

Armenia Accuses Azerbaijan of Ethnic Hatred At UN Court

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Armenia urged judges at a United Nations court Thursday, October 14, to order Azerbaijan to release Armenians detained during a six-week war last year and to stop promoting ethnic hatred. Azerbaijan urged judges to reject the requests as the two nations faced off in a Hague courtroom.

Armenian representative Yeghishe Kirakosyan made the requests as a hearing opened at the International Court of Justice into a petition by Armenia for judges to impose urgent interim measures to prevent Azerbaijan breaching an international convention to stamp out ethnic discrimination.

Among measures Armenia wants the court to impose on Azerbaijan are an order to release and repatriate prisoners of war and halt hate speech aimed at Armenians.



Yeghishe Kirakosyan speaking at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Netherlands

Azerbaijan’s deputy foreign minister, Elnur Mammadov, said Armenia’s request “is defective, and must be rejected.”

The case stems from longstanding enmity that boiled over into last year’s war over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh that left more than 6,600 people dead. The region is within Azerbaijan but had been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since the end of a separatist war in 1994.

Kirakosyan said Armenia wasn’t asking the court to rule on the root causes of the war, but “seeks to prevent and remedy the cycle of violence and hatred perpetrated against ethnic Armenians.”

Azerbaijan also has filed a similar case alleging discrimination against its citizens see ACCUSATIONS, page 2



Some of the pigs donated to the Berdzor refugees through the Tekeyan Cultural Association

TCA Sustainable Assistance Continues To Help Berdzor Refugees in Armenia

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

VAYOTS DZOR, Armenia — After the loss of the Vahan Tekeyan School of Berdzor, Artsakh Republic, the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA) began a program of aid to the school’s staff and alumni who had suddenly become refugees. The program has been implemented in two stages so far, and is ongoing.

Through small contributions and mass funding, income-generating opportunities were created for the displaced families. TCA in association with a local NGO called Syunik Development has made investments in agriculture and beekeeping to create income or comforts for their beneficiaries. The recipients get assistance on the condition that, after a waiting period of two years, they pay back on an annual basis the equivalent in produced goods of 10% of the amount of assistance they have received.

The TCA Sustainable Assistance Project is coordinated and implemented by Arto Manoukian of Montreal, a TCA board member and monitored by the TCA’s Armenia representative, Gayané Muratyan, with the assistance of Anahit Kosakyan, the last principal of the Berdzor Tekeyan school.

Apiculture

Eight families were given bee colonies, hives, training and various equipment in the first stage in the plan, which has been described in a prior article in the Mirror-Spectator. Two excerpts from letters from Tekeyan School students in these families give a further idea of the effects of this assistance.

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TCA representative in Armenia Gayane Muratyan holding some of the honey produced by Berdzor refugees that was displayed at Armenia Expo 2021 this September

Group Tries to Give Armenian Veterans’ And Martyrs’ Families Their Due

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

YEREVAN — In a country with few resources, no life insurance or hefty pensions, the families of soldiers who were killed or severely injured in war are often left bereft of everything after paying the ultimate price of the loss or incapacitation of a loved one. Sentimentality butts up against two ugly truths: those loved ones are often the breadwinners and unfortunately, Armenia is in the shadow of a strong enemy that seems to be willing to launch strikes regularly.

Those reasons led to the creation of the Insurance Foundation for Servicemen (IFS), also known as 1,000 Plus, after the four-day 2016 war, which left about 100 casualties in its wake, said Sona Baghdasaryan, the group’s fundraising and donor relations manager.

The organization is basically a life insurance plan that pays a lump sum after the



First Lieutenant Sargis Gabrielyan

death or incapacitation of a soldier on duty and then makes payments for the next 20 years.

“We have a single mission to give monetary compensation to families of fallen soldiers or soldiers who have acquired a disability of first or second degree due to combat,” Baghdasaryan said during a recent interview from her office in Yerevan.

“We make sure that after they sacrifice their lives, they can live in comfort. We make sure they have a dignified life,” Baghdasaryan said, adding that the state itself can only offer a tiny monthly payment of about \$80 to survivors of an injured soldier or a martyr.

“It’s a long-term financing that makes sure those families are not on the brink of

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Los Angeles Community Leader George Mandossian Passes Away

BURBANK, Calif. — There are key individuals at any epoch and any place whose decisive actions shape their environment. George Kevork Mandossian is one such individual. Mandossian died on October 17, having led a full and long life. A leader of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA) and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL),

he also played an important role in the Armenian Church and the Armenian General Benevolent Union.

He was a founder and guiding spirit of the TCA Arshag Dickranian Armenian School and a member of the founding council of the Montebello Armenian Martyrs Memorial Monument.

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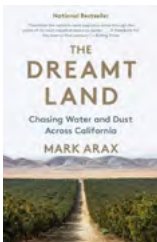
ARMENIA
India, Armenia Forge Closer Ties with Foreign Minister Visit



MARYLAND
AYC Raise Funds on the Links for Youth Groups in Washington



BOOKS
California Dreamin’: a Mark Arax Trilogy





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Officials Offer Conflicting Information about Strategic Height in Syunik

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A confluence of conflicting information is surrounding the situation in Kapan, a town in Armenia's Syunik province. Kapan mayor Gevorg Parsyan said on October 18 that a strategic high position near the town had gone under Azerbaijan's control. The mayor was almost immediately contradicted by Syunik Governor Melikset Poghosyan and the National Security Service of Armenia. According to a report from Factor.am, Parsyan said Russian border guards deployed atop the hill were withdrawn two days earlier, with the Azerbaijanis blocking the area and preventing Armenians from using a road nearby. Poghosyan, however, denied the information, but failed to provide details. The National Security Service too weighed in, maintaining that no positions have changed in the area, with Armenian border troops guarding the frontier in said section.

Norway to Send 'Significant Batch' of Moderna Vaccine To Armenia

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Norway will provide a "significant batch" of the Moderna vaccine to Armenia, newly appointed Norwegian ambassador to Yerevan Helene Sand Andresen has revealed. She made the remarks when presenting her diplomatic credentials to Deputy Foreign Minister Vahe Gevorgyan in Yerevan on October 18. During the meeting, Gevorgyan detailed Andresen about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the current situation in the region, stressing the need for a full resumption of the Karabakh peace process within the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship.

Russia Delivers 10 Tons Of Humanitarian Aid to Karabakh

STEPANAKERT (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A military transport aircraft of Russia's Aerospace Forces has delivered to Yerevan another batch of humanitarian aid for the refugees and large families of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), the Defense Ministry of Russia reports. The aid was collected by charitable organizations and loaded onto a military aircraft at the Chkalovsky airfield in the Moscow region. Semyon Bless, a representative of the Russian Aerospace Forces, revealed on October 18 that 10 tons of humanitarian aid will be further transported to Stepanakert.

This is not the first such campaign as the Russian peacekeeping contingent has been regularly staging humanitarian relief in Nagorno-Karabakh. The peacekeepers are carrying out a range of activities from working with local residents to collecting information about those in need of help, communicating with charitable organizations and handing over necessary supplies to schools and families.



Fire in the Yeraskh village in Ararat Province

Armenia's Ombudsman Says Azerbaijani Forces Fortifying Positions In Gegharkunik, Ararat Provinces

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Azerbaijani armed forces that invaded Armenia's Gegharkunik region in May, have built large shelters, accumulated a large amount of firewood, and paved the roads leading to their positions, Armenia's Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan said this week.

The Ombudsman says the Azerbaijani forces continue to build new roads, as well as increase their numbers and armaments in the positions. They are constantly carrying out active engineering work to reinforce the positions, Tatoyan said.

"We are talking about the illegal deployment of Azerbaijanis and their criminal acts in the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia," Tatoyan said, noting that they are physically present in the very lands that belong to the citizens of the Republic of Armenia with the rights established by legal documents.

The data was confirmed by the staff of the Human Rights Defender, including the Gegharkunik regional subdivision, with reliable evidence and data verified by several sources.

"These are the Azerbaijani positions from where the Azerbaijani servicemen commit terrorist crimes against the civilian population of Armenia. They regularly fire on the villages of Verin Shorzha, Sotk, Kut and other settlements in Gegharkunik, in particular on civilian houses, and set fire to the pastures and grasslands of civilians. The officers of these positions have committed a large number of thefts of animals of the residents of the Republic of Armenia," Tatoyan said.

According to him, the presence of the Azerbaijani armed forces in the vicinity of the villages of the Republic of Armenia and in the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia is of an openly criminal nature, it in itself violates the villagers' to live safely, their rights to property and family income and other vital rights. Their presence disrupts the peaceful life of the people.

Therefore, the Ombudsman insists, the process of creating a demilitarized security zone around the borders of the Republic of Armenia, the immediate removal of Azerbaijani servicemen from the vicinity of the villages of the Republic of Armenia, and

the roads between the communities must begin immediately.

In addition, Yeraskh, a village in the Ararat province, is subjected to regular shelling by the Azerbaijani armed forces, both during the day and at night, Tatoyan says.

The village last came under shelling on October 15.

"The unruliness of the Azerbaijani servicemen has reached such a level that they set fire through intentional shootings to 8000 stacks of grass belonging to a resident of Yeraskh community. The entire winter stockpile, which the citizen had collected to feed his livestock, has been destroyed," the Ombudsman said in a Facebook post.

Moreover, he said, the fire spread destroying the roof of the barn belonging to the citizen. The fire was extinguished only thanks to timely intervention of the firefighters.

"Taking into consideration that the Azerbaijani positions are located in the immediate vicinity of the village, it is obvious to Azerbaijani servicemen that their actions are harming the residents of the village, destroying their property, violating their rights to life and property, and disturbing

their life and peace," Tatoyan said.

He insists that the process of creating a demilitarized security zone around the borders of Armenia with Azerbaijan and the removal of the Azerbaijani armed servicemen from the vicinity of the villages and from the roads between the communities of Armenia should start immediately.

"The proposal of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia has already been included in an international instrument in Resolution 2391 (2021) of September 27, 2021 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The Human Rights Defender will send relevant reports about this situation to international organizations, to the State bodies of Armenia, and to civil society organizations," the Ombudsman said.

"It is evident that the basis of these criminal harassments and the gross violations of human rights is the same: — the policy of Armenophobia and enmity, and of ethnic cleansing and genocide. This policy has institutional bases, and the violations will not end, and the security of the people will not be guaranteed unless the perpetrators are punished," Tatoyan concluded.

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by Armenia and also has requested the world court to impose interim measures. Hearings in the Azerbaijan case are scheduled to start next Monday. Rulings on both requests will likely be issued in coming weeks.

Both nations' cases alleging breaches of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination will likely take years to reach their conclusion at the Hague-based court.

Last year's conflict ended when Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan signed a Russia-brokered cease-fire agreement that granted Azerbaijan control over parts of Nagorno-Karabakh as well as adjacent territories occupied by Armenians.

Armenia says more than 3,700 Armenians and Nagorno-Karabakh residents died in the war. Azerbaijan said it lost 2,900 people.

Kirakosyan told the court that despite the deal that ended last year's conflict, "Azerbaijan continues to espouse and actively promote ethnic hatred against Armenians."

He said that Azerbaijan has "captured, tortured, and arbitrarily detained numerous members of Armenian armed forces and civilians of ethnic Armenian origin" and "continues to destroy Armenian cultural heritage and religious sites or negate the Armenian character, and the territory's economic controls."

Lawyers for Azerbaijan said Baku has released most prisoners and those who remain in detention were convicted or are being prosecuted on charges including murder, torture and espionage.



ARMENIA

Armenia Ruling Party Suffers Setbacks in Local Elections

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party failed to unseat the jailed opposition-linked mayor of a major community in Armenia's Syunik province and was also defeated in Gyumri in local elections held on Sunday, October 17.

Voters also went to the polls in seven other communities across the country. In most of them, they elected, on a party-list basis, local councils that will in turn appoint their mayors.

The most tense and closely watched race was in the Syunik town of Goris and several surrounding villages making up a single administrative unit. Incumbent mayor Arush Arushanyan was arrested in July on a string of criminal charges rejected by him as politically motivated. Arushanyan's two deputies were detained in August but were subsequently set free.

Arushanyan, who has headed the community since 2017, has not been convicted of any crimes so far and was therefore allowed to run for reelection. The 30-year-old is affiliated with the main opposition Hayastan alliance led by former President Robert Kocharyan. But he chose to cobble together a smaller bloc for the local election.

Preliminary election results showed the bloc bearing Arushanyan's name winning 62 percent of the vote, compared with about 36 percent polled by Civil Contract. The ruling party's mayoral candidate, Vladimir Abunts, effectively conceded defeat.

"I did not expect such an outcome because during the election campaign we were convinced that we are going to win," Abunts told reporters late in the evening.

Sunday's voting was marked by mutual accusations of foul play and heightened police presence in Goris condemned by the Arush Arushanyan Bloc as a government attempt to intimidate its supporters.

Special police forces sent from Yerevan also raided the bloc's campaign headquarters and searched it for several hours. A lawyer for the bloc said they suspect the incumbent mayor's father and campaign manager, Gagik Arushanyan, of buying votes. He rejected the allegations.

Over two dozen Arushanyan loyalists, who gathered in the office after the closure of polls, burst with joy when Menua Hovsepyan, a deputy mayor of Goris released from jail last week, announced the preliminary vote results.

"The people of Goris have spoken up [in favor of] dignity, Syunik and the country," Hovsepyan said.

The new Goris council will almost certainly reelect Arushanyan as community head. It remains to be seen whether Armenian courts will agree to free him pending the outcome of his anticipated trial.

Syunik borders districts southwest of Nagorno-Karabakh that were retaken by Azerbaijan during and shortly after the six-week war stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire last November. The mayors of virtually all provincial towns and villages blamed Pashinyan for Armenia defeat and demanded his resignation. Some of them encouraged supporters to disrupt Pashinyan's visits to Syunik.

Most Syunik mayors joined Kocharyan's bloc in the run-up to the snap parliamentary elections won by Civil Contract. Three of

them were arrested shortly after the snap polls.

One of those mayors, Mkhitar Zakaryan, ran another major community comprising the towns of Meghri and Agarak and several villages. Pashinyan's party was defeated there on Sunday by the Hanrapetutyun party, a pro-Western group which is nominally in opposition to the Armenian government but supports it on some issues.

The ruling party prevailed in two other, smaller and rural Syunik communities. But it suffered another serious setback in Gyumri.

Armenia's second largest city has been run by Samvel Balasanyan, a local businessman, for the last nine years. He was allied with the former Armenian government that helped him win reelection in 2016.

Although Balasanyan decided not to seek another term in office, a newly created party bearing his name has joined the mayoral race. Its list of election candidates was topped by one of the outgoing mayor's relatives, Vardges Sanosyan.

The Balasanyan Bloc won 36.6 percent of the vote in the weekend election marked by a record-lower voter turnout of just over 24 percent. Civil Contract finished second with about 30 percent. Three other political forces, including former President Serzh Sarkisian's Republican Party, fared much worse while managing to clear the 4 percent threshold for being represented in the municipal council.

It was not immediately clear if the Balasanyan Bloc will seek a power-sharing deal with Pashinyan's party or the other opposition groups to install Gyumri's next mayor.

Fugitive Armenian Statesman Vano Siradeghyan Dies

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Vano Siradeghyan, a once powerful Armenian politician and former government member, died at the age of 74 on October 15, more than two decades after fleeing the country to avoid prosecution on murder charges denied by him.

Siradeghyan's death was announced by his wife and son in a short statement issued over the weekend. They did not specify its cause, reveal his last place of residence or say whether they want to bury him in Armenia.

