

Russia Indispensable For Ending Armenian-Azerbaijani Border Dispute, Says Putin

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) — Armenia and Azerbaijan cannot end their simmering border disputes without Russian mediation and mutual concessions, according to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Putin commented on the aftermath of last year’s war in Nagorno-Karabakh and Russian efforts to bolster a shaky peace in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict zone during an annual meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club on Thursday, October 22.

“The main thing now is to finally resolve the situation on the [Armenian-Azerbaijani] border, and it’s impossible to do anything here without Russian participation,” he said. “We probably do not need anyone except Russia and the two sides. Why? ... Because the Russian army’s General Staff has maps showing the borders that existed between Soviet republics in Soviet times. “

Tensions have run high in recent months at several sections of the long border where Azerbaijani forces reportedly advanced a few kilometers into Armenian territory in mid-May. Armenia has repeatedly demanded their unconditional withdrawal. Azerbaijan maintains that its troops took up new positions on the Azerbaijani side of the frontier.

Moscow proposed later in May that Yerevan and Baku set up a commission on border delimitation and demarcation. It offered to act as a mediator in such talks.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated at the time that the talks are conditional on an Azerbaijani withdrawal from Armenia “sovereign territory.” But he indicated in August that his government is ready to negotiate without any preconditions.

Baku has also expressed readiness for such negotiations. They have not yet begun, however.

Putin, who brokered a ceasefire that stopped the Karabakh war last November, said that while Soviet

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DataFest Yerevan 2021 Conference Converges Machine Learning Experts

By Cristopher Patvakanian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — This past September, DataFest Yerevan hosted its second annual data science conference at the American University of Armenia (AUA), which co-organized the event through the AUA Akian College of Science and Engineering. DataFest Yerevan brings together Armenian and international data scientists, machine learning companies, students and those generally interested in advanced data science topics for a weekend of lectures, presentations,



Dr. Hrant Khachatryan, co-organizer of Data Fest



Participants checking in for DataFest Yerevan 2021

and networking. Unlike other data science conferences, it covered advanced concepts in machine learning, with a strong focus on engineering and applications. The importance of hosting such events is paramount — data science is among the fastest growing industries of the 21st century, see DATAFEST, page 5

Tekeyan Cultural Association Leaders Meet with Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II

ECHMIADZIN — Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II on October 23 received a delegation of leaders of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) at his pontifical offices. Their discussions touched upon the current situation in the Republic of Armenia, the role of the Armenian Church, and the



various TCA organizations and structures. In the above photo are, from left, Dr. Rouben Mirzakhanyan, president of the Central Board of TCA of Armenia, Hagop Kasarjian, president of the Founders Body of TCA of Lebanon, Catholicos Karekin II, and Edmond Y. Azadian, president of the Board of Directors of TCA of the United States and Canada.



Bazhak from the outside (photo Hayk Harutyunyan)

Tangled Up Between Wine and War: A Story Of a Small Artsakh Café and Great People

By Lilit Shahverdyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

STEPANAKERT — Walking down the Vazgen Sargsyan Avenue in Stepanakert, one can notice the smoke rising from a samovar near dark-brown fences that demarcate a gray compact building along the sidewalk. That is Bazhak (“glass” as in wine glass) — a new downtown café that attracts passers-by with its abundance of wine and the enticing smells of its cuisine.

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ARMENIA
Celebrating Inclusion Through Art



MASSACHUSETTS
Sponsor A Teacher Program Reinforces Its Commitment To Karabakh Teachers



VIRGINIA
Armenian Festival Resumes In Virginia





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Yerevan to Honor Three-Time Olympic Champion Albert Azaryan with Statue

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Yerevan City Council on October 26 approved the National Olympic Committee's motion on installing three-time Olympic champion Albert Azaryan's statue in the city. The statue will be erected at 3 Moskovyan Street downtown, near the champion's namesake sports school. Moreover, the Albert Azaryan Olympic Sports School will soon move to a new building. Yerevan Mayor Hayk Marutyan said the city can't simply renovate the current building because it is damaged beyond repair.

He said the City Hall worked personally with Azaryan — the artistic gymnast famous for his variation of the Iron Cross known as the Azaryan Cross — to find a new place. Azaryan, now 92, won gold at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics (team and individual) and the 1960 Rome Olympics, in addition to multiple titles at European and World championships.

Holy See Embassy to Open In Armenia

VATICAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Substitute for Secretariat of the State of the Holy See, Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, paid an official visit to Armenia to participate in the opening ceremony of the Holy See Nunciature, or embassy, there. On October 27, Peña Parra met with Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He also met with President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II. A stamp redemption ceremony was held after the cleric's meeting with Mirzoyan.

Foreigners in Armenia Can Get Vaccinated with AstraZeneca and Sputnik V

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Foreign nationals in Armenia and persons without citizenship can now get vaccinated against Covid-19 irrespective of the period of stay in Armenia, the Ministry of Health announced on October 25. Vaccinations among the latter will be carried out in mobile vaccination points with AstraZeneca and Sputnik V. Previously, foreigners and persons without citizenship could get vaccinated only in case of a minimum 10-day stay in Armenia.

Armenia Sets COVID Record for Single Day

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The number of confirmed coronavirus infections in Armenia grew by 1517 to reach 298,069 on October 26, according to information provided by the Health Ministry. Also, 1050 more people recovered, a record 57 patients died from Covid-19, while two others carrying the virus died from other reasons in the past 24 hours.

Celebrating Inclusiveness Through Art

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Art is inclusive. Creativity, that uniquely human characteristic, is by definition universal. No matter what age or sex, from what culture or geographical region, every human being is endowed with the ability to create, and art is the way we celebrate that capacity.

Nowhere is this more evident than in cultural events featuring youngsters with disabilities. In Yerevan earlier this month, the «ԿՈՂՔ ԿՈՂՔԻ» “Side by Side” State Musical Inclusive Art Festival took place, presenting both the visual and performing arts. Financed by a grant provided by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia in August, the project goes under the name of Inclusive Programs and Projects in the Sphere of Contemporary Art. The applicant is the Autism National Foundation, and the founder and director of the festival itself is Naira Sargsyan, who is the Music Therapist at the Foundation's MY WAY Educational, Rehabilitation and Vocational Training Center for people with autism.

The festival took place on October 1 and 4, at the Hovhannes Tumanyan State Puppet Theatre, small and large concert halls respectively. The foyer of the theater hosted an exhibition of art works, handmade souvenirs and crafts, which students from all the participant specialized centers had created. And in the halls, the musical programs were performed, by students of all ages.

Nationwide Participants, Unified Concept

Preparations for the festival were extensive and intensive. Eleven specialized centers from all over Armenia came on board, and communicated both online and in person. They united around one idea: to create the means for the children and youngsters to be able to demonstrate their talents to society, in the name of development and inclusion in the field of arts. The centers included MY WAY Educational,



Vardan and Vahagn Hayrapetyan

Center, Emili Aregak Rehabilitation Center of Gyumri, Regional Pedagogical-Psychological Support Center of Spitak, Mayri Center of Curative Pedagogy and Social Therapy, Kharbert Specialized Children's Home, Zatik Child Assistance Center, Yerevan MANKAN TUN Orphanage and Sevan Children Rehabilitation Center. Students from the Aregnazan School, which is not a specialized school but inclusive, and the Sevan-based Music School named after Valery Sargsyan, also took part in the event.

Once a program had been developed, each musical number had to be learned and rehearsed. Fourteen professional musicians and musical collectives were engaged in joint numbers with the students with special needs, and conducted more than 30 rehearsals in specialized premises. In addition to the 10 people directly engaged in project execution, 40 volunteers and 40 specialists aided in the festival preparations and implementation.

Well in advance of the opening event, the public learned of the festival through widespread coverage on the internet. Naira Sargsyan gave interviews, both in the framework of TV programs and at the My Way Center in Yerevan, explaining the concept of the festival, and the importance and success of inclusion. The invitation to attend was open and attendance was high. On the first day, designed more for younger performers, there were 30 participants on stage and 100 spectators. The program

participants and 300 spectators, including many prominent public figures.

On the Scene

No second-hand description can replace an eye-witness report. Sona Petrosyan, the My Way co-founder and board member,



Raphael

who is the source of this article, shared her enthusiastic account of the process, from preparations to performances. “The atmosphere at the rehearsals I attended was so warm, and the musicians were very patient and flexible, always ready to help, devoted and enthusiastic. Good for them!” she said. “Overall, it was really a tremendous job,” she continued, “labor-intensive, emotional and overwhelming (in a good way). The idea of uniting so many different centers itself was challenging and the importance of these events cannot be overestimated. Everything that happened on stage was unique, touching, with unprecedented vibe. The mood and spirit of every performance was so intense and contagious, that the whole space, the auditorium and the stage, the performers and the spectators, became one. There was not a single bitter emotion or feeling of sadness or pity — we all felt only joy, amazement, pride and affection, and gratefulness to all those who took part, joining our special children and youngsters on stage, with such grace, kindness, an open mind and empathy. The sense of gratitude was deep and widespread, for individuals who were working with special people, directly or indirectly, supporting them, advocating their rights and making their lives better. And all our students were happy, performing and being engaged, being accepted and enthusiastically greeted, encouraged and sincerely valued.”

Petrosyan was especially moved by the
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My Way inclusive music festival

Rehabilitation and Vocational Training Day Care Center, Source House Development Center, LUSE Social-Rehabilitation Center, Arev-Erekhaner Children with Down Syndrome Health and Development

included a shadow play, students from the LUSE and Zatik Centers performing Nouneh Sargsyan's fairytale, “The Bald Hedgehog.” On October 4, the festival concluded with a gala concert, featuring 60



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Aznavour Foundation Opens New Rehabilitation Center for Artsakh Veterans in Vanadzor

By Vic Gerami

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

VANADZOR, Armenia — The Aznavour Foundation, founded by the great French-Armenian singer, actor, and humanitarian and his son, Nicolas Aznavour, continues the artist's legacy with various projects around Armenian and Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).

It just opened a brand new physical and psychological rehabilitation center within the Vanadzor Medical Center, located in Lori Province, for the veterans who were injured in last year's attack by Azerbaijan that took the lives of almost 5,000 Armenians and left over 10,000 injured. The Foundation held a press conference on October 20 to make the announcement which included the participation of Armenia's Minister of Health Anahit Avanesyan, CEO of the Aznavour Foundation Kristina Aznavour, French Ambassador to Armenia Anne Louyot and Director of the Vanadzor Medical Center Vahagn Mkrtchyan.

Until now, there were only two rehabilitation centers in Armenia, one each in the two largest cities of the country, Yerevan and Gyumri. Because of this, thousands of veterans in need of rehab did not have access to proper care due to living in small villages, rural communities, and lack of transportation.

Azerbaijan used illegal and banned weapons during the 44-day assault and ethnic cleansing that it unleashed on the Armenians of Artsakh. These weapons, such as cluster bombs and white phosphorus munitions, caused the loss of limbs and severe brain and spinal cord injuries, which require long-term medical care. The Aznavour Foundation has taken a step to decentralize medical care so people in remote communities can receive treatment.

"The rehabilitation department in Vanadzor will allow many beneficiaries to use physical and psychological rehabilitation services. The staff of the newly established department will be in constant contact with French specialists to exchange experience and master innovative approaches. The opening of this rehabilitation center is another step towards returning our heroes to normal life," said Avanesyan.

Within the framework of the project, Vanadzor Medical Center will receive twelve units of rehabilitation equipment,

a part of which has already arrived and been installed. In addition, local specialists will have the opportunity to take part in training courses conducted by specialists from France.

"The Aznavour Foundation started the cooperation with Armenia's Ministry of Health during wartime. However, after

of post-traumatic stress disorder.

"The French government continues to support Armenia. We are happy to be part of such a strong initiative. The establishment of such centers in the regions and decentralization of services is very important for the effective operation of the system. We are full of hope that we will

the project are the Republic of Armenia's Ministry of Health and Vanadzor Medical Center.

The Aznavour Foundation, created by Charles Aznavour and his son Nicolas Aznavour, aims at continuing the development and implementation of educational, cultural, and social projects started



From left, Aznavour Foundation Staff, Kristina Aznavour, CEO of the Aznavour Foundation, Anne Louyot, the French Ambassador to Armenia, Anahit Avanesyan, Armenia's Minister of Health, and Vahagn Mkrtchyan, Director of Vanadzor Medical Center

the ceasefire agreement, it became obvious that the support provided to the medical sphere needs to be continuous and with a more systematic approach. This project has been developed based on this perspective," said Kristina Aznavour.

She added, "The implementation of such an extensive project was made possible thanks to the significant co-financing by the Crisis and Support Centre of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. We always feel the support of the French Embassy in Armenia and are certain that we still have a lot to do together."

Several groups of French specialists have already worked with local doctors, transferring their experience in the field, and exchanging valuable information. A group of psychologists also had meetings with the community, including children who lost relatives during the war, and held consultative talks on the prevention

be able to witness the results of this great work in person," said Louyot.

The center will help to improve the quality of life of those affected by the war in Artsakh by providing them and their families with much needed support.

"This is a very honorable cooperation for the Vanadzor Medical Center. Together with the team of the Aznavour Foundation we were able to organize the whole process in a very short period. We have already hosted several groups of training specialists; we have also received the first batch of the rehabilitation equipment. This is a great investment for our city and region, which will serve it for a long and purposeful time," concluded Vahagn Mkrtchyan, director of the Vanadzor Medical Center.

The project is implemented with the participation of the Crisis and Support Center of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. The other partners of

by the legendary artist. Another important axis of its mission is to preserve and promote the cultural and humanitarian heritage of Charles Aznavour.

Charles Aznavour commenced his high-impact humanitarian activities after the earthquake that struck Armenia on December 7, 1988, leaving tens of thousands dead and hundreds of thousands homeless. For 30 years, his humanitarian efforts have enabled the implementation of numerous charitable programs in the country. Charles Aznavour was also involved in the fight against cancer and Alzheimer's disease and assisted greatly the victims of the earthquake in Haiti. He always fought against any discrimination through his art and his global actions.

The Aznavour Foundation undertakes to pursue the humanitarian achievements of Charles Aznavour further and preserve and promote his heritage. See en.aznavourfoundation.org.

