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STEERING COMMITTEE OF UNIFICATION OF THE ADL LEADERSHIP:

The Time Is Here for the Unification of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party

An Appeal

Dear and faithful members of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (Ramgavar Azadagan Gousagt-zoutyou),

Today, Armenia is facing critical challenges. Armenia and Artsakh, reborn with independence through a rare historical opportunity, are in existential danger. During its centuries-old history, Armenia has lost its statehood many times, subjecting its people to foreign dominion and regaining its independence again and again. It is incumbent upon the current generation to save and perpetuate our statehood, which was regained through the sweat and blood of many generations.

The diaspora, in its turn, is undergoing a crisis of leadership. It is failing to reorganize itself and lend support to Armenia, despite the abundance of intellectual, cultural and material resources at its disposal.

The Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL), which



had played a crucial role during its one hundred years of history for our people in trying times, has also fallen into a sad pattern, failing to continue its political and ideological missions in the current state of challenges. In today's world, with pervasive globalization, every Armenian organization has been faced with the same challenge of keeping up with the changing times in order to be able to function effectively.

Thus the ADL too is faced with the urgent task of putting its house in order.

The ADL has been the standard bearer of the Armenian cause, while serving as a bridge between the homeland and the diaspora and functioning as a balancing political force throughout the world.

Today, opportunities arise and pass us by while we are no longer in a position to face those challenges, while in the past our leadership and the dedicated membership would have

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Massachusetts Mandates Genocide Education in Public Schools

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — On December 2, Massachusetts finally joined the ranks of states mandating genocide education, including the Armenian case, in public schools. The Massachusetts legislation follows that of 20 other states, including four in New England. This lag might be surprising because Massachusetts has a large and active Armenian population, and had adopted a law recommending, but not mandating, guidelines for teaching genocide and human rights over twenty years ago, in 1998.

In the period between 1985 and 1994, five states, New York, New Jersey, California, Illinois and Florida, legally mandated genocide education. A hiatus of some 20 years followed before efforts to pass such laws sprung up again in 2014. Massachusetts meanwhile faced efforts by Turkish organizations and their supporters to dilute the portion of the state curriculum that recommended teaching the Armenian Genocide. Initially, these organizations managed to introduce materials in the curriculum that claimed the Armenian case did not qualify as genocide.

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Shooting in Verin Shorzha Village, Azerbaijanis Lose Military Equipment

By Gevorg Gyulumyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — On December 17 at about 17:00 Yerevan time, another incident took place at the line of contact between Armenian and Azerbaijani troops, which ended in an intense shootout. There were no casualties among the Armenians.

According to our local sources, Azerbaijani military equipment neutralized by Armenian forces was in the area of Verin (Upper) Shorzha Village of Armenia's Gegharkunik Province from November 16, while in the Jermuk sector of Vayots Dzor damaged equipment belonging to the Armenian army was located which had been struck by Azerbaijani bands on that

see SHOOTING, page 2



Verin Shorzha Village sign

Envoys Named By Armenia And Turkey, No Meeting Date Set

ISTANBUL/YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — Turkey announced this week the appointment of Serdar Kilic, former Ambassador to the US, known for his vociferous stance against the recognition of the Genocide, as special envoy to discuss steps for normalization of ties with Armenia.

Kilic has long been known in the US for his Genocide denial activities. Just last year, on April 24, when then-President Trump put out a statement in honor of the day, Kilic tweeted: "President Trump's statement is based on domestic political considerations, ignores massacre of 500K Muslims by Armenian rebels in the same period, is thus void of objectivity in reflecting 1915 events, and as such is totally unacceptable. Let historians decide on historical events."

Speaking to reporters in the United Arab Emirates, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said positive statements for the normalization of relations were recently made from both sides, adding that there is a need to take confidence-building measures.

"We consult with Azerbaijan on every issue and take such steps ... Nobody should question whether we can act independently or separately from Azerbaijan. We are one nation, two states. These are positive things that will benefit us all," Cavusoglu said.

Kilic's appointment has been made with the approval of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish foreign minister said.

The date of a meeting between the special representatives of Armenia and Turkey will be announced in due time, the spokesperson for the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Vahan Hunanyan announced this week.

"In case of an agreement on the dates of the meeting of special representatives within the framework of the dialogue between Armenia and Turkey, the public will be informed in due time," Hunanyan said.

Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Armenia Ruben Rubinyan will be the special representative of the Republic of Armenia for the process of normalization between Armenia and Turkey, Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Vahan Hunanyan informs.

Various international partners have been encouraging the effort. In November, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said that Moscow was ready to mediate between Ankara and Yerevan and that normalization "would undoubtedly contribute to the improvement of the general situation in the region."

The United States also has been pushing the effort. During an October meeting in Rome, President Joe Biden urged his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to open the border with Armenia, Bloomberg reported, citing an unnamed "senior Turkish official."

Yerevan has long been in favor of reopening ties, particularly given the economic losses it suffers from the closed border with its large neighbor. But following the defeat in last year's war, in which Turkey provided substantial aid to Azerbaijan, many in Armenia are wary of any overtures toward Ankara.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has welcomed and expressed support to the steps aimed Armenian-Turkish normalization.

"We welcome and strongly support statements by Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and the Foreign Ministry of Armenia on appointing

see ENVOY, page 4



Annual Mirror-Spectator Christmas Vacation

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator will take its annual Christmas break starting December 27.

This issue, featuring the annual Christmas Greetings, will be our last for 2021. The first issue back will be that of January 8, 2022.

We wish our readers a safe, happy 2022 and a Merry Armenian Christmas. *Shernorhavor Soorp Dzenoont.*



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Remains of Two Female Warriors Discovered in Shirak

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The skeletal remains of two female warriors have been unearthed in Jrapi, Shirak province, Armenia, and the study of the burial ground has revealed an array of traumatic lesions, which shed light on their daily activities, suggesting they were warriors.

Published this month in the *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology*, the peer-reviewed paper was authored by Anahit Y. Khudaverdyan, Azat A. Yengibaryan, Hamazasp H. Khachatryan and Arshak A. Hovhanesyan.

“Both women had compressive cranial lesions with the signs of healing. A bronze arrowhead once embedded in the soft tissues of the intercostal space was discovered as well as a canal in the lower epiphysis of the tibia probably left by the broken point of a bronze arrowhead. The women were likely horse riders and archers,” the paper’s abstract reads. The remains unearthed in the burial belonged to two females who seemed to live as professional warriors and were buried as individuals of rank.

Opposition Leader Isagulyan Detained

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The leader of Armenia’s opposition National Security Party, Garnik Isagulyan, has been detained, the Investigative Committee of Armenia said on December 21. Isagulyan is accused of reporting a false crime at a news conference on September 20. He said that Armenian Ambassador to Ukraine Vladimir Karapetyan was allegedly recruited by the Azerbaijani and Turkish special services, claiming that the diplomat had been cooperating with them since 2008.

According to the Investigative Committee, the diplomat was unfairly accused of committing an especially grave crime. The agency underlined that Isagulyan had been previously accused of slandering other officials.

Government to Boost Women Entrepreneurship

YEREVAN (ARKA) — The Armenian government will release 155 million drams to boost women’s entrepreneurship and employment, Economy Minister Vahan Kerobyan told UN Development Program Resident Representative in Armenia Natia Natsvlishvili on December 21.

According to the ministry, Kerobyan and Natsvlishvili discussed female entrepreneurship and employment development program Accelerator#5, which is part of the national platform to strengthen women’s economic potential.

According to the ministry, the accelerator aims to promote women’s entrepreneurship, increasing the demand of women in the labor market by emphasizing their competitive advantages.

‘Peace, the New Stage, Is Impossible’: The Situation of One Border Village

By Gevorg Gyulumyan

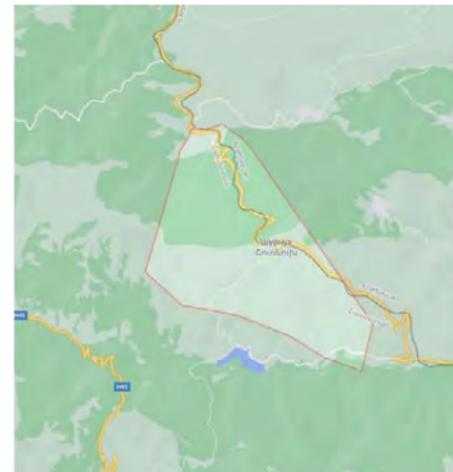
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — The village of Shurnukh in the enlarged Goris community of Syunik Province in the Republic of Armenia was divided after the 44-day war into Armenian and Azerbaijani parts, while the Goris-Kapan road became semi-blocked after the placement of Azerbaijani checkpoints. Administrative head of the village Hakob Arshakyan related that the Azerbaijanis installed in one part of the village completed all the construction work a long time ago.