A former novelist, Siradeghyan was one of the leaders of a popular movement for Armenia's unification with Nagorno-Karabakh that erupted in 1988 and toppled the then Soviet republic's last Communist government in 1990. He be-



Vano Siradeghyan

came one of the newly independent country's most powerful men when serving as interior minister in the administration of its first President Levon Ter-Petrosian from 1992-1996.

Both during and after his tenure, Ter-Petrosian's political opponents and some media outlets accused Siradeghyan of abusing his powers to enrich himself and his family. He denied the accusations.

One year after Ter-Petrosian resigned in 1998, Siradeghyan was charged with ordering a string of contract killings. State prosecutors claimed in particular that he set up in the early 1990s a death squad to eliminate and terrorize opponents of the Ter-Petrosian administration.

In July 2000, two members of the alleged gang were sentenced to death while seven others got jail terms ranging from 4 to 11 years. One month later, eleven former officers of Armenian interior troops were given lengthy sentences after a Yerevan court convicted them of murdering two men in 1995.

The former interior minister strongly denied ordering those killings. He and his supporters insisted that the charges were fabricated as part of then President Robert Kocharyan's efforts to neutralize his political foes.

Siradeghyan fled Armenia in April 2000 ahead of the Armenian parliament's decision to allow law-enforcement authorities to arrest him pending the outcome of his trial. Although the authorities for years claimed to be trying to track him down and have him extradited, his whereabouts always remained unknown to the public.

Throughout his exile Siradeghyan never went on record to comment on political developments in the country. He continued to enjoy the backing of Ter-Petrosian and members of the ex-president's entourage.

In a weekend statement, Ter-Petrosian's Armenian National Congress (HAK) party, paid tribute to Siradeghyan, saying that as interior minister he managed to quickly "root out crime" and maintain "internal stability and law and order" and thus contributed to the Armenian victory in the 1991-1994 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The HAK also deplored the "trumped-up" charges brought against him during Kocharyan's rule and urged the current Armenian authorities to allow Siradeghyan's family to bury him at the National Pantheon in Yerevan.

COAF Renovates Dilapidated School Gym in Getashen Village

YEREVAN — More than 300 students in the village of Getashen, located in the Armavir region of Armenia, celebrated the opening of their newly renovated school gymnasium on October 8. The large-scale renovation carried out by Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) was made possible through the support of John Akhoian and family, as well as the Hoops4Hayastan nonprofit organization.

COAF first entered Getashen in 2014, launching several education programs over the years. Today, the primary COAF after-school offerings at the school include Drawing, Basketball, Debate, Aftoun Social and Financial Education, and English language classes in partnership with the US Embassy's Access program.

Back in 2015, COAF completed a major capital renovation of the school, developed a Brushodrome (a room where children can brush their teeth), refurbished the school cafeteria, opened a



Staff and kids at the Getashen school gym



Practicing martial arts at the Getashen gym

Creativity Lab — a multifunctional classroom equipped with innovative technologies and launched a unique AgroSchool project, aimed at educating children in agribusiness and constructing greenhouses, the harvest of which serve the school's cafeteria.

The newly-renovated gymnasium provides children the necessary space to live their natural drive for movement and will directly benefit their motoric and cognitive development, allowing for better coordination and higher concentration. Additionally, physical education plays an integral role in fostering the social skills of children by teaching them the importance of teamwork, mutual understanding and acceptance, as well as following instructions.

The school administration will now be able to offer a wide variety of physical education classes thanks to the gym no longer being categorized as hazardous. COAF will also continue to offer extracurricular sports programs, with an emphasis on the promotion of basketball.



ARMENIA

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poverty, because they make sure that we are safe,” Baghdasaryan said.

“The foundation was created by a special law, so it’s basically a private foundation that has its own law, and a strict, narrow, mandate to provide compensation. We are financed by the Armenian nation. Every single Armenian and foreign working in Armenia and paying taxes, provides between \$3 and \$30 every single month in mandatory contributions,” she added.

Amazingly, the majority of the funds that go to the soldiers and their families comes from that tax and it has been more or less enough until this year. However, the most recent devastating attack by Azerbaijan on Armenia and Karabakh changed the numbers and the IFS leadership realized that with the tremendous number of dead and wounded, they needed a bigger infusion of funds. According to the latest government statistics, Armenia and Artsakh lost about 4,025 servicemen, with 231 missing and 11,000 servicemen wounded and sick.

“After the [most recent] war, since our caseload grew tenfold,” between 2008 and

Defense. Therefore to verify the claims and find out how and where a particular soldier died, the latter authority can provide the information and thus greenlight the authenticity of the claim.

“We make sure whoever is included is the family and we make sure everyone is in,” she explained.

Artsakh’s residents also pay in and we also pay in Artsakh. For us, we don’t care which army they were in. Most of our officers serve in Artsakh.

“We are governed by an independent professional board that comes mostly from the diaspora, They are experts in finance, crisis management, fundraising,” etc., to strategically guide the organization, she noted.

Sitting on the board of trustees are David Akopyan, who has held a variety of positions in the last 30 years with the United Nations Development Program; Adam A. Kablanian, a high technology CEO, serial entrepreneur, and investor from San Francisco; Anahit Adamyan, a partner at EV Consulting management consultancy in

Baghdasaryan said she is aware of large organizations that have raised money which has not always reached its target or if it has, it has been less than promised or slower than planned.

Those organizations’ mismanagement or misappropriation of funds has been a “catastrophic influence for us,” she said.

Baghdasaryan stressed that no government official is involved with the money.

Baghdasaryan, who speaks English fluently, attended high school in the US for a year as part of an exchange program for students from the Soviet bloc and later received a master’s degree in banking and finance law from the Boston University School of Law.

Tour of the US

With the greater numbers of families that need to be helped, the organization wants to make the US more aware of its presence and therefore Baghdasaryan and her colleague Narine Galstyan are embarking on a multicity tour of the US.

“Now we need to fundraise. We have a gap of \$10 to \$15 million that we have to close by the end of this year,” and new cases are still coming in, she said.

“We have started with the US because it is the community that reaches us the most. We also have communities in the US who organize fundraisers for us,” she said.

As an example, she cited a group in San Francisco, Artsakh Task Force, “A group of very committed people,” who have held fundraisers for IFS both during and after the war. “We want to meet these people and thank them in person,” she said.

She stressed that while they plan to raise funds, this trip will be more about exposing the IFS to the Armenian Americans who do not know of the group. “For this trip, we don’t plan to fundraise. The communities that know us and work with us, they fundraise without our asking,” she said. “The communities that do not know us, we will introduce ourselves because we need to build trust, and then we will ask for donations when the calls will resonate with them.”

They have started their tour in Washington, DC, and will visit between October 20 to November 18 Philadelphia, New Jersey, Boston, Detroit, Chicago, Fresno, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

The IFS has initiated a foothold in the US through two sister organizations, the Armenian Wounded Heroes Fund (AWHF), run by Chris Petrossian and Razmig Arzumian, and Friend of the Armenian Soldier and Family (FASF), which just acquired its 501-3.

Baghdasaryan expressed her pride in working with the two groups.

For AWHF, she said, “It is a two-man initiative that has a stellar reputation and doing a stellar job since 2017. They channel tax-deductible donations from US residents to us, as well as training, medical kits, etc.”

The fate of soldiers is one close to her; her younger brother studied in the military academy and was stationed in July 2020 and fought in the war. Fortunately, he was not hurt.

That is not the case especially for those serving in Artsakh. “Unfortunately most Artsakh families have had a loss in the first war or this one. They are exempt from the mandatory contribution but they usually don’t [take advantage of it]. They need the money but” don’t ask not to pay. “It’s a very interesting system that we can do something well and support each other, independently, just us as a nation. And we are quite proud of that achievement.”

Founding IFS

The IFS started in 2017 as a grassroots effort by a group of people, led by Varou-

jan Avedikian of the Central Bank of Armenia, who were horrified by the loss of 100 lives during the four-day war launched by Azerbaijan against Artsakh. “They started gathering money, doing fundraising from their friends in the diaspora and visiting the families one by one. They visited everyone and came out of it with two realizations: these people need help financially because they don’t come from the most comfortable areas of our society. People who serve in the military are not the rich elites. They are regular people in the region that go and fight and stand so that I can sleep safely and calmly with my three children. And secondly, these people need recognition for what their sons have done,” she noted. “There is no national recognition, no way they feel the support or care of their nation.”

Avedikian, then the general counsel of the Central Bank of Armenia, came up with the idea, she said, based on his exposure to Western organizations and entities such as life insurance.

Baghdasaryan got involved early in the project as she had been working for him for 15 years at the bank as head of the legal services department at the Central Bank of Armenia.

“He came up with the idea and sold it to the management. They said ‘write the law and we will support the foundation for five years,’” she said.

“It [the bill creating the IFS] was written very fast and passed parliament very fast,” she said, with the support of the then-minister of defense, Vigen Sargsyan.

All procedures were streamlined through the bank’s resources where needed, with the rest done by volunteers. “Everything was run by volunteers. People chipped in with their time and assets,” she said. “We didn’t have staff then. There were about 10 volunteers.”

After the war, the people running the IFS realized there needs to be a team of employees because unfortunately, the issues are not going away. “We have 5,000 cases and 20 years of liability. We need a team that works 9-10 hours a day,” she said.

In the short time since its founding, the organization has been rocked by much. “We have seen one revolution, one COVID, several escalations and one large-scale war. We lost in 44 days more lives that we lost in the first five years of the Artsakh War,” she noted.

“A decision was made that the foundation has to become a professional, independent organization,” she said.

Now, it has a 15-person staff.

“Accountability is very important to us, so we have an annual financial reports, audited by a top-10 audit firm. We make sure people see our financial statements. We have quarterly director’s reports. You will always see your donations, always see the contributions and you will always see the names of the beneficiaries you have received the donations,” she added.

“We make sure everyone is compensated. We make sure everyone’s compensation is equal and fair. The only difference in compensation is the difference in rank,” she said, as well as the number and ages of children.

While Baghdasaryan wants the IFS to reach its targets, she has another wish — that there was no need for the IFS.

“I wish we were jobless. The only thing we want to do is collect money and manage it but we know it is not where we live. We want to make sure that these people don’t leave the country. We want to make sure these people feel dignified and appreciated so they stay. Otherwise we are going to have empty villages on the border and a completely empty Artsakh,” she said.



Veteran Harand Harutyunyan



Veteran Zaven Marutyanyan

2020, we had 416 cases. Now we have 4,465 cases and they are still growing. Now they have to apply to their local municipality, whatever the smaller unit they live in. From there, it will be processed and checked for completeness. They will then be sent to the Ministry of Defense,” she said.

“We have raised over \$22 million, the first million during the first war, and the rest after the second war,” Baghdasaryan said, mostly from Armenia, including voluntary donations. Taxpayers there had paid \$96.5 million in mandatory employee contributions into the program from 2017 to 2021. “We have paid \$102 million in compensations,” she added.

She explained further, “The beneficiaries are either the soldiers themselves who survived with a first or second degree disability, or the families of soldiers, such as parents, legal spouses or children (in or out of wedlock). Siblings are not included. “The idea of the foundation is basically life insurance, so we cannot compensate the loss of a loved one, but we can make sure that people who have lost a breadwinner” can live in comfort.

The amount IFS pays out is codified in the law.

“It’s in the law. In case of a first-degree disability or fallen soldiers, there is a \$20,000 lump sum payment then a payment between \$400-\$600 a month for 20 years,” she said. “For a second-degree disability, we have a lump sum compensation of \$10,000 and then \$200-\$400 a month.”

Beneficiaries need to apply to the Ministry of Defense and to their local municipalities, which vet their applications and establish the names of survivors.

Baghdasaryan noted that the location of the soldiers are classified by the Ministry of

Moscow; Joseph Simonian, founder and CIO of Autonomous Investment Technologies LLC, in Newton, MA, a company that provides AI and machine learning consulting services to the financial industry and Irina Seylanyan, a senior leader with over 20 years of experience in banking and since March 2020 the CEO of HSBC Bank Armenia.

Baghdasaryan is aware that diasporan donors especially want transparency.

“We modestly call it a national success story. It is very rare for something to come out of a post-Soviet Armenian institution, where corruption is everywhere. This is an institution that locals trust. Unfortunately due to the war, the losses are in everyone’s families,” she said.

“From the beginning, the model was set up to make sure that the foundation is transparent, accountable and independent and carries out a mission that is just and fair for everyone,” she said. “From day one, we have had a website that shows every single dollar that was raised by the foundation — the contributions as well as the donations.”

“We have a real time calculator,” she said.

All the names of the donors and the recipients are listed in the website, including names of the person, their family, the date of the injury or death.

“We were lucky we were created before a large war [in 2020] and lucky we had the four years to raise money. Our contributions before the war started at 1,000 drams (\$2) per month. Now we have raised the obligatory payment from \$3 to \$30 depending on income.”

In addition, she said, the amount of compensation the family of the dead or injured get is also bigger.



INTERNATIONAL

India, Armenia Forge Closer Ties With Foreign Minister Visit

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — The foreign ministers of Armenia and India pledged to deepen relations between the two countries sharing common geopolitical interests after holding talks on October 13 for the second time in a month. (See related editorial on Page 18.)

Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said he and his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar reached “concrete agreements” to that effect during the talks held in Yerevan. He also reaffirmed Armenia’s support for India in its long-running dispute with Pakistan and praised New Delhi’s “principled” position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

India supports the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship, Minister of Foreign Affairs Jaishankar said in Yerevan.

“Our position is very consistent. Since the clashes began we have been supporting the peaceful settlement through diplomatic means. We have expressed our support to the peaceful settlement of the conflict within the OSCE Minsk Group. India always supports peace and stability in this region,” he said.

He added that last year Armenia passed a very difficult stage and expressed deep condolences to the Armenian people on behalf of the Indian government and people.

Pakistan staunchly supports Azerbaijan in that conflict, refusing to not only establish diplomatic relations with Armenia but also formally recognize it. Islamabad underscored that support during last year’s Armenian-Azerbaijani war over Karabakh. But it denied claims that Pakistani soldiers participated in the six-week war on the Azerbaijani side.

Pakistani troops regularly take part in joint military exercises held by Azerbaijan and Turkey.

By contrast, India has backed international efforts to settle the Karabakh conflict

spearheaded by the United States, Russia and France. It has also effectively sided with Armenia in an Armenian-Azerbaijani border dispute that broke out in May this year. In a statement issued at the time, the Indian Foreign Ministry called on Baku to “pull back forces immediately and cease any further provocation.”

Mirzoyan recalled and hailed that statement during his joint news conference with

viously met in Tajikistan on September 16, stressed the importance of establishing an Armenian-Indian transport link passing through Iran and its Chabahar cargo port in particular.

India has built and operates two terminals at the Gulf of Oman port to bypass Pakistan in cargo traffic with Iran, Afghanistan and central Asian countries.

New Delhi has also proposed Chabahar’s



Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, center, with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan at his left

Jaishankar. “For our part, we reaffirm our position in terms of supporting India on the Jammu and Kashmir issue,” he said.

Mirzoyan stressed that forging closer ties with India is one of Armenia’s foreign policy priorities. “We need to take joint steps to elevate our relations in the political, economic, military and cultural fields to a new level,” he said.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan echoed that statement when he met with Jaishankar later in the day.

“We not only express readiness but also have concrete ideas and proposals regarding what we should cooperate [with India] on,” he said.

Jaishankar, who is the first Indian foreign minister to ever visit Armenia, told reporters that he and Mirzoyan approved a “roadmap for future cooperation and mutual visits at different levels.” He singled out closer economic ties between the two nations whose bilateral trade was worth only \$128 million last year.

In that regard, both ministers, who pre-

inclusion in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) project initiated by Russia, Iran and India in 2000. The project envisages a 7,200-kilometer-long network of maritime and terrestrial routes stretching from Mumbai to Moscow.