Celebrating Inclusiveness Through Art

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musical performances, "always full of surprises; every number is a 'living organism,' and this spontaneity and authenticity of our students always makes you smile."

She cited the example of Vardan, a student both at My Way and the State Music College, in "an outstanding ragtime number with famous jazzman Vahagn Hayrapetyan. It was the last number of the concert. Up to that moment, they had used only one keyboard on stage, and Vardan was sitting and waiting for the second one to be brought in for the jazzman. This took some time, so Vardan decided not to wait

and started his ragtime. The musician immediately joined him and was improvising standing next to him, playing from the right side, then from the left, it was awesome! The second keyboard was never used! And it came out even better!"

In addition to Vahagn Hayrapetyan, there were a number of top musicians joining the youngsters on stage: Ruben Hakhverdyan, Miqayel Voskanyan and MVF band, Konstantin Abgaryants, Lav Eli rock band, Nemra, Hope For Coffee band, Lidushik, Colors of Music band, Anna Mkhitarian and Anahit Mkhitarian, Hayk Petrosyan and David Ghazaryan.

Sona Petrosyan's son, Raphael, an accomplished pianist, was also a leading figure. "Right after that, my Raphael ran to the stage (he had performed before Vardan,

but one number is never enough for Raphael) and took the flowers from Vardan's hand, asking him to sit back and to play his favorite song Araks. This Vardan did, while Raphael took the microphone from the concert host and sang. And the host and all the people in the concert hall were singing along, and that became an unplanned but very festive ending to the event."

Political Support and Honored Guests

The festival was supported by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of RA, the Autism National Foundation and the Society of Orphaned Armenian Relief – Armenia (SOAR) Charitable Foundation. The event was honored by the presence of the Spouse of the Prime Minister of Armenia Anna Hakobyan, the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Narek Mkrtchyan,

the Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Tatevik Stepanyan, the Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Ara Khzmalyan, the Chief Specialist of the General Education Department of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Anahit Muradyan, the Chief Specialist of the Projects Development and Monitoring Department of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Marine Aghajanyan, the Director of the Republican Pedagogical Psychological Center of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Araksia Svajyan, the Armenia Wine Company Deputy Director Hrayr Babayan, the Yerevan Council of Elders "My Step" Faction Member Lusine Gevorgyan and the State Puppet Theatre Director Ruben Babayan.



ARMENIA

Tangled Up Between Wine and War: A Story of A Small Artsakh Café and Great People

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From inside, an old Belorussian piano welcomes you with decorated with a vase of poppies and fancy paintings on the walls, which lead you to the hall. The wine corks in a wide container, the collections of wine hanging on the walls, and the paintings of wine glasses give a clue about what you will order soon — probably a dry red Kataro with a dish of fruits.

The story of Bazhak will become clear only after an eloquent conversation with Hayk Avanesyan, the owner of the café, who didn't give up hope after losing another cafe in the heart of Artsakh, in Shushi.

During the 2020 war, Artsakh, internationally recognized as Nagorno-Karabakh, lost control of the town of Shushi, a symbol of Karabakh both for Armenians and Azerbaijanis. The loss of the impregnable fortress city became the turning point of the war: whoever holds the keys to Shushi is the victor.

"I was shocked," recalled Hayk Avanesyan, the day of handing Shushi to the enemy. "Words cannot convey my emotions. I thought it was the end. I even wanted to change my surname, never to have the 'yan' at the end."

Avanesyan has been earning his living since his teenage years, and by the age of 20, he became a cook at a restaurant in Stepanakert, later advancing to become



Hayk Avanesyan in his café, Bazhak. Hayk is the founder of "Paris Gastro Bak" cafe in Shushi, which came under Azerbaijani control after the war. Hayk then opened Bazhak in the center of Stepanakert,

manager and then director. This inspired him to start his own business, and soon, he launched his first restaurant in Stepanakert with a friend. Years of experience in the service industry helped Avanesyan master his skills to extend his business and come up with an idea for a second cafe in the fortress of Shushi.

"A few years ago, I was in charge of a cultural event organized near the Shushi fortress," remembered Avanesyan. "The ambiance seduced me so much that I decided to turn it into a new public place for cozy gatherings," he says. He specifies that the foundation of the Paris Gastro Bak was laid with just a shovel and a rake, with a minimal budget. Avanesyan didn't perceive his new start-up as a commercial venture; it was instead a favorite occupation that later grew into a serious enterprise.

Paris Gastro Bak became a center for cultural events, local concerts, and festivals, or simply a relaxing escape from the hustle and bustle of routine life. However, the sinister morning of September 27 became a fateful turning point for Paris Gastro Bak and Avanesyan.

Like many of his compatriots, Avanesyan headed for the frontline to stand together and defend his fatherland. He didn't want to elaborate on his participation in the war. "I fought like everyone else," he said.

On October 26, Avanesyan was taken to Yerevan for medical treatment and returned to Stepanakert after the war, with one of his legs amputated.

"I admired Shushi more than my hometown Stepanakert," confessed Avanesyan. "The sceneries of Shushi were always flamboyant, so much that I fell in love with the town and decided to invest my vigor into its prosperity." The war, however, deprived him of the chance to say one last goodbye to his café, as Shushi was soon handed over to Azerbaijan. Avanesyan didn't rest even after losing Gastro Bak, and his previous endeavors made it easier for him to recover and attempt another undertaking.

Bazhak cafe opened its doors in Stepanakert in May 2020, and it soon succeeded in gaining the admiration and respect of the locals and became their brand-new favorite.



Jengyalov Hats, a popular Armenian bread with greens at Paris Gastro Bak (photo Trip Advisor)

Starting a new business practically at gunpoint means facing the risk of losing everything at any unexpected moment. Still, it doesn't seem to impact the inhabitants of Stepanakert, as the town has set its course for revival after the war. "I never thought that a human can get accustomed to everything when life addresses an ultimatum. But life hasn't stopped; it keeps going, and so should we," assures Hayk. He started as a washer and a builder, and believes that hard work pays off, so now Avanesyan is a future-oriented businessman.

"There is no secret to being successful," he says, "you only have to dedicate yourself to your labor." The love for his work was the driving force that didn't allow Hayk to break after losing his cafe in Shushi, and it pushed him to open a new one that would become an occupation for him and a pleasant spot for others. He states that challenges are never insurmountable, and to overcome them, you must think differently and more creatively.

Despite his love of and devotion to work, Avanesyan doesn't feel comfortable among people who surround him in Stepanakert and avoids interacting with them too often. "I don't communicate because I don't want to get disappointed in them. People here are too indifferent, and it's worse than a betrayal," he said. Shushi always felt livelier and more vibrant to Hayk, but it was even more challenging to find a common language with people in Shushi.

"If a person is apathetic towards his family and his country, then he doesn't recognize the value of a homeland," asserts Avanesyan. And even his complicated attitude to the locals does not prevent him from creating and contributing to Artsakh, and the thoughts of leaving the country are preposterous to him. Hayk has undergone two disastrous wars (2016 and 2020), invested a lot into the prosperity of his motherland in cultural aspects and business, and is willing to fight again if necessary. "Artsakh is not just a word for me; it is my family, it is mine, and I know who I am here," says Avanesyan. "You can live in Switzerland and earn a lot more than here, but you are nothing in Switzerland. It will not accept you."

The rich collection of wines and mixed drinks create a perfect ambiance for pleasant evenings at Bazhak, and the delicious desserts with herbal tea complement the milieu. Avanesyan collaborates with Christina Khachatryan, the owner of Mille-feuille Confiserie, who provides the cafe with the best cheesecake and apple strudel in Stepanakert, as people say.

Khachatryan, 25, represents the fourth generation descended from an indigenous Shushi native, Arsen Khachatryan, who was the president of the Real School in Shushi back in the 19th century. Khachatryan's family always lived in Shushi and was displaced twice, during the First (1991-1994) and Second Nagorno-Karabakh Wars.

As a consequence of the war, tens of thousands of Armenians fled from Nagorno-Karabakh and found residence in Armenia, some temporarily and some permanently. An official post states that as of May 2021, Armenia hosts around 37,000 people as refugees. The Khachaturyans' household was also displaced from their hometown Shushi and now they reside in Stepanakert.

The Khachaturyans were mostly intellectuals — doctors and teachers, whose commitments were to developing the community in Shushi.

"I learned from my family how to love and respect my hometown," affirmed Christina Khachatryan, "and we

spared no effort to develop Shushi."

She is the eldest offspring in her family, and now her younger brothers serve in the Artsakh Army, as she is proud to declare.

Her mother was the deputy director of the Khachatur Abovyan School in Shushi, and along with teaching, she had a passion for cooking at home and for guests. The idea of opening the Mille-Feuille confectionery originated in 2016, after several suggestions from her relatives to start baking cakes for sale. At first, the bakery became known by word of mouth, but later Christina made her final decision to promote their products as a brand.

Mille-Feuille continued to gain popularity among the locals throughout the year, and they organized shipments to Stepanakert to increase the number of customers. The population of Shushi was only around 4,000 back then, so the deliveries to Stepanakert, Martuni, Hadrut, and other regions propelled their business to a broader clientele. They even received orders from soldiers' families to ship birthday cakes to their military units.

"We were planning to open a cafe near the bakery so that people could taste fresh sweets and cakes every day," said Khachatryan, "but life had different, unexpected plans for us, and we left everything in Shushi."

Her family rented an apartment in Stepanakert and resettled there, and soon after the war, their customers returned with new orders for cakes. After the war, the bakery condensed its assortment because of the lack of necessary equipment, but the Khachaturyans didn't give up on their occupation. "We do not have the same confidence to purchase new equipment for the bakery because it is all connected to finances," confessed Christina. "I feel like we're back to 2016 when my mom cooked everything, and my dad was in charge of the delivery."

During the war, the Khachaturyans stayed in Shushi and supported the rear lines, doing voluntary work. On October 28, they were forced to depart and temporarily resettle in Yerevan.

Having left a whole family history behind, the Khachaturyans' devotion to Artsakh has remained solid and pure. "If we ever thought to break the connection with Artsakh, we wouldn't return and work again," she says, "and the biggest mission we're fulfilling now is serving for the army."

Christina is currently promoting their business in Yerevan and plans to represent her brand in festivals and exhibitions, which will symbolize Artsakh and Shushi. "I will never allow our wounded Artsakh to be forgotten, and that's the best I can do now," she stressed.

Another important person who links Bazhak to Shushi is Edmon Shaqaryan, a 17-year-old teenage boy. Edmon has been working there since the summer of 2020 when another cafe operated in the same building, and he adores his job as a bartender. Despite his relatively young age, Shaqaryan came up with new ideas for cocktails and other beverages. He is beloved and respected by the visitors, with many of whom he has become friends through his work. Like Hayk, the owner of Bazhak, Edmon is passionate about the job. "When you work somewhere for a long time, you get tired of it," said Shaqaryan, "but even when I take short breaks, I realize that I cannot live without my work."

He is developing his know-how in the catering business and desires to launch a network of his restaurants.

Edmon was born in Stepanakert but lived the best part of his life in Shushi, in the surroundings of ancient castle-like buildings and traditional architecture. However, the bond to Shushi was not strong enough for Edmon: "I admired Shushi for its glory and history, but not the atmosphere, I was out of my element," he said. "Whenever I drive through the road to Shushi, I recall the days when I took the blue bus to get home in Shushi. But I did not belong there."

Warm conversations accompanied by tranquil Armenian music, the sounds of a unique dialect, and delicious pizza aromas complete the day at Bazhak, but a short talk with Hayk Avanesyan rearranges one's priorities. When the value of a homeland overcomes personal barriers, you know that the fight has a value.

"If we abandon everything and leave, the struggle would be in vain," said Hayk. "I will become a traitor if I ever think of leaving my fatherland."



ARMENIA

DataFest Yerevan 2021 Conference Converges

DATAFEST, from page 1

and the application of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and data analysis is becoming ever-present in all forms of business.

The team behind the event are four Armenian data science professionals, Arsen Yeghiazaryan, Hrant Khachatryan, Zaven Navoyan and Andranik Khachatryan.

Dr. Khachatryan, who holds a doctorate in Graph Theory from Yerevan State University and is the director of the machine learning research lab YerevaNN, explained the rationale for creating their group and the event: “The existing conferences in Armenia lacked the rigor and technical details of advanced machine learning.” Their collective frustration led to the creation of DataFest Yerevan in 2020.

Their first year hosting a conference online was less than ideal, and was a three-day virtual event, while this year it was hosted offline in person at AUA. DataFest Armenia hosted guests from Russia, France, Austria, Iran, and Georgia, bringing together not only local but regional and international experts as well.

Among the many speakers this year were Stephen Papp, co-founder and managing director at Sophron Engineering, Victoria Muradyan, machine learning scientist at Picsart, and Stepan Sargsyan, Chief Scientist at Krisp. As far as academics, Khachatryan explained that unfortunately, “Armenia does not have many full-time professors teaching machine learning and artificial intelligence.” Thus, the majority of the speakers were from industry. In addition to lectures, the conference gave the opportunity for presenters, students, and professionals to network in person — a notable difference from last year.

In future iterations, Khachatryan hopes to have more workshop-style lectures and tutorials, diving deeper into complicated technical methods and concepts. For the long



A networking break and opportunity for socialization outside of the AUA lecture halls

data science. Until the country gets that infrastructure, Khachatryan thinks one potential solution to resolve the issue of lack of experts may be to make it easier for international specialists to come and get hired in these roles in Armenia.

Beyond DataFest Yerevan, if someone is interested in

learning data science in Armenia, Khachatryan suggested pursuing degree programs at universities, such as the BS in Data Science at AUA, Yerevan State University’s joint Master’s Degree Program in Applied Statistics and Data Science, or Armenian State University of Economics Master’s degree in Applied Statistics and Data Science. There also opportunities to enroll in courses at training centers such as the Armenian Code Academy or source-mind, which are primarily taught in Armenian but on occasion in English as well.

For those interested in supporting the development of machine learning/artificial intelligence in Armenia, Khachatryan suggested a few concrete ways to do so. The first is to move to Armenia, whether by joining local teams, starting a company there, or opening a branch of an existing company there. Some notable local and international data science companies with teams in Armenia include DISQO, SmartClick, and intelinair, not to mention the growing data science teams at other firms such as Picsart and SoloLearn. Another way to help, for those with the appropriate background, is by becoming a supervisor for students and contributing to the data science community (which is often online) through classes or lectures at events like DataFest Yerevan, which can have a major impact for those seeking more advanced studies not yet available. And finally, not only donating, but investing in Armenian startups, research teams and universities helps support the infrastructure for the industry to develop.

