic contraction in our traditional export markets and the contraction in foreign demand, we reached an export figure of \$170 billion. The trade volume between Turkey and the United States increased by 4 percent and exceeded \$21 billion.

"In the January-April period of 2021, our exports increased by 33.1 percent compared to last year.

"Our industrial production increased by 12.3% in the first quarter of 2021 compared to the same quarter of the previous year. We also observe a significant increase in investment demand in Turkey.

"The total direct investments of the United States in Turkey reached \$13 billion, while the investments of Turkish companies in the United States reached \$7.2 billion. I would like to thank all American companies who trust Turkey and the Turkish economy."

Surprisingly, Erdogan then decided to tell the American CEO's of President Joe Biden's acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide on April 24, thus informing them of the horrible mass crimes committed by Ottoman Turkey against the Armenians.

"Even though President Biden's statement about the 1915 events puts an additional burden on our relations, I believe that the meeting we will hold with Mr. Biden at the NATO Summit [in June] will herald a new era," Erdogan stated hopefully.

Erdogan then contradicted his many cruel, inhuman, anti-Semitic and racist public statements and policies by claiming: "We have never, and never will, allow distorted mentalities such as xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and racism to find ground in our society. We resolutely continue our efforts to reform the economy, freedoms, laws and justice according to changing conditions and needs. We presented our Human Rights Action Plan and our Economy Reform package to the public."

Here is the list of the CEO's that Erdogan met with:

Cargill, David Webster, Senior Vice President - Food Ingredients and Bio Industrial Ventures; DowAksa, Douglas Parks, CEO; Hilton, Chris Nassetta, President and CEO; MetLife, Nuria Garcia, President -- Europe, Middle East and Africa; Netflix, Spencer Neumann, CFO; Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Stan Deal, CEO; Kellogg Company, Steven Cahillane, President and CEO; Google, Karan Bhatia, Vice President - Public Policy, Europe, Middle East and Africa and Asia-Pacific; GE Aviation, John Slattery, President and CEO;

Varian Medical Systems, Chris Toth, CEO; PepsiCo, Silviu Popovici, CEO Europe; Amazon, Susan Pointer, Vice President -- Public Policy; Cheniere Energy, Anatol Feygin, CCO; Citi, David Livingstone, President and CEO -- Europe, Middle East and Africa; Procter & Gamble, Loic Tassel, President -- Europe; Progress Rail, Marty Haycraft, President and CEO; Tellurian Inc., Octavio Simoes, President and CEO; Medtronic, Rob ten Hoedt, Senior Vice President and Head of Europe; Archer Daniels Midland, Ismail Roig, President -- Europe, Middle East and Africa; Microsoft, Samer Abu Ltaif, Corporate Vice President -- Head of Europe and Middle East; Cisco, Michael Timmeny, Senior Vice President and Head of Corporate Strategy; Honeywell Aerospace, Mike Madsen, President and CEO; Nova Power Solutions, Steve Ziff, President and CEO; The Coca-Cola Company, Jenny Stoichkova, President -- Europe and the Middle East; Johnson & Johnson, Giorgio Milesi, President -- Emerging Markets; and Baker Hughes, Zaher Ibrahim, Vice President -- Middle East, Turkey, North Africa.

Let us now turn to one of the top economists in the world, Daron Acemoglu, an Armenian born in Turkey, who is now Professor of Economics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston. His name is often mentioned as a future Nobel Prize nominee.

During a video interview, Acemoglu directly contradicted Erdogan's propagandistic picture of the Turkish economy, by stating: "I have great fear the economic crisis may deepen in Turkey."

Here are excerpts from Acemoglu's description of the deplorable condition of the economy in Turkey:

"When Turkey went to the presidential election and all the power gathered in the palace, it had a great impact on the economic policy.

"These nationalist and authoritarian populist regimes or these movements generally weaken state capacity when they come to power. This is both a strategy and something they do unintentionally because they can't rule legally. We see this in India, Brazil, Turkey, Russia, and Hungary."

"The countries where the most people died from the coronavirus in the world were Brazil, Turkey, India, Russia and populist authoritarian regimes such as America during the Trump administration.

"Turkey has been experiencing the most critical economic crises in the last five years. There were major crises that started not only after the pandemic, but also before the pandemic. The increase in debts, the worsening of balance sheets, could a correct result be brought against them? No. Why? There are few people in the bureaucracy who can deal with the economy properly and improve it. Especially the cadres established under Berat Albayrak [Minister of Economy and Treasury and Erdogan's son-in-law] could not bring the right approach to what needs to be done. Democracy has many advantages over dictatorships and authoritarian systems. But one of the biggest advantages is their tendency to keep the biggest mistakes, talents and incompetence in the lead, is much weaker. Especially when the presidential election in Turkey and all power gathered in the Palace, this had a great impact on the economic policy.