“We support using the Chabahar port and other initiatives that would expand links between our two countries,” said Jaishankar.

Mirzoyan said the Iranian port could be used for cargo shipments to not only Armenia but also neighboring Georgia and further north, to Russia and even Europe. He said Armenia and Iran are planning to sign an agreement on such freight transport.

In addition, Mirzoyan congratulated India for its chairmanship at the UN Security Council.

Mirzoyan reiterated Armenia’s support for India in the issue of becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

(Armenpress and RFE/RL contributed to this report.)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Paris Votes to Establish Esplanade of Armenia in 8th Arrondissement

PARIS (Public Radio of Armenia) — The City Council of Paris voted unanimously on October 14 to establish an Esplanade of Armenia in the 8th arrondissement of the capital. This space will encompass the part of Court Albert I where the statue of Komitas is located, the Garden of Armenia, and will extend as far as the Pont de l’Alma, an exceptional location in the heart of the prestigious 8th arrondissement, right in the center of the capital. Armenia’s Ambassador to France Hasmik Tolmadjyan, who was present in the stands of the City Council at the event, immediately reacted to thank the Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo and her deputy Arnaud Ngatcha, for this expression of friendship and solidarity with Armenia.

Armenia Fund Raises And Donates \$1 million To Lebanese-Armenian Community

BEIRUT — Thanks to the efforts of the Hayastan All Armenian Fund’s US partner, Armenia Fund Inc, \$1 million were raised and transferred to the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia to meet the urgent social needs of the Armenian community and support Armenian educational institutions in Lebanon. The fundraising was organized in September upon the appeal of His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia to Armenians around the world.

Committed to its mission of supporting worldwide Armenian communities, the Fund stands firm with the Armenian community and schools in Lebanon. The Fund began its support to compatriots at the onset of the economic crisis in December 2019 followed by an extensive campaign immediately after the 2020 Beirut explosion as well as additional financial support to Armenian educational institutions in April 2021 resulting in a total financial support of \$600,000.

ECHR Says Turkey Should Change Law on Insulting President

STRASBOURG, France (Reuters) — Europe’s top human rights court called on Turkey on October 19 to change a law regarding insulting the president under which tens of thousands have been prosecuted, after ruling that a man’s detention under the law violated his freedom of expression. Vedat Sorli was given a suspended 11-month jail sentence in 2017 over a caricature and a photograph of President Tayyip Erdogan that he shared on Facebook, along with satirical and critical comments. There was no justification for Sorli’s detention and pre-trial arrest or the imposition of a criminal sanction, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) court said. “Such a sanction, by its very nature, inevitably had a chilling effect on the willingness of the person concerned to express his or her views on matters of public interest,” it said.

Pashinyan Backs Closer Economic ‘Integration’ With Russia

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) — Armenia is committed to further deepening commercial ties with Russia, its main ally and trading partner, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Tuesday, October 19.

“The Russian Federation not only plays a key role in maintaining peace and stability in our region but also occupies a central place in our country’s economy,” Pashinyan said in an address to a Russian-Armenian interregional conference held in Yerevan.

“We need to improve our economic relations in a way that will foster the development of competitive industries in our countries,” he told government officials and businesspeople from the two states attending the forum. “In this context, we regard as important further mutual integration of our economies, which must be based on a

free movement of goods, services, labor and capital. The [Russian-led] Eurasian Economic Union serves this strategic goal. “

Bilateral commercial ties should be diversified to cover knowledge-based sectors of the Russian and Armenian economies, added Pashinyan.

According to Armenian government data, Russian-Armenian trade rose by almost 12 percent in the first eight months of this year, to \$ 1.54 billion, after shrinking by 4 percent in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Russia thus remained Armenia’s number one trading partner, accounting for about 31 percent of its overall foreign trade, compared to the European Union’s 20.2 percent share in the total.

Russian Deputy Minister for Economic Development Dmitry Volvach hailed the

renewed growth in bilateral trade when he spoke with journalists during the Yerevan forum.

Russian companies plan to invest \$ 1 billion in the Armenian economy “in the near future,” the Armenpress news agency quoted Volvach as saying. He said the investments will be channeled into energy, transport and other infrastructures.

Speaking at a recent Russian-Armenian business forum in Yerevan, Russian-Armenian billionaire Samvel Karapetyan said his Moscow-based Tashir Group will invest up to \$600 million in the Armenian energy sector in the coming years.

Tashir owns Armenia’s electricity distribution network, largest thermal-power plant and second most important hydroelectric complex.

Community News

St. Nersess To Honor First 12 Graduates

ARMONK, N.Y. – St. Nersess Armenian Seminary will be celebrating its 60th Anniversary on November 13 at a special banquet which will honor the vocations of the first 12 students who graduated from St. Nersess and St. Vladimir's Seminaries and were ordained into the priesthood.

The celebratory dinner will take place at the Old Tappan Manor in Old Tappan, NJ, starting with cocktails at 6:30pm. Please note that in accordance with local regulations, all guests will be required to show proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test.

This event is the first in a series to recognize the alumni of St. Nersess, both ordained and lay, who are in service to the Armenian Church, in any capacity.

This year's honorees, listed by ordination dates, are Rev. Fr. Kevork Arakelian (1973); Rev. Fr. Garabed Kochakian (1976); Rev. Fr. Yeprem Kelegian (1977); Rev. Fr. Mardiros Chevian (1985); Rev. Fr. Shnork Demirjian (1991); Rev. Fr. Diran Bohajian (1993); Rev. Fr. Sahak Kaishian (1993); Rev. Fr. Tavit Boyajian (1993); Rev. Fr. Arakel Aljalian (1993); Rev. Fr. Vasken Kouzouian



St. Nersess Seminary

(1994); Rev. Fr. Stepanos Doudoukjian (1996); Very Rev. Fr. Simeon Odabashian (1996). Two honorees are from the Western Diocese.

The evening will be filled with nostalgic and celebratory reflections, as well as a special award. Donations to the Commemorative Booklet are encouraged to include your best wishes to the honorees. All donations will benefit the seminary and its ongoing mission. The deadline to RSVP or make a donation is October 23.

For more information, contact event co-chair Lynn Beylerian at lynnbeylerian@gmail.com or go to www.stnersess.edu.



Dr. Gennaro LaBella, left, with Meduni supporter Tigran Safaryan and his mother Irina Safaryan

Meduni Promotes Colorectal Cancer Prevention and Healthcare in Armenia

By **Aram Arkun**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

CINCINNATI — Meduni Unicare Medical Solutions, Inc., is a nonprofit organization based in Maryland which primarily aims to provide healthcare assistance and support to people in need in Armenia. Founded in 2016, it has engaged in several different fundraising efforts. Its most recent campaign has been focused on colorectal cancer and its prevention. To this end, it held a fundraising gala on October 8 called “Prevention Is Cure” at the Renaissance Cincinnati Downtown Hotel, featuring Armenian singers Armenchik (Armen Gondrachyan) and Shprot (Ani Tovmasyan). The event raised \$104,000 gross, prior to the payment of some concomitant expenses.

The major donor at the event was Tigran Safaryan of Columbus, Ohio, who made a generous contribution of \$50,000. Safaryan, active in the Armenian community in the US and Armenia, is the owner of Twins Buick GMC and Fine Line Auto Body in Columbus.

Motivation of Founder

Meduni was founded fairly recently by its executive director Vahagn Vaughn Martirosyan, an entrepreneur in the health and wellness industry, but his motivation goes back many years to his childhood. His father is an anesthesiologist who took him to operating rooms from a very young age. This sparked his general interest in medicine in general. A series of unfortunate illnesses in the family then led him to narrow his focus.

When Martirosyan was only 12 years old, his grandmother passed away from breast cancer at the comparatively young age of 68. He said, “She was a very beloved grandma, like a mother figure for me. That inspired me originally to become an oncologist.”

Martirosyan went to Mkhitar Heratsi Yerevan State Medical University, but during his fourth year, his family won a green card and moved to the United States. He then went to the University of Maryland, at which he earned a bachelor of science degree in biology, but his family was struck another blow when his mother was diagnosed with colon cancer. Martirosyan said this “was a very devastating experience for me because in the Armenian culture where I am coming from, the word cancer was associated with death.” Fortunately, despite a tough year, her treatment at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda was successful. This led Martirosyan to want to help provide similar quality care and access to technology to Armenians.

Armenia is behind in so many basic things in medicine. For example, Martirosyan said, the V. A. Fanarjyan National Oncology Center, the oncology center for the entire country, does not have a single MRI machine even now. Their radiation therapy equipment is 25 years old, but in a fast changing industry such as healthcare, things change very, very fast. He concluded, “People use that outdated technology with outdated ways of doing things. There are many problems. It is just not possible to change everything, so we need to be focused on the things that we can do the best.”

Meduni Commences Work

The first few years after the establishment of Meduni were spent on in-depth research, Martirosyan said – everything from independent needs analysis to collaboration with different organizations, physicians and residents. In 2018, he began collaborating with his former Yerevan medical school classmate Gevorg Tamamyan, who at that period with his friends founded City of Smile, a foundation working to promote oncology and hematology in Armenia, especially for care for children.

see HEALTHCARE, page 8

Fiona Ma Shares Her Vision of Helping Middle-Income Families Over a Cup of Tea

By **Ani Duzdabanyan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PASADENA, Calif. – After exchanging awkward questions about keeping the mask on and our vaccination status as a recent addition to social interactions during the pandemic, California State Treasurer Fiona Ma and I sat down for an interview in a cozy tea room in Pasadena.

Fiona Ma, a daughter of Chinese immigrants, started her career as an accountant at Ernest & Young. She served on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, the California Board of Equalization and the State Assembly, and was appointed as State Treasurer in 2019.

“It doesn’t happen in all the states!” notes Ma about the ability of immigrants to reach such heights, before we start to talk about California’s specific characteristics.

Even agreeing with the treasurer on the Golden State being a “state of immigrants” and “the fifth largest economy,” I couldn’t help mentioning the high taxes, the astronomical housing prices and post-pandemic small business crisis that forced nearly 40,000 businesses to close down permanently, according to the New York Times.

“I am concerned about [all] that, but taxes are controversial,” notes the treasurer. She is more focused on housing prices that she calls “a product of supply and demand.” “Next door to my house there was a house for sale. It went for a million dollars over the asking price! They didn’t need to do that. But that also creates imbalance in what the real prices are,” says Ma.

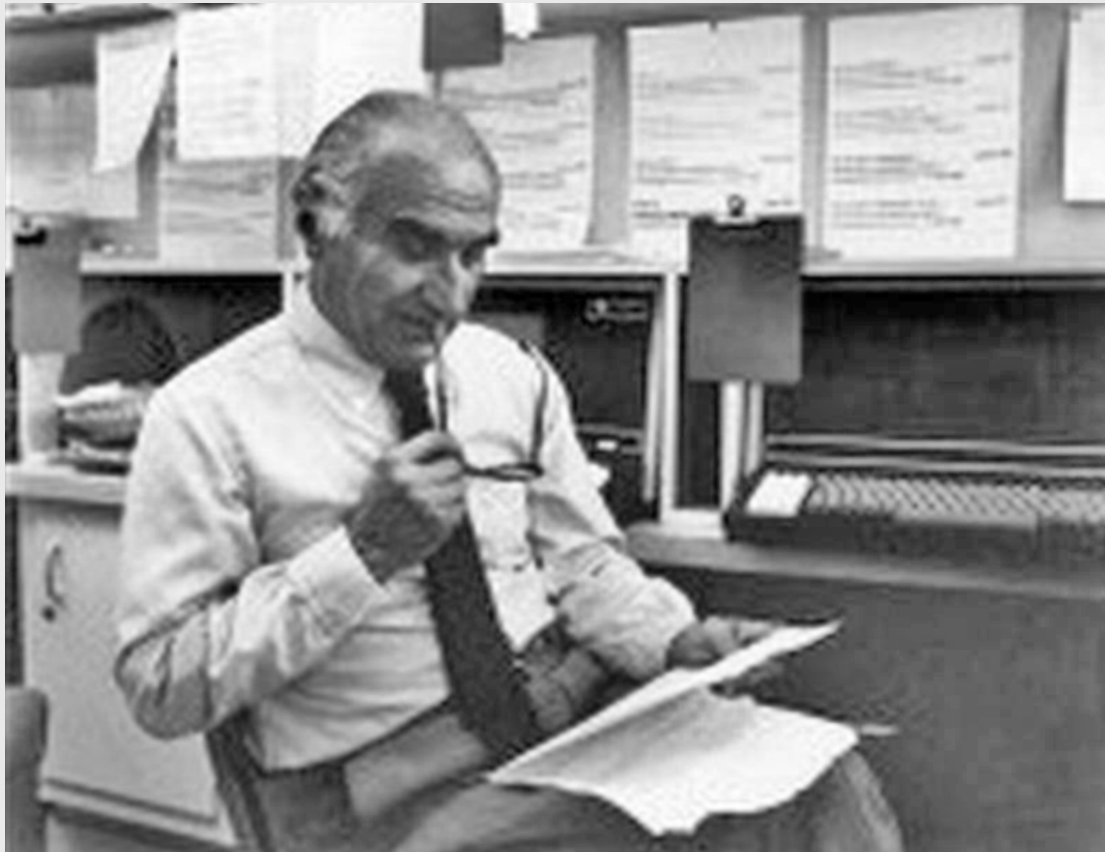
Sky high and ever-rising real estate prices as well as other issues that make California an expensive state forced many to migrate to neighboring states. According to the Census Bureau, from 2010 to 2019 more than 900,000 people left California as a net change in population. The Armenian population is no exception to this trend.

In fact, during the last couple of years at least 35 families migrated to Carrollton, Texas, and many more called and emailed inquiring about the ways to move there, as the pastor of St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Carrollton reports. In Arizona, the number of families attending the St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church in Scottsdale went up from 900 to 1070. Its pastor, Father Zacharia Saribekyan, based this number on the church’s mailing list. He sees more families from California relocating to the cities of Arizona, opening ethnic grocery stores and businesses. There is a large migration movement towards Nevada, Oregon and Washington as well. The reasons vary from gas prices, to business opportunities and high taxes. Californians find it easier to buy real estate in these states especially after retirement.

see VISION, page 9



COMMUNITY NEWS



A grassroots effort from Fresno's Armenian community is pushing for Fresno Unified to name a campus after H. Roger Tatarian — a renowned journalist, professor, author, and Fresno native (*Fresno Bee* file)

Fresno Board Stands against Racism and Upholds An Armenian Star by Renaming School

By Tad Weber

FRESNO (*Fresno Bee*) — After a torturous process that dragged out over several months, the Fresno Unified School District trustees did the right thing Wednesday, October 13, in renaming Forkner Elementary for one of the city's star residents.

As of fall 2022, the school in northwest Fresno will become H. Roger Tatarian Elementary. That is important for three reasons.

First, Tatarian was a Fresno native who rose to become editor in chief of United Press International, one of the world's two leading wire services. As such, he oversaw a news report that went to millions around the globe. Just on those merits alone, naming a school after Tatarian was deserved.

Second, Tatarian was an Armenian American. Fresno Unified has more than 100 campuses, and none had been named for an Armenian. The Armenian heritage in Fresno covers more than a century, having begun out of the genocide that started in 1915 in their European homeland, then controlled by Ottoman Turks. About 1.5 million Armenians died in that genocide, an event many historians think was a precursor to the Nazi Germany's attempt to rid the world of Jews in the Holocaust.

Los Angeles Community Leader George Mandossian Passes Away

MANDOSSIAN, from page 1

Youth

Mandossian was born in Jerusalem on February 24, 1934 to Antranig and Haiganoush Mandossian. During the first Arab-Israeli war, his family was forced to move from the new sector of Jerusalem to the Armenian Quarter of the old city. He graduated the Holy Translators Armenian elementary school in 1948 and the Catholic College des Freres afterwards. An athletic youth, he joined the Armenian Young Men's Society (Hoyetchmen) to participate in scouting and sports, as well as cultural and social activities.