In short, there is much work to be done for helping further data science in Armenia, and DataFest Yerevan is among the newest and most successful ways thus far. Much remains to be seen as this growing field is established in Armenia.



From left, Data Fest Yerevan organizers Arsen Yeghiazaryan, Andranik Khachatryan, Hrant Khachatryan, and Zaven Navoyan

term, DataFest Yerevan hopes to create an event which will have broader regional interests and keep its focus on advanced topics. The biggest takeaway, in Khachatryan’s words, was that Armenia not only wants, but “needs more upper-level education and experts to advance the study and industry of data science in the country.”

In his view, the conference highlighted two main gaps of data science in Armenia. The first is a lack of professors and faculty in higher education teaching the latest and most important topics in machine learning and artificial intelligence. The second is the lack of mid-level and senior industry experts to fill in data science roles to match the growing demand for data science leaders and managers in the country.

As of today, Armenia has a much greater demand than supply of data science experts, who often receive a limited form of education in training centers and at universities. There is room for a lot more investment in data science research and academia in Armenia, and part of the issue is that the financial incentive for people to stay in research is low, an issue not exclusive to Armenia or



Attendees of DataFest 2021 in one of the lecture halls of the American University of Armenia

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Turkish President Arrives In Karabakh Lands Taken by Azerbaijan

ISTANBUL (Panorama.am) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrived at the Fizuli Airport (Varanda) in the occupied territories of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic on October 26. According to local sources, he was greeted by Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev. The two were set to attend the opening of the airport, the construction of which had been announced by Azerbaijan a month ago. Erdogan's aircraft was the first international plane to land in the airport. During the meetings of the visit, all aspects of relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey will be considered, steps to deepen bilateral cooperation, and regional and international issues will be discussed.

Armenia, Cyprus Talk Cooperation, Conflict Resolution

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — President of the Armenian National Assembly Alen Simonyan met with Cypriot Foreign Minister Nikos Christodoulides on October 25 to discuss bilateral relations and the situation in the South Caucasus region following the 44-day war in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh). Simonyan said he values the cooperation between the two countries. He highlighted the quick launch of the format of the parliamentary cooperation between Cyprus, Armenia and Greece, especially in the situation created after the 44-day war. In this context ideas were exchanged on the issues of regional security and stability.

When discussing Cyprus, Simonyan noted that Armenia will continue to support that nation in international organizations, and that Yerevan is in favor of a peaceful settlement of its issues through negotiations, accepting the principles of the UN resolutions as a starting point. Christodoulides stressed "the priceless role of the Armenian community in public and political life of the Cyprus," the Armenian National Assembly stated. The full implementation of the possibilities of the Armenia-European Union Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement in the context of the development of Armenia-EU relations were on the table. The two also discussed investment opportunities of the Cypriot side.

Greece Reportedly Declares Turkish-Armenian Intellectual Sevan Nisanyan 'Persona non Grata'

ATHENS (Panorama.am) — The government of Greece on October 25 declared Turkish-Armenian author and intellectual Sevan Nisanyan "persona non grata." Nisanyan had left Greece for a trip to Albania where he learnt about the decision of Greek authorities to ban him from entry to the country, Nisanyan told Ermenihaber news outlet.

Lebanese President Meets with New Armenian Catholic Patriarch

BEIRUT (Armenpress) — President of Lebanon Michel Aoun received new Patriarch of the Armenian Catholic House of Cilicia, Raphael Minassian at Baabda Palace on October 26, and the two discussed

the domestic situation in Lebanon, the National News Agency of Lebanon reported citing the Presidential Press Office.

The Armenian Patriarch was accompanied by a delegation of bishops and priests.



President of Lebanon Michel Aoun, right, with Patriarch of the Armenian Catholic House of Cilicia, Raphael Minassian at Baabda Palace

Aoun also congratulated Minassian on his inauguration, wishing him success in his new ecclesiastical responsibilities.

Aoun stressed that the repercussions of the recent security incidents have ended, and that there is no return to the civil war in Lebanon, despite the existence of a permanent disturbance of the general atmosphere in the country.

He also emphasized the need to establish a megacenter to facilitate the voting process in the upcoming parliamentary elections, in light of the current financial hardship "which may prevent many from reaching their areas to vote, which leads to the election of a parliament with a very low voter turnout".

Regarding the ongoing investigation into the explosion in the port of Beirut in August 2020, Aoun stressed the independence of the judiciary in this regard, and the need for politicians not to interfere in its course.

Minassian stressed that members of the Armenian Catholic community in Lebanon are always ready to serve their country, in a way that enhances the unity of the people and builds the state

Turkish President Steps Back From Expulsions of 10 Western Diplomats

By Carlotta Gall

ISTANBUL (New York Times) — President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stepped back on October 25 from a threat to expel 10 ambassadors, averting a diplomatic storm that analysts and diplomats were warning would bring economic disaster upon Turkey and a lasting rupture in the NATO alliance.

In what seemed to be a calculated move, the 10 embassies involved issued identical statements confirming their compliance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, statements which were then welcomed by Erdogan. In a televised address after a cabinet meeting, he cast the incident as an obligation to protect Turkish sovereignty.

"Our will is never to cause a crisis, but to protect the rights and law, honor, interests and sovereign rights of our country. Thus, today the same ambassadors with a new statement turned back from their accusations to our judiciary and to our country," he said, adding: "I believe from now on they will be more careful about their statements regarding sovereign rights."

The diplomacy saved Turkey from a major blow-up with its Western allies, which many feared over the weekend would cause new economic turmoil and political instability in the country of 80 million.

Erdogan had threatened to make the 10 persona non grata after they issued a joint statement last week calling for the release of a jailed philanthropist.

The envoys had urged the Turkish government to abide by a ruling of the European Court of Human Rights and release Osman Kavala, who has been held since 2017 despite not having been convicted of a crime.

They released the letter on October

26, on the fourth anniversary of Kavala's detention, saying the irregularities in his case "cast a shadow over respect for democracy, the rule of law and transparency in the Turkish judiciary system."

The statement was signed by ambassadors from Germany, France, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Canada, New Zealand and the US.

The Biden administration was the driving force behind the letter, in keeping with what the president's aides have described as his policy of publicly calling out states over human rights violations. Erdogan lashed back in characteristic fashion, railing at the statement as an interference in Turkey's internal affairs and evidence that Western leaders did not understand the country's true worth and standing.

In a speech to supporters on October 23, Erdogan said he had told his foreign minister that the 10 ambassadors should "immediately be declared persona non grata." "They should know and understand Turkey," he continued. "The day they don't, they will leave."

Analysts warned the expulsions could cause a disastrous decline of the Turkish economy, which already is struggling with 20-percent inflation. The Turkish lira, which has lost a quarter of its value this year, fell to a new low of 9.75 to the dollar.

On October 25, Abdulkadir Selvi, a senior columnist known for his close ties to Erdogan, urged caution in the newspaper *Hurriyet*.

"Who would it hurt to break our relations with 10 countries over Osman Kavala?" he asked. "We need to be coldblooded and act in an attitude befitting great states. With his reaction, President Erdogan spoke to these 10 countries in the language he understood. With its government and opposition, Turkey has shown

its stance. But after that, it's time to act calmly."

By the time Erdogan entered the cabinet meeting in the midafternoon, the embassies had issued their statements, and the president had welcomed them. Mr. Erdogan's acceptance of a diplomatic resolution was a rare show of humility from the Turkish leader, and showed that when the Western powers delivered a coordinated response, the pressure worked, said Soner Cagaptay, the director of the Turkish research program at the Washington Institute.

"He realized the economy would collapse," he said. Among the countries involved were Turkey's largest trading partners, he added.

"It looks like the 10 ambassadors threw a rope to get us out of the pit we fell into," Namik Tan, a former Turkish ambassador to the United States, posted on Twitter. "Our people jumping on these explanations is also a sign of collusion. That is, we are ready to hold the rope you throw to save us from the pit we have fallen ourselves into, our people say."

Few expected Kavala to be released after such a spat, however, even if Mr. Erdogan had recognized his limits.

"The end of this crisis does not mean that the Osman Kavala issue is over," Asli Aydintasbas, a senior fellow with the European Council on Foreign Relations, wrote on Twitter. "The Kavala issue will continue to be a problem in Turkey's relations with the E.U. and the U.S.A."

Cagaptay predicted that Erdogan would present the episode to the Turkish public as a victory, in which he taught the West to respect Turkey. "He will keep using the wording, 'I told the West ambassadors that they cannot interfere in Turkey's affairs.'"

Russia Indispensable For Ending Armenian-Azeri Border Dispute, Says Putin

PUTIN, from page 1

military maps must serve as a basis of talks the two conflicting sides should be ready for minor territorial swaps and other mutual concessions.

"There are things there that also require mutual compromises," he said. "Something could be straightened [on the map] in some places and swapped in others."

Pashinyan has for months been facing Armenian opposition statements that he

has secretly agreed to cede major chunks of Armenian territory to Azerbaijan. The prime minister has categorically denied that.

Russia is already the sole international facilitator of ongoing Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations on opening transport links between the two South Caucasus foes. A Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani task force set up in January for that purpose held a fresh meeting in Moscow

earlier this week.

Putin stressed on Thursday that Moscow remains committed to a "multilateral format" of achieving a broader normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations and a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement. He said it is now trying to step up the mediating activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-headed by Russia, France and the United States.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Community News

Giving Thanks: Together in Celebration At Armenian Heritage Park On Greenway

BOSTON — On Sunday, November 14, at 2 p.m., all are invited to “Giving Thanks! Together In Celebration at Armenian Heritage Park” on The Greenway, Boston. The newest program of the Friends of Armenian Heritage Park is offered in collaboration with the Boston Children’s Chorus and The Greenway Conservancy.

The idea for the new program was sparked by North End newcomer and former Boston Public School teacher Jean Gibran who shared with several other Friends of Armenian Heritage Park that she “enjoyed discovering the Park” and recalled how combined children’s voices brought harmony and unity to her former school’s neighborhood. While stepping on the “magical Labyrinth at the Park,” Jean shared with Dr. Armineh Mirzabegian, active with the Friends Programs Planning Team, “Why don’t we all, young and old, express the Park’s dedication to immigration? What better way than to sing together in the spirit of Thanksgiving?”

A Boston Public School teacher for 25 years and co-founder of the Boston Women’s Heritage Trail with Susan Gogonian and others, Jean Gibran brings a lifelong commitment to the arts, children and community. She is author of Love Made Visible Scenes from a Mostly Happy Marriage and co-author with her late husband, artist and sculptor Kahlil George Gibran (1922 – 2008), of Kahlil Gibran Beyond Borders and most recently actively supported a recent show of his works, “The Surface and Below,” at the Ogunquit Museum of American Art in Maine. Gibran was the godson and cousin of the late Lebanese American poet Kahlil Gibran.

With that, the planning began for the first Giving Thanks! Together in Celebration to gather together to meet, greet and sing, view the 2021 Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture, tie a ribbon giving thanks on The Wishing Tree, walk the Labyrinth, and enjoy light refreshments at Armenian Heritage Park with its geometric features that tell the story of the immigrant experience.

Andrés Holder, executive director of the Boston Children Chorus, welcomed the idea of the chorus performing at the park and engaged Robbie Jacobs, Boston Children’s Chorus (BCC) executive producer, who was as delighted, and suggested that the chorus learn an Armenian folk song to perform and include in their repertoire.

The Boston Children’s Chorus was founded in 2001 by Hubie Jones, then dean of Boston University School of Social Work, to “harness the power see THANKS, page 9



Sam Seviaan

Armenian-American Grandmaster Sam Seviaan Close to Becoming US Chess Champion, but Wesley So Wins St. Louis Tie-breaker

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

SAINT LOUIS, MO. – Saint Louis hosted an annual US Chess Tournament. Among the 12 candidates, American Grandmasters (GM) Fabiano Caruana, Wesley So, and Sam Seviaan, an Armenian American, had each collected the same 6.5 points in the matches through October 18. The tie-breaker games were played at Saint Louis Chess Club in the afternoon of October 19 and are available online.

Between October 6 and 18, each candidate played 11 matches. Seviaan scored three victories, one defeat, and seven draws. Furthermore, in the fifth round, he had defeated Caruana, the world’s number two GM. As Wesley So and Fabiano Caruana collected equal points, rapid tie-break games were set up among them to decide the champion.

Samuel (Samvel) Seviaan was born in Corning, NY, to Armen and Armine Seviaan. His father, a candidate master in chess Soviet Armenia, noticed his son’s chess talent when Sam was five years old and supported his interest in chess.

The Armenian-American prodigy became a national master when he was nine years old. By late 2014 he became the youngest GM in the history of the United States. Seviaan fulfilled the grandmaster requirements at 13 years, ten months age. Bobby Fischer became a GM when he was 15.

Seviaan lost his first blitz game to Caruana and a difficult game against Wesley So, who had defeated Caruana. Both Caruana and So scored a point. As So remains undefeated in the tie-breaker games, he has become the winner of the 2021 US championship. Caruana and Seviaan share second place, according to the St. Louis Chess Club.

“I cannot be more proud of Sam than I am today,” Armen Seviaan, Sam’s father, wrote on his Facebook page after the tournament was over. He also noted that Samvel technically is one of the co-champions of the US Championship in Classical Chess, if not the tie-breaker games. Among various systems of the tie-breakers, there is one called the Sonneborn Berger tiebreaker, which calculates Sam as the winner based on additional data that the system takes into account.

Meanwhile, the US Women’s Chess Tournament finished October 18. Tatev Abrahamian ended up fourth with six points in total.