He said, “They are quietly staying in their places there. There are no aggressive things. Just as it was, they are remaining in the same situation. Azerbaijanis have done whatever is necessary, their work. It is the same situation. If they do not want to enter the highway in principle, they will not enter it. They have already secured their connections internally [through land controlled by Azerbaijan]. They can do any work internally. Whenever they wanted, they made their movements with the accompaniment of the Russians.”

In the Karmrakar section, according to Arshakyan, there are also Azerbaijani soldiers, but he observed that the Armenian National Security Service border troops are also located there and are observing the passersby. When necessary, they try to ascertain from the administrative leaders whether it is the inhabitants of the settlements who are passing through that way.

“In that section, the Turk [Azerbaijani]



Hakob Arshakyan and a map showing Shurnukh on the border of Azerbaijan

does not block the road. There we encounter only our border troops. They ask, where are you going, what are you doing? When it is necessary, they ask for information: who is that man? If he is one of my residents, they telephone me. If they are from Vorotan, they call there. There is movement. The Turk [Azerbaijani] has not blocked the road, but they are there,” Arshakyan said.

The Azerbaijani checkpoint placed on the Goris-Kapan road has created serious



An Azerbaijani sign placed in the area of Shurnukh Village under the control of the Azerbaijanis



Hakob Arshakyan

problems for Bardzavan, Vorotan and Shurnukh. There is an alternative road for Bardzavan, the M2, which should intersect with the Tatev-Aghvan road. At least earthworks have begun for the Bardzavan road, though Arshakyan does not know when it will be completed, but the construction of the Shurnukh road has not started.

The Azerbaijanis who seized the Goris-Kapan auto route not only have set up a customs point, but also opened a gas station of the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR). Arshakyan was the first to speak up about this. To the observation that in this way they are trying to attract Iranian drivers

will take 4-5 meters of the gardens even at a section of the highway above M2 and continue in that fashion until the last section of the village. In other words, the Turk [Azerbaijani] says that the border line through the territory of Shurnukh will be drawn according to GPS, while in the Black Lake area, it will be according to the map.”

Arshakyan added that no matter how much they talk about an era of peace, living side by side, things are the same—it will not work. He concluded, “It is not possible for them to live peacefully. Peace, the new stage, is impossible for any right thinking, Armenian-educated person. It is impossible, if the one standing before you is a Turk [Azerbaijani]. Let us not forget the story of Gurgen Margaryan [the Armenian officer killed with an axe by Ramil Safarov in 2004].”

Shooting in Verin Shorzha Village, Azerbaijanis Lose Military Equipment

SHOOTING, from page 1

same day. Approximately one month later, through the mediation of the command of Russian troops, an agreement had been reached to exchange military equipment located in neutral zones.

According to the agreement, the exchange should have taken place on December 17. The Azerbaijani armed forces sent equipment to remove their previously damaged equipment, but at the same time did not allow the Armenian side to evacuate its equipment in the Jermuk area, as Armenian soldiers doing their military service in Verin Shorzha informed.

As the result of provocative actions of the Azerbaijani side, shooting took place between the two sides. Consequently, the Azerbaijan armed forces not only were unable to remove their damaged equipment, but also lost the equipment they intended to use for the removal.

Hakob Avetyan, the outgoing administrative head of the nearby Geghamasar enlarged community, describes Azerbaijan’s actions as dishonest. He exclaimed: “This speaks of Azerbaijan being a low-class, terrorist state. The world must see all this, analyze it and give a clear assessment.”

This author tried to get information from the Ministry of Defense, but it refused to comment.

with cheap fuel, he remarked with sorrow: “Why only Iranian drivers? They will pay and come and go. Even the most patriotic resident of Goris will come, buy the Azerbaijani gas at cheap prices, and return. This will happen, no? If it is so, I in turn propose that the part of the road from Vorotan towards Goris where our border guards are located, below Karahunj, be closed by them, the M2, so that the so-called “good” Goris inhabitants who will appear, do not go bring gas and sell it.”

At the end of the year, border demarcation and delineation work will begin. Arshakyan said, “They divided the village through this situation. They gave it to the Azerbaijanis. The parties were present. The same day the Russian general said that it would take place according to the map of the general staff, I took out the map and showed it. The Turkish [Azerbaijani] general said, ‘Lose that map. We work with GPS.’ I want to say that if, according to what the Russian general says, the border goes through the lower gorge by means of the map of the general staff, the village will completely remain within the administrative territory of the Republic of Armenia. GPS however indicates that they



ARMENIA

Yerevan Mayor Rounds On Ruling Party

By Harry Tamrazian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A spokesman for Yerevan's embattled Mayor Hayk Marutyan has hit out at Armenia's ruling Civil Contract party, saying it wants to oust him because of his popularity.

The party headed by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan officially announced on Friday, December 17, its decision to replace Marutyan by one of his deputies. It controls at least 54 seats in Yerevan's 65-member municipal council empowered to appoint and dismiss mayors.

The council is scheduled to vote on Wednesday, December 22, on a motion of no confidence proposed by its pro-government majority. (This is after the press time of the Mirror-Spectator.)

In a statement issued after a meeting with Pashinyan held on Friday, the major-

ity leaders said that Marutyan quit Civil Contract in December 2020 and is not running the Armenian capital "with sufficient efficiency."

Marutyan's spokesman, Hakob Karapetyan, dismissed on Sunday, December 19, the official rationale for the bid to impeach him.

"Thanks to his three-year work, Mayor Hayk Marutyan has a very high approval ratings, and I think that one must look for reasons for this whole process behind this fact," he told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

Karapetyan also accused council members loyal to Pashinyan of sabotaging his efforts to improve public transport. He said they attempted last February to block the purchase of hundreds of news buses for the city.

Some council members affiliated with the My Step bloc have openly disagreed

with the move to remove Marutyan. Two of them, Grigor Yeritsyan and Gayane Vartanyan, have resigned from the city council in protest.

Yeritsyan said on Monday that the mayor's relationship with Armenia's political leadership was "in tatters" even before the September 2020 outbreak of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh. He said that following Armenia's defeat in the war, Marutyan did not publicize his decision to leave the ruling party at the request of Pashinyan's entourage.

Marutyan, 45, is a former TV comedian who actively participated in the "Velvet Revolution" that brought Pashinyan to power in May 2018. He was handpicked by Pashinyan to lead My Step's list of candidates in the last municipal elections held in September 2018 and won by the pro-government bloc.



Mayor Hayk Marutyan presiding over a meeting (Facebook photo)

'The Voice Of Hadrut'

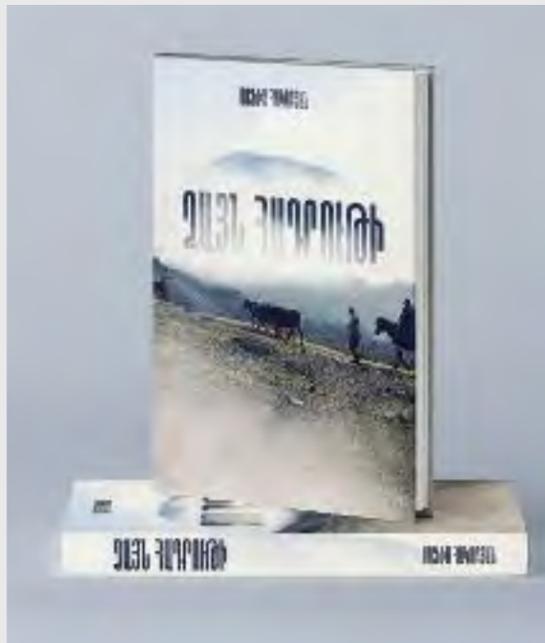
New Book Makes Audible the Voice of the Displaced

By Gevorg Gyulumyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — The new book by Turkologist and journalist Sofia Hakobyan, titled *Dzayn Hadruti* [The Voice of Hadrut], was published by the Gevorg Virats Publishing House recently. It comprises the memories and experiences of the Armenians of the Hadrut region, which was occupied and emptied of Armenians as a result of the terroristic attacks of the Turkish-Azerbaijani lineup in the last war of 2020. The book is published in three languages.

Hakobyan explained why she wrote this book: "As a Turkologist and journalist, for nearly 10 years I have studied the Islamized and Christian Armenians living in Turkey. I thought that there is practically no one speaking on this, whereas it appears that probably Artsakh does not yet need me. However, of course 2020 turned the course of everyone's life around. In Octo-



ber of last year, when our compatriots displaced from Hadrut appeared in Armenia, I periodically heard from them about the killings of the peaceful inhabitants of this or that village and those who went missing. It was clear that we were dealing at that very moment with ethnic cleansing, and it was clear that we did not realize how important it was to record those stories at that very moment."