Mandossian found his first job in 1952 in nearby Amman, Jordan, as a draftsman for the US Foreign Aid Program (Point IV), and was able to find the time to simultaneously teach calligraphy at the Hetoumian Elementary School there. It was in Amman that Mandossian joined the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, and joined a basketball group that turned into the Armenian National Athletic Union (Azkayin Marzagan Mioutioun) in 1955. As part of the Jordanian National Basketball Team, which had five Armenian out of eleven members, Mandossian participated in the first Pan-Arab Olympic Games in Alexandria, Egypt. His team won the bronze medal.

In 1955, he began his studies of engineering at the American University of Beirut. In 1959 he and his parents were accepted as refugees from Palestine to the United States.

Life in America

As soon as he was settled in Los Angeles, Mandossian joined the choir of St. James Armenian Church, and the local chapters of the ADL and the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America.

Bishop Torkom Manoogian, who knew Mandossian in Jerusalem, was elected as Primate of the Western Diocese in 1962 and soon chose Mandossian along with five other young men to be trained as deacons.

Mandossian studied at the University of California, Los Angeles, at night, while working during the day as a microfilm processor, and in 1964 graduated with a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering (structural). He earned a master's in the same field from the University of Southern

California two years later and soon became quite successful in this professional arena.

In 1965, when half a century had passed after the start of the Armenian Genocide without any real justice or even international recognition, Armenians around the world saw the need for action. Mandossian did his part by joining with other Armenian professionals to form an Armenian Monument Council which led to the erection of the Armenian Martyrs Memorial Monument in Montebello. When Catholicos of All Armenians Vasken I came to visit it and donate two khachkars in 1968, Mandossian, then on the Diocesan Council in Los Angeles, volunteered to be the latter's chauffeur and companion.

The ADL grew stronger in Los Angeles when its organ, the newspaper *Nor Or*, was moved there from Fresno, and a building was bought on Pico Boulevard. The Armenian Youth Cultural Association was established, which was renamed a few years later as the Tekeyan Cultural Association's Los Angeles chapter. This chapter held major events at the Wilshire Ebell Theater, such as bringing the famed singer Lucine Zakarian to perform, or organizing exhibits.

The Armenian community of Los Angeles was growing rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s through new immigration from the Middle East and Soviet Armenia. During this period, Mandossian exhibited leadership in various local and national ADL, TCA and AGBU bodies.

He was vice president of the TCA Central Board of Trustees for many years. One of the major initiatives he spearheaded was the creation of the TCA Arshag Dickranian Armenian School in Hollywood. He continued to be involved as head of its board of trustees for several decades and presided over its expansion into a high school with a major campus.

As an indication of the intensity of his dedication to the school, he wrote in his reminiscences, "Since its establishment, Arshag Dickranian School has become my prime interest after my family."

Mandossian was also a driving force behind the creation of the TCA Beshgeturian Center in Altadena, helping both secure the

necessary funds from the main benefactors, Vahan and Nartoui Beshgeturian, and serving for more than 30 years on its board of trustees.

Mandossian received many honors, including the St. Sahag – St. Mesrob Medal of Honor from Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II in 2007. Mandossian was honored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association at the Beshgeturian Center in 2018. At that event, Edmond Y. Azadian, president of the TCA Central Board, who served for many years on that board with Mandossian, and

knew him as a youth in Beirut, observed that Mandossian was a man of few words, but his work spoke volumes about him and his dedication to the community.

Mandossian's work contributed to the expansion of not only the organizations that he served, but the broader Armenian community of Los Angeles, and ultimately, the flourishing of Armenian culture and identity in the United States and the pursuit of historical justice for the Armenian people.

Funeral arrangements will be announced soon.

Giragosian

F UNERAL

H OME

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Meduni Promotes Colorectal Cancer Prevention and Healthcare in Armenia

HEALTHCARE, from page 6

In April 2019, in support of City of Smile, Meduni held two days of events in Washington. The first day it raised awareness at Capitol Hill in Congress, with meetings with members of congressmen in the Armenian Caucus and a small event. The second day a fundraiser with some 280 guests succeeded in collecting some \$150,000 in cash and in-kind donations which ended up helping at least 42 children. Anna Hakobyan, spouse of the prime minister of Armenia and head of the City of Smile foundation spoke. Among the guests was US Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. Meduni continued to support City of Smile on a smaller scale in 2020 and plans to contribute again in 2021, Martirosyan declared.

The next major initiative of Meduni came about when his Italian-American friend, colorectal surgeon Dr. Gennaro LaBella, took

er scale. In the fall of 2019, Martirosyan and LaBella went back to Armenia. The latter operated on 12 complicated cases. A laparoscopic tower, which comprises several components, including a camera, was donated to the National Oncology Center and seven or eight physicians were trained in how to use it. Part of the agreement was that these physicians then would perform a certain number of colonoscopies for free.

The pilot program exceeded the originally agreed upon number of colonoscopies, and discovered 64 cases of cancer out of 500 colonoscopies. The total has increased by now. The incidence is very high, Martirosyan said, so it is necessary to act fast.

Why are the numbers so high? Martirosyan said it is a mixture of reasons, beginning with the polluted environment. For example, catalytic converters are removed from cars, and there are no emissions tests, so the air is very polluted. The biggest cause is late diagnosis, due to mistrust of the medical system and lack of proper screening and diagnostic programs. People do not go to the hospital until cancer has spread dangerously far. Diet is another cause.

Interlude of Covid and War

Prevention of colorectal cancer consequently became Meduni's main mission, but Covid-19 changed things. Martirosyan said, "The Armenian Ministry of health was at the brink of collapse, due to the heavy flow of Covid patients, so in March and April of 2020 we got together and collected a full 40-foot container of medical supplies and equipment such as ventilators, respirators and masks." These items were delivered directly to public hospitals, which were the ones

with the greatest need. Meduni also provided some Covid-related aid to local hospitals in Maryland.

Another major shift from Meduni's cancer efforts was caused by the Artsakh war in 2020. Martirosyan said, "During the war, we were more successful in our fundraising efforts. We raised about \$500,000, which was put into two programs. One was continuous support for frontline hospitals through equipment and supplies, including digital x-rays, digital sonograms and other items. The rest of the funds went to buy homes for 14 families which had more than two children and lost their breadwinners during the war, and another 30 displaced families from Artsakh. The displaced families program we created helped these families from Artsakh find rental or shared homes, and provided them with food and essentials on a monthly basis." This latter was all post-war.

Martirosyan went to Armenia in December, 2020 to manage this but got Covid and had to stay longer than planned.

Back to Preventative Measures for Colorectal Cancer

Upon his return to the US, he decided to



Fr. Hratch Sargsyan, pastor of St. Gregory of Narek Armenian Church of Richmond Heights, Ohio, who supported the recent Meduni gala

refocus on strategic programs that would not only locally help a few hospitals but could be implemented throughout the entire country. During an August 2021 trip to Armenia, Meduni brought together all the stakeholders. Martirosyan said, "We realized that if we want to change things on the level of the entire country, we cannot do this singlehandedly. We cannot do it without the involvement of different institutions and organizations, including the Armenian Ministry of Health, Yerevan State Medical University, various hospitals, mostly public but also private, and other local stakeholders. We brought them all into one room to discuss how we can implement a new screening program like what we implemented at the National Oncology Center on a larger scale."

During the same trip, Meduni brought a larger group of physicians from the US to conduct physician training in Armenia on various colorectal cancer-related subjects, including hands-on training in doing operations. Meduni board director Dr. Armen Aboulhian was in this group. He previously came to Armenia during the course of the 2020 war, operating in hospitals in Goris and Kapan, and has now moved to Armenia for a year.

Another doctor who has been involved with Meduni, pediatric surgeon Shant Shekherdimian, who is a professor at UCLA and first deputy director of public health of the Promise Armenian Institute there, also moved to Armenia for at least another year and now serves as an advisor to the Ministry of Health. This assists in Meduni's relations with the government. Martirosyan said that there are daily talks with the ministry, and various local stakeholders about how to implement a colorectal cancer screening program for Armenia.

The funds raised at the Cincinnati gala will be used as part of the first stage of such a screening program. Meduni wants to purchase 25,000 fecal immunochemical tests (FIT), which are comparatively affordable, and can be carried out easily in the comfort of one's home. A specimen is dropped

into a container which will be brought to a drop-off station, just like one does in the US through companies like Quest Diagnostics. If the test result is positive, that means the person has polyps. He will be then called to come in for a free colonoscopy.

LaBella said, "I didn't necessarily find a lack of education or knowhow in Armenia. The physicians and surgeons knew that it would be nice to have screening programs, but I thought they felt a bit lost on how to



Vahagn Martirosyan, left, with Dr. Gennaro LaBella

start it and the means to do it." However, he said, Armenia is not that big of a country, so it should not be that difficult to implement the screening program Meduni is promoting.

LaBella added that everybody says that it is expensive, but they are treating these cancers at the end when it is much more costly. He said that a FIT test may cost between 20 and 40 dollars a person depending



A laparoscopic tower, so important for colorectal prevention

a trip in 2018 to Armenia. Martirosyan's father invited him to visit the National Oncology Center, where he was working, and LaBella noticed the poor conditions.

LaBella said, "I was actually pretty impressed as far as the quality of the surgeons and the skill of the nurses was concerned, but there was no developed screening program for colon and rectal cancer. Everybody was presenting for late-stage cancers that essentially were 100 percent avoidable. They start from polyps. The idea is that if you have a colonoscopy and we remove them, they are no longer there to keep growing and turn into cancer."

When he returned, according to Martirosyan, he said, "Listen, we have to do something about the fact that there is not even a single laparoscopic tower there. We need to go there not only to donate this equipment. We need to go there to teach them how to perform operations laparoscopically to help remove colon cancers."

The two decided that if they created a training program, they could use data from this pilot attempt to convince the Armenian government to institute screening on a large-



COMMUNITY NEWS

on the scale at which they are purchased, but compare that to the cost of chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, and hospital stay. In addition, the person will be out of the workforce, creating a loss of income which affects society as a whole. Finally, there is the cost of premature death.

He said, “It is such an extensive cost but nobody wants to look at this. Our goal is really to raise awareness, to say you really need to look at the whole picture. This really is a public health issue, not a crusade.”

Martirosyan said that two more endoscopic/laparoscopic towers have been purchased, and a further two must now be bought to deal with the aftermath of such a program. The polyps will be removed and sent for biopsy. Martirosyan said that if the biopsy confirms cancer, the Ministry of Health will then take over due to a ruling two years ago that the state will provide free treatment to all cancer patients. This is subject to limitations in practice, he added, such as for medications. Since screening is also not covered, Meduni wants to provide it free of charge to encourage more people to do the testing, instead of waiting till a cancer reaches Stage 4 and metastasizes.

Martirosyan confirmed that rumors about the theft of donated medical aid are true. He commented, “We cannot change the mentality of people overnight. That is a process that will take decades.” To ensure the secure use of money raised through Meduni, he said that its Armenian affiliated, established in January 2020, rents its own warehouse space, sufficient for two forty-foot containers, and all items sent from the US are first accepted directly by Meduni Armenia, not any state body.

When items are received, he said, “We take them to the warehouse, divide things according to each hospital’s needs, and then deliver them directly to the hospitals. When we deliver them to a hospital, we ask for a letter of receipt that specifies what we contributed. Then we send one copy of that report to our major donors, another to the Ministry of Health, and a third to the state revenue body (since when we received an item, it appears as an asset of our organization, and we then have it removed as such).” In addition, often hospitals issue letters or certificates of appreciation to Meduni.

Outside of Armenia, all Meduni opera-

tions are based on the work of volunteers, starting with Martirosyan and including its entire board. LaBella exclaimed, “The heart and the soul of it, no question, is Vahagn Martirosyan. When you do something that you don’t really have to do and there is no gain, well, we all talk a lot about what can be done, but – you have to hand it to him – he is really doing it.”

The only paid Meduni employees are five people in Armenia. In the US, about 15-20 people are actively involved as volunteers,



Shprot singing Yeghir Azat [Be Free] at the Meduni Cincinnati gala (courtesy Shprot Facebook page)



Armenchik, singer at the Meduni gala, at center, with some of the gala organizers

Martirosyan reported. On the agenda, when Dr. Aboulian returns from Armenia, is the creation of chapters in different parts of the US.

In California, there are organizations like Armenian American Medical Society, Armenian Medical International Committee and Armenian Healthcare Association of the Bay Area raising aid for the Armenian health sector, and there are organizations like Eternal Nation raising aid for the Armenian wounded. In New Jersey and New York, there is the Armenian American Health Professionals Organization, the Armenian American Medical Association of Boston, and there are many more throughout the US, France and other countries outside of Armenia, including programs of larger Armenian philanthropic organizations and churches. When asked whether the multiplicity of efforts to provide medical aid from the diaspora can be coordinated to become more efficient and avoid duplication of efforts, Martirosyan said, “That is one of the major things we are bringing up. What we are now working on is a way through which we can centralize everything so we are more aware of each other’s work. We opened up Meduni Armenia as an affiliate organization so we can be on the ground and directly involved in the different programs we implement. During the war, we became connected to so many different organizations about which we didn’t know before. What we are work-

to know which organization is involved in which program, what we need and what is missing.” The Armenian Ministry of Health, Yerevan State Medical University, and many other Armenian institutions will also be integrated into this plan.

The Final Word

The most recent news from Meduni is that it is in the process of obtaining a US Agency for International Development (USAID) grant for \$1.2 million to open the first palliative care center for end of life in Armenia. Martirosyan said, “There is a big need there as there are no such places available in Armenia at this point. It is another big gap in healthcare practice there.” Without palliative care, in Armenia people with incurable diseases are just sent home to die. Their agony and pain affect the patient’s family members, who usually are the caretakers at this stage at home, causing negative psychological impact. The new Ministry of Health budget which will be in place for January, 2022, includes funding for elder care and end of life care, so helpfully this will mark a shift, Martirosyan said, to recognition of hospice and palliative care as a critical human rights issue.

Martirosyan encouraged more involvement in improving healthcare in Armenia. He said, “The more people that become involved, the more impact can be made. A lot of people are frustrated with the government, and I totally understand that – so are we – but if we say the government is bad and we are not going to do anything, that is not going to fix the problem. If we want to see change, we have to be part of that change.”

LaBella, meanwhile, gave a final message to diasporan Armenian readers on colorectal cancer and beyond, declaring: “Everybody wants to change the world overnight, but no one realizes, it is one step at a time. As long as you keep taking those steps, you get there. At the end, everybody has to do something in life, and everybody has to help. This is the battle we chose, and I think it is a good one... I would say, especially to the diaspora, reach out to family and friends to change the culture. This should not be something taboo, but instead encouraged... Literally, prevention is the cure.”

For more information, see www.meduni.org or Meduni’s Facebook page.

Fiona Ma Shares Her Vision of Helping Middle-Income Families Over a Cup of Tea

VISION, from page 6

This is the pattern that Ma hopes to break with a new project her office is working on. Increasing the creation of affordable housing is one of the biggest tasks for the treasurer. With her team, she is now focused on the “middle income families,” for which, she explains, “there is no subsidy; people make too much to live in affordable housing, yet they can’t afford a down payment for their house.”

The treasurer’s office is preparing to reform this situation through a “shared appreciation model” that Ma plans to put on the ballot next November. “As you sell your house, or it appreciates, and you refinance, then you would put the money back in the fund so other families can access that fund. That is an opportunity for working folks in the middle income to buy their own home. And when you buy your own home that’s how you accumulate wealth and stay in California,” explains Ma.