2021 US CHESS		2021 US WOMEN'S	
SCORE: 6.5		POSITION: T-1st	
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	
1/2 1/2 1 1/2 0 1 1 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2		1/2 1/2 1 1/2 0 1 1 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2	

Photographer Hrair ‘Hawk’ Khatcherian Talks About Khatchkar

By David Lührssen

MILWAUKEE, Wis.— The physicians gave photographer Hrair “Hawk” Khatcherian only 10 days to live. As Khatcherian told the audience at his October 24 slide show and talk at St. John the Baptist Armenian Church, he made a vow: if he survived lung cancer, he would travel to every country in the world with at least one Armenian church and take pictures. “I wish I had just offered madagh,” he joked. Although keeping his promise proved to be a larger than anticipated investment in time and money, the Canadian Armenian traveled to 48 nations for the photos he chose to include in his 2013 book, One Church, One Nation.

Khatcherian devoted most of his presentation as part of Armenian Cultural Month observance at St. John in Milwaukee, to his latest book, Khatchkar. Beautifully produced and photographed, the 500-page coffee table book an impressive document



Hrair “Hawk” Khatcherian

of Armenian religious stone carvings. Included are not only the khachkars that dot the Armenian countryside but bas-reliefs in churches and monasteries displaying events from the life of Christ and iconic images of Jesus and Mary the Mother of God.

With many visual juxtapositions, Khatchkar is designed to reveal common themes across different media by contrasting images of stone carvings with illuminated manuscripts, metalwork and fabric. Many of the khachkars he photographed were difficult to access. He clambered along slippery cliffs, stepped carefully through a Soviet-era minefield, braved the threat of Azeri snipers and ventured into the vicinity of Mount Ararat without alerting soldiers at a nearby Turkish army base. Several khachkars he photographed rise to 16 feet in height. Another difficulty involved photographing khachkars with natural light sufficient to reveal see KHATCHERIAN, page 8

COMMUNITY NEWS

Artsakh Minister to Speak at ARF, Armenian Churches' Program Dedicated to End of War Anniversary

WATERTOWN — The ARF of Boston, in collaboration with the Armenian churches of Eastern Massachusetts, is hosting a commemorative event on the first anniversary of the atrocities committed against 150,000 inhabitants of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabagh) by Azerbaijan and its ally Turkey. The event will be held at the Armenian Heritage Park (Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway, Boston) on Sunday, November 7 from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. The event is open and free to the public. City of Boston COVID-19 restrictions guidelines will be followed.

Artak Beglaryan, the State Minister of the Republic of Artsakh will deliver remarks for the occasion. A graduate of the Fletcher School of Diplomacy at Tufts University, Beglaryan has previously served as the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Artsakh, Advisor to the State Minister of the Republic of Artsakh, and Spokesman to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Artsakh. He obtained his PhD in political science from the Institute for National Strategic Studies in the Republic of Armenia in 2018. Beglaryan is the embodiment of the resilience of the Armenians of Artsakh;

at the age of 6, he lost his eyesight due to a landmine explosion, and his father was martyred during the first Artsakh war.

The brutal and unprovoked campaign leveraged NATO troops, drones, ISIS mercenaries, and chemical weapons to unleash terror in an effort to erase the Armenians living peacefully on their ancestral lands. Many of these atrocities were streamed live on social media, including the beheading of POWs and the elderly. The world, beset by the pandemic, passively witnessed this forceful display of neo-Ottoman, pan-Turkic extremism. This event will be held in memory of those who lost their lives throughout these attacks.

A memorial service will be held by the Armenian clergy of Eastern Massachusetts, presided over by Archbishop Vicken Aykavian, the Diocesan Legate to Washington and Ecumenical Officer of the Armenian Diocese, and Very Rev. Sahag Yemishyan, Vicar General of the Armenian Prelacy.

Also participating will be clergy from the: Armenian Church of Our Savior, Worcester, Armenian Church of the Holy Translators, Framingham, Armenian Me-

morial Church, Watertown, First Armenian Church, Belmont, Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, Belmont, Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Cambridge, Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, Worcester, Soorp Asdvadzadzin Armenian Apostolic Church of Whitinsville, St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church, North Andover, St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church, Indian Orchard, St. James Armenian Church, Watertown, St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, Watertown, St. Vartanantz Armenian Church, Chelmsford, and the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe, Haverhill.



Artak Beglaryan

Kurt to Speak on 'The Armenians of Aintab'

FRESNO — Dr. Ümit Kurt, a Polonsky Fellow at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem, will speak on "The Armenians of Aintab: The Economics of Genocide in an Ottoman Province" at 10 a.m. (Pacific time)/1 p.m. (Eastern time) on Saturday, October 30.

The presentation is part of the Fall 2021 Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program. The lecture is based on the publication of his new book, *The Armenians of Aintab: The Economics of Genocide in an Ottoman Province* (Harvard University Press, 2021).

Ümit Kurt, born and raised in Gaziantep, Turkey, was astonished to learn that his hometown, called Aintab by the Ottomans, once had a large Armenian community. The Armenian presence had not only been destroyed — it had been replaced. Gaziantep was a typical Turkish city. Kurt provides an invaluable account of Genocide at ground level by digging into the details of the Armenian dispossession, examining, in particular, the population that gained from ethnic cleansing. Records demonstrate how much new wealth became available when the prosperous Armenians were ejected. Kurt shows that the prospect of material gain was a key motivator of support for the genocide. Those who benefited most then financed the nationalist movement that brought the modern

Turkish republic into being. The economic elite of Aintab was thus reconstituted along both ethnic and political lines.

Ümit Kurt is a historian of the late Ottoman Empire with a particular focus on the transformations of the imperial structures and their role in constituting the republican regime. He received his Ph.D. from Clark University in 2016. Since then, he has held a number of postdoctoral positions in the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University and the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Fresno. Currently, he is a Research Fellow at Polonsky Academy in the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and teaches in the department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is the author of *Antep 1915: Genocide and Perpetrators* (2018), co-author of *The Spirit of the Laws: The Plunder of Wealth in the Armenian Genocide* (2015) and editor of *Armenians and Kurds in Late Ottoman Empire* (2020). He is the winner of the 2021 Discovery Early Career Research Award given by the Australian Research Council.

Zoom Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudieskurt>

For information about upcoming Armenian Studies Program presentations, visit <https://fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies>.

Photographer Khatcherian Talks About *Khatchkar*

KHATCHERIAN, from page 7
their detailed carvings. Because they face east, the best time of day for capturing the standing stones is between noon and 2 p.m.

Khatcherian photographed khachkars in Armenia, Artsakh, the Crimea, Iran, Lebanon, Georgia, Turkey and the Holy Land. "It took 26 years and 100 trips to Armenia and Artsakh," he said, describing a search that revealed

khachkars in their diversity as well as commonality and their fate. They remain objects of reverence in Armenia. However, in Kurdish regions khachkars were used as building materials, many have been deliberately defaced in Turkey and others were bulldozed by the Azeris. Several khachkars photographed by Khatcherian were evacuated from Artsakh to Echmiadzin at the close of the 2020 war.



Genocide Memorial Courtyard at St. John Armenian Church, Milwaukee

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ASA Announces Silver, Gold Medal Recipients

PROVIDENCE — The Armenian Students' Association (ASA) Silver Medal Award Committee selected three seniors to receive the Silver Medal Award.

The following students were selected to receive this award: Grace Catherine Boghosian, Providence, RI, Lincoln School, she will be attending Lafayette College; Ava E. Kooloian, North Providence, RI, Providence Country Day School, she will be attending Tulane University; and Wyatt Glenn, Westport, Conn., Staples High School, he will be attending Montana State University. The Silver Medal Awards are given annually to high school seniors who have demonstrated outstanding scholastic ability.

Applications for Silver Medal Awards

can be obtained at: www.asainc.org. Deadline for submitting applications and documentation is May 1, 2022.

The ASA Gold Medal Award is recognized as the highest Scholastic Award within the ASA. Any member of the ASA who is an undergraduate student and is at least a sophomore in an accredited college or university within the United States is eligible for consideration for this award.

Selected to receive the award this year Kristen Mary Hekimian, Bedford, MA, double major in biology and psychology at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Applications for the Gold Medal Awards can be obtained at: www.asainc.org. Deadline for submitting applications and documentation is March 15, 2022.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

‘Ordinary Killers Of the Armenian Genocide: The Lower-Level Perpetrators’ by Suren Manukyan

FRESNO — Dr. Suren Manukyan will speak on “Ordinary Killers of the Armenian Genocide: The Lower-Level Perpetrators” on Friday, November 12, at 7 p.m. (Pacific time)/10 p.m. (Eastern time). The presentation is the final one in a three-part series of lectures by Dr. Manukyan on the Armenian Genocide. Zoom registration is required: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudiesmanukyan3>.

Manukyan is the Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at Fresno State for the Fall 2021 semester.



Dr. Suren Manukyan

On the lowest level of the extermination, “ordinary” murderers participated in the killings, taking advantage of the atmosphere of impunity, due to the general popular support. Carrying out genocide is impossible without the large participation of masses. Privates, volunteers conscribed to the paramilitary detachments of Teşkilat-i Mahsuse, gendarmerie officers, criminals released from prisons, doctors, peasants, students, Kurds, refugees from the Balkans, i.e. almost every group of the society took part in the process of annihilating Armenians.

Dr. Manukyan is the Head of the UNESCO Chair on Prevention of Genocide and Other Atrocity Crimes at Yerevan State University and Head of the Department of Comparative Genocide Studies at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (Yerevan).

Zoom Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudiesmanukyan3>



Shushi Dance Ensemble performing

Armenian Festival Resumes in Virginia

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — After seven years, the Armenian Arts and Food Festival resumed in this historic city’s Market Square on October 23 and 24, thanks to Mariana Agheganyan and her committee.

The festival had been a tradition for the Armenian community of Greater Washington, which used to be organized by Parish Councils of the two Armenian churches in the area, Soorp Khach and St. Mary, and the Knights of Vartan.

An exhibition of Armenian folk crafts and traditional costumes was shown to non-Armenian public and vendors sold Armenian food and pastries. The highlights of the festival were the performances of the Shushi Dance Ensemble of New York, directed by Seta Kantardjian, and folk singers Kevork Artinian, Gevorg Chakmanyan and Marc 2Ray.



Left to right, David and Leda Zenian, Seta Kantardjian, Kevork and Vartiter Marashlian at the Armenian Arts and Food Festival

Giving Thanks: Together in Celebration at Armenian Heritage Park on Greenway

THANKS, from page 7

of music to connect our city’s diverse communities, cultivate empathy, and inspire social inquiry.”

Also, quite possibly, some children in the chorus are attending a Boston Public School that is implementing “Geometry as Public Art: Telling A Story,” the curriculum inspired by the Park’s design and geometric features that tell the story of the immigrant experience.

In preparation to meet with the young singers, Manneh Ghazarians, actively involved on the Friends’ Program Planning Team, chose an Armenian folk song with the music and lyrics annotated. When introducing the song, she would speak about the park and Armenia, its cultural heritage including the work of Gomidas who documented thousands of Armenian Folk Songs and best known and revered for his major

work, the Armenian Church Divine Liturgy drawn from the chants sung by the Armenian priests for centuries.

Several years earlier in her senior year at Lexington High School, Ghazarians arranged for the Lexington High School Chorus to travel to Armenia to sing and perform with the Children’s Choir of Armenia.

Presently, she is a senior quality improvement consultant at Boston Children’s Hospital. She and her husband, Jason Behrens, founder of Sun Bear Local, and a teacher in the Somerville Public Schools, are parents of a young daughter. Both also serve on the Friends’ Curriculum Development Team. Behrens is currently on the team implementing the curriculum in six Boston Public Schools this Fall which includes a visit to the park.

With an Armenia folk song selected, Robbie Jacobs introduced the Friends to Krystal

Moran, Director of Boston Children’s Chorus performing at the Park on November 14.

When Robbie Jacobs initially suggested that the children learn an Armenian folk song, he did not know what Krystal Moran was about to reveal in her email of introduction to the Friends.

“I’m so excited to meet you and to learn about this collaboration and event,” she wrote. “I actually went on choir tour to Armenia — Yerevan, Lake Sevan, Vanadzor, and a few other places — and our group actually worked with the Little Singers of Armenia chorus and Tigran Hekekyan (founder and director) while we were there. I have such fond memories of the wonderful people we met and collaborated with, this history we learned, the amazing food, the beautiful Mount Ararat.” In addition to her directing chorus with the Boston Children’s Chorus, Krystal is a full-time music teacher

at Boston Green Academy.

Preliminary discussions are underway for a joint virtual concert with the Boston Children’s Chorus and Little Singers of Armenia.

The opportunities that Armenian Heritage Park creates or inspires are quite extraordinary. This is yet another example.

In the spirit of giving thanks, appreciation is extended to the Friends of Armenian Heritage Park Giving Thanks! Planning Team: Ann Babbitt, Victor Brogna, Susan Deranian, Tom Dow, Jean Gibran, Barbara Jakob, Eleice Latham, Cathy Minassian, Rita Pagliuca, Marchelle Raynor and Barbara Tellalian together with the Boston’s Children’s Chorus under the direction of Krystal Moran.

For information, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org or visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org



COMMUNITY NEWS

Sponsor A Teacher Program Reinforces Its Commitment to Karabakh Teachers

WATERTOWN — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Sponsor A Teacher Program, which has been helping teachers for the last 20 years in four schools in Armenia and one school in Karabakh, resumed its help to Karabakh teachers one year after the bloody 44-day war initiated by Azerbaijan and Turkey.

During the war, the unthinkable happened. The Tekeyan School of Berdzor, Karabakh, now lies in ruins. It is situated in the narrow corridor of Kashatagh or Lachin province. During the war it was used as a barracks for Armenian soldiers. At the end of the war, the Armenian population was evacuated and Russian peacekeeping forces controlled this area, except for around 100 remaining Armenians. They are permitted to stay in order to serve the Russian troops in various capacities, such as running



The Vahan Tekeyan School plaque at the entrance



Mihran Minassian, sixth from left, with Gyumri Tekeyan School principal and teachers

shops or doing other supportive work.

The principal and teachers of the school are now either in Yerevan or various villages with relatives. The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of the United States and Canada is assisting and helping them find alternative income work, led by Arto Manoukian of Montreal, who initiated and implemented the “Sustainable Assistance” program for Berdzor refugees in Armenia by making investments in agriculture and beekeeping through Syunik Development NGO.