A particular incident was the final spark. She said, "I remember that during those same days the president of Azerbaijan in an interview given to one of the foreign media assured that the people of Artsakh were 'their citizens' and that they were ready to provide them with the best living conditions. The director of Mediamax.am, Ara Tadevosyan, very aptly countered that interview of Aliyev by offering him [the opportunity] to give an interview to the Armenian media and state what were those 'best' living conditions that awaited the people of Artsakh within Azerbaijan. Of course, they did not respond from Azerbaijan, but at that very moment, as they say, that 'lamp' lit up and I proposed to Ara Tadevosyan to show that 'best life' which the Azerbaijanis brought to Hadrut."

According to Hakobyan, the people of Hadrut convey their own messages through this book. She said, "The purpose was to create that very platform, to try to give the Hadrut people the right to that voice of which they are deprived by the country whose armed forces now control Hadrut. The problem is that when discussing wars, people talk about territories but do not talk about the people living in those territories. Within the framework of the project, we conducted more than twenty interviews with forcibly displaced Artsakh residents from various villages of Hadrut. We tried to include representatives of various groups of people, such as women, men, the elderly and youth, medical workers, returnees from captivity, and relatives of peaceful

residents who were killed."

She said that the interviews appear without interventions or interpretations, though information about the history and culture of particular villages mentioned are given at the end of interviews. The interviewees are unarmed peaceful inhabitants who should not have been perceived as legitimate targets of Azerbaijani actions during the war, with even the men not of the age of military conscription.

She had a particular goal in mind pertaining to readers in Armenia. She said, "We hope that the book will awaken many people who live side by side with the same Hadrut residents in Armenia and Artsakh, but do not always notice the latter's personal dramas. Not all segments of society understand the magnitude and consequences of the tragedy. Let us not forget too that we have the problem of understanding Hadrut and the people of Hadrut outside of the context of politicized discussions or purely social matters, and let us as much as possible objectively record this stage of our history in all its painful and salient aspects, confronting what we have done and have not done, and seek answers to numerous questions on our own."

On the other hand, she said, "As for the international audience, the goal, of course, is to fight against the misinformation spread around the world every day about the Artsakh issue. Did the Armenians in the Azerbaijani SSR really lead a carefree and safe life and the Artsakh movement was the result of baseless unrest provoked from outside, as they claim in Azerbaijan? Is it so easy to attribute the entire historical and cultural heritage of Artsakh to the peoples of Aghvank (Caucasian Albania) or to dispute the right of Armenians to live here, discussing whether they are locals or not? Let us not forget that the foundations of the Artsakh movement were laid in Hadrut, and who, if not the people of Hadrut, should talk to the world about its motives, right to self-determination, peace and war, as well as the possibilities of coexistence."

The book includes references to the problems of the people of Martakert who were forcibly displaced during the first Artsakh war, and to the villages of the Hadrut region that tried to evict the Armenians during 'Operation Ring.' Personal stories about the Baku and Sumgait massacres are included.

The author added, "As one of the most widely circulated theses today is that only Azerbaijanis were deported in the 1990s while now Armenians are deported, there is often an attempt to equate the sides, to devalue the problem of today's forcibly displaced people and to legitimize Azerbaijani aggression. Yet our refugees of the first war have simply been ignored, and that is our big omission. I am against thoughts such as 'It's all the same, let them do what they want to do,' 'Who will listen to our voice,' and 'Everything is decided.' We probably take conspiracy theories too seriously and prefer to do nothing. In fact, it is our and only our responsibility that many people have not even heard about Maragha even in Armenia."



Sofia Hakobyan



INTERNATIONAL

Armenia Named World's Leading Heritage Destination 2021

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenia was named by the World Travel Awards on December 16 the “World’s Leading Heritage Destination 2021” and Wings of Tatev was singled out as the winner of the “World’s Leading Cable Car Ride 2021” category, Armenia won the category.

Given the gradual recovery in global tourism following the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic, receiving the top tourism award this year is more important and valuable for Armenia than ever before.

Wings of Tatev is the longest (5,752 meters) reversible aerial cable car in the world, and has served more than 1 million visitors in 11 years. Thanks to this world-class award, Wings of Tatev can record another new achievements, as well as successfully continue its work on raising awareness about Armenia and Tatev in the international tourism market.

“This achievement has once again proved the fact that Tatev Monastery and Wings of Tatev are one of the main and significant tourist destinations for Armenia and the region, and Wings of Tatev cable car meets the highest international standards,” said Vahe Baghdasaryan, Director of Wings of Tatev.

World Travel Awards was established in 1993 to acknowledge, reward, and celebrate excellence across all key sectors of the travel, tourism, and hospitality industries.

“The participation and victory of Armenia in such a world-class award ceremony in both nominations make the country more recognizable in international markets. It is necessary to use such opportunities and strengthen Armenia’s position as a world’s leading heritage destination and a leading cable car ride through continuous marketing campaigns,” said Gayane Ayvazyan, Public Relations Expert of the Tourism Committee of the RA Ministry of Economy.



The collaboration with World Travel Awards was launched by the Tourism and Urbanism (TUF) Charitable Foundation in June 2021. A cooperation agreement was signed to develop the capacity of specialists in the

field of tourism and tourism infrastructure in Armenia.

As part of the cooperation, TUF Foundation organized a visit of Graham Cooke, the Founder and the Director of the World Travel Awards, to Armenia. In the course of the tour, Mr. Cooke visited the most spectacular and attractive touristic sites in Armenia. He got acquainted with Armenian culture, history, traditions, and national cuisine.

The Opposition Wins in Vardenis Election, Its Candidate Is Arrested

By **Gevorg Gyulumyan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — The United Vardenis alliance of political parties on December 15 appealed the results of the recount of votes in the recent enlarged Vardenis community elections, as a result of which the December 18 session of the council of elders was postponed. United Vardenis, the Aharon Khachatryan coalition, and the Civil Contract political party led by Prime

Minister Nikol Pashinyan were the rivals in this recent local election. The outgoing head of the Geghamsar community Hakob Avetyan provided information about the situation.

United Vardenis is a coalition of several local political parties which do not have na-

tion-wide representation, but in general support former Armenian president Robert Kocharyan’s Hayastan Alliance nationally. The majority of its supporters are Armenians who had to flee from various territories under Azerbaijan’s control in the late 1980s. Aharon Khachatryan leads a second eponymous coalition, which is supported primarily by Armenians who settled the area from the Ottoman Empire much earlier, in the early 19th century. Khachatryan was a community administrative leader in the Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan eras, and his coalition also opposes the Civil Contract. The local Civil Contract candidates benefit from support at a provincial and national level from the party and even to a degree from state institutions. Aram Melkonyan, the head of the list of the party’s candidates, is the current mayor of Vardenis city.

According to the results of the December 5 local elections in the enlarged community of Vardenis (in Gegharkunik Province), the Civil Contract party received 12 seats, the Aharon Khachatryan coalition of political parties 10 seats, and the United Vardenis coalition of party 5 seats. Based on these election results, the Aharon Khachatryan bloc of parties and the United Vardenis bloc of parties signed a statement on cooperation and the joint formation of local government bodies.

The Civil Contract party appealed the

election results and submitted a recount application. As a result of the recount, the votes of the Aharon Khachatryan bloc decreased by 4, those of the Civil Contract increased by 1, and those of the United Vardenis bloc decreased by one.

Hakob Avetyan stated that United Vardenis appealed the results of the recount in the Administrative Court, while the session of the Vardenis Council of Elders, which was to take place on December 18, was postponed until the announcement of the court decision. He added that the court will probably announce its decision on December 18 or 20.

It should be noted that after the local government elections, a decision was made to detain Aram Harutyunyan, who heads the list of the United Vardenis bloc. Lawyers provided through the Hayastan Alliance are defending Harutyunyan.

According to Avetyan, this detainment is another attempt by the government to put pressure on the opposition. “We consider his arrest unfounded. Where the opposition wins, its candidate is arrested,” Avetyan concluded.



Hakob Avetyan, head of the Geghamsar community

As background, the Geghamsar community was created in 2018 as an administra-

tion-wide representation, but in general support former Armenian president Robert Kocharyan’s Hayastan Alliance nationally. The majority of its supporters are Armenians who had to flee from various territories under Azerbaijan’s control in the late 1980s. Aharon Khachatryan leads a second

Envoys Named By Armenia And Turkey, No Meeting Date Set

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Special Envoys to discuss the process of normalization,” Secretary Blinken said in a Twitter post.