"Especially in the last five years, unemployment and inequality have reached very high levels [in Turkey].

"Shopping malls and construction companies, which have had a huge problem in their balance sheet for five years, are still standing. How long will they be able to stand? What will be the effects on banks? How long will we be able to keep the interest rate policy this way, while our reserves have decreased so much? These dimensions are likely to go much more negative. These problems are not only in Turkey, there are problems in other parts as well, but wherever you see these problems, you see the role of decisions not to manage the economy correctly."

I hope the American CEO's will pay more attention to Acemoglu's accurate assessment than to Erdogan's propaganda which has led Turkey to economic disaster.

Armenia's Place in the New Political Order of the Caucasus

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visit Yerevan, Tbilisi and Baku.

Any outside attention to the region certainly worries both Moscow and Ankara and places their mutual arrangement under scrutiny.

Pashinyan, in his turn, was very careful not to overstep Putin's instructions, but giving in to domestic pressure, decided to take a bold step and visit President Emmanuel Macron in Paris and Charles Michel, president of the European Union in Brussels, on June 1-2, to find out how much substance there is in their offer to help Armenia to stand firm against Azerbaijani pressure.

This international pressure had also its ramifications on the domestic policies in Armenia, during the heat of pre-election campaign.

Twenty six groups have registered for parliamentary elections: 22 political parties and four alliances.

What is significant is that in view of Russian reluctance to meet its treaty obligations towards Armenia, anti-Russian political forces are being formed and are becoming more vocal.

Some of them are real political forces, unlike Tigran Khzmalyan, president of the European Party, which is a lightweight in Armenia's political structures.

Prominent pro-Western groups are the Baba-

janyan-Shirinyan alliance, the Armenian Popular Axis, in which the heavy weights are Varoujan Avetisyan and Garegin Chukaszian, as well as the Armenian Constructive Party led by Andreas Ghougasyan.

If anything, these voices will demonstrate that Armenia has alternatives to count on. But it is not realistic that these groups will receive much support from the electorate which always has been biased towards Russia. From experience, they also remember that Russia may not be very forgiving if Armenia really tries to move away from its sphere of influence, as happened with Georgia, which was amputated during the 2008 war with Russia.

In addition to international power play and domestic turmoil, Pashinyan has to fight his tug-of-war with Aliyev. The president of My Step Alliance, Lilit Makunts, insists that no negotiation will be held with Azerbaijan before the latter's forces retreat from Armenian soil. Caretaker Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan, who is working with his Russian and Azerbaijani counterparts on the implementation of the November 9 declaration by restoring roads and communications, and Pashinyan himself, insist that there is no discussion of an Azerbaijani corridor cutting through Zangezur, while President Aliyev insists that in no way can Armenia walk away from its agreement to build the corridor through Zangezur, which will be controlled by

Russian forces.

During a visit to Baku by Turkish Transport and Infrastructure Minister Adil Karaismayiloglu, President Aliyev gave a report on the work in progress and despite all denials from the Armenian side, he stated, "As you know, at the first stage after the war, Armenia expressed its protest on the issue. However, recently I have been informed that the Armenian side is already correctly analyzing the issues related to the inevitability of this corridor and there are good results."

Pashinyan's denial is understandable, because if Aliyev's statement proves to be true, that may have some negative impact on election results when Pashinyan's party still remains the favorite.

But when the dust settles, we may see that Aliyev's statements turn out to be true, unfortunately.

In the wake of the devastating war and the turmoil raging in the region, it is insane to hold snap elections to prove that Pashinyan is still ahead in popularity. But the participation of so many parties and alliances has the potential of dividing the votes on the Pashinyan and Kocharyan camps, by not allowing any group to garner an overwhelming advantage, which may eventually lead towards a national unity government, which will be the silver lining in all these catastrophic events.



We Need to Get Ready for New Battles of Sardarabad

By Dr. Arshavir Gundjian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On May 12, 250 regular Azerbaijani army soldiers just strolled 3.5 kilometers past the borders of Syunik province onto the territory of the Republic of Armenia, as freely as regular tourists. They did not encounter any resistance. Apparently that number has now increased and has reached the thousand mark. It appears that there is nothing to prevent the same from occurring at the Armenian borders at Tavush as well as near the shores of Lake Sevan. What is next? Where else will it happen? Can they go all the way to Yerevan?