Sponsor a Teacher Program, led by Maro Bedrosian of Houston, Texas, raised enough funds between January and September of 2021 to help not only all four Vahan Tekeyan Schools in Armenia but also to 90 teachers of 5 newly located village schools in what left of Karabakh, namely the villages of Yeghtsahogh, Aghavno and Shushi District schools of Medz Shen, Hin Shen and Lisakor, through a non-profit organization called the Gurgun Melikyan Multichildren Family Foundation of Kashatagh. The 2021 fund raising was successful thanks to major donors of the Mesrob Fund, in lieu of flowers donations in

memory of Nora Azadian, the TCA Detroit chapter and many other donors from the US and Canada. A total of \$38,610 dollars was distributed in the past two weeks.

Between October 2 and 18, the funds were distributed and/or transferred to the teachers accounts by TCA Central Board chairman Edmond Azadian and member of the Central Board Mihran Minassian, who were visiting Armenia on assignment, TCA Armenia Representative Gayane Mouradyan and Gurgun Melikyan, who travelled to the five villages in Karabakh and handed personally to 90 teachers and workers enough funds to sustain them over the months of October, November and December of this year.

Boghos Aghabegyan, principal of Yeghtsahogh school said, “This kind of philanthropy by our brothers and sisters of the United States encourages us not to leave our village and open the road for Azerbaijan to conquer what left of Karabakh.”

Adrine Tavityan, an English teacher at Medz Shen village school, said, “We are thankful to the members and supporters of the Tekeyan Cultural Association, who sup-



Teachers of Medz Shen school during receiving the envelopes



COMMUNITY NEWS



Gurken Melikyan, third from right, in the patio of Lisakor School of Karabakh

ported us financially, and, most importantly, morally. Philanthropic acts serve as examples to people and show the path leading to kindness.”

“Every year everybody with great excitement awaits this beneficence, and has great expectations concerning this sum. Though the amount is not that great, teachers today need it. It is also a motivating and inspiring factor, which gives the teacher the desire to work, do and create,” he continued.

After visiting the Gyumri Vahan Tekeyan School, Mihran Minassian, member of the Central Board of TCA of the US and Canada, stressed to the principal and teachers of the school that it was not the amount of the money that was important. He said, “I understand that in today’s economic environment, the sum donated is not all that large. However, all this could have been done in an impersonal fashion by just directly sending checks. What is important is the contact, the immediacy, while presenting the sums. We believe in the future of Armenia. Today there are more Armenians outside than inside Armenia. And if with this many Armenians we are not able to make this little Armenia survive, then shame on us.”

Armenian language and literature teacher Narine Hayrapetyan of the Tekeyan School of Karpi, Armenia, said that they feel more secure because the TCA exists. She said, “We wait for you every year, and, thank God, we all are aware that this is not only for the money, but to meet with you and to have you by our side. There are two major goals: one, that we feel more secure through you, and second, irrespective of age, it is

extremely pleasant when a person’s work is appreciated. We await you gladly. May God grant that we too will be able to aid you in something.”

TCA Sponsor A Teacher in Armenia and Karabakh program enters its 21st year of existence, thanks to its co-

ordinator Maro Bedrosian and Armenia Representative Gayane Mouradyan. To make a tax deductible donation go to <https://givebutter.com/0g6lky> or mail checks to Tekeyan Cultural Association, 755 Mt. Auburn Street, Waretown, MA 02472, Memo: Sponsor a Teacher.



Gurgen Melikyan with principal and teachers of Yeghtsahogh school entrance



Arts & Culture

A CONVERSATION WITH...

Shake Makarian

Opera, Piano and Ikebana in Iran

By **Artsvi Bakhchinyan**
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Lyrical soprano and pianist Shake Makarian (born in 1931 in Kerman, Iran) occupies a place in the history of Iranian opera and classical music. She is the daughter of Araks Makarian (1907-2010), an active figure in the Iranian-Armenian community and the first professional make-up artist in Iran.



Shake Makarian began her musical career studying piano at Tehran Conservatory. In 1951 she went to Italy to study piano and vocals at the Santa Cecilia Conservatory of Rome. Returning to Iran in 1957, Makarian performed as a singer and pianist with Tehran Symphony Orchestra and gave recitals for the Tehran Philharmonic Society, Goethe Institute, Youth Palace and appeared in several TV and radio programs, as well as actively participated in Armenian community events. She also had concerts in Italy, Greece and the US, performing opera arias and Armenian songs.

In 1971, Makarian graduated from Tehran University with a degree in musicology. She made her opera debut in Italy, in the city of Barga, during the International Festival in 1973, and sang at the Tehran Opera’s Roudaki Hall until 1978. She has taught classical vocals and piano in Tehran for about 35 years.

My meeting with Shake Makarian took place in the Yerevan apartment of the singer and her sister, pianist Ruzanna Makarian-Hovanesian.

Dear Mrs. Shake, it is with great pleasure that I read your mother’s memoir, *Ashes of Memories*, published in 1998 in Boston. It is a highly recommended book for those interested in the Armenian Diaspora and Iranian-Armenian community history.

see MAKARIAN, page 16



Konstantin Petrossian in front of a poster advertising the special evening dedicated to his works

Konstantin Petrossian Honored and His Compositions Performed in Yerevan

By **Aram Arkun**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

YEREVAN — An evening devoted to the works of composer and conductor Konstantin Petrossian took place at the Komitas Chamber Music Center in Yerevan on September 14. Petrossian has created numerous compositions, including symphonic, choral, chamber, instrumental and vocal works, many of which have been published and performed in different countries of the world.

He has received the Movses Khorenatsi Medal of the Republic of Armenia for the exceptional advance of the development of Armenian culture and the St. Sahag and Mesrob Medal, the highest award of the Armenian Apostolic Church, along with many other awards.

Petrossian moved to the United States in the 1995. He serves as the Cultural and Music Director of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church of Providence and has also been the artistic director and conductor of the Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island.

see PETROSSIAN, page 13



Konstantin Petrossian, center, at the Komitas Chamber Music Center in Yerevan

Toward Purpose:

Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the Peace of Art Organization

YEREVAN — The 25th anniversary of the Peace of Art organization was celebrated at the Imperium Plaza in Yerevan on October 11 at an event called “Toward Purpose.”

Writer-poet Mary Poghosyan, the host of the event, began by greeting those present, adding: “Today marks the 25th anniversary of the installation of the first billboard which was unveiled in 1996 in Cambridge, MA, calling on the United States to recognize the Armenian Genocide. We are proud to announce today that we have achieved our goal of recognizing the Armenian Genocide by the United States.”

Peace of Art History

Heghine Gevorgyan, the representative of the Peace of Art organization in Armenia, made an opening speech. She explained that the Peace of Art organization was founded in Boston, MA, in 2004 and is listed with the Massachusetts Secretary of State, but has been active since 1996 with the installation of the first billboard. The Peace of Art organization is dedicated to the peacekeepers and implementers of the world peace, as



Varoujan with Republic of Armenia Honored Artist and Conservatory Professor Armenuhi Seyranyan at right, and the Symphony Orchestra Violinist, Sona Sokhikyan, to his left

well as to those who had the courage to risk their lives for the welfare of humanity. It is a non-profit educational organization that uses the universal language of art to raise awareness of the human condition and contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts. It serves art for the sake of peace and has no political, partisan or religious orientation, focusing on the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Since the foundation of the organization, she continued, it has not requested or received any funding from individual, state or other sources. All the needs of the organization have been sponsored by Daniel Varoujan Hejinian’s personal efforts and means.

Having worked with Hejinian since 2013 and representing the Peace of Art organization in Armenia, she briefly presented his work as follows.

“Varoujan urges people to adopt see ANNIVERSARY, page 14

ARTS & CULTURE

Konstantin
Petrossian
Honored and
His Compositions
Performed in
Yerevan

PETROSSIAN, from page 12
He has been the music director and conductor of the Erevan Choral Society since 2009. He was named Rhode Island Man of the Year in 1996.

The concert of Petrossian’s works, which took place at the Komitas Chamber Music Center, was performed by the State Chamber Orchestra of Armenia under the direction of Harutyun Arzumanyan, soloists of the National Opera Magda Mkrtchyan, Alina Pahlevanyan and Artak Stepanyan; instrumentalists cellist Aram Talalyan, trumpeter Daniel Melkonyan, bassoonist Nikolay Poghosyan and violinist Ani Khachunts; and pianists Lilit Artemyan, Levon Javadyan, Anahit Dilbaryan and Lilit Zakaryan. All these performers are internationally known and winners of various competitions and awards.

Well known chamber works of the composer were performed along with the premieres of two new works, Sonata for Bassoon and piano and Scherzo for Trumpet and Piano.

At the end of the concert, Petrossian’s famous song Hayastan [Armenia] was played. The president of the Union of Composers of Armenia, Aram Satyan, and the chairman of the Armenian Music Commission, composer Leon Chaushyan, made welcoming speeches. Many cultural figures and clergymen were present at the evening.

The evening dedicated to the works of Konstantin Petrossian was a great success, with a large audience, and left its mark on the cultural life of Armenia. In addition, the Union of Composers of Armenia published a special magazine issue dedicated to the



From right, conductor of the State Chamber Orchestra Harutiun Arzumanyan, Konstantin Petrossian, and Magda Mkrtchyan, soloist of the Armenian National Opera



The front acover of a special issue of the periodical Hay Kompozitor [Armenian Composer] dedicated to Konstantin Petrossian's 55th anniversary of work

55th anniversary of Petrossian’s professional activity at this occasion.

Petrossian later commented, upon returning to the US: “It was very important for me to have such a concert of my compositions, especially in my homeland. I am so happy that it turned out to be such a significant cultural event. Meanwhile, I am already actively working on some new musical projects.” He stressed that in the United States, “I do everything in my activities here to make contemporary Armenian music and art better know.”

Tekeyan Cultural Association

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20th

ANNIVERSARY

a TEACHER

IN ARMENIA AND ARTSAKH



SINCE ITS INCEPTION
IN 2001, THE TCA
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PROGRAM HAS
RAISED \$734,590
AND REACHED OUT
TO 6,829 TEACHERS
AND SCHOOL STAFF
IN ARMENIA AND
ARTSAKH





☐ Yes, I want to sponsor teachers in Armenia and Karabagh to continue helping them educate the children, our future leaders. I would like to have the teacher's name and address.

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Mail your check to:
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Your donation is Tax Deductable

Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the Peace of Art Organization

ANNIVERSARY, from page 12

a peaceful and civilized way of resolving conflicts, as the idea of peace is the main source of inspiration for his art. For the past twenty-five years, billboards have been erected in various US states in March-April on Varoujan's initiative, presenting the undeniable fact of the Armenian Genocide to the international community, calling for its recognition and condemnation. He has had numerous solo exhibitions in various prestigious galleries in the United States, often contributing to Armenian and foreign charities. Also, Hejinian is the author of numerous murals that are visible and popular in various parts of Boston.

In his art, in particular in the collection of Peace of Art, Varoujan discusses humanistic ideas, presents human situations, the lack of peace and its catastrophic consequences. He also appreciates the role of women in society and emphasizes the peculiarities of the image of Armenian women in his works.

Varoujan has painted many religious murals and paintings in seven Armenian Churches throughout the United States. Hejinian completed 46 murals covering the northern and southern walls of the Saint Vartanantz Armenian Apostolic Church. He has painted several public and corporate murals in Boston as well.

On May 10, 2014, a khachkar-monument called "Mother's Hands," designed by Varoujan and initiated by the Merrimack Valley Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee, was unveiled at the entrance of the Lowell Town Hall. The monument is special since it is the first in the diaspora to be placed on a public municipal space.

In 2014, on the initiative of the Ministry



Daniel Varoujan Hejinian at the commemorative event in Yerevan

Norwegian nations.

In 2019, President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian handed over to the French Ambassador to Armenia Varoujan Hejinian's canvas titled "Aznavour: Bridge of Friendship" for transfer to the president of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, as a symbol of permanent friendship between the two countries.

Hejinian has received many awards and medals throughout his life for his efforts to promote peace through his art, as well as for his romantic expressive paintings that transcend the boundaries of place and time.

In his home state, the Massachusetts Supreme Court has recognized Varoujan Hejinian's many contributions to the Armenian-American community, his lifelong

its international recognition. From that day on, every year, Mr. Hejinian and his associates display billboards in public places in the United States, which silently but at the same time very eloquently informed the public about the reality of the Armenian Genocide. Many of us have seen them on various media platforms and social networks.

After all, as a result of the years of active work, in 2004, Hejinian officially registered the non-profit organization, Peace of Art, which continued to work even harder, particularly in the United States and Armenia, adopting a new form of civilized struggle, to be compassionate and tolerant of the public and to choose fair paths to achieve the goal.

One of the main activities of the organization became support for genocide prevention. Over the past 25 years, the organization has installed more than 100 informative billboards about the Armenian Genocide in the United States.

The organization has organized about 3 dozen exhibitions, numerous lectures, and other programs in the United States and Armenia. As a result, it has been awarded many high awards by a number of authoritative institutions, including the state institutions of the Republic of Armenia.

The translation of a speech by Ruzan Asatryan, writer, publicist, public figure, academician of the International Academy of Nature and Society, was also read.

"Peace is the oxygen of humanity on the planet. You have chosen 'Peace of Art,' because art is a divine force leading to Parnassus. The talented radiance of your mind includes the universal outbursts of both the universal and the personal pulse, which have been highly valued by the art-loving society," she said.

in our homeland. I congratulate you and wish you new initiatives.

Poet and Architect Tatios Yessayan added, "This beautiful picture, that you saw and loved, is really a symbol of the peace pioneer painter Mr. Varoujan Hejinian. Here is the history of the Armenian nation, which is presented in colors. See how Mr. Hejinian's brush changes from black to blue: the black as the suffering of the Armenian nation, and the blue as the rebirth of the nation. And here is the proud Armenian woman with her native flag waving in the blue and raising her hands as if calling home birds like a Diaspora Armenian alien in the distance."

He added, "Hejinian lives in a world of different colors. He loves all the colors of the Great Painter God. He loves the seven colors of the rainbow. He prefers the colors that are missing in the rainbow – the 'mys-

terious black' that Hejinian immortalizes in his black pencil drawings."

He concluded, "Let us honor Mr. Hejinian with applause. If the Frenchman is proud of his Matisse, if the Netherlands is proud of his Van Koch, if Armenia is proud of his Martiros Sarian, Roslin and Kochar, we Western Armenians are also proud of Varoujan Hejinian."