The Bloomberg news agency on Monday quoted an unnamed senior Turkish official as saying that U.S. President Joe Biden urged his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan to open Turkey’s border with Armenia during an October meeting in Rome. Ankara hopes that efforts to normalize Turkish-Armenian ties will help it to improve its strained relations with Washington, said the official.

Cavusoglu also stated that Turkish and Armenian airlines have applied to operate flights between Istanbul and Yerevan.

“These (applications) are evaluated by the Transport Ministry and the General Directorate of Civil Aviation. In principle, we approach it positively,” he added.

(Yeni Safak, Public Radio of Armenia, Eurasianet.org and RFE/RL contributed to this report.)



INTERNATIONAL

New Yerevan Skatepark Hopes To Spark Interest Of Young Fans

By Brandon Balayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — On November 15, the Yerevan Skatepark, the first such park in Armenia, was inaugurated. The ceremony included performances by Ukrainian artists, as well as Armenian artists such as the band Garik and Sona (Garik Papoyan and Sona Rubenyan), and Harout Pam-boukjian.

It was announced in February 2020 that Mayor Hayk Marutyan of Yerevan had signed a contract with the donor for the park, President of the Union of Armenians in Ukraine Vilen Shatvoryan, which stipulated that the park would be built in the middle of 2020. However, the Karabakh war halted construction.

The park on opening day was filled with skaters, bikers, rollerbladers, and many onlookers.

Local skater Narek Sarkisyan was part of the crowd. He commented that the construction of the park appeared



Landon Burke and Grigor (photo Brandon Balayan)

standard, but could have been made better, pointing out how the ground felt like sandpaper. He believed the concert was unnecessary.



Garik and Sona performing (photo Brandon Balayan)



The Yerevan Skatepark is right next to St. Grigoris the Illuminator Cathedral (photo Brandon Balayan)

“I’m sure they spent a lot of money on the concert,” Sarkisyan said. “Instead they could have used that money and built a smaller [second] skatepark either in Gyumri or Vanadzor.”

Sarkisyan believes this would have developed skateboarding culture more within Armenia.

Sarkisyan runs the Instagram account Armenian Skateboarding, which he started in 2015, features Armenians skateboarding from around the world.

“I feel great when I see all these guys follow the site and get to know each other,” Sarkisyan said.

Before the skatepark was built, he and the other locals would skate at the nearby Vardan Mamikonyan statue.

The demographics of the skate scene in Armenia range from teenagers to adults, though children nine years old and up are learning fundamentals with the help of Skate School Armenia. Many of the older skaters order their boards and equipment from outside Armenia, but others have been using Skate.am, an online shop that now runs out of the Yerevan Skatepark and rents out boards for \$2 per half hour.

Street skating, which is an important part of skating culture, is prevalent throughout Armenia. The use of plazas, parks, ledges, and rails is an adaptation to not having skateparks.

Places like the United States already have an established skateboarding scene, which leads to the demand for the constant development or restoration of skateparks.

Landon Burke, a skateboarder from the US, attended the opening. Burke came to Armenia with the encouragement of his friends who used to live here. He stayed with a host family for six months in Kotayk to enhance his Armenian language skills.

Through the family, he met Grigor, the grandson of his host parents. Burke introduced Grigor to the sport of skateboarding and eventually taught him how to skate. He mentioned how Grigor was a fast learner, mastering the kick-turn (changing direction by balancing on your back wheels) in one day and how to ollie (leap in the air on a skateboard without the use of hands) in two.

Overall, Burke said he likes the park but believes it needs improvements such as a better halfpipe (mini ramp) and a better handrail that can go

a long way. He also commented on the Armenian skate scene as a whole.

“It’s not very big but the people have a passion for it,” Burke said. “I think there is a lot of potential.”

Skating in Armenia is relatively new, but Sarkisyan’s Armenian Skateboarding YouTube channel published the first-ever Armenian skateboarding video “Mexaz,” featuring a local skateboarder named Tigran.



A large enthusiastic crowd listens to Garik and Sona on the opening day of the Yerevan Skatepark (photos Brandon Balayan)



The skateboarding video features Tigran street skating in Yerevan. It is an impressive seven minutes that showcases the creativity of Tigran and the potential of the Yerevan skate scene.

The skatepark provides an environment for more kids to learn how to skate and to immerse themselves in skate culture.

As far as the future of Armenian skateboarding goes, Sarkisyan believes locals hold the responsibility for its development. He plans on organizing a street skating contest and believes there will be a skate shop in the near future.

“We are responsible for its development,” Sarkisyan said. “Nobody else will do it for us.”



INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Gulbenkian Foundation Allocates 125,000 Euros To Armenian Schools in Lebanon

LISBON — The Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation has allocated 125,000 euros to the 16 Armenian schools in Lebanon. This follows the donation of 650 tablets and 50 laptops to the schools at the beginning of 2021, the organization announced this week.

Since its establishment, the Armenian Communities Department has paid special attention to the Armenian schools in the Middle East. In recent years, the Foundation has developed a comprehensive strategy for Lebanon, with a particular focus on the Armenian community schools.

Currently, Lebanon is facing one of the worst economic crises in its history. In response, the Foundation has temporarily suspended The School Grant Program it launched in 2020. Instead of supporting three schools to develop comprehensive educational projects, it is supporting all schools to meet immediate needs. The current support provided to Lebanon is in addition to the Foundation's other initiatives in the country: scholarships, special education, teacher training, publications and funding for cultural initiatives by youth.

Online Platform for Selling Armenian Wines in European Union Launched

YEREVAN (ARKA) — The Armenian Ministry of Economy announced on December 21 launched www.winesofarmenia.store, an online platform designed for selling Armenian wines in the European Union. The platform was created by the Vine and Wine Foundation of Armenia and the German Society for International Cooperation GIZ together with the ACBA Federation.

The website showcases the products of 21 companies, which meet 56 quality criteria and are selected on the basis of objective assessments based on the results of "blind" tastings. "This is a unique site, as besides providing information in four languages it contains also information about Armenia's wine heritage, Armenian grape varieties and "wine" regions of the country," said Zaruhi Muradyan, executive director of the Vine and Wine Foundation of Armenia. She said the news section of the platform will be constantly informing EU consumers about Armenia's achievements in the winemaking.

GIZ has been supporting Armenia's wine sector for the past 10 years through the "South Caucasus Private Sector Development and Vocational Education and Training" program. Alongside the launch of the www.winesofarmenia.store, a warehouse-logistics center for Armenian wines was recently opened in Berlin. From there Armenian wines will be delivered to European consumers in just a few days at the most affordable prices.

More Armenian POWs Freed

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Azerbaijan freed and repatriated at the weekend ten more Armenian soldiers captured during deadly fighting on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border that broke out last month.

The soldiers were flown to Yerevan by a plane chartered by the European Union. Toivo Klaar, the EU's special representative to the South Caucasus, was also on board.

The EU said their release was the result of an agreement reached by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev at their December 14 meeting in Brussels hosted by European Council President Charles Michel.

"An important humanitarian gesture follows the efforts by the EU to work with both countries to build on mutual trust," it added in a statement.

Michel said after the Brussels talks that Aliyev and Pashinyan pledged to de-escalate tensions on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and restore rail links between the two South Caucasus states. Aliyev described the talks as "productive."

A total of three dozen Armenian soldiers were taken prisoner during the November 16 fighting on the border which left at least 13 troops from both sides dead. Azerbaijan freed ten POWs on December 4.

A few days later, Armenian courts allowed the Investigative Committee to arrest four of them on charges of violating "rules for performing military service." They will face between three and seven years in prison if convicted.

Armenian opposition figures and human rights lawyers criticized the arrests, saying that Baku could exploit them to further delay the release of dozens of other Armenian servicemen remaining in Azerbaijani captivity. Pashinyan's political allies dismissed these warnings.

Armenia's human rights ombudsman, Arman Tatoyan, criticized a law-enforcement agency on Thursday for arresting four Armenian soldiers who were freed and repatriated by Azerbaijan earlier this month.

They were among three dozen soldiers taken prisoner during the November 16 fighting on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border which left at least 13 troops from both sides dead. The Armenian military said it also lost two border posts in what Yerevan condemned as an Azerbaijani incursion into Armenian territory.



Toivo Klaar, EU's special representative to the South Caucasus, with the freed POWs on board a chartered plane

Baku freed ten POWs on December 4. A few days later, Armenian courts allowed the Investigative Committee to arrest four of them on charges of violating "rules for performing military service." They will face between three and seven years in prison if convicted.

Tatoyan said his office has interviewed the detained soldiers, looked into the circumstances of their capture and arrived at the conclusion that explanations given for their pretrial arrests are "not convincing."