The present-day authorities in Armenia keep justifying the absence of any intervention by the Armenian army, arguing that this could be considered a violation by Armenia of that nefarious November 9 agreement, and consequently may lead to the restart of hostilities for which Armenia

is not prepared.

In the meantime, the Armenian civilian population in the border regions is outraged. It feels abandoned, protests, searches alternatives for self-defense and is in a state of deep crisis. This unacceptable and intolerable tension leads every day to an increasingly more explosive situation, wherein the Armenian civil population is left in an unfair state of helplessness. Then an inevitable question begs an answer: Facing this threatening existential crisis, where are Armenians living in Armenia and beyond expected to find sources to support self-defense?

The perspective for a promising political turnaround from the forthcoming elections is unfortunately rapidly losing any likelihood. In the past six months period we all expected that beyond the two sworn enemies, Pashinyan and Kocharyan, with their faithful followers, new groups and individuals among the population of Armenia

would emerge, with fresh political, diplomatic, economic, and military strategic ideas, thus providing Armenia's electorate the option of electing to the helm of the country a new stable and capable government. Had such a strong and reliable third option turned up, an even broader coalition could have coalesced around it. However, to this date, it has not materialized, by now its formation seems to be quite unlikely.

It is unlikely that any of our Eastern or Western so-called ally or friendly large states will, merely for the sake of justice, help us to maintain the integrity of our borders, while we remain inactive and at best write petitions left and right asking others to intervene while enemy boots have already trod across our borders a long time ago.

After six centuries of stateless existence, we regained statehood a century ago by means of great sacrifices. Our reborn country has reached the highest international

levels of successful development in the fields of culture, industry and the sciences, including military innovations. Nonetheless, today, as a result of the reigning political incompetence, the country is being lost piece by piece without having the possibility of firing even a single shot in defense.

In the face of this alarming situation, calls for new battles of Sardarabad are expectedly being raised in Armenia. In May 1918, however, the calls for the defense of the motherland were directed at the remnants from the Armenian massacres that were gathered in the limited areas of Sardarabad, Gharakilissa and Bash Abaran. Today the threat is spread along the entire borders of Armenia, excepting of course its friendly sections with Georgia and Iran. Also a large portion of Armenians live now beyond Armenia, throughout the vast spread of the diaspora. While it is unrealistic to expect the latter's physical presence to defend Armenia's borders, on the other hand it is imperative that it helps through other means its brethren who themselves have no choice but to raise physical barriers along the borders of all endangered regions to prevent any Azerbaijani or Turkish soldier from being tempted to repeat the Syunik precedent of unwelcome "touristic" trespass.

If the regular Armenian army, based on today's authorities' political calculations, will still be prevented to intervene, there remains no other alternative but for civilians and volunteer groups to create a human barrier to stop the enemy advance into Armenian lands by invoking once more the spirit of the heroes, and by ringing the bells, of the victorious battle of Sardarabad.

Under the present circumstances, the civilian population of border communities in particular must be trained and armed in order to be able to successfully perform their self-defense operations. Today, however, they are still not permitted to arm themselves. In all civilized nations where due to particular circumstances civilians are not properly protected by the official regular armed forces of the country, they are then authorized to arm themselves in order to protect their families and properties. In that respect the right for self-defense of the citizens of the United States of America is notorious as it is granted by a prominent article of the country's constitution. It is imperative that with the probability of a forthcoming existential struggle in Armenia, authorities legalize and immediately grant civilians the right to bear arms for self-defense.

At this point, there is obviously no alternative. It is necessary to be ready along the entire length of the Armenian border to recreate the victorious battles of Sardarabad, or else be resigned to accept the reality of having to meet the enemy in the streets of Yerevan! That possibility had actually been impertinently evoked by Aliyev a few months back in one of his fiery warmongering speeches. At the time, we may have ignored those provocative statements. Now, on the other hand, our continuing to ignore such revolting possibilities would amount to sheer irresponsibility.

All of this can be prevented if the current or forthcoming governments of Armenia can successfully implement preventive diplomatic or military measures. It would also be desirable for our friendly and allied nations to take a firm stand and intervene immediately to neutralize the current existential threat to Armenia.

In the absence of the above two possibilities, Armenia's current authorities must disclose if there is a convincing alternative to allowing the Armenian people to prepare for the eventuality of victorious new battles of Sardarabad.