The director of the Diaspora Scientific-Educational Center, Professor Suren Danielyan, in his speech mentioned the parallel between the poet Daniel Varoujan, who called for fight, and the artist Daniel Varoujan Hejinian, who a century later peacefully continued the struggle for the welfare and justice of humanity, condemning the genocide to prevent future genocides.

Hejinian responded at the end of the event as follows.

"On behalf of the Peace of Art organization and me, I would like to thank all of you for participating in the event dedicated to the 25th anniversary of our organization.

"For Armenians, April is a month of mourning and sad memories. Every Armenian living abroad feels in his soul and essence the suffering and injustice to which he is personally subjected. In addition, the storm of genocide along with the massacre of one and a half million, scattered another one million Armenians to the four corners of the world, each of which already has its own victims.

"I am one of them. From my father's side, my paternal uncle was hanged, my aunt suffering from tuberculosis died on the way to exile, my mother's whole family was lost in Der Zor irretrievably, and I am a child of an immigrant. Our fathers and grandfathers had a house, a garden, a pasture, but we were left with a longing for dry bread, under tin sheets, whistling with rain water and trembling winds blowing through the cracks. All of these are lived realities, clear and unambiguous.

"I am the child of that tortured generation and my cells are made up of suffering and pain. That pain will linger until the weight of justice begins to weigh heavily and good people multiply to listen to our grievances. Every Armenian has his just complaint and other ways to express it.

"I firmly hope that one day the Turkish people, having perpetrated the 'Great Crime' of the past, will condemn it with all righteous people and, extending a friendly hand to the Armenian people, will confess the 'unacknowledged crime'."

The event was concluded by Republic of Armenia Honored Artist and Conservatory Professor Armenuhi Seyranyan and Symphony Orchestra violinist Sona Sokhikyan.



Poet Mary Poghosyan, the host of the event

of Diaspora of Armenia, a solo exhibition entitled Peace of Art, dedicated to the 23rd anniversary of Armenia's independence and the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, was organized at the National Gallery of Armenia.

In 2015, Peace of Art organized a campaign entitled '100 Billboards on the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide,' installing electronic and static billboards dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in various US states and Canada, as well as in memory of the innocent victims of all genocides committed in the past hundred years.

In 2018, with the participation of the Ministry of Diaspora, the Honorary Consul of the Kingdom of Norway in the Republic of Armenia received a gift from the Government of the Republic of Armenia to the Government of the Kingdom of Norway – a portrait of Fridtjof Nansen by Daniel Varoujan Hejinian, titled "Nansen, Bridge of Friendship and Peace." The painting expresses the friendship of the Armenian and



Heghine Gevorgyan, the representative of the Peace of Art organization in Armenia

work, and his art of serving peace and justice."

The event was accompanied by two videos, the first about the achievements of the organization, and the second about the Peace of Art collection — the use of art as a tool to raise awareness of the human condition to prevent homelessness, hunger, violence against women, terrorism and genocide.

Karen Avanesyan, the head of the Diaspora Potential Mapping and Involvement Department of the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, warmly congratulated the 25 years of activity of the Peace of Art organization on behalf of the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, Commissioner Zareh Sinanyan.

He said: "A quarter of a century has passed since Daniel Varoujan Hejinian initiated the display of the first large billboard informing about the Armenian Genocide in the United States of America, calling for



ARTS & CULTURE

Filmmaker Mirzoyan Documents Spiritual Solitude with Authentic Hermit

By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

DETROIT — A good filmmaker must be someone who offers a different perspective of the world. The power of observation — of color, light, movement and sound — and knowing the emotions these evoke, must be harnessed to reproduce these aspects of life on screen. Standing back from the world and watching it, learning about it — but not necessarily being a part of it — is one way to become such an observer. In a way, watching the world as a filmmaker is not



Oksana Mirzoyan

unlike watching the world as a monk. Oksana Mirzoyan is an independent filmmaker born in Baku whose family fled to the US and settled in Detroit when she was young. She has always been drawn to mo-

nasticism. At 18, she wanted to run away to a Buddhist monastery in Tibet. Now the perceptive artist has chosen to explore the ascetic tradition of her Armenian forbears in a new short film.

A Providential Encounter

Mirzoyan has been working on a larger film, to be titled “Abysm,” which will tell a fictional narrative tied into the Karabakh conflict. In the film, she planned to have two young soldiers take refuge with a monk at an abandoned monastery. But she needed to find a location to film the scenes.

The filmmaker chose Tatevi Anabad, “The Great Hermitage of Tatev,” not to be confused with its much more famous neighbor, the ninth-century Tatevi Vank “Monastery of Tatev.”

Tatevi Anabad is a now-abandoned complex built in 1608-1613 and abandoned just 45 years later. The short-lived monastic community was not sustainable due to earthquakes and floods in the valley of the Vorotan River where it is built. Its inaccessible location and overgrown appearance made it ideal for Mirzoyan’s film.

In 2019, while teaching at TUMO Stepanakert, she visited Goris (her mother’s hometown) and hiked out to Tatevi Anabad. “I went there for a hike and there saw a man sitting and talking on the phone. There are farmers who wander in the gorge, so I thought he was a farmer. I paid no attention to him and started to take photos. He goes inside and comes out in his monastic clothes. He came on the roof [where I was standing] and started talking. We spent the rest of the day together.”



Monk Hacob

The Hermit

Despite his use of a cell phone, “Monk Hacob,” as he is called in Mirzoyan’s film, was living the life of a solitary monastic hermit. In his mid-60s, Hacob had always wanted to be a monk but took the typical path of marriage and family in his native Gyumri. When his kids grew up and

moved away, he agreed with his wife that he would follow his long-time dream. Now he has been living by himself at Tatevi Anabad for the past 6 years.

Mirzoyan says that they bonded over their shared love of gardening, but it took 6 months to get “the hermit” to agree to a short film depicting his daily life. The artist is excited for the possibilities. The project was chosen by the Berlin Film Festival to be “mentored” by an international team, and the story evolved quite a bit during that time, but fundraising has been more difficult, says Mirzoyan.

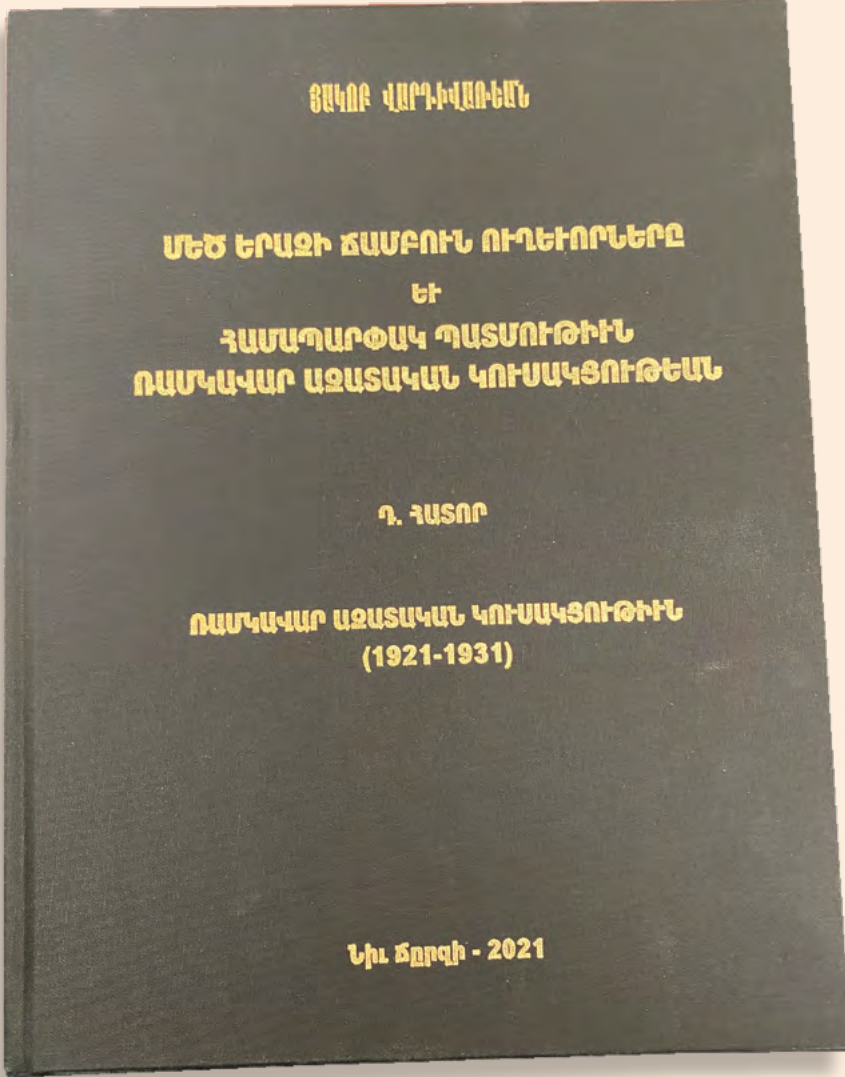
The hermitage itself also enthralled Mirzoyan.

“Being from Detroit, I love abandoned structures. There is a spirituality about them as they are being taken back by nature. It’s transcendent.” Mirzoyan also mentions old villages, now ghost towns, where she plans on shooting footage. Her abundant imagination pictures the time when these places were alive and vibrant.

Monk Hacob’s proximity to the border will also shed light on the recent war and his opinions of the situation. But the primary purpose of the film is to explore the nature of solitude. She says that this was something which allowed her to connect to Monk Hacob. “We both love solitude. I plan to spend time with him, understand what his perspective is, what does it mean to be in solitude. To get an understanding of his spirituality, Armenian spirituality and perhaps, come closer to my own.”

The filmmaker is still amazed at how Monk Hacob appeared in her life. “It was a moment of synchronicity,” she says. “It felt like, ‘how did this just happen?’ I’ve imagined this character in my film for so long at exactly this location. I went to scout the location for the film and there he was.”

Mirzoyan departed for Armenia on September 29 to shoot footage for the film.



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

An Armenian-language 425-page hardcover volume.

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

Shake Makarian: Opera, Piano and Ikebana in Iran

MAKARIAN, from page 12

My mother, Araks Makarian, wrote that book at the age of 82-83; she wrote it from memory, without having notes. She lived 103 years and six months. She was a very brilliant person, very strong, knew languages, attended Armenian and French schools, always participated in artistic and national events. After the death of her father, she went to Paris alone, studied make-up artistry and opened the first make-up salon in Iran. In general, there were many cultural figures in our family. My paternal grandfather emigrated to Persia from the ancient Armenian town of Agulis (now in Azerbaijan) at the end of the 19th century and founded the country's second Armenian-language newspaper called Astgh Arevelian (Eastern Star). Satenik Asryan, my great-aunt, was also known for her public and cultural activities in the life of the

Armenian community in Tehran.

How would you describe being an opera singer in Iran?

It was terribly difficult. The usual theatrical intrigues were not lacking, but the opera stage is an extraordinary place where you forget all those difficulties.

Weren't you asked to change your last name as a singer?

No, maybe because I did not have a world reputation. For example, the husband of the Iranian shah's sister, who was the Minister of Education of Iran, asked composer and conductor Loris Tjeknavorian to use only his first name. However, when writing about me in the press, they did not emphasize my being Armenian, but if necessary, they remembered.

In those years, was it accepted for Iranians to go to Europe for classical art education?

Yes, many went. I first went to Italy to study piano with my sister, but my voice was discovered and I started taking vocal classes. I was lucky to go on stage with the singers of the Italian opera. Once I learned that the famous Italian baritone Giuseppe Taddei was going to perform in Puccini's opera "Gianni Schicchi." I asked them to give me one of the small roles. They were surprised that I was asking for such a small role, and I said it is an honor for me to go on stage with Taddei, I want to learn from him.

In addition to studying at the Santa Cecilia Conservatory, I attended the Siena Summer Music Academy and participated in the Barga International Festival in Tuscany, where we spent a month preparing for performances. The first performance I starred in was the staging of Benjamin Britten's "Let's Create an Opera." On the last day of the festival, we went to Barga Church with the participants to sing some songs. There was one very old harpsichord to accompany the Haydn and Bach. And since it was very bad acoustic and I did not have an accompanist either, I said I would sing Armenian church songs. They were very happy. I started walking around the empty church to see where the acoustics were best and started singing the songs of our liturgy. In that city we were known as foreigners, participants of courses, so the next day the locals told me: "How interesting your Persian songs were!" I had to explain to everyone that the Persians are Muslims, my songs are Armenian.

I learned from your mother's memoir that you met Aram Khachaturian in Rome.

In the 1960s, Aram Khachaturian had a wonderful concert at the Audience Hall in Vatican. It was very surprising to see that the Armenians of different cities of Italy came to that concert. One day the Armenians gathered in a cafe to meet with Khachaturian. They told me to take my notes just for case. And there was an opportunity to sing, so I sang Komitas' Garun a (It is Spring), and Aram Khachaturian's



Shake Makarian in Iran

Indeed, even now many people hardly believe that in the middle of the last century Tehran had centers of classical art. Has the history of the Iranian Opera House been written?

I doubt it. Very few have preserved something, because after the Islamic Revolution our recordings and photos were destroyed. Now some young people are interested, they have started collecting posters, program books and pictures. Maybe they want to create something like a museum. By the way, Maritsa Sanosian, Hakint Vardanian, Hila Gharakhanian, Alenush Melkonian, Sargis Ghookasian, my cousin Ruben Aghabekian and Vahe Adamian sang at the Iranian opera at different times. And in general there are many interesting things to write. Operas were presented at the Roudaki Concert Hall in Tehran, both in the original languages, in Italian, Czech, and

sometimes in translations into Farsi. By the way, I also played my favorite role in Smetana's opera, "The Bartered Bride," presented in the Czech language. Iranian composers also wrote operas, and an Austrian composer named David wrote an opera in Farsi. Sometimes Iranian television filmed opera performances, for example, "Madame Butterfly," where I played the role of Suzuki.

The most important thing was that at Tehran University I wrote my thesis on musicology in Farsi about Komitas. It was the first time that a thesis about Komitas was written in that language. It was published in a separate book 10-15 years ago. I brought copies to Yerevan and presented over to the library of the National Conservatory for the use of Iranian students.