In a statement, the human rights defender linked the arrests with controversial statements about Armenian POWs made by senior government officials and pro-government lawmakers.

In particular, parliament speaker Alen Simonyan was caught on camera saying during a recent trip to Paris that many of them "laid down their weapons and ran away" during fighting with Azerbaijani forces. In a secretly filmed video published on December 7, Simonian branded them deserters, sparking angry street protests by relatives of POWs.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and members of his political team did not publicly criticize or disavow the disparaging comments condemned by the Armenian opposition. Pashinyan said on December 8 that law-enforcement authorities must investigate the circumstances in which Armenian soldiers were captured by Azerbaijani troops.

Armenian opposition figures and human

rights lawyers have also deplored the ensuing arrests, saying that Azerbaijan could exploit them to further delay the release of dozens of other Armenian servicemen remaining in Azerbaijani captivity. Pashinyan's political allies have dismissed these warnings.

In a newspaper interview published earlier this week, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev pointed to the arrests of repatriated POWs and alleged their mistreatment by Armenian investigators. "If we repatriate more people, they too will be arrested," he said.

The four soldiers are prosecuted for allegedly trying to negotiate with, rather than engage, Azerbaijani troops that attacked and seized their border post on November 16.

Aleksan Tumasyan, a lawyer representing one of the arrested men, dismissed the charges when he spoke with RFE/RL's Armenian Service on Tuesday. He said they repeatedly warned their senior commanders about an Azerbaijani military buildup in the border area but were ordered not to open fire.

Armenian opposition politicians have for months accused the government of not allowing army units to shoot at Azerbaijani forces attacking them at various sections of the border. Pashinyan insisted on November 17 that neither he nor any other official had ever issued no-shoot orders. Deputy Defense Minister Arman Sargsyan also denied the claim.

Berlin Welcomes New Ambassador

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BERLIN — On December 14, German President Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier received new Armenian Ambassador to Germany Victor Yengibaryan, who officially presented his credentials. Steinmeier congratulated the ambassador on his appointment and wished him success in his new mission. Thanking the President for his welcome, Ambassador Yengibaryan said he would do everything in his power to further develop the friendly relations between the two countries. As reported on the Armenian Embassy website, the two discussed perspectives for bilateral cooperation in political, economic and cultural areas.

Yengibaryan, born on July 11, 1981 in Talin, Armenia, received his BA from Yerevan State University in 2002, and continued studies at the Open University in

Hagen, Germany. He obtained his master's degree from Ruhr University in Bochum, and in 2018 did graduate study at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University in the US.

His association with Germany goes back to 2002, when he served as member of the board of the Armenian-Academic Society. From 2005-2006, he worked as a data processor at the UNDP Program for humanitarian mine clearing, continued work with the United Nations from 2008 to 2010 as board member of the UN Millennium Development Goals. From 2011 to 2013, he was Portfolio Manager at the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), and advisor for international cooperation.

He served as President of the Armenian Council of the European Movement International from 2005 to 2018, in the European Movement Armenia. In 2018 he became a member of the Yerevan City Council.

He served as member of the National



Victor Yengibaryan

Assembly of the Republic of Armenia from 2019 to 2021 in the My Step faction.

Yengibaryan, who is married with two children, received his appointment to Berlin on November 5, 2021. He speaks English, Russian and German.

(Source: Armenian Embassy Berlin website, combined wires)



Community News

The Armenian Film Foundation Survivor Testimonies Available On USC Shoah Visual History Archive

A legacy of excellence in documentary filmmaking on Armenian heritage and the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

(This story is contributed by Christine Vartanian Datian to The Armenian Mirror-Spectator Newspaper. Special thanks to Armenian Film Foundation Board of Directors Member Hratch Karakachian, CPA, ESQ for his contributions to this story.)

ENCINO, Calif. — The Armenian Film Foundation (<http://www.armenianfilm.org/drupal/>) was established in 1979 as a non-profit, educational and cultural organization dedicated to the documentation and preservation of Armenian heritage in multi-media formats. Its primary aim “continues to be to inspire pride in, and worldwide recognition of, the Armenian people and their contributions to society, thereby fostering human dignity and enhancing understanding and goodwill between present and future generations of Armenians and other cultures.”

A key focus of the Armenian Film Foundation has been the interviews of the survivors of and witnesses to the Armenian Genocide. Its co-founder, Dr. J. Michael Hagopian, was born in Kharpert-Mezreh in 1913, located in the Turkish Ottoman Empire. He survived the Genocide because his mother hid him in a well behind the family home. His father was spared because he was an important medical doctor, and the family left Turkey for Boston in 1922, eventually settling in Fresno in 1927.

Hagopian attended Fresno State University, transferring to UC Berkeley, where he received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in political science. He went on to earn another masters and a PhD in Government and International Relations from Harvard University. After serving in the US Army Air Corps during World War II, he taught at several universities, including Banares Hindu University, India; American University of Beirut, Lebanon; UCLA and Oregon State University. While teaching, he realized there were few good films to show his classes and concluded that he could do better. He then completed two years of graduate work in cinema at the University of Southern California (USC).

In his lifetime, Hagopian recorded nearly 400 eyewitness testimonies of Armenian Genocide survivors and witnesses on 16mm film from 1972 to 2005 for a series of documentaries. Dr. Hagopian, who passed away in December 2010 at age 97, ultimately produced 17 films about Armenians and the Armenian Genocide. In partnership with USC Shoah Foundation Institute’s Visual History Archive (VHA), Dr. Hagopian agreed to turn see TESTIMONIES, page 13



Chairwoman Shoghig Sahakian hands the golden cross to Archbishop Aykazian.

St. Mary Armenian Church Marks 89th Anniversary

Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Ordination of Archbishop Aykazian

WASHINGTON — On Sunday, December 12, the Parish Council of St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church organized and hosted an event dedicated to the church’s 89th anniversary as well as the 50th year of the ordination of Archbishop Vicken Aykazian.

The program started with greetings from MC Avedis Seferian, welcoming remarks by Parish Council Chairwoman Shoghig Sahakian and an invocation by Archbishop Vicken Aykazian.

Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the US Lilit Makunts spoke next, expressing her gratitude to Archbishop Aykazian for his decades of service to his people in Armenia and the Diaspora.

The keynote speaker was the president and general secretary of the National Council of Churches, James Winkler, who highlighted Aykazian’s many contributions to see ANNIVERSARIES, page 12



Bryan Ardouny, Mariam Khaloyan, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, and Dr. Rouben Adalian

Ardem Patapoutian Picks Up Nobel Prize during Special Ceremony in Irvine

By Gary Robbins

IRVINE, Calif. (San Diego Union Tribune) —Dr. Ardem Patapoutian picked up the Nobel Prize on December 8 for helping discover how humans sense temperature and touch.

Karin Olofsdotter, the Swedish ambassador to the United States, conferred an 18-karat gold medal for physiology or medicine on Patapoutian and one of his co-winners, David Julius, of UC San Francisco, under circumstances that also were highly unusual.

All Nobel medals and diplomas — except for the ones given in peace — have historically been given in Stockholm, Sweden. But the Nobel Foundation decided — as it did a year ago — to honor the laureates in their home countries due to COVID-19 issues.

The four Western U.S. laureates received their prizes during a brief ceremony at the National Academies’ home near UC Irvine. They include Patapoutian and Julius, as well as David Card of UC Berkeley and Guido Imbens of Stanford, who won a Nobel in economics.

Patapoutian, 54, fled civil war in his native Lebanon in 1986 to emigrate to the U.S., where he began his career as a biochemist and later joined Scripps, where he still works.



Dr. Ardem Patapoutian, right, and Dr. David Julius at the ceremony

He had his phone turned off in the hours before dawn on October 4 when the Nobel Committee was trying to reach him to say that he’d won. The committee was able to reach his 94-year-old father, who lives in the Los Angeles area, who then contacted Patapoutian, telling him to call Sweden.

He and Julius discovered cell receptors that make it possible for people to sense heat, cold, pain, touch and sound. The work is important in drug development, especially at places like Scripps Research, which works closely with pharmaceutical companies to turn its discoveries into new therapeutics.

Patapoutian told the Union-Tribune in October, “I came here with very little money and hardly spoke the language. I worked in a lab and just fell in love with doing research. Ever since then, this has been my life and joy.”

In October Armenian President Armen Sarkissian congratulated Ardem Patapoutian on winning the Nobel Prize in Medicine.

“As the President of the Republic of Armenia, I am very happy for your great success, which, I think, we all consider one of the greatest achievements of our nation,” Sarkissian then said.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Massachusetts Mandates Genocide Education in Public Schools

EDUCATION, from page 1

Cosponsor of the original bill State Senator Steven Tolman managed to have these items removed.