(Montreal)

Tribute to Dr. Raffy A. Hovanessian on First Anniversary of His Passing

A physician in the truest sense, is not defined solely by his choice of profession. What defines him is a lifelong impulse to help others: a commitment to treat fellow human beings with compassion, love and respect.

May 27, 2021, marked the first year anniversary of the passing of Dr. Raffy A. Hovanessian. Dr. Hovanessian was remembered in a private requiem service of the immediate family at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in New York City presided by Bishop Daniel Findikyan and Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian.

In honor of the first year of his passing, the family has committed funds to two very important missions established by Dr. Hovanessian during his life: First, in 1986, the "Clergy Endowment Fund for Higher Education of Clergy" for the Brotherhood of Antelias. And second, post humous in 2020, "Continuing Medical Education of Doctors and Health Professionals of Artsakh" in Fund for Armenia Relief.

On the first anniversary of his passing, the first mission which Dr. Hovanessian established back in 1986, the family directed a \$100,000 distribution from the "Dr. Raffy A. and Vicki Shoghag Hovanessian Endowment Fund" to further the post-graduate education of clergy of the Cilician Brotherhood. In the words of Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy, "Throughout his life, Dr. Hovanessian was a visionary to concentrate his efforts in enhancing the higher education of clergy as he firmly believed these efforts would strengthen the caliber of sermons and clergy's efforts in spreading our faith and attracting the youth to attend Churches."

Since his passing on May 27, 2020, today's gift brings the total distribution from the "Dr. Raffy A. and Vicki Shoghag Hovanessian Endowment Fund for Higher Education of Clergy" to a total of \$222,000 in the year 2020 to 2021.

In addition, in 2011, Dr. Hovanessian was the catalyst to establish continuing medical education of doctors and health professionals in Yerevan and later in Artsakh while serving on the Board of the Armenian American Health Professional Organization together with his close friend Benefactor Mr. Nazar Nazarian under the Directorship of Garnik Nangoulian of Fund For Armenia Relief (FAR). In Armenia, since its inception, all the medical programs of F.A.R. are implemented through the dedicated services of Dr. Hampartsoum Simonyan.

Posthumously, the family established the "Dr. Raffy A. Ho-

vanessian FAR Educational Fund" to continue his vision for Artsakh, and his legacy as a Benefactor of its medical professionals in Yerevan and Artsakh.

On the Anniversary of his first passing, the family made a \$25,000 donation to the "Dr. Raffy A. Hovanessian FAR Educational Fund." The family wishes to continue his profound impact and legacy by continuing to support such noble spiritual and medical missions in Yerevan and Artsakh which he wanted to guarantee at any cost even before the September 2020 Armenia war.

Certainly, the name of Dr. Raffy Hovanessian will be remembered with honor, in death as it was in life. During his lifetime he was the recipient of numerous awards, from entities around the world. He was grateful for such recognitions — he was especially charmed that both he and his wife Shoghag had been awarded America's Ellis Island Medal of Honor — while accepting them in a spirit of genuine humility and detachment. The glory of name-recognition was never Raffy's motivation. What drove him, filling his life with consequence and joy, was the work itself, and the chance it presented to do a good turn to others — especially to his own people.

It's not surprising that as a physician, Dr. Hovanessian was concerned with the health and well-being of his countrymen. He gave voice to that sentiment in an interview he once gave to Chris Zakian of the Eastern Diocese, "Let us never forget that we are Armenians," he said. "Our great connection to each other is that we belong to the same nation. The blood flowing in our veins is distinctive, unique; to infect it with mutual jealousy, animosity, and opposition would be a costly mistake."

In September 2019, the Artsakh Ministry of Health expressed its gratitude to Dr. Hovanessian for his visionary commitment to improve healthcare in the republic.

In the year since his passing, Raffy's words and life example have taken on a poignant urgency, as Armenians throughout the world seek voices of wise counsel to unite us, lift us up in spirit, and guide our aspirations towards truly productive goals — goals which would elevate all of our people, and would be worthy of our shared heritage.

During the private Hokehankisd, Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese, addressed the family with these poignant words, "It is deeply regrettable that at such time, Raffy himself is no longer with us, to speak candidly (as he always did) to our present moment, and to help us address the profound challenges weighing upon us as a non-clergy person." Bishop Daniel further emphasized that, "Raffy's authority to address these matters came from wisdom, humility, and love for the church."

Nevertheless, the legacy he left behind is itself a guiding voice: a lifetime example of patriotic, compassionate, Christian outreach; a doctor's thoughtful prescription to heal the afflictions with which we struggle today.

May his legacy be a guiding light for the younger generation to follow.