And after 1978 you only taught piano.

Yes, although there were rare concerts in the community. I left the stage at the best time of my career, because I have never liked when old singers come on stage, and people say: ah, you should have seen him/her younger in time!

And how did you get close to Charles Aznavour's family?

continued on next page

CALENDAR OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

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@ArmenianHeiritagePark.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, Diarbeqir, Dickranakert /, Documentary in English

NOVEMBER 12 — The Land of the Armenian Kings /Ani, Kars, Edesia, Musaler/, Documentary in English

NOVEMBER 19 — Konstantin Petrossian's creative evening in Armenia

NOVEMBER 26 — Armenian Spiritual Music



From left, Ruzanna Makarian-Hovanesian, Artsvi Bakchinyan and Shake Makarian (Photo by Suzy Sahakian)

wife, Nina Makarova, accompanied me. Khachaturian asked me where I learned to sing. "First in Iran, then in Rome," I replied. "Do you have a conservatory in Iran?" Khachaturian wondered. "We do." "Do you have a concert hall, a symphony orchestra?" Khachaturian asked again. "We have, and your piano concerto was played by Raffi Petrosyan, and Ruben Grigoryan conducted it. But, sorry, master, why are you surprised?" Aram Khachaturian said: "Once in Moscow I met with a general of the Shah of Iran, who said to me, 'Unfortunately, we do not have a concert hall or an orchestra, otherwise we would have invited you.' Now I do not know who to believe." And I said: "It has to do with politics." On that word, Aram Khachaturian said: "Hey girl, go take your sit!" (laughs).



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Holiday Walnut Cake from Café Cat (Photo credits Linda Peek)

Holiday Walnut Cake From Café Cat

“I grew up in England in the 1960s, when olive oil was kept in the medicine cabinet as a cure for earache and only foreigners ate garlic. We had never heard of eggplants or zucchini, not even by their European names of aubergines and courgettes.”

Linda Peek has cooked for rock stars, dignitaries, and royalty in her role as a diplomat’s wife, and is now sharing her stories and volumes of recipes like this decadent walnut cake at her remarkable Canberra, Australia food blog. “Of Middle Eastern origin, this special cake is best served with hot coffee or tea, with a dollop of fresh cream, says Linda. “It will keep in a cake tin for 2-3 days. Being doused in a sugary syrup, you would think it would be very sweet, but it’s not. The syrup helps to keep it moist.”

There aren’t many food bloggers who can list “Diplomat’s Spouse” as a former career, but for Linda it was a natural progression from one experience to the other. She lived in Geneva, Switzerland until she met her husband Matthew, a member of the Australian Diplomatic Service. “We’ve been fortunate to live on five continents with postings to Tel Aviv, Kuala Lumpur, Pretoria, Santiago, Paris and Copenhagen, with home postings to Canberra in between.”

“Many of my recipes have been in my family for generations...others were passed on by friends and chefs around the world. Many recipes have been adapted over the years to make them lighter and healthier or to update their presentation. Diplomacy, I found, involves a lot of cooking and entertaining. With several events to host each week, from small dinners to large receptions, being an ambas-

sador’s wife is a bit like running a restaurant. I’ve served my recipes to royalty, PMs and other VIPs, and there have been no complaints. This recipe includes walnuts, one of my favorite ingredients, and is moist and delicious baked any time of year,” she adds.

“Internationally, California walnuts supply two-thirds of the world’s walnut trade. Walnuts are primarily made up of protein and polyunsaturated fat, and contain a relatively high percentage of omega-3 fat, which has been linked to various health benefits. Walnuts are naturally a gluten-free food.” (For information, see: <https://walnuts.org/>).

INGREDIENTS:

125g (4 oz.) butter (one stick) at room temperature
3/4 cup sugar
4 large eggs
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon salt
2 cups walnut halves (or pecans)
1 1/4 cups flour, sifted, plus 2 teaspoons baking powder

Syrup:

1 cup sugar
1 cup water
1 tablespoon lemon juice
Piece of cinnamon bark
1 tablespoon brandy, to taste

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and bottom line a 22cm (9-inch) cake pan. (Note: Linda uses a silicone pan that doesn’t need to be greased, but if you use a metal pan, you will need to grease and line with paper.)

Place butter and sugar in food processor and mix well until smooth and creamy, stopping to scrape down the sides. Separate the eggs. Add the yolks to the food processor, with the cinnamon and salt.

Lastly, add the walnuts and process to chop them, but not too finely, stopping to scrape down the sides. With electric beater, whip the egg whites in a large clean bowl, until they hold soft peaks. Scrape the mixture from the food processor into the whipped egg whites and add the sifted flour and baking powder.

Fold all ingredients together gently but thoroughly, then scrape mixture into the cake pan and smooth the top. Bake for 30-40 minutes or until light brown and firm to touch. Do not overcook. Remove from the oven and spoon cooled syrup evenly over the hot cake.

Syrup: Make syrup while cake is baking: Place sugar, water, lemon juice and cinnamon bark in a small saucepan. Bring to the boil and boil for 10 minutes, stirring. Remove cinnamon bark, add brandy, then cool. Serve with sour cream or fresh whipped cream.

From Linda: “This recipe was inspired by a recipe from Claudia Roden, a British cookbook writer and cultural anthropologist in the 1970s. She is known as the author of Middle Eastern cookbooks including *A Book of Middle Eastern Food*, *The New Book of Middle Eastern Food* and *Arabesque—Sumptuous Food from Morocco, Turkey and Lebanon*. I have adapted the recipe over the years. I usually buy my walnuts from the supermarket, but I do like to get ones which are an attractive pale colour and quite large. Dark walnuts can be bitter. Also, I don’t know what sour cream is like in the United States, but it’s not very sour in Australia, and is more equivalent to crème fraîche in France. That’s what you can see in the photo above.”

Serves 10.

Linda manages her own brokerage company, Oztrade Pacific, which handles frozen fruit, juices and purees from various countries into Australia/New Zealand, Europe and South America and Australian cheese into South America. For information, contact: linda@oztradepacific.com.au. Skype: linda_peek tel: +612-62828872. Or go to: www.oztradepacific.com.au.

For Café Cat recipes, see: <https://cafecat.com.au/>

For Café Cat walnut recipes, see: <https://cafecat.com.au/?s=walnuts&submit=-Search>

For Linda’s Tahini Cookies, see: <https://cafecat.com.au/2021/07/tahini-cookies/>

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from previous page

While in Paris, my mother met an Armenian family, who were very close to Charles’s mother, Knar, and sister, Aida. Through this family we also got acquainted with the Aznavourians. One year, they invited my mother and my sister Ruzanna to their home in the south of France. Aznavour’s father sang well and played the tar, and since my mother also sang well, one day a song contest was organized. There were many guests in that summer house, 30-40 people sat down to dinner every day. Once Charles, my mother and Ruzanna spoke Armenian around the table,

and a French woman present said: “You cannot do it this way, you speak a language that we do not understand.” Charles said. “This is an Armenian house; we speak our mother tongue in our house.”

When Charles came to Tehran, we met every day. He was a very down-to-earth person. Charles once said that he was going to the summer house of a very rich Armenian family for a cocktail party organized in his honor, in the Armenian neighborhood of Vanak in the northern part of Tehran. He left, but in 15 minutes he came back to us and said: “Everyone wanted to show me their properties, I have nothing to do there.”

Apart from song and piano, you have performed in another field.

Ikebana! A Persian woman studied at the Sogetsu School of Ikebana in Japan and returned to Tehran to offer classes. This course lasts for eight or ten years, everyone is surprised that putting a flower in a vase can take so long. I specialized not only in Ikebana, but also was awarded the high title of Ikebana teaching, being the first Armenian woman to receive that order.

Thank you, Mrs. Shake, for an interesting conversation. I hope that one day your activity in Iran will be appreciated.

Yes, they already appreciate it. In 2016, at the initiative of the Ministry of Education of Iran and the House of Music, an evening in honor of six famous classical singers, including me, took place in Iran. We were awarded an order. There was another Armenian among those six, singer Shake Harutiunian.

I think it is encouraging that in a country where women do not have the right to go on stage, singers are honored today. I wish you to be in the homeland more often and reach the age of your mother in a healthy state!

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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

Political Tug of War in the Caucasus



By Edmond Y.
Azadian

How far can President Recep Tayyip Erdogan push his demand for the Zangezur Corridor? On October 26 he was scheduled to head to Azerbaijan to attend the inauguration of an airport in Varanda, which was taken over by Azerbaijani forces during the 44-day war. Before his trip to Azerbaijan, Erdogan reiterated his idea of the corridor through Armenia's sovereign territory, stating that Turkey has not changed its mind on the corridor issue.

"We are still determined on the opening of the corridor," he said.

His soulmate, President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, who was threatening to open the corridor by force, has been quiet recently. He has even released five more Armenian POWs and the rumor is that more will be released by November.

These changes cannot take place without underlying reasons. There is a definite change in the political atmosphere: First, the issue of the corridor is no longer left to Armenia; it has become a global issue. Turkey wants the corridor as a component of its pan-Turanic plans, but now there are other regional players who are wary of Turkey's expansionism. The corridor has become a red line for Iran, which has gone to the brink of war with Azerbaijan, and equally interested is India, as demonstrated by its more active presence in the region recently.

Another factor is the possible ill health of President Erdogan. Now his designated heir apparent, Minister of Defense Hulusi Akar, is cited in some news stories and credited with building up Turkey's armed forces.

Unlike its forces, Turkey's economy is faltering and the opposition has been accusing Erdogan of causing the country's economic decline through his expensive foreign adventures.

In addition, the stand-off continues between Turkey and the US over the F-35 fighter planes.

Another reason for the atmospheric change is the 3+3 negotiation format is losing its momentum. That format was being promoted by Turkey and Russia. The idea was to solve the regional problems with the participation of Russia, Turkey and Iran plus Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

During a recent trip to Georgia, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, blasted that format, stating that before talking about the 3+3 format, Russia has to return the occupied territories it has claimed back to Georgia. Armenia's Secretary of Security Council Armen Grigoryan made a reserved statement that his country had been studying the format, and it was too early for Armenia to comment, because that format is designed to keep the West away from getting involved in the Caucasus.

Additionally, no member in that 3+3 format had supported a settling of the status of Karabakh through negotiations. Then, suddenly we see Russia back off from the plan; Maria Zakharova, the spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry, started saying that the idea of the format did not originate in Moscow but was proposed by Turkey and Azerbaijan and Russia simply went along with it.

All these activities indicate that there is a tug-of-war between the parties to deny the West from participating in the resolution of the conflicts in the region. Most probably this infighting is the reason for the delay in convening the meetings of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk group, on which rests Armenia's last hope to bring to the negotiation table the issue of the status of Karabakh.

While the above activities are evolving, a symbolic date has been chosen to sign two agreements. That date is November 9, the first anniversary of the signing of the ceasefire declaration. The agreements will be signed by President Vladimir Putin of Russia and Aliyev, as well as Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The first agreement is on the border demarcation and delimitation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, based on the old USSR maps. The second agreement is opening the roads and communications; the latter was being negotiated by the deputy prime ministers of the three nations.

Both treaties have their potential dangers. We have to find out if the agreement on recognizing each other's territorial integrity contains any reference to Karabakh, as President Aliyev was

insisting all along that Armenia has to accept Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan. The caveat in the second agreement is the issue of the corridor.

Caution in these cases is warranted as President Putin has just made a convoluted statement asking for concessions from both parties, saying, "There are things which require mutual concessions. There are places where exchanges are required."

The sad truth is Armenia has no room for further concessions after losing 75 percent of Karabakh and after compromising the security of its very own borders.

In the meantime, documents are being released about the war and Azerbaijani victims in that war.

The Baku authorities, thus far, have admitted to have suffered 2,700 casualties. But former Prime Minister Hrant Bagratyan insists that the losses on the Azerbaijani side far exceed 18,000 and he quotes a site in Holland and also the news of the opposition media. Indeed, the opposition representatives in Azerbaijan have been visiting the cemeteries and counting flags on fresh graves. Bagratyan also believes that Azerbaijan and Turkey did not have enough fighters left to take over Shushi, which was offered to them by Russia on a silver platter.

If indeed Azerbaijan suffered three times more casualties than Armenia, that is not a cause for consolation. But that indeed indicates that the Armenian army lived up to its reputation as a formidable fighting force in the Caucasus.

To continue the war against overwhelming forces for 44 days and to face deadly new warfare technology is no small feat. Some divisions in the Armenian army were victims of confusion; the rest stood up and fought valiantly.

Military wisdom suggests that the standard ratio of losses in warfare is that the aggressor absorbs three times more casualties than the party defending itself. Viewed through the prism of that ratio, Bagratyan's statement might actually be realistic.

A tenuous situation continues. Shootings are taking place regularly and the Armenian side is losing many servicemen and civilians but the Russian peacekeeping forces seem to have orders not to defend the Armenian

side. If recent news is accurate, that Armenian forces have been facing the Azerbaijani forces both on Armenia's borders and in Karabakh, whereas the Russian peacekeepers are positioned behind the Armenian forces rather than between the two armies.

No one believes that the Russian forces are there to keep peace, but President Putin himself and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov have been harping on what a wonderful job the peacekeepers are doing.

For a long time, Russia was looking for an opportunity to bring its military on Azerbaijani soil. The 44-day war gave that opportunity to Moscow. The organized swiftness of that operation indicates that Russia was always ready for that move.

The question lingers in the minds of the Armenians: what will happen if Azerbaijan asks Moscow to move its peacekeepers out? Incidentally Baku has not even signed the agreement which has allowed the Russian peacekeepers in, so as to maintain its option to refuse Russian military presence on its soil.

Armenia and the diaspora have been allocating their resources toward what is left of Karabakh. The resettlement of the displaced refugees is a tremendous task, but it is a necessary project to keep Armenians in Karabakh. However, Russia has other ideas. Moscow's insistence that the issue of Karabakh's status should not be raised at this time has very serious implications.

Russia has a pattern of operating in the "near abroad." Before wresting South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia, Moscow granted citizenship to many residents of these two provinces. Later on, it had an excuse to defend its citizens by occupying their land.

A similar policy is being applied in Karabakh: Russian citizenship is being distributed and the Russian language is being taught on the same level as Armenian.