Then, in 2005 lawyer Harvey Silverglate filed a suit against the Massachusetts Department of Education on behalf of the Assembly of Turkish American Associations and several public school teachers, students and parents, claiming that what happened was censorship. A federal court dismissed the case in 2009 but the plaintiffs took it to a higher court. The US Court of Appeals for the First Circuit dismissed their appeal in August 2010. The plaintiffs then attempted to apply to the US Supreme Court, but the latter declined to hear the case in January 2011, thus putting an end to the legal efforts to debase the curriculum.

An attempt to pass a mandated curriculum in Massachusetts began around 12 years ago. Eric Cohen, chair of the Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur, has been involved from the beginning with the various bills introduced for this purpose. He said wryly, "It did take a long time. Somewhere along the way, I was informed by experienced Massachusetts legislators that it is not unusual for such things to take ten years. That didn't really make me feel better though."

In nearly all of the legislative committee hearings and lobbying that took place over the past dozen years, there was a significant Armenian component. The Armenian National Committee (ANC) of America and the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA) actively supported it and sent representatives to testify. Primarily, Dikran Kaligian of the ANC and Herman Purutyan of the AAA, respectively, represented these two organizations.

The first bill was actually the brainchild of a high school student on the South Shore of Boston. Cohen said that naively, not having any experience in legislation, he thought it would make more progress. Nevertheless, he said, "I would like to think that it got a little stronger and gained a little more support every legislative session."

The Final Stretch

Over the years, a number of variants of the bill failed to get turned into law, or even to make it out of committee for a full vote. Cohen was more hopeful for the legislative session prior to the current one. A large and diverse number of some 25 groups for the first time came together as a coalition. In 2019, he said, "we had more support than we ever had before, which I attribute to both JCRC [Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston] and ADL [Anti-Defamation League New England Regional Office] deciding to throw their weight behind the bill. And it still didn't really get anywhere." The bill made it out of committee for the first time in the 2020 legislative session. However, Cohen said, "It was stripped of any of its power and changed to be encouragement rather than a requirement, whereas what we wanted was a mandate. The towns with motivated students and households didn't need help. The ones that needed help in the form of a mandate were the towns that didn't require such a curriculum, which was most, and the towns that didn't offer anything at all, which was all the rest."

In 2021, Cohen said, he and his organization worked with a core group of the two aforementioned Armenian organizations, the Ukrainians and the Cambodians. The annual Boston Walk Against Genocide, which first began in 2014, had helped bring these groups closer in contact. Together they decided that this year, in addition to making the usual presentations at commit-

tee hearings, recalled Cohen, "We wouldn't rely on other people to lobby for us. We would do the lobbying ourselves and hope that this would work." He explained that it was not just that it had been such a long effort, stating: "It was exhausting too. I was not sure that I was going to do this again after this attempt. We were going to throw everything we could at it."

All the involved people contacted their legislators individually, Purutyan said. Some legislators needed basic education on the issue and there was a group against mandating anything in Massachusetts, so Purutyan said this group needed extra lobbying and educating. Kaligian also noted that resistance from local school committees to mandates had always been an issue. Cohen said he wrote every member of the Massachusetts House and Senate. The group also followed up as a coalition with key legislative members.

Working as a group was very productive, Cohen said, explaining: "As with so many central movements and all of my work for Sudan and Darfur, the same thing happened with the work for the genocide education bill. A few of us would get together and all of a sudden we were a lot smarter than we were individually, and a lot more creative. The crew of us was meeting every week, and every week some new miracle of a brainstorm would happen to give us ideas about how to have more impact and influence."

One problem that the group had to overcome, he said, was that many sympathetic legislators by this point had become convinced that the best they could do legislatively was to encourage changes in genocide education, not effect a mandate. That resistance to mandate forced the group to attempt to foster higher expectations among legislators and to convince them that 2021 would be different than the past.

Cohen noted several factors which served to motivate legislators. There was a recent spate of anti-Semitic hate crimes and hate speech that were very much in the news, such as that by the Duxbury High School football team. A recent nationwide survey of Holocaust education showed that millennials were fairly ignorant of basic facts, and Massachusetts was no better than anywhere else, while Holocaust survivors, who could provide firsthand and often gripping testimony, were dwindling in number.

In October 2019, for the first time, the Anti-Defamation League was able to get both the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents to go on record with letters to the Joint Committee on Education saying that they were in support of the mandated genocide education bill. These letters of support applied to this year's bill as well. The MASC letter pointed out that "we generally warn the legislature about mandates," yet agreed that in this case, a mandate was both "good public policy and socially relevant at this time," while it "leaves abundant discretion to schools and teachers." Both letters, Kaligian commented, were very useful to show legislators that schools were behind the law and not concerned about creating extra work for educators.

Finally, Cohen remarked that there was even a sense of potential embarrassment and local New England rivalry because all except one other remaining New England state had already passed mandate laws, with Rhode Island doing so in 2016, Connecticut in 2018, New Hampshire in 2020 and Maine in the summer of 2021.

There was no partisan element in the

support for the mandate, Cohen related, though the most important supporters were Democrats simply because they were the ones running the Massachusetts legislature. After Duxbury, both the Senate President Karen Spilka and House Speaker Ronald Mariano spoke out powerfully on the need for genocide education, which were good signs, he said.

Purutyan said that this year, there were initially two versions of the bill, with the Senate version containing strong mandate language and the House version being more of a strong recommendation. In Massachusetts, all things connected to education are first heard by the Joint Committee on Education. This committee includes both House and Senate members, and has two chairpersons, one from each body. Cohen explained that any bill on genocide education, or any education-related topic, must be reported out of that committee favorably, or it will be really hard for anything to happen afterwards. The genocide education bill was reported out favorably but was completely changed, with the strong mandate provisions removed.

It could have then gone through both chambers separately, which could have created two competing versions, but instead it reported out only to the Senate, to its Ways and Means Committee, where the mandate was restored. Then it was passed by the Senate and sent to the House Ways and Means Committee. The latter improved it further, adding a funding mechanism for a trust fund for genocide education, and passing it out favorably. The House voted nearly unanimously for it, and then it went back to the Senate to reconcile the slightly different wording with a few improvements, as identical versions must be approved by both bodies to become a law. The Senate then approved it unanimously.

Cohen praised in particular the role played by Senate Ways and Means Committee Chair Michael Rodrigues (D-Westport) in reinserting the mandate language and pushing the bill through the Senate, exclaiming, "Kudos to Senator Rodrigues. He deserves special mention and acclaim. He is not only the good friend of genocide education but he was wonderfully positioned and really exerted himself to make it happen. Without such leaders, it just wasn't going to happen." Purutyan and Kaligian also praised Rodrigues.

Kaligian and Purutyan noted that State Rep. David Muradian was very helpful on the Republican side, as was Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian with the Democrats, as a former House member. Like Cohen, Kaligian spoke appreciatively of the Senate president and House speaker, without whose support the bill could not have been passed.

Turkish Opposition

Two years ago, in the public hearing for the bill at the Joint Education Committee, some five or six Turkish people came to testify. According to Kaligian, it takes a lot of endurance because there are some 40 different bills being testified on during the session and you might have to wait three or four hours for your turn to come. At that time, the Turkish people primarily argued that the bill was fine, but that the Armenians and Pontian Greeks should be taken out of the list of accepted genocides. There were no Armenian survivors left to testify, though a few Holocaust survivors were able to participate. On the Armenian Genocide, speakers included representatives of Armenian organizations, scholar Taner Akçam of Clark University, Koutoujian, Muradian, a social studies coordinator for the Watertown public schools, as well as some students who had studied genocide

at Bristol Community College.

This year, the hearing took place for the first time via Zoom, due to the coronavirus pandemic. Cohen said that he would not have been surprised to see someone from the Turkish embassy come and say we have to be careful about genocide education because there never was an Armenian Genocide. However, this time there were actually some 40 people who signed up.

"It is astounding that they came out in such high numbers," Cohen said. "There were more Turkish Americans speaking at the hearing than there ever were before, and then there were of any other group making a point. Because it was Zoom this made it easier for them to get so many speakers, but it was a coordinated campaign to make this happen." All of them made the same points, which led Cohen to surmise that they were, he said, "reading from a script provided by the Turkish government."