California has always been home to a large Armenian population. The figure is listed as a quarter million according to various sources, like the British Broadcasting Corporation and Wikipedia. But Ambassador Armen Baibourtian, who

serves as Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles, finds that number should be threefold higher. He said in a phone interview that during the US census generated every ten years, Armenians don’t include themselves in the “other” category as Armenians. They overwhelmingly register themselves as “White Caucasians.” Baibourtian stated that this creates difficulties in gauging the real figures in the state and for the group to be included in the government’s programs for ethnic minorities. Also, according to a decision of the government of Armenia taken on September 29, 2016, immigrant Armenians are not obligated to be registered in diplomatic missions of Armenia, including the Los Angeles Consulate General. This creates a further obstacle in accurately counting the number of the Armenian population in California.

The treasurer’s first contact with the Armenian community happened in 1994 when she was a district representative of then-State Sen. John Burton. “In northern California, we have the Mount Davidson Cross. Every Easter and every April 24, the cross is lit up for the Armenian Genocide. Every Easter Sunday I used to go up there and celebrate the non-denomina-

tional sunrise service,” recalls Ma.

Serving in the California State Assembly she continued supporting resolutions related to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. She also encouraged the formation of the Southern California Armenian Democrats (SCAD) and continued to support them.

Ma was endorsed by the Armenian National Committee for both the State Board of Equalization and the State Treasurer’s office.

What does she think about the recall election results? “I am pleasantly surprised that the governor [Gavin Newsom] did as well as he did. We’ve spent multimillions of dollars on the ballots to be mailed, [and] the people who were counting them. I just wasn’t sure with the pandemic, with the mask mandates, with the vaccines how they are going to vote,” Ma confesses.

In May Newsom announced that the state accumulated a \$75-billion budget surplus. “A lot of the legislators got to have their wish lists as a number one priority,” says Ma reflecting on the recent \$1.8 million that state Sen. Anthony Portantino was able to generate. “Having museums where the next generation can



California State Treasurer Fiona Ma

go to learn about the history, the traditions and culture of your people, is so important. I am fully in support of the Armenian museum. I applaud Senator Portantino for making this museum a priority,” Ma says.



COMMUNITY NEWS

2021 TCA Dr. Nubar Bereberian Trust Fund Awards Recipients Announced



Dr. Nubar Berberian,

WATERTOWN — The management of Tekeyan Cultural Association’s “Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund” has announced the names of Armenian students awarded in 2021 for their academic studies . They are:

Elena Azadian Martinez, from Boynton Beach, Fla., studying at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, majoring in international politics and government.

David Melikian, from Yerevan, Armenia, studying in American University of Armenia, majoring in politics and governance.

Noted journalist and Armenian activist Dr. Nubar Berberian passed away on November 23, 2016. His estate has been bequeathed to the Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc. The Board of Directors of TCA decided to establish the “Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund” and publish a compellation of his Armenian language articles and editorials and use the annual interest to give awards to college students of Armenian descent from all over the world who major in either international law or political science .

To apply for the 2022 awards, email your TCADirector@aol.com.



David Melikian



Elena Azadian Martinez

AYC Raise Funds on the Links for Youth Groups in Washington

ROCKVILLE, Md. — The Armenian Youth Center of Greater Washington (AYC) hosted their Fourth Annual Golf Outing in support of local American-Armenian youth charities on Monday, October 4, at the Norbeck Country Club in Rockville, MD in the rebranded Armenian Youth Center Golf Fore Kids Charity Golf Outing.

The AYC Golf Committee has announced that they had a very successful event in terms of selling out the golf outing with 167 golf slots purchased and hosting 136 golfers. In addition to the golfers, there was a significant showing of volunteers and community members attending the dinner. The AYC Golf Committee put on a Coronavirus-conscious event that was enjoyed by all and raised over \$30,000.

As part of the awards ceremony, The AYC Golf Outing Host Committee presented checks in the amount of \$2,000 to the Shnorhali Sunday School of St. Mary’s Armenian Church as well \$2,000 the Washington, DC Chapter of Homenetmen following their submission of a grant request in support of their missions on behalf of the Local DC American-Armenian youth, regardless



Members of the committee and volunteers



Presenting a check to the Homenetmen Chapter



Presenting a check to the St. Mary’s Armenian Church Sunday School

of church or political party affiliation.

Local Washington, DC American-Armenian youth organizations are encouraged to apply for future grants through a competitive process through requesting a form via the AYC Golf Outing Website: <https://birdease.com/AYCGolf>

This event is now a staple in the Washington, DC community and organizers all look forward to the 5th Anniversary of the Golf Outing to take place in the autumn of 2022, following the Committee securing the date and location for the event.

The primary mission of the AYC is focused on immediately giving back to the various American-Arme-



On the course

nian youth organizations of the DC area whose missions serve to inspire and develop camaraderie through cultural, social, educational, and athletic endeavors.


For more information, visit infoaycgolf@gmail.com

COMMUNITY NEWS

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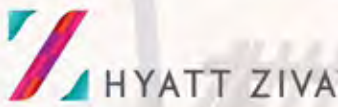
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Arts & Culture

Tribute to Playwright Barbara Bejoian Planned for Nov. 7

BOSTON — Award-winning playwright Barbara Bejoian probed Armenian-American customs and traditions, exploring, shifting relations between family and friends and adjustments to rapid changes in the modern world, during her successful career cut short by her death from cancer in 2004.

In a tribute to her talent and achievements, two of her best known plays, “The Porch” and “Dance, Mama, Dance,” will be featured in a program “Barbara + 2,” a staged reading on Sunday, November 7, at the Armenian Cultural Foundation in Arlington.

“The Porch” (1999) takes place in the Berkshires and Boston and is subtitled “An Old-Fashioned Play with a New-Fashioned Ending.” It deals with family/friend relationships and reflects Bejoian’s love for baseball, Fenway Park and the Boston Red Sox. It received the first prize at the Sewanee Writers Conference in 2001.

“Dance, Mama, Dance” was commissioned by the Rites and Reason Theatre at Brown University, where it was first performed in 1984 and later revised and produced there in 1989 with the support of a grant from



Barbara Bejoian

the Rockefeller Foundation. One of a trilogy of Bejoian plays centered on defining the Armenian-American women of the 20th century, it explores political, religious, and social tensions arising as the past of a multi-generational Armenian-American family is unraveled.

Widely recognized as a playwright, Bejoian was also an outstanding educator, teaching English, playwriting, and creative writing to a variety of students in many settings, ranging from elementary school children whose second language was English to undergraduate and graduate students at several universities, including Brown, New York University, Rhode Island School of Design, and the University of Rhode Island. She received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts as well as ten Massachusetts Artist-in-Residence Awards for her work with elementary school children.

Born in Watertown in 1955, Bejoian graduated from Watertown see **TRIBUTE**, page 15



Veronique Tamaccio

‘The Armenian Influence Was Definitely Strong at Home!’

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / ZURICH, SWITZERLAND — Veronique Tamaccio was born in 1982 in Marseille. She is a Switzerland-based ballerina and dance teacher with

Italian and Armenian roots. At the age of 8, she stood out in dance competitions in Montpellier, and Paris, then participated in various ballet contests in France and abroad.

Tamaccio studied at the Studio Ballet Colette Armand and Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Danse de Marseille under the direction of Colette Armand.

In 1998 she won a scholarship to the Lausanne Ballet. In 1999–2000 she performed with the English National Ballet (“Coppelia,” “Raymonda,” etc.) and with the Jeune Ballet de France (Milady in “The Three Musketeers,” Pas-de-deux in “Diana and Actaeon,” etc.). Since 2001, Tamaccio has performed with the Birmingham Royal Ballet, participated in “Swan Lake,” “The Nutcracker,” “Façade,” “Sleeping Beauty,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “Apollo” and in other performances. Later, Tamaccio worked also with the Dutch National Ballet and the Zurich Ballet.

Currently she resides in Zurich with her husband and two children, running the Ballet for Everyone dance center, where she teaches children and adult classes both for beginners and advanced students in various classes (Adult Ballet for Beginners, Intermediates, Advanced, Barre Workouts, Choreography, Stretching Classes, Little Ballerinas Classes, Ballet Together Classes, etc.). In her teaching Tamaccio combines ballet, Pilates and stretching to provide an optimal opportunity to improve posture and flexibility.

see **VERONIQUE**, page 13



Veronique Tamaccio teaching students

NYC Opera Conductor Constantine Orbelian Honored at Diocesan Center

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — For the multitude of guests who ventured to the St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral Complex and Diocesan Center on the evening of Thursday, October 7, it was a festive homecoming: a resumption of the vital Armenian community life that had been curtailed in response to the pandemic.

Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, presided over the reception honoring the newly appointed Music Director and Principal Conductor of the New York City Opera, Constantine Orbelian.

Some 100 attendees showed their delight in seeing each other, and celebrating Maestro Orbelian’s prominent new role in New York’s cultural landscape.

As the guest of honor entered Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium, he was greeted with hugs and words of welcome by many who have known him for years. Maestro Orbelian, who always exudes warmth and joviality, showed his happiness to be among fellow Armenians.

The renowned musician is a person who bridges different worlds



A joyous Constantine Orbelian greets a friend. (Credit: Albin Lohr-Jones)

with utter ease. Born in San Francisco to an Armenian father and a Ukrainian-Russian mother, he was drawn to music naturally, and started playing the piano at age three. He debuted with the San Francisco Symphony when he was 11, and later graduated from New York City’s Juilliard School of Music.

For more than 30 years he has been a prominent figure in the musical life of Russia and Eastern Europe, and from 2016 to 2020, he was director of the State Academic Opera and Ballet Theater in Yerevan. Orbelian’s career has included performances in the United States, Canada, and Central and South America; concerts and recordings with some of the world’s great singers; and four Grammy nominations.

The Divine Power of Music

The sumptuous October 7 reception at the Diocesan Center was jointly planned by pianist Şahan Arzruni and art impresario Vicki Shoghag Hovannessian, who also underwrote the reception’s expenses. As guests settled into the program after being treated to delicious hors d’oeuvres, Arzruni took on the role of Master of Ceremonies with his usual grace and wit.

see **ORBELIAN**, page 16

ARTS & CULTURE

Veronique Tamaccio: 'The Armenian Influence Was Definitely Strong at Home!'

VERONIQUE, from page 12

Dear Veronique, you have danced since you were 3, so can we call you a dancer by birth? Although Fred Astaire said: "Some people seem to think that good dancers are born, but all the good dancers I have known are taught or trained."

I would say I could dance before I could walk. Dancing was always very natural to me. My mother told me when I was 3, I told my dance teacher I was born in first position (the famous ballet position). As a little girl, I was dancing everywhere, in the streets, in the sea, on the beach in Marseille, in the pool, in our house everywhere and every day. It was a big part of my life. I grew up surrounded by classical music. My uncle, Jacques Semizian, was always playing the Nocturnes from Chopin on his beautiful piano and my favorite thing to do was to dance as he was playing. Often, Jean Ter-Merguerian and other famous Armenian violinists were coming to his house and I was dancing along as they were rehearsing for their upcoming concerts. I cherish these precious and very special childhood moments.

You have danced in large European ballet companies. It seems classical dance should be the same everywhere, especially in Europe, yet you can see some characteristics in each country. What is the difference between ballet scenes in the different countries where you danced?

Yes, that is right, every ballet companies have its own specificities and influences. Each country is influenced by their culture, society and custom. For example, when I was dancing with the English National Ballet and the Birmingham Royal Ballet, the influence of famous English choreographers such as Frederik Ashton, Sir Kenneth MacMillan was very strong. Additionally, we were dancing the classical masterpieces ballet productions of the wonderful Sir Peter Wright who kept the essence and beauty of classical ballet at his very best.

When I was in the Netherlands, dancing with the Dutch National Ballet, the repertoire was also very classical, and we performed all the wonderful classical ballets such as Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty, The Nutcracker and so on. On top of that, we had the privilege to have Dutch choreographer Hans Van Manen in the house and his great work and influence was palpable within the company.

In the Zurich Ballet, the company was successfully directed by famous Swiss choreographer Heinz Spoerli, who is also a wonderful choreographer. Mr. Spoerli has an exquisite taste in classical music, he made some beautiful ballet and pieces, among his famous work on the Goldberg variations from Bach with very pure and classical lines. He also restaged some of the classical ballet such as "Swan Lake" and "Nutcracker" with a modern, very tasteful and sophisticated touch.

What you like more in your artistic career?

Being a professional dancer working with major companies in Europe was to work with amazing and very talented dancers, choreographers, teachers and ballet masters from all over the world. It was such a rich experience to be taught different styles and learn from different schools, backgrounds and cultures

In 1995 you acted in a film, "Danse avec la vie" by Michel Favart. How was this experience?

Yes, that was such a delightful experience. Especially because in the movie I was the student of the great Patrick Dupond, who was at the time one of the big-

gest ballet stars in the dance world. I keep a beautiful memory from this experience and I am very grateful to have been part of it

Now you have your own dance school, Ballet for Everyone. After working with professionals, is it not challenging to deal with just dance fans and enthusiasts?

Not at all, my aim is to share my passion and knowledge with as many people as possible. I started with Ballet for Everyone right after I stopped with my career as a professional ballerina in 2012 and my goal was to make ballet accessible to everyone and show people how wonderful ballet is and how great it makes you feel. I love to see my students, making progress, feeling better about themselves. I am very proud of them! Some of them never did ballet before, or did it as a child, then they come to my school and experience the great benefits of ballet. It is wonderful!

American dancer and choreographer Alvin Ailey once said: "Dance is for everybody. I believe that the dance came from the people and that it should always be delivered back to the people." However, 10 years ago I was in a small American city for a while, where I decided to attend amateur ballet classes. But I gave up the idea

when entered the hall and saw only women and not a single man. Are your attendees also mainly women?

I truly believe dance is for all the people, this is why I called my school Ballet for Everyone, but it is a fact that 95% of my students are women. There is still this preconceive idea that ballet is a girl thing. I had last week a little boy who stopped coming to the classes because his friends at school were making fun of him. It is such a shame, that in 2021 we are still at that point. It is surely better nowadays but we still have a long way to go.

In 1998 you won the prestigious Prix de Lausanne. That year young dancer Tigran Mikayelyan from Yerevan was also was an award-winner in the same competition. Did you meet Tigran at that time?

Yes, as well as Arsen Mehrabyan! My family was very happy to see three Armenian dancers in the finale of the Prix de Lausanne. It was a big pride!

By the way, in the same year 1998, my uncle Jacques Semizian invited violinist Astghik Vardanyan from Yerevan to come to Marseille when she was 15. We did a few concerts together, where she was playing

the violin and I was dancing at the Armenian church in Marseille and a few Armenian associations in Marseille. She is so talented!

You are daughter of Beatrice Kelechian. Does this fact have an impact on you as an artist and a human?

Yes, absolutely! My late mother grew up with her parents only speaking Armenian; she and her sisters learnt to speak French when they went to school. Given that fact, the Armenian influence was definitely strong at home, when I was a little girl. I was christened, married and both of my kids have been christened in the Armenian Apostolic church of Marseille. My mother taught us the importance of family, we are very close with all my cousins, aunts and uncles and love to reunite over a good Armenian meal (beurek, lemejoun...) and a fun tavloo game!

Have you ever been in Armenia? If not, since this year there is a contemporary dance festival in Yerevan. Perhaps this is a good excuse to travel to Armenia?

No, I have never been to Yerevan yet. And you are right — that would be a good time to go since this festival is taking place!