When push comes to shove, Russia will again play the game as a defender of its and stay put in Karabakh. For the Karabakh people that will become an acceptable situation when all hope for independence or autonomy are dashed.

Before the current process goes too far, the OSCE session must convene and take up the issue of the status of Karabakh.

Time is running out and time is against the destiny of Karabakh and its people.





COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

President Erdogan Withdraws Empty Threat To Expel 10 Western Ambassadors

Once again, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made empty threats. He boastfully proclaimed that he would expel the ambassadors of 10 Western countries, including the United States, for issuing a declaration urging the release of a Turkish human rights activist. He has been wrongly jailed since 2017 without any conviction.

Here are the twists of Erdogan's irate words. On October 20, he harshly criticized and threatened to expel 10 foreign ambassadors who made a joint declaration on Oct. 18, urging the Turkish government to release philanthropist Osman Kavala immediately from jail. The 10 countries are: The US, Germany, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden. On the fourth anniversary of Kavala's jailing, the ambassadors encouraged Turkey to find a "just and speedy resolution to his case." They warned that Kavala's continued detention "cast a shadow over respect for democracy, the rule of law and transparency in the Turkish judicial system."

After his initial arrest in 2017, Kavala was acquitted in 2020 of the accusations against him, but was rearrested on new baseless charges. Turkey ignored the 2019 ruling of the European Court of Human Rights calling for the immediate release of Kavala. The European Council warned Turkey that if it does not comply with the European Court's ruling by Nov. 30, 2021, it could suspend its voting rights or even membership in the Council.

Erdogan lashed back at these ambassadors by saying: "Is it within your boundary to teach such a lesson to Turkey? Who are you? I told our foreign minister that we cannot have the luxury of hosting them in our country." Erdogan added: "They go to bed, they get up, Kavala, Kavala.... Kavala is the Turkish branch of [George] Soros. Ten ambassadors come to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for him. What kind of rudeness is this? What do you think this place is? This is Turkey, Turkey. This place is not what you think — a tribal state. This is glorious Turkey. You can't just get up and come to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to give instructions. I gave the necessary instructions to our Minister of Foreign Affairs. I told him what to do. I said, 'you will immediately deal with these 10 ambassadors declaring them persona non grata [an unwelcome person] as soon as possible.' They will know Turkey. The day they do not know or understand Turkey, they will leave this place."

After their declaration, the 10 ambassadors were summoned to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Afterwards, the Ministry said that "the ambassadors were warned."

The real question is: Who the hell Erdogan thinks he is to warn the envoys of these countries? By making such a threat, Erdogan just added another wrinkle to the existing problems with President Joe Biden on the eve of the G20 summit in Rome, where the two leaders are supposed to meet. Contrary to President Donald Trump who went to great lengths to accommodate Erdogan's wishes, President Biden has taken a much tougher line on Turkey. Not surprisingly, The New York Times reported that "the Biden administration was the driving force behind the letter, in keeping with the president's policy of publicly calling out states over human rights violations."

Seven of the 10 countries that had signed the letter are members of NATO, while six of them are European Union members. European Parliament President David Sassoli issued a hard-hitting statement. "The expulsion of ten ambassadors is a sign of the authoritarian drift of the Turkish government. We

will not be intimidated. Freedom for Osman Kavala."

By threatening to expel the 10 ambassadors, Erdogan is engaging in his usual trick of demagoguery as his political rating has plummeted risking his reelection in 2023. He prefers to raise his own popularity while damaging Turkey's reputation around the world. He frequently creates artificial external crises to deflect the public's attention from the dire internal conditions. Meanwhile, the Turkish economy has hit rock bottom with massive unemployment and poverty. The Turkish Lira has dropped to a record low of almost 10 Liras per dollar from 1.3 Lira per dollar from when Erdogan became Prime Minister in 2003.

Even though Erdogan refuses to heed anyone's advice, he finally came to his senses, realizing that he cannot go forward with his threatened expulsion. He was caught in the horns of a dilemma. If he reversed his decision and allowed the ambassadors to stay, he would lose face in front of the Turkish public. However, should he have proceeded with his expulsion order, he may have caused irreversible damage to Turkey's economy and relations with the West.

Erdogan was quoted on Oct. 21 as saying that the 10 ambassadors would not release "bandits, murderers and terrorists" in their own countries. Thus, Erdogan was urging Western countries not to interfere with Turkey's judicial system. While Erdogan is making such a provocative statement, he himself repeatedly pressured President Trump to quash the investigation of the Turkish Halkbank which is accused of money laundering and conspiracy, helping Iran to evade US sanctions. Erdogan was trying to cover up his own ties to the Halkbank scheme.

President Erdogan's aides explained to him the catastrophic repercussions of his threatened expulsion of the 10 ambassadors. Naturally, these 10 countries would have retaliated by expelling Turkey's ambassadors. There were dozens of irate articles in the United States and European countries stating that they were fed up with Turkey's hostile behavior and illegal actions.

That same message was relayed to Turkey through private diplomatic channels. Finally, a compromise was found to deescalate the crisis. The US Embassy in Ankara tweeted on Oct. 25: "in response to questions regarding the Statement of October 18, the United States notes that it maintains compliance with Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations." Other embassies, including those of Canada, New Zealand and the Netherlands, posted similar messages. Germany and France retweeted the US Embassy's tweet. Article 41 of the Vienna Convention bars ambassadors from interfering in the domestic affairs of host countries.

The Turkish Anadolu news agency gleefully tweeted in response: "The US Embassy in Ankara has given in," adding that Erdogan welcomed the US tweet. Erdogan announced after a Cabinet meeting on Oct. 25 that the ambassadors had backtracked on their "defamation of our judiciary and our country."

Whichever US official decided to send the second tweet which was interpreted as "backing down" from condemning Turkey's violations of human rights, should be immediately fired. How can the US government send one message a few days earlier and then turn around and contradict it? What happened to President Biden's policy of publicly calling out states over human rights violations? A US State Department spokesman responded by saying that its second tweet was meant to underscore that the US envoy's actions were in keeping with the Vienna Convention.

Unless the US government keeps its promise to come to the defense of human rights around the world, Erdogan and others will keep on violating with impunity the basic rights of their people. There should be no backing down and no contradictory messages in this regard. It is now up to the European Court of Human Rights to hold Erdogan's feet to the fire.

Armenia's Government at Odds with Its Human Rights Ombudsman

By Karine Ghazaryan

On October 18, Armenia's outspoken human rights ombudsman Arman Tatoyan announced that Azerbaijani forces were fortifying their presence in a small bit of Gegharkunik province where they reportedly have been stationed for several months.

"They continue building new roads, increasing the number of servicemen and armaments at the posts," Tatoyan wrote on his Facebook page. "Active engineering work is being carried out to reinforce their positions."

The announcement prompted an unusual rebuttal from Armenia's ministry of defense, which issued a statement calling Tatoyan's claims "obviously exaggerated" and "detached from reality." Tatoyan shot back in another Facebook post, accusing the MoD of feeding into an Azerbaijani disinformation campaign by impugning his claims.

The confrontation represented a new spark in a long-running tension between the government and the office of the ombudsman, who has taken a highly visible role calling public attention to the fragile security situation along the Azerbaijani border following last year's war.

Tatoyan was appointed to the post of ombudsman in 2016, two years before the "Velvet Revolution" that brought the current government, led by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, to power.

Initially, Tatoyan kept a low profile under the new government. But starting after last year's defeat in the war with

Azerbaijan, he has become far more outspoken. That has led to criticism that he has remained loyal to the former regime, which since last year's war has also heavily attacked the current authorities on security issues.

Tatoyan has stayed quiet about his own political sympathies, though his take on human rights often dovetails with that of the opposition. In 2019, when the country was debating whether to ratify the anti-domestic violence Istanbul Convention, he remained on the sidelines as opposition figures assailed the government on the topic. Human rights organizations also have criticized Tatoyan for failing to properly condemn violations of LGBTQ rights.

He is regularly praised by opposition figures while sparing with government officials and ruling party members of parliament.

In one session of parliament in May, when Tatoyan presented his annual report on the work of the ombudsman's office, Maria Karapetyan, a member from the ruling Civil Contract party, criticized the ombudsman, reminding him that he is "not a politician" and that the "aggressive tone and content" of his speech were "not appropriate for the institution that he represents." Tatoyan responded by complaining that ruling party members "overtly falsify facts" about his work.

Tatoyan also criticized the state-run public television for becoming a "government propagandist" because, Tatoyan claimed, the channel's news programs did not cover his statements about the situation on borders in Syunik province. In response, the leading Public TV host invited Tatoyan for an interview and accused him of taking a political position.

In March, the government proposed a bill that would reduce funding to the office of the ombudsman. Government officials denied that there was any political motive behind the bill, but some human right defenders criticized the decision as an infringement on the ombudsman's independence.

While Tatoyan had failed in the past to act on other critical issues for human rights in Armenia, he deserved credit for his work after the war, said Nina Karapetyants, the head of Armenia's Helsinki Association. And the government's bill would have set a dangerous precedent for the political independence of future ombudsmen, too, she added. The government eventually withdrew the bill.

This round of conflict has dragged on, as well, with the defense ministry and Tatoyan continuing to issue mutual accusations.

And the spat has drawn in other officials. The Secretary of Armenia's Security Council, Armen Grigoryan, accused Tatoyan of supporting the political opposition, noting in an interview with news site Rusarminfo that the ombudsman only had a few months left in his term and suggesting that when that happened Tatoyan would openly enter politics. (Tatoyan's term ends in February 2022.)

Meanwhile, the opposition again stepped up to defend him. "While we hear from Europe that the Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan is a 'Status A,' high-class official with exceptional public trust — which for us doesn't even need proof — the Secretary of the Security Council is hurrying to call him a 'counter-revolutionary' and biased," wrote Lilit Galstyan, an opposition member of parliament, on her Facebook page.

(This originally appeared on Eurasianet.org on Oct. 25.)

Vahan Tekeyan Awards Winners Announced

YEREVAN — The 27th Vahan Tekeyan Awards ceremony of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA), supported by the Shake Tekeyan-Ghazarian Fund of the TCA of the United States and Canada, took place



Prof. Rouben Mirzakhanyan

on October 8 at the Tekeyan Center. These annual awards, the first of which took place in 1991, recognize and encourage the best work in various fields of Armenian culture. During its existence, more than 100 worthy individuals have been recognized. This year, Edmond Y. Azadian, president

of the TCA of the United States and Canada, and president of the TCA of Armenia Rouben Mirzakhanyan, spoke at the event, and many Armenian intellectuals and writers were present at the ceremonies for six categories of awards. This year there were approximately 70 applicants from which the awards committee had to choose.

Archbishop Natan Hovhannisyan gave his blessing to the ceremony, and conveyed greetings from Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II.

Artavazd Nazaryan received the award



Professor Arman Elbakyan

in the field of literature for his collections of poetry titled *Arvartzan* [Suburb] and *Ughepagots* [Barrier].



Professor Arman Yeghiazaryan



Edmond Azadian, left, presenting award to poet Artavazd Nazarian

Professor Arman Yeghiazaryan, doctor in the field of history, received the award for Armenology for his work *Ashot III Voghormats Tagavor Hayots* [Ashot III the Merciful King of Armenia].

In the field of drama, the winner was Professor Armen Elbakyan, Honored Figure in the Field of Art of the Republic of Armenia,



Anatoli Avetian

for his staging of “*Trichk kkui bni vrayov*” [One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest].

In the category of the visual arts, the award was bestowed upon People’s Artist of the Republic of Armenia Anatoli Avetian for his creation “Erebuni-Yerevan-2800.”

The winners in the field of journalism were Diana Markosyan for her series *Hachoghutyan banadzev* [Formula for Success] on A-TV (an Armenian television



Photographer Armen Yengoyan



Journalist Diana Markosyan and Archbishop Natan Hovhannisyan

station) and Hakob Asatryan for his publications concerning the Armenian communities of Europe in the monthly *Orer* (Prague).

In the field of fine art photography, Armen Yengoyan’s series *Giughakan Eskizner* [Village Sketches] and Zaven Khachikyan’s *Anvermagir Paterazm* [Untitled War] series.

The Public Radio and Television Symphonic Pop Orchestra, led by People’s Artist of the Republic of Armenia Yervand Yerznkian and with the participation of People’s Artist of Armenia Martin Vardazaryan, performed during the ceremonies, and the art works of applicants were on display.

GENOCIDE CONTINUED

Azerbaijan Attempts to Rewrite History Through Ethnic and Cultural Cleansing






A commemorative event to honor the victims of the 44-Day war in Artsakh

Memorial Service:
Led by the Honorable Armenian Clergy of the Eastern Massachusetts

Guest Speaker:
His Excellency, Mr. Artak Beglaryan
State Minister, Republic of Artsakh

Sunday, November 7, 2021, at 2:30 PM
Armenian Heritage Park, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway, Boston

Rain or shine | limited seating available at venue



The Armenian-American community of Boston commemorates the first anniversary of the atrocities committed against 150,000 inhabitants of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabagh) by Azerbaijan and its ally Turkey. This brutal and unprovoked campaign leveraged NATO troops, drones, ISIS mercenaries and chemical weapons to unleash terror in an effort to erase any trace of Armenians living peacefully in their ancestral lands while streaming the atrocities live on social media, including beheading of POWs and the elderly. The world, beset by the pandemic, passively witnessed this forceful display of neo-Ottoman, pan-Turkic extremism. The infamous post-war references to Talaat’s (mastermind of the Armenian Genocide) “dreams” by Turkish president Erdogan were the manifestation and declaration of the intent to finish the incomplete goal of annihilation of Armenians in their homeland. Yet again, Armenians are here to demonstrate how grief and resilience come together to forge a stronger nation.

Armenian Church of Our Savior, Worcester • Armenian Church of the Holy Translators, Framingham • Armenian Memorial Church, Watertown • First Armenian Church, Belmont • Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, Belmont • Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Cambridge • Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, Worcester • Soorp Asdvadzadzin Armenian Apostolic Church of Whitinsville • St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church, North Andover • St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church, Indian Orchard • St. James Armenian Church, Watertown • St. Stephen’s Armenian Apostolic Church, Watertown • St. Vartanantz Armenian Church, Chelmsford • The Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe, Haverhill • Facilitated by the ARF-Boston