The argumentation had been discredited in the past. The Turkish advocates stated that there was no Armenian Genocide and that this issue should be left to the scholars, but the scholars already have given their verdict, so, Cohen said, they could not be cited. They used to say the American government does not recognize the Armenian Genocide, but Congress and the president now have spoken up on this and US policy is now clear. They called for the courts to decide, but that is not the forum for this issue. They said they didn't want their children in Massachusetts school to be subject to information on the Armenian Genocide, but, Cohen noted, Germans in America with school children could say the same thing about the Holocaust, or Northern Sudanese who might not want their children to learn about the Darfur Genocide, or some Rwandans, and on and on. Cohen concluded, "These are all examples of ignorance, and if we allow that ignorance to persist, then shame on us...These Turkish Americans need education. They were highlighting for me how important it is."

Kaligian concurred that since the old arguments could no longer be used, the Turkish government was pushing a new tactic, claiming that Turkish Americans are being discriminated against and bullied on this issue. Purutyan agreed with his colleagues that the Turkish opposition to the bill made no difference in the outcome, and that there did not seem to be any groups lobbying against the bill in general.

Kaligian and Purutyan were the only two Armenian speakers at the Zoom hearing.

The New Mandate

The new law, "An Act Concerning Genocide Education," requires that every Massachusetts school district provides instruction on the history of genocide in accordance with the history and social science curriculum framework to middle and high school students. Furthermore, it may partner with community-based organizations such as municipal human rights commissions in this work. It does not specify at which grades this instruction will be provided, but leaves this to the determination of the local school district.

The same law created a Genocide Education Trust Fund which will promote teaching of human rights issues in middle and high schools, with particular attention to genocide. The fund in addition to donations or state appropriations, will receive revenues from fines imposed for hate crimes or civil rights violations.

Cohen stated that now the social studies curriculum will have to be updated to comply with the new law. The curriculum framework already covers what is genocide and what is not, and the accompanying

see MASSACHUSETTS, page 20



COMMUNITY NEWS

Merry Christmas

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Book Presentation at Altadena Tekeyan Center of Armenian Sayings Translated from Turkish into English

By Sevan Boghos-Deirbadrossian

ALTADENA, Calif. — After the fall of the Cilician kingdom, the Armenian people lost not only their state and country, but also their culture and language as a result of being under Turkish rule for almost 600 years. Despite the fact that only 20 percent of the current population of Turkey is of Turkish ethnic origin, according to historical sources, Turkey has been able to forcibly rule and Turkify the majority of the population, especially the population of Cilicia, such as Armenians, Assyrians, Greek and Arabs. A collection of sayings used during Ottoman rule have been passed down from generation to generation to Kevork Keushkerian, the author of Armenian Sayings Translated from Turkish into English.

The book presentation ceremony was organized by the Tekeyan Cultural Association Pasadena-Glendale chapter on December 12 at the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Beshgeturian Center in Altadena, California. Siran Oknayan, chairlady of the TCA Pasadena-Glendale Chapter, opened the event by warmly welcoming those in attendance. She then introduced each of the speakers of the day. Afterwards, she invited Lulu Ekizian, Sofi Yousefian, Elen Vartanian and Daron Yacoubian, four stu-

dents from Blair High School in Pasadena, to recite and utter dialogues in the Hamshen dialect in an atmosphere of joy and excitement.

Dr. Krikor Simonian, chairman of the AGBU Krikor Satamian Theater Group, was invited to the stage to read a few passages from Keushkerian's book. This was followed by Krikor Satamian, who presented the book. Satamian, a well-known name among Armenians from around the world for his cultural and theatrical activities, presented to the public the motivation for the publication of this book, which sought to preserve valuable Armenian heritage sayings that might be lost over time. Satamian selectively prepared a series of different themes of sayings and invited the author to the stage to read the sayings in Turkish and then translate their content. This created a very interesting and satiric dialogue, something that both Satamian and Keushkerian are very well known for.

Upon the conclusion of the book ceremony, a traditional kinetson was held followed by a reception. This book presentation was different from many other Armenian cultural and literary events, as it was very pleasant and light in nature, with the audience enjoying the sayings and the performances.



Author Kevork Keushkerian, left, with Krikor Satamian



Merry Christmas and

Happy Holidays to you all! May the New Year be a healthy, happy, peaceful, joyful and COVID and variant-free one for Armenians and for all mankind.

Annie Simonian Totah and family
Potomac, MD

May the true spirit, joy and blessings of Christmas be with all of us throughout the year!

Richard and Ann Tarvezian
Watertown, MA

To our family and friends both near and far, Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy New Year.

Michele Kolligian and Bob Khederian
Boston, MA

Peace on Earth.

Elizabeth Aprahamian
Northville, M

May the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ be upon all of us.

Andrew Torigian
Paramus, NJ

Merry Christmas!

Ruth and Wil Swisher
Newington, CT

Healthy Happy Holidays and throughout the days ahead.

Casey Kazanjian and Bella Kazanjian
Rockville, MD

God Bless our Homeland!

Andre Polissedjian
Derwood, MD

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, with peace and unity for Artsakh and Armenia.

Robert P. Proodian
Lynn, MA

Merry Christmas and healthy Happy New Year to All.

Agnes Killabian
Cranston, RI

Wishing all a Merry, COVID-free Christmas and a Healthy Happy New Year.

Dr. Myron and Ruth Allukian Jr.
Boston, MA

Hopefully better days for the future. The best to you all at the Mirror-Spectator

Hayg Boyadjian
Lexington, MA

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Harry and Janice Mazadoorian
Kensington, CT

Best Wishes for 2022

Heratch Doumanian
Chicago, IL

Happy Holidays to my relatives and friends

George W. Haroutunian
Stoneham, MA

The *Mirror-Spectator* remains the strong iron link of information and inspiration between the Armenians in the Diaspora and the Armenians in the Motherland. May it continue its noble and essential mission forever.

Ernest M. Barsamian, MD and Sonig Kradjian
Boca Raton, FL

Keep up the fantastic work..

Dicran Antreassian
North Easton, MA

We wish all our friends a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Kevork and Silva Keushkerian
Pasadena, CA

Thanks for your articles. Merry Christmas.

Ara Cherchian
Hartland, WI

Pray for Peace. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Annette and Greg Mamassian
Troy, MI

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Nerses Joubanian and Roxanne Etmekjian
West Newton, MA

Happy New Year and Merry Christmas.

Zareh and Hasmig Maserejian
Belmont, MA

We wish a very Merry Christmas and a Happy Near Year to all our friends and family far and near this season.

Sonia Iskandarian
Watertown, MA

Good health to everyone. That's all that matters!.

Richard E. Mikaelian DDS
New York, NY



a Happy New Year

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to everyone.

Edmond Azadian
West Bloomfield, MI

I always look forward to reading the Mirror-Spectator!

Paul Chilian
East Providence, RI

Merry Christmas in memory of my parents Krikor and Esgohe Maksian and my siblings Anna, Bob and Azaduhi Maksian Gadarian.

George Maksian
Englewood, NJ

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home
Watertown, MA

May the true spirit of Christmas shine in your heart and light your path.

Dr. and Mrs. Gary Zamanigian
Bloomfield Hills, MI

On behalf of the Armenian Missionary Association of America I would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! We appreciate all that you for the AMAA and the Community at large.

Zaven Khanjian
Bloomfield Hills, MI

Wishing the blessings of the Christmas Season to our Armenian community members wherever they might be.

Drs. Dennis and Mary Papazian
San Jose, CA

Peace to Armenia and Artsakh.

Guiragos Minassian, MD
Tarzana, CA

Merry, joy and festive cheer, peace and a wish for happiness in the New Year.

Ara, Pamela, Lara and Sophie Gechjian
Lincoln, MA

Merry Christmas and Happy and Healthy New Year to everyone.

Charles Gazarian
Brookline, MA

Merry Christmas and a healthy New Year "For Such a Time as This."

Charleen and Peter Onanian
Weston, MA

Merry Christmas and Happy Near Year to All.

Nishan and Margrit Atinizian
Winchester, MA

Peace and good health to all my fellow Hyes!

Peter Turza and Dale Chakarian Turza
Bethesda, MD

May Christmas Blessings continue to fill your homes and hearts with joy and peace throughout the coming New Year.

Sarkis and Ruth Bedevian
Wyckoff, NY

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Pray for peace in Artsakh.

Jeff Barasatian
Westchester, PA

We wish a Merry Christmas and a peaceful, safe and Happy Near Year to all our sisters and brothers around the world.

Osep and Nadya Sarafian
Northville, MI

Merry Christmas and love

Gregory, Liza and Andrew Zirakian
Wilbraham, MA

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all friends and family.

Maria and Hagop Vartivarian
Mahwah, NJ

Merry Christmas to my friends and fellow members of NAASR, AMA, CAE as we remember Haig Deranian, Haig Der Manuelian and Jack Medzorian.

Paul Boghosian
Belmont, MA

Shnorhavor Nor Dari Yev Sourp Dznount to all Armenians.