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ARTS & CULTURE

Books

California Dreamin' A Mark Arax Trilogy

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

I sometimes wonder what the Mamas and the Papas would think if they were still around to see the big ole' mess that California has become. A conflagration of intensified forest fires, and droughts; economic inequality that has left thousands homeless in the streets and Hollywood liberals lodged in the scorched hills. Would Mama Cass still gingerly tap her heels together when she sings?: "All the leaves are brown/And the sky is grey/I've been for a walk/On a winter's day/I'd be safe and warm/If I was in L.A./California dreaming/On such a winter's day." California, an American El Dorado that spawned entire industries and educational institutions that are the envy of the world (Hollywood, Silicon Valley, Stanford, Caltech).

Yet as we have long known, the Golden State has always had a less mythical side to it. Joan Didion in particu-

course been abundantly written about as well in the stylistically distinct books of William Saroyan, John Steinbeck and Nathaniel West.

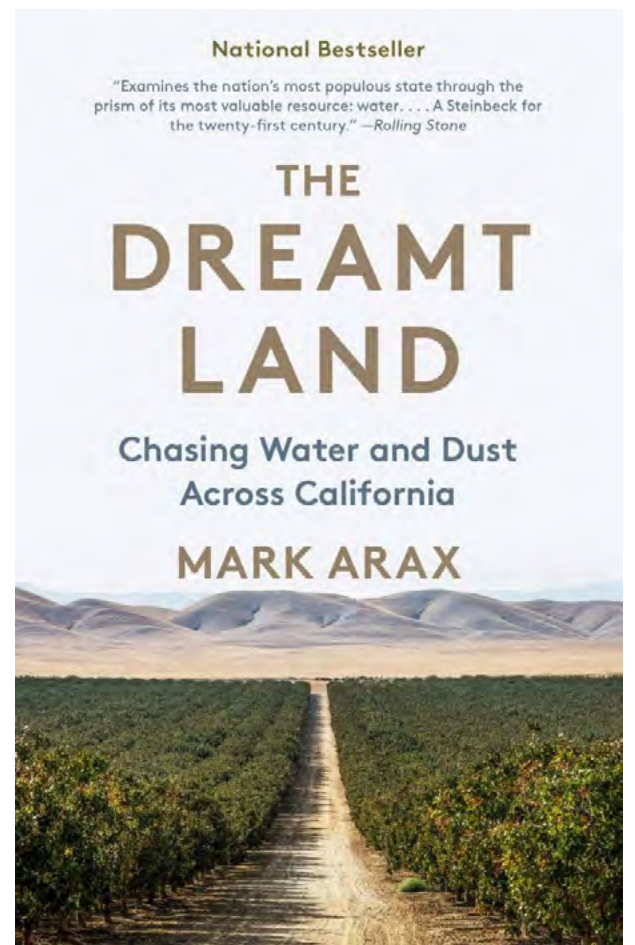
To these great names, Mark Arax deserves to be appended for the meticulous research and reporting that he has put into his three books about his home state. He is as much a historian as a journalist, trying to uncover the endless chicanery that has shaped California since its inception. His 1996 memoir *In My Father's Name* was a searing look at the underside of Fresno, a town rife with corruption and gangsterism of every conceivable type. Arax's father was gunned down one night in the bar that he owned when Arax was just a little boy and so began a thirty year search to find out who was responsible for his death. Was Arax's father involved in drugs or to the contrary a whistleblower? Or was the shooting just a sad robbery gone bad? Arax also digs deep into the lives of Fresno's different ethnic communities that each ruled its different fiefdoms (Armenians, Volga Germans, WASPS, Mexican) while detailing the prostitution, crime and police corruption that ruled the city at the time. Like many Armenians, whose families fled to Fresno after the Hamidian massacres of 1896 and then the Armenian Genocide in 1915-23, Arax comes from a family of Central Valley farmers. His love for the land is evident in every sentence that he writes: its natural beauty as well as the man-made orchards and fields of crops that have been planted and labored over for some two centuries now, and which is said to provide 40 percent of the food that America consumes. The richness of this book lies in Arax's ability to weave together the history of this place with his obsessive search to uncover his father's executioners.

As the *L.A. Times* correspondent responsible for covering the Central Valley, Arax would become aware of the danger posed by "Big Ag" and the ruthless use of technology to produce ever increasing amounts of crops that

the soil and water of California cannot forever accommodate. The statewide water distribution system — a dizzying series of canals, aqueducts and rivers (redirected, merged, siphoned off) built mainly from the 1930-'60s represents so many engineering miracles and triumphs — yet it is also outdated and its growth today unsustainable. Arax chronicles all this and more in his encyclopedic 550-page opus *The Dreamt Land* (2019). Arax is first and foremost an investigative reporter — here he interviews everyone from Stewart Resnick, the wealthiest farmer in America whose 120,000-acre empire goes by the simple name of "Wonderful," (who could make that up?), to a waitress in a diner-cum-fish museum in a dusty town that has been left behind economically. Along the way, we meet everyone from crazed gold prospectors to cutthroat cattle barons and Franciscan Friars who convert Native tribes and destroy their language and culture in the process. We also meet Annie and Lawyer Cooper, one of the families in the once-prospering black town of Fairmead. They wake up one day to find that the corporate entity that has bought and expanded the almond orchards surrounding them drains so much of the underground water that they can no longer do laundry or cook without Lawyer having to fetch water in a well with an old fashioned bucket in hand and haul it back several times a day in spite of his advanced age.

And we see how time and again water has been the key factor in California's growth: how politics, legal cunning, and often outright theft were used so that a

particular wealthy landowner's crops could be irrigated, or entire cities like Los Angeles have water to drink — and also for their front lawns and pools. The concept of a particular crop belonging to a particular land — the way that say apricot or pomegranates are associated with Armenia — also flew out the California experiment window



long ago. So rich is the soil, so driven the farm owners and so lucrative the profits, that acreage devoted to grapes one year will see its vineyards deracinated the next to plant pistachios say — or almonds, etc. This of course wreaks havoc with soil and water supplies, as well as on indigenous fish and bird species, but so be it. Perhaps it is Arax's Armenian roots, but the author also spends many pages decrying the terrible treatment of California native tribes like the Yokut who have been all but eradicated — their lands taken, their sacred mountains and rivers defiled. The fate of Chinese immigrants and workers who never make it big is also a part of the California story, as are self-made charlatans who travelled the state collecting huge fees in exchange for "rainmaking" or creating storms by way of magic potions. Pick any chapter in *The Dreamt Land* and become privy to fascinating anecdotes and hitherto occulted historical events that make the story of California and its dependence on water uniquely complex.

Finally in *West of the West* Arax deploys his considerable gifts as an essayist, partly in homage to Didion. The pieces deal with topics large and small but through each one we get a taste for a part of the California Dream gone awry. In one essay, "The Last Valley," we follow Arax's childhood friend, Tai, the son of Chinese immigrants with a gambling addiction that destroys his life. In "Home Front" we even get an account of the post 9/11 pro-Israel lobby that is bound to rankle some. Of particular interest to Armenian readers will be "Legend of Zankou," which for the first time retells in detail the remarkable and shocking story of Zankou Chicken. Everyone's favorite chicken joint apparently started out in a tiny Beirut stall, expanded when the family moved to L.A. and showed no signs of slowing down until its founder makes a questionable decision as to who should inherit the business. Much bitterness ensues and then one day suddenly out of the blue the patriarch, now dying from inoperable cancer, drives to the house of his mother, whom he adored as a child, and shoots her and two other family members before putting a bullet through his own head.

So much history, so much intense human emotion, so many dreams gone awry and others made true. California today remains a place of sunshine and hope, in spite of everything. Arax ends his story "Confessions of an Armenian Moonshiner" thus, returning the Golden State at some future date to the natives who are its true guardians: "Summer was already in the air, and the 107-degree days of the harvest would take us right into fall, and the raisins and the almonds would come in together and right behind them would be the pomegranates and tangerines, and before you knew it, after the first rain, the lid would close down on the valley and the for would settle in, and the old Yokut would get his last laugh. I would wait until then."

Buy *In My Father's Name*: <https://www.amazon.com/My-Fathers-Name-Mark-Arax/dp/0671010026>

Buy *The Dreamt Land*: <https://www.amazon.com/Dreamt-Land-Chasing-Across-California/dp/1101910194>

Buy *West of the West*: <https://www.amazon.com/West-Dreamers-Believers-Builders-Killers/dp/1586489836>



Writer Mark Arax

lar has written about California's underside and its history of graft in her 1968 classic *Slouching Toward Bethlehem*, starting with her title essay, a devastating look at the Haight-Ashbury drug culture. Didion is writerly elegance personified, her essays composed like fine symphonies, every word a note perfectly sounded. California has of



ARTS & CULTURE

Armenian Museum of America Partners with TUMO Center for Online Concert

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America re-opened in June with three floors of updated exhibitions including ancient and medieval artifacts, displays on folk instruments, and two contemporary art exhibits. At the same time, the museum is continuing to offer virtual programs for members and supporters around the world.

The next Online Concert hosted by the Museum will feature young vocalists and musicians from the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies.

TUMO is a free education center for teens in Armenia specializing in technology and design. The TUMO Band is led by Arik Grigoryan, a member of the popular rock band Bambir. The group met during his music workshop at TUMO and they perform genres from rock to classical, fusing the traditional with the modern.

“Our goal is to return to hosting cultural events such as this in our gallery, but we are happy to host the performances online and to partner with musicians in Yerevan and other cities for our local, national, and international members and friends,” explains Executive Director Jason Sohigian.

“This exciting concert was recorded exclusively for the Armenian Museum, and it is free to attend thanks to a generous grant from the Dadourian Foundation, whose mission is to promote Armenian cultural identity,” adds Sohigian. “We do hope that viewers join the Museum as members,



The TUMO band

though, as it supports our mission to preserve and share Armenian heritage and culture. We’ve had an impressive response to our 50th anniversary membership drive and would like to continue the momentum.”

TUMO Center for Creative Technologies is made up of self-learning activities, workshops, and project labs that cover technology and design including computer programming, animation, game development, robotics, 3D modeling, filmmaking,

and graphic design. More than 20,000 students currently attend TUMO centers in Armenia on a regular basis. In recent years, TUMO centers have opened in Paris, Moscow, Tirana, Berlin and Beirut.

TUMO’s music program explores many genres and instruments, as well as songwriting, composing, and the use of digital audio software.

The 19 members of the band range in age from 14 to 23, and they go to TUMO twice a week for the afterschool music pro-

gram. Ten of the group members are vocalists, and others play instruments such as cello, guitar, violin, and flute. This concert will include original songs by the band, as well as music written to accompany stories by Hovhannes Tumanyan, Mesrop Mash-tots and Rumi.

The Armenian Museum of America is the largest Armenian museum in the Diaspora. It has grown into a major repository for all forms of Armenian material culture that illustrate the creative endeavors of the Armenian people over the centuries. Today, the Museum’s collections hold more than 25,000 artifacts including 5,000 ancient and medieval Armenian coins, 1,000 stamps and maps, 3,000 textiles, and 180 Armenian inscribed rugs. In addition to more than 30,000 books in the Research Library, there is an extensive collection of Urartian and religious artifacts, ceramics, medieval illuminations, and various other objects. The collection includes historically significant objects, including five of the Armenian Bibles printed in Amsterdam in 1666.

The Armenian Museum of America is currently open Friday through Sunday from noon to 6 p.m. The concert will stream online on Sunday, October 24 at 2 p.m. EST (11:00 a.m. PST) via the museum’s Facebook page, YouTube Channel, and website www.ArmenianMuseum.org, and it will be available online for later viewing.

Tribute to Playwright Barbara Bejoian Planned for November 7

TRIBUTE, from page 12
High School and Wheaton College, and after participating in writing seminars at Radcliffe College and serving as a summer intern in documentary writing at the

BBC (British Broadcasting Company) in London, she earned her Master of Arts Degree in Creative Writing from Brown University. Subsequently she collaborated for several years with the director of Brown’s

Rites and Reason Theatre George Houston Bass while teaching at Brown.

One of the highlights of her career was the presentation in 1994 of her popular work, based on the life of Virginia Wolff,

“A Play of One’s Own,” at the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland, where it won the Critic’s Choice Award. She wrote more than 10 plays which were performed in Boston, Philadelphia, Providence, New York, and Fort Lauderdale

Bejoian was inspired by her first visit to Armenia with a group of scholars in 1989 and returned for six months in 1995 with her husband and two young sons under the age of 5 on a Fulbright Scholarship. Despite the difficult conditions at the time in the newly independent Armenia (intermittent electricity, lack of hot water, etc.), Bejoian managed to teach courses at the American University of Armenia, deliver a series of lectures to children and college students in Gyumri and Vanadzor, stage a play at the American Embassy in Yerevan, and present a reading of her latest Armenian-American play, “Eagles Without Wings – Horses Without Legs,” at Yerevan State University. The theme of her work there was “Armenian Folklore for Tomorrow: Voices of an Ancient People,” and she focused her attention there, and later when she returned to America, to fostering relations between homeland and diaspora Armenians.

“Barbara + 2: A Staged Reading of 2 of Her Award-Winning Plays” is being produced by Paul Boghosian, president of Harborside Films, and directed by Blair Cadden, graduate of the MFA directing program at Boston University and co-founder of the theatre company 5th Wall Productions. Professional actors from the Boston-area will take part. Co-sponsors are the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA) and the Armenian Cultural Foundation (ACF). For information and tickets, visit www.aiwainternational.org.

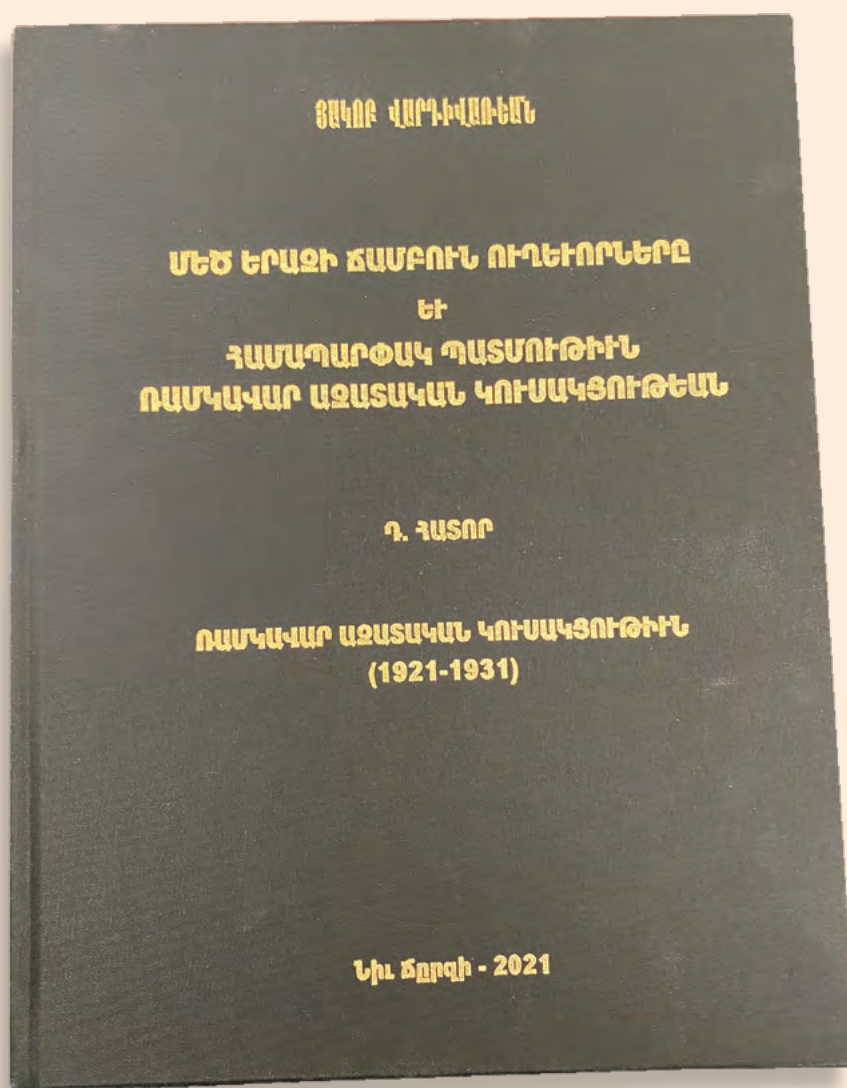
Hot off the Press

*The [Armenian] Democratic Liberal Party (1921-1931)
Vol. IV of Travelers on the Path of the Great Dream and a Comprehensive History of the [Armenian] Democratic Liberal Party*

By Hagop Vartivarian

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To order this or previously published volumes, please write to: Tekeyan Cultural Association, 572 Glasmere Rd., Mahwah, NJ, 07430, or contact the author at (201) 406-9771 or hhvartivarian@gmail.com





ARTS & CULTURE

NYC Opera Conductor Constantine Orbelian Honored at Diocesan Center

ORBELIAN, from page 12

Bishop Daniel addressed the guests in Armenian and English, expressing his great joy that the Diocesan Center was the stage for “finally joining together again, in person, in this hall.”

“St. Vartan is your cathedral,” he assured the guests from throughout the community.

In congratulating Maestro Orbelian, Bishop Daniel eloquently noted that “in music, we become one with God. That’s especially true of the music of the Armenian Church, which is a stirring reminder of one’s faith in the Lord.” He then presented the guest of honor with a silver bowl crafted by artist Michael Aram.

Officials of the New York City Opera were also in attendance — among them its General Director Michael Capasso, who remarked that, “We found the right person

of his friends and colleagues to Armenia during his five years as music director and conductor of Yerevan’s State Opera House.

He stated that his current goal was to bring the best of Armenian music to New York, and he is especially intent on mounting a performance of the opera Anoush. This announcement brought a loud ovation. He added that “some of the most sought-after singers are Armenian.”

Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, a special guest of Bishop Daniel, offered remarks in Armenian and English, poetically stating that “the source of Maestro’s God-given gift is the land of Mount Ararat, the breeze of the Divine Voice making the covenant with Noah, and the centuries-old spirit of creativity, suffering, and longing for peace and prosperity by the Armenian nation.”

He prayed that “the beneficent Lord

Armenians, which will “continue to inspire us and move us forward.”

For Gaiane Danilian, the occasion was “a wonderful chance to see so many Armenians. Maestro Orbelian has given a new breath to the New York City Opera with his desire to bring operas from Armenia to New York.”

Dr. Tavit Najarian called the evening “remarkable. I am so proud that a man of such talent will grace the stage of one of the most respected opera houses. We look to him to conduct ‘Anoush’ opera in New York, and to make Armenia’s fantastic historical and cultural heritage available to American audiences.”



Bishop Daniel Findikyan was mindful of COVID safety. (Credit: Albin Lohr-Jones)



Bishop Daniel Findikyan presided over a reception at the St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral Complex and Diocesan Center in New York on the evening of Thursday, October 7, honoring Constantine Orbelian the newly appointed Music Director and Principal Conductor of the New York City Opera. Pictured (l-r): Mrs. Shoghag Hovanessian, Bishop Daniel, Maestro Orbelian, Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Ambassador Mher Margaryan. (Credit: Albin Lohr-Jones)

at the right time,” and praised Orbelian for his “musicianship and elegance. He will take this legendary opera house to the next level of brilliance.”

Christopher Nazarian, the well-known bass singer from Australia who has been a soloist in the St. Vartan Cathedral Choir, delighted the audience with Zaccaria’s aria from “Nabucco,” followed by a powerful rendition of Hayastan by Gomidas, which elicited cheers from crowd.

Bringing the Best of Armenian Music to New York

In his appreciative remarks, Constantine Orbelian thanked all the organizers of the evening, and recalled that he brought many

would grant Maestro Orbelian’s baton the power to promote serenity in the hearts of audiences, and orient them towards good works.”

Dignitaries attending the reception included Armenia’s Ambassador to the United Nations Mher Margarian; Honorary Consul of Armenia in the Midwest Oscar Tatosian; Metropolitan Opera Board of Directors Chair Ann Ziff; benefactors Harry and Suzanne Toufayan; and representatives from the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA).

Zaven Khanjian characterized Constantine Orbelian’s prominent role on the New York cultural scene as a kind of victory for



Honoree Constantine Orbelian speaks with Şahan Arzruni as Vicki Shoghag Hovanessian looks on. (Credit: Albin Lohr-Jones)

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

OCTOBER 24 — The Armenian Museum of America’s seventh Online Concert featuring young musicians from the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies. This free event is sponsored by the Dadourian Foundation. Streaming online at 2:00 pm via the Museum’s Facebook page, YouTube Channel and website: www.armenianmuseum.org/concerts

NOVEMBER 7 — **BARBARA + 2: A Tribute to the Legacy and Talent of Playwright Barbara Bejoian** through a Staged Reading of 2 of Her Award-Winning Plays, “The Porch” and “Dance, Mama, Dance.” 2-5 p.m. Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic St., Arlington, MA. Co-sponsored by ACF and the Armenian International Women’s Association. \$15 (in advance); \$20, \$5 (students). Reservations: www.aiwainternational.org, info@aiwainternational.org, 617-926-0171.

NOVEMBER 13 — **ANNUAL ARMENIAN FOOD FESTIVAL & BAZAAR** at the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe, 1280 Boston Rd., (Rt. 125) Haverhill. Free Admission. Saturday, November 13, 11:30 a.m.-7 p.m., Delicious Armenian Food, Losh, Kheyma, Lamb Kebab, Chicken Kebab, Pastry Table, Choreg, Paklava, Khadayif-nuts & cream| Armenian, Kata (Nazoog), Gift Baskets & Cash Raffles, Winner need not be present. Country store selling Armenian Delicacies, Tourshi, Tel Banir (string cheese). Specialty Vendors will be there, Credit cards accepted, Online Ordering Available, Until November 6. www.HyePointeArmenianChurch.org 978 – 372 – 9227

NOVEMBER 14 — **GIVING THANKS! TOGETHER IN CELEBRATION**, Sunday, 2 p.m. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston Meet & Greet. Enjoy the Boston Children’s Chorus singing an Armenian Folk Song .Walk the Labyrinth. Tie a Ribbon Giving Thanks on the Wishing Tree.

DECEMBER 4 and DECEMBER 5 — Holy Trinity 2021 “Grab and Go” Christmas Bazaar. Saturday and Sunday, Holy Trinity Armenian Church grounds, 145 Brattle St, Cambridge, MA 02138.

DECEMBER 19 — **CANDLELIT VIRTUAL LABYRINTH WALK: IN PEACE & HARMONY**, 4.30 p.m. Meet & Greet. Walk the Candlelit Labyrinth. Wish on The Wishing Tree. Hot Chocolate. Individually-wrapped cookies. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeirtagePark.org

NEW JERSEY

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

RHODE ISLAND

Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church of Providence continues programming the Armenian Cultural Hour programs, every Friday at 7:30 p.m. The program can be livestreamed on the church’s Facebook page by everyone at <https://www.facebook.com/armenianchurchprovidence>

OCTOBER 22 – “Hayastan”/Armenia/, Documentary in English

OCTOBER 29 – Composer Martin Vartazaryan /concert/

NOVEMBER 5 – The Land of the Armenian Kings /Van, Diarbekir, Dickranakert /, Documentary in English

NOVEMBER 12 - The Land of the Armenian Kings /Ani, Kars, Edesia, Musal-er/, Documentary in English

NOVEMBER 19 - Konstantin Petrossian’s creative evening in Armenia

NOVEMBER 26 – Armenian Spiritual Music



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Feta/Chicken Potato Salad

Creative Salads from Cupertino's 1999 St. Andrew Armenian Church Cookbook

The Armenian community in Cupertino, California goes back to mid-1950s when a small social group calling themselves the Armenian Society was organized. The first monthly prayer services commenced in 1960 when Dr. Deacon Shahan Sevkhonkian arranged with Rev. Fr. Shahe Altounian of St. Vartan Church in Oakland to conduct prayer services in the hospitality room of a San Jose bank.

The first permanent Ladies Society was established in 1963. Throughout this period monthly church services were conducted by visiting priests. On April 15, 1963, twelve women paid their annual dues of \$3 and formed an official Ladies Aid. Margaret Hagopian, Rose Hines, and H. Ronnie Henesian were elected to the



St. Andrew Armenian Church Ladies Society members in the 1990s.

offices of Chairlady, Secretary, and Treasurer, respectively. The other members were: Betty Espinoza, Sofia Giragosian, Esquhy Henesian, Anahid Nalvarian, Marion Paparigian, Zabel Solakian, Asdghig Soliman, Rose Tootelian, and Roxie Yeram.

These seasonal salad recipes are contributed by Vera Sarkissian and Kim Henesian. They were included in *The New Armenian Kitchen Cookbook* published in 1999 by the St. Andrew Armenian Church Ladies Society. Vera, the cookbook chairman, says the cookbook committee included: Nadine American, Mary-Louise Essaian, Arlene Hancock, H. Ronnie Henesian, Florence Janjigian, Lucille Kuzirian, Arlene Narlian-Finley, Lorraine Paul, and Madelaine Tolegian.

"In 1999, our committee spent countless hours working together, testing, and proofing each of the recipes, and created a detailed index to make recipes easier to find. Everyone worked as volunteers in this effort, and all funds earned from the sale of the cookbook were donated for the church charitable projects," says Vera. She adds, "The corrected cookbook link is only available through me at this time; the Kindle one is available through Kindle at \$9.00 but still with problems with ingredient listings."

The *New Armenian Kitchen Cookbook* is no longer in print, but note:

For Kindle, go to: https://www.amazon.com/Armenian-Kitchen-Andrew-Armenian-Society-ebook/dp/B002S52562/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr

OR -- to receive a corrected copy of *The New Armenian Kitchen Cookbook* from Vera Sarkissian, send e-mail Thenewarmeniankitchen@yahoo.com

Feta/Chicken Potato Salad

By Veronica Sarkissian

INGREDIENTS:

1 1/2 lbs. small (1 1/2" diameter) thin-skinned potatoes, scrubbed and drained
3 cups cooked skinless boneless chicken breast, cut into bite-size pieces
1/2 cup thinly sliced green onions
1-6 oz. jar marinated artichoke hearts*
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
1-4 oz. jar sliced pimiento, drained
Fresh lettuce leaves or spinach, rinsed and crisped
1/2 cup (about 3 oz.) feta cheese, crumbled
Freshly ground pepper

PREPARATION:

Bring 2 quarts water to a boil. Add potatoes; reduce heat. Cover and simmer until potatoes are tender when pierced (about 25 minutes). Cool, cut into quarters. In a large bowl, combine potatoes, chicken, artichoke hearts with marinade, pimientos, olives, green onions and lemon juice. Gently fold to mix seasoning; chill at least 15-20 minutes, or up to 4 hours. Arrange lettuce leaves on dinner plates, and divide mixture equally among plates. Sprinkle with cheese; season with pepper as desired.

*Note: The marinade liquid in the artichoke jar serves as the flavorful dressing for this salad. Or you can substitute olive oil and fresh lemon juice.

Serves 4-6.

Mom's Armenian Potato Salad

By Kim Elise Henesian

Kim Henesian remembers this about her mother H. Ronnie Henesian's famous potato salad, "I can tell you this dish was served at many family functions through the years, and is one of our favorite salads because it was light and refreshing to eat. It doesn't include mayonnaise which is typically added to most potato salads. And the inclusion of mint added a special taste to the salad."

INGREDIENTS:

7 or 8 medium russet potatoes, boiled with the skin
1 1/2 tablespoons dried mint
1/2 cup fresh lemon juice (or a little more, if you like it tart)
1 medium white or yellow onion, sliced thinly
1/3 cup olive oil or salad oil (or more to taste)
1/4 bunch fresh parsley, finely chopped
Fine salt and ground pepper

PREPARATION:

Place thinly sliced onions in a sieve and salt liberally. Peel potatoes and cut into 1/2" rounds. Wash onions under cold water and squeeze dry. In a bowl, alternately layer potatoes, onions, parsley, mint, salt and pepper. Pour lemon juice and oil on top and mix carefully. Can be kept in the refrigerator for several days. Toss before serving.

Serves 4-6.

Salad Olivier

By Veronica Sarkissian

INGREDIENTS:

4 cooked skinless boneless chicken breasts, diced
1-2 cups deli fresh dill pickles, chopped (if using more tart pickles, use less pickles to taste)
1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
2 cups sour cream
1 cup mayonnaise, to taste
1 medium package frozen baby green peas, rinsed in water, drained
1 medium onion, finely chopped
4-6 large russet potatoes, cooked, peeled, diced
Salt and white pepper

PREPARATION:

In a large bowl, mix ingredients together reserving 1/2 cup of sour cream for later use. Mix well, taste and adjust seasonings. Mound salad onto a serving platter smoothing with the back of a spoon. "Frost" with the remaining sour cream and decorate with black or green olives.

Serves 4-6.

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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

India's Involvement in the Caucasus Equation



By Edmond Y.
Azadian

The adage that “my enemy’s enemy is my friend” does not always prove true. But in the case of India, it does. India and Pakistan have a longstanding dispute over the Jammu and Kashmir region. Both states are nuclear powers and the diplomatic world always watches with trepidation the escalation of rhetoric between the two nations.

One party in that equation, Pakistan, has thrown in its lot with Turkey and Azerbaijan, leading India to find its own way in the region and increasing ties with their target, Armenia.

Turkey and Pakistan are two nations sharing characteristic behaviors in promoting their interests. Both have weaponized Islam and both are actively exporting terrorism and using terrorists in proxy wars. Pakistan has been caught red-handed in the past using terrorists against India. It has also trained Taliban insurgents to destabilize Afghanistan, who shockingly overthrew the US-supported government in that country, while pretending to serve US interests in the region.

Turkey’s conduct has similar hallmarks; while officially serving as a NATO ally, it has used terrorists in all its wars in Syria, Libya, Somalia and elsewhere, most recently in Karabakh. Right now, it is threatening the Kurdish forces allied with the US in Syria.

For a long time, India maintained a balanced relationship with the countries in the Caucasus. However, that is no longer the case. The Pakistan air force’s involvement in Karabakh and its joint military exercises in Azerbaijan, along with Turkish and Azerbaijani forces, as a direct show of force against Iran, has alarmed policymakers in India to the point that they are now engaged in a more assertive way in the region.

In fact, Jaishankar is the first Indian foreign minister to visit Armenia since the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1992.

Additionally, the odd alliance between Turkey, Pakistan and Israel coupled with Ankara’s drive toward Central Asia have warranted a response from India, whose foreign minister, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, just completed a three-country tour, with Armenia the final stop.

The other two countries he visited were Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, which are in the sights of Turkey to become part of the new potential Turanic empire.

There are two significant points to note in Jaishankar’s visit.

The first is that he avoided Azerbaijan, meaning that the latter is firmly in the enemy camp. The other point is that a small country like Armenia would ordinarily be treated to a much lower-level emissary than the foreign minister himself.

The discussions between Jaishankar and his Armenian counterpart, Ararat Mirzoyan, included game-changing relations in the region, particularly regarding trade routes and economic projects. But before outlining those projects, one must note also the political undertones developing there. In that regard, Russia has been promoting a 3+3 formula for the resolution of the outstanding issues between the parties in the region.

This negotiation formula was recently proposed by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. The parties involved in this formula would be Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Russia and Turkey. The problem for Armenia is that none of those countries is interested in trying to resolve the issue of the status of Karabakh within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, except perhaps for Georgia, which is at odds with Russia.