Dr. Nishan and Mary Goudsouzian
Marco Island, FL

Shenorhavor Nor Dari Yev Sourp Dzenoont...

Anna Marie Norehad
Glenview, IL

We thank God for his blessings..

Joan Agajanian Quinn and family
Beverly Hills, CA

Merry Christmas and a happy, prosperous and healthy New Year to our members and friends.

Tekeyan Cultural Association Los Angeles Mayr Chapter
Los Angeles, CA





COMMUNITY NEWS

St. Mary Armenian Church Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Ordination of Archbishop Aykazian

ANNIVERSARIES, from page 7

Christian ecumenism, his knowledge of many languages, and familiarity with the many important personalities and religious places in Jerusalem. Winkler said Archbishop Aykazian has served the Armenian nation more than any political person by introducing its history, atrocities committed against it and the needs of the people living in Armenia and Karabakh through his work with many religious organizations in the US.

Many representatives from different religious communities spoke about him, including pastor of St. Mary Church Rev. Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan and several faculty members from the Catholic University of America, including dean and associate professor of Liturgical Studies/Sacramental Theology Very Rev. Mark Morozowich, Associate Professor of Church Dr. Robin



Anniversary Cake

Darling Young and Associate Professor of Liturgical Studies, Reverend Stefanos Alexopoulos.

Archbishop Aykazian is the ecumenical director of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), in which capacity he has served since 2000.

Born in Turkey, he moved to Jerusalem as a young man to study at the Armenian Patriarchate. He was ordained a deacon in 1968 and celibate priest in 1971. He attend-



From left, Stefanos Alexopoulos, Dr. Robin Darling Young, Archbishop Aykazian, Rev. Mark Morozowich and Fr. Karapetyan

ed the Armenian Seminaries in Istanbul and Jerusalem and then studied pastoral theology at St. Augustine's College in Canterbury before he received a Bachelor of Divinity degree from King's College in London. Aykazian received his PhD from the Armenian Academy of Sciences' Department of History and completed his doctoral course requirements at Fribourg Catholic University in Switzerland.

He has served the Armenian Church in diverse roles including tenures as Primate of the Diocese of Switzerland and as director of the Fund for Armenian Relief's office in Armenia.

In 1992 Catholicos of All Armenians Vazken I consecrated him a bishop at Holy Echmiadzin.

In 2007 he was elected president of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the US and served his term from 2008 through 2009. He was the first Oriental

Orthodox clergyman to serve as president of America's leading ecumenical organization. He currently sits on the Executive Board of National Council of Churches as well as on the board of the World Council of Churches, where his involvement has been extensive and continuous since 1985.

The program included a heartwarming performance and recitation in Armenian by the St. Mary Shnorhali Sunday School

students, ages 5 to 12, under the direction of its newly appointed Director Nunik Nahapetyan Nishanian. They presented a Biblical story, recited the poem "Armenian Church" by Vahan Tekeyan and sang the hymn of the Catholicos of All Armenians with Tagouhi Gomtsyan as soloist.

Executive Director of Armenian Assembly of America Bryan Ardouny spoke next, saying his organization recognizes Archbishop Aykazian's decades long dedication to the Armenian nation and work with the world's major interfaith and Christian ecumenical groups. The Armenian Assembly has provided Aykazian with an office in its headquarters in Washington, DC for many years.

Rev. Karapetyan spoke eloquently of Archbishop Aykazian's humility, leadership in the Armenian Church worldwide and his constant advice to Catholicos of All Armenians and Primate of Eastern US.

On this occasion, Parish Council Chairwoman Shoghig Sahakian, on behalf of Board members and the church, presented him a special gift of golden Armenian Cross made in Armenia.

The Karas Armenian wine for the reception was sponsored by the Armenian Embassy, the barbeque was donated by Ghazarian family of Bark BBQ, the anniversary cake donated by the Movsesian family of Classic Bakery, with the lunch sponsors Margie Satian and Koumkoumian families. The audio visual presentation was by Haykaram Nahapetyan. The program was put together by numerous volunteers who worked under the direction of Raffi Sahakian, including the ACYOA youngsters as servers.

—Kevork Marashlian



Students of Shnorhali School



Head table, L-R Shoghig Sahakian, James Winkler, Abp Aykazian, Lilit Makunts, Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Film Foundation Survivor Testimonies Available on USC Shoah Visual History Archive

TESTIMONIES, from page 7 over raw footage of the nearly 400 interviews so they could be integrated into the VHA. These testimonies (<https://sfi.usc.edu/collections/armenian>) are available to scholars, students and researchers online. The VHA allows users to search through and view over 54,000 video testimonies of survivors and witnesses of genocide, including the Armenian Genocide, making it one of the most comprehensive online archives in the world (<https://vhaonline.usc.edu/login>).

Interviews were conducted and recorded throughout the world in 13 countries, primarily in English and Armenian — some in rare Armenian dialects, though other interview languages include Arabic, Greek, Spanish, French, Kurdish, Turkish, German, and Russian. About half a dozen interviews were conducted by Carla Garapedian after 2011 (<https://sfi.usc.edu/vha/access>).

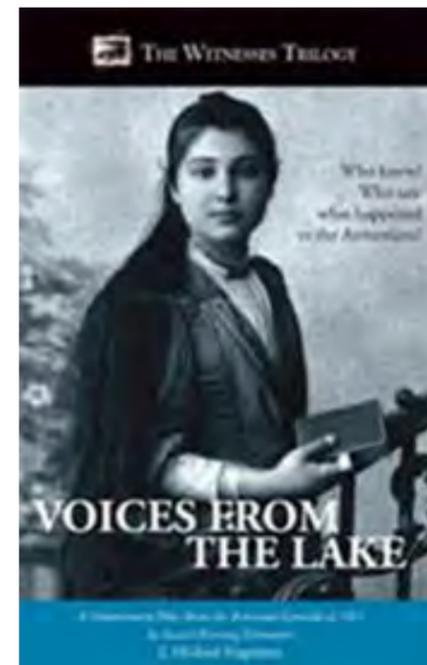
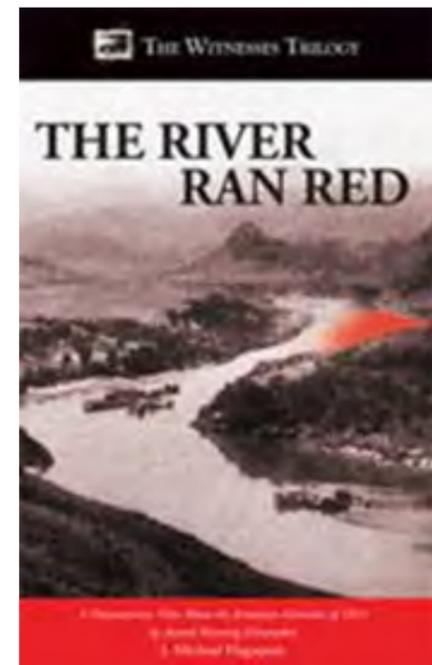
In addition, the Armenian Film Foundation and the UCLA Promise Armenian Institute have recently announced they will collaborate on a range of projects that support Armenian film and photography at UCLA (<https://www.international.ucla.edu/armenia/article/248208>). (<https://mirrorspectator.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Shoah.jpg>)

The Witness Trilogy (<http://armenianfilm.org/drupal/the-witnesses-trilogy>) is a series of three documentary films written, directed and produced by Dr. Hagopian and based on his filmed interviews of 400 survivors of and eyewitnesses to the Armenian



Dr. J. Michael Hagopian

Genocide of 1915. Dr. Hagopian chronicles the near extinction of the Armenian people against the sweeping canvas of the lack of human rights and the absence of democratic traditions and principles in the Turkish Ottoman Empire. The films document the Turkish leaders' actions as a unified and systematic program of annihilation of the Armenian homeland in the Turkish Ottoman Empire, with transportation of Armenian deportees by rail to the far reaches of the Der Zor desert, and massacres and ethnic cleansing operations along the Euphrates River. Amazon Prime is showing these three documentary films that help answer the question: Who are the Armenians? Watch "Voices from the Lake," "The River Ran Red," and "Germany and the Secret Genocide" on Amazon Prime. Go to: <https://prime.armenianfilm.org/river-ran-red/>.



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All films (on DVD format) cost \$19.95 except Supplement to "The Forgotten Genocide," which costs \$14.95. To purchase, go to: <http://armenianfilm.org/drupal/affstore> <http://armenianfilm.org/drupal/affstore>.

Over the years, the Armenian Film Founda-

tion has provided scholarships for film students working on projects of Armenian interest, established an industry-wide networking association to encourage young filmmakers, and conducted two interna-

tional Armenian film festivals. The Armenian Film