It is in the interest of Russia and Turkey to keep the West away from the Caucasus and finalize the deal amongst themselves. Already, the New York Times reported on October 19 that Russia has ended its diplomatic mission to NATO. Fortunately, Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani had pronounced the formula dead on arrival.

Then, the recent flare-up between Iran and Azerbaijan (and Turkey, by association) has made the formula even less tenable.

On the other hand, India maintains the same principle as Armenia, that the Karabakh issue must be resolved within the framework of the OSCE.

Other favorable developments for Armenia are emerging from Iran. While the country’s supreme religious leader, Ali Khamanei, was congratulating the “brotherly” Azerbaijani people for having recovered their territory following the 44-day war in the immediate wake of the ending of the war, today other contradictory messages are emanating from Tehran, as Israel’s military presence on Azerbaijan’s soil is too close for comfort for the Iranian leadership.

For example, the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps in Tabriz, in Iran’s Azerbaijan Province, Col. Hossein Pursmail, recently announced: “The repetition of Israel’s threats against Iran through the mouth of Azerbaijan is not

continued on next page





COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

U.S. Mayors Rescind False Proclamations They Had Issued At Azerbaijan's Urging

The Azerbaijani government does not seem to understand that you can't always get what you want by bribing and paying politicians. There is a limit to what money can buy. Sometimes, the truth matters more.

This is an important lesson that Azeri leaders have not learned. They have wasted tens of millions of dollars in paying lobbying companies and corrupt politicians.

An example of such useless activity is the Azeri obsession with trying to exploit the controversial incident of the killing of a few hundred Azeris in the town of Khojalu during the 1992 Artsakh War. There are various versions of what exactly took place in Khojalu. Nevertheless, Azerbaijan has gone to great lengths to falsely convince the world that Armenians committed "genocide" in Khojalu!

The usual Azeri approach in the United States and around the world is to bribe politicians to issue proclamations to commemorate the anniversary of the Khojalu killings. Ayaz Mutalibov, the first president of Azerbaijan, told Czech journalist Dana Mazalova in a 1992 interview that his Azeri political opponents exploited this incident to topple him from power. He said that Armenian fighters had urged the Azeri populations of Khojalu to flee through a passage left open, but the Azerbaijani National Front obstructed their exodus.

Azerbaijan's petrodollars have succeeded in getting 23 U.S. states to commemorate the deaths in Khojalu as a "massacre." Despite Azerbaijan's persistent lobbying efforts, none of these states accepted Azerbaijan's alleged term of "genocide" to describe the deaths of a few hundred Azeris in Khojalu. Azerbaijan also used its deep pockets to obtain the recognition of these killings by the parliaments of eight countries: Azerbaijan (naturally), Peru, Panama, Honduras, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Djibouti and Paraguay. In addition, the Foreign Relations Committees of seven Parliaments: Turkey, Pakistan, Mexico, Colombia, Czech Republic, Sudan and Guatemala commemorated the Khojalu killings.

Azerbaijan used these commemorative resolutions to tarnish Armenia's reputation and counter the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by over 30 countries and 49 U.S. states.

While sometimes money can get you what you want, it can at other times get you embarrassed when those who had earlier commemorated Khojalu, issue a retraction, apologize and cancel their recognition when they realize that they were duped.

The latest such embarrassing example is what took place in San Diego, the second largest city in California. The Azeri media and the Consul General of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles, Nasimi Aghayev, boastfully publicized on October 14 that San Diego Mayor Todd Garcia had issued a proclamation designating October 18, 2021 as "Azerbaijan's Restoration of Independence Day."

The proclamation falsely claimed that "Azerbaijan is internationally regarded as a successful model for the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of Muslims, Christians, and Jews." Consul General Aghayev reminded everyone that 2021 "marks the 10th anniversary of the Baku-San Diego partnership." Aghayev also noted that "for the first time since 1991, the Azerbaijani people will celebrate this date as victorious people who restored the territorial integrity of their country."

However, the Consul General's excitement lasted just one day. On October

15, the Armenian National Committee – Western Region issued a press release urging the Mayor of San Diego to rescind his proclamation which "white-washed Azerbaijan's human rights abuses." That same day, the Mayor of San Diego rescinded his earlier pro-Azerbaijan proclamation. The Mayor wrote: "It is with regret that I share this proclamation was issued as an oversight and should have been more thoroughly vetted by staff as it did not account for the relationship, history and current events between Azerbaijan and Armenia." More importantly, he stated: "while the city of San Diego has issued proclamations for Azerbaijan Independence Day and similar occasions in previous administrations, my office will no longer be granting these requests. To that end, I am rescinding this proclamation and the City of San Diego will not recognize it on October 18. Please accept my deepest apologies for this oversight and I appreciate you bringing this issue to my attention."

That is the end of "the Baku-San Diego partnership." Not surprisingly, the Consul General of Azerbaijan has turned into a mouse since the Mayor rescinded his proclamation. He has not uttered a single word!

The chain of rescinded pro-Azerbaijan proclamations does not end with San Diego. On February 26, 2021, Boston Mayor Martin Walsh issued a proclamation to commemorate "Khojali Day." However, on March 10, 2021, the Mayor reversed himself and wrote: "I would like to extend my apologies to the Armenian-American community.... Following conversations with leaders of the Armenian-American community, we realize that this proclamation has been hurtful to many of you.... I have decided to rescind this proclamation." Mayor Walsh, now US Secretary of Labor, included high praise for the local Armenian community and made a reference to the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. What started as an Azeri propaganda effort, ended up as a great public relations victory for Armenia and Armenians.

The same scenario repeated itself in Portland, Maine. Mayor Kathleen Snyder initially issued a proclamation on February 17, 2021 to commemorate "Khojaly Remembrance Day." However, on April 1, 2021, the Mayor wrote: "I have decided to rescind the Mayoral Proclamation." She added: "I once again apologize for the pain and harm that the issuance of this proclamation has caused...."

Similarly, the city of Torrance, California, issued a proclamation on October 15, 2021 to celebrate "Azerbaijan Day." It is a carbon copy of the proclamation issued by San Diego. Later that day, Torrance Mayor Patrick Furey stated that the city "issued a proclamation in error. On past occasions, the City has proclaimed Azerbaijan National Day in the City of Torrance on the effective date. In light of recent events in the associated region, the City has respectfully requested that the Consulate General of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles remove the proclamation from all media." Nevertheless, the rescinded proclamations of San Diego and Torrance are still on Consul General Aghayev's Facebook page.

This is yet another example of the failed propaganda efforts of the Consul General of Azerbaijan. Armenians in California are fortunate that Azerbaijan has sent such an incompetent Consul General to Los Angeles. No one should be surprised if he is recalled shortly back to Baku.

There are many other examples of failed Azeri propaganda attempts. On February 25, 2021, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz issued a proclamation on "Azerbaijani Day," but refused to include a reference to "Khojaly." Nevertheless, the Azeri media falsely reported that the Governor had signed a proclamation to commemorate "the Khojaly Genocide."

Rather than trying to undo the proclamations that are falsely issued at the urging of Azerbaijan's lobbyists, the Armenian-American community should take preemptive steps so that false pro-Azerbaijan declarations never see the light of day in the first place.

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only not conducive to Baku's interests, it is also a threat to the latter's very existence."

On the other hand, Iranian lawmaker Mahmoud Begash has remarked that "If the Turkish adventure and Azerbaijan's behavior continue, we will return Nakhichevan and Nagorno Karabakh to their rightful owner – Iran."

In conjunction with its bellicose rhetoric, Iran held its largest-ever military exercises under the code name "Conquerors of Khaybar," startling President Ilham Aliyev.

Jaishankar's package also includes a military component, along with other economic infrastructure initiatives.

In view of Russia's cavalier treatment of Armenia, underarming and pretending to defend Armenia's territorial integrity, these statements from other capitals provide an alternative source of hope to Armenia's destitute leadership. No one can expect that Iran or India will introduce their armed forces in Syunik to thwart an Azerbaijani attack, but their posturing will quite possibly deter Azerbaijan and Turkey from engaging in that kind of military conflict, knowing that Armenia has active, interested and powerful allies.

Armenian-Indian relations have been developing steadily since 2019, when Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Indian leader Narendra Modi met in New York and discussed a host of issues of mutual interest. More recently, India's foreign minister met with his counterpart in Dushanbe. Therefore, this historic visit to Armenia was the culmination of those earlier developments.

The Indian foreign minister was particularly appreciative of Armenia's support for this country's candidacy for the United Nations Security Council as both a permanent and non-permanent member.

Both sides extolled the historic relations between the two nations. Indeed, the first Armenian-language newspaper, Aztarar, was published in Madras, India, in 1794. At that time, the city enjoyed a vibrant Armenian community. In fact, Armenians established many trading posts on Silk Road, from the Indian subcontinent to Harbin, China to Sumatra, Java and all the way to Venice. The Indian-Armenian community, originally from Julfa, Iran, had developed an intellectual class eager to liberate Armenia or purchase from the Sultan a territory for a future Armenia.

By contrast, the Turkey-Azerbaijan-Pakistan nexus has created problems for most of the countries in the region. For example, Saudi Arabia, which claims to be the leader of the Sunni world, has shifted its investment policy away from fellow Islamist Pakistan (\$1.7 billion in 2019) to India (\$33 billion).

Armenia and India are members of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). Because of belligerence from the Azerbaijan-Turkey-Pakistan triad, India and Iran have decided that the INSTC will begin to run through Armenia, rather than Azerbaijan, which had invested massive resources in this network project. This will mean an economic boost for Armenia and a major setback for Azerbaijan.

In the past, Turkey and Azerbaijan used to place all

the oil pipeline and railway lines in such a way as to bypass Armenia, with approval from Georgia, in the hope of further impacting Armenia's depressed economy. With India's involvement and the standoff between Iran and Azerbaijan, the equation is changing in Armenia's favor.

During the discussions with the Armenian side, Foreign Minister Mirzoyan expressed his interest in using Chabahar port in Iran, which is being developed by India. These alternatives provide some room to maneuver for Armenia, as negotiations are waiting to begin with Turkey and Azerbaijan for the creation of routes throughout the Caucasus almost one year after the cessation of hostilities of the devastating Second Karabakh War.

In the best case scenario, Turkey and Azerbaijan will decide to allow trade traffic through their territories as Armenians will remain hostages to the whims of their enemies.

Russia would not look favorably at these developments, particularly India's partnership with Iran and Armenia, because it indicates a loss of control when it was convinced that Moscow and Ankara could shape the economic infrastructure of the region.

In addition to the economic issues, international political factors are also against the Russia-Turkey-Azerbaijan tandem, because all efforts to block OSCE's participation in solving the Karabakh issues are failing hopelessly.

These new developments may help Armenia only in case its leadership realizes the value of the opportunities and take advantage of the situation.



TCA Sustainable Assistance Continues To Help Berdzor Refugees in Armenia

ASSISTANCE, from page 1

Syuzanna Ghambaryan, a seventh-grade student in the city of Jermuk, Armenia, and an alumna of the Vahan Tekeyan School of Berdzor, writes as follows:

“One of the vivid memories of my childhood is the ceremony of squeezing out honey, when my whole family was assembled together. This was all before the war, and the unfortunate war deprived us of the opportunity to enjoy those pleasant moments.

After the war, good people appeared in our lives, who offered us helped, and tried to ease our life, which had turned into a nightmare, with their good deeds. Arto Manoukian, a board member of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Canada [and the United States], for whom philanthropy is a way of life, provided five bee colonies to several families in Vayots Dzor, including ours. We moved the bee colonies to my grandfather’s ancestral home, in Herher village of the Vayots Dzor province. It is true that I am very afraid of bee stings, but I follow the work of the bees with love and interest.

I like their diligence, friendliness, their ability to communicate with one other, the division of labor, and, most importantly, the blessing created by their work – honey. We even managed to enjoy the first bountiful gift they gave us and treat the neighbors. I will tell you about its immortal taste later.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, I would like to express my thanks to all those people, who organized, implemented, and provided, and returned me to my childhood memories about my native Berdzor. I hope the program will continue and many of my friends will also be able to benefit from the support of people who create and do good.

Thank you Tekeyan for standing by our side. Of course, this was not the first time. My school was becoming more beautiful day by day through your help and that of other benefactors, but the unfortunate war left our dreams unfinished.”

A second student attests: “I, Rafik Aleksanyan, was born and raised in Berdzor of the Artsakh Republic. I received my education at the Vahan Tekeyan School, which was renovated by the Tekeyan [Cultural] Association in recent years. After the unfortunate war, we moved to the village of Malishka in the province of Vayots Dzor. The Tekeyan



Displaced Berdzor residents in Vayots Dzor province with their new cow from the TCA Assistance Program

book.com/mountainmiraclehoney). Mountain Miracle Honey was represented at the Armenia Expo 2021 trade forum this September

Animal Husbandry

For the second stage of the program, the former principal of the Berdzor Tekeyan School, Anahit Kosakyan, prepared a list of the families connected with the school living in various villages of Vayots Dzor province who had

of Sers, with the other five members of his family. He promised that he could take care of two cows and signed a contract to provide, after two years pass, one calf to another displaced family from Artsakh. Meanwhile, his family would use the milk, butter and yogurt produced through these cows for its immediate needs.

Aragats, an alumnus of the Tekeyan School, lives with his five-person family in Herher village of Vayk. His family takes care of six pigs. The animals’ feed has been provided for the first four months, after which his family must provide it. Aragats’s father, Ararat Avagyan, said, “If necessary, perhaps I will slaughter them to use their meat, but I will never give up keeping pigs. I am in agreement that in one year I will willingly give two pigs to a needy Artsakh native. Let him also keep and increase the number of the pigs.”

Arevik Sargsyan worked as a cleaning woman in the Berdzor school, and recalls the annual visits of the Tekeyan Cultural Association representatives, with their financial aid. She was upset and exclaimed, “I lost my only son in last year’s war. I have no home. Now I have moved to Martiros village. At first I lived with my brother’s eight-person family. In the framework of the program, I received two cows. I am very happy and satisfied, but unfortunately my brother’s family is large. Even the space to sleep is scanty. It seems that soon I must go rent a home and live by myself. My brother helps. I will work to live.”

Lusine Chichakyan with her four-person family lives in Malishka village. She also has received two cows, has a stable and a small storage room for animal feed. She succeeded in obtaining hay in the summer for the animals’ winter provisions.

A fifth family was helped by donor Tony Halepli, through the Canadian Atken Armenian Foundation. It is a six-person family, with four minor children and mother Takuhi Stepanyan. The family, originally from the village of Van in Kashatagh, received six pigs and feed for four months.

The Tekeyan Cultural Association thanks all those who have supported the TCA Sustainable Assistance Program and encourages further support to these families who are victims of war and are attempting to create stable lives in Armenia instead of emigrating elsewhere. In the United States, please send your checks made out to the Tekeyan Cultural Association with the memo “Berdzor Project” to 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472, or use our online link <https://givebutter.com/NLWnPU>. Donations are tax-deductible.



Cattle given to the Berdzor refugees

Cultural Association of the United States and Canada extended a helping hand to a number of families displaced from Artsakh. I express my deep gratitude to all the organizers of the union, for giving me and my family two heads of cattle at this difficult time. May God bless you and may my nation never see war. Thank you!”

The honey produced is marketed together with the honey from other produces in the same province under the name Mountain Miracle Honey (see <https://www.face->

the necessary desire, ability and environment to raise domesticated animals.

The Syunik Development organization visited these families and studied their surroundings, especially the available stables for animals. When it was clear that conditions were sufficient for keeping animals, they selected healthy ones with the aid of an veterinarian and delivered them to four families.

Hovhannes Avagyan, for example, lives in the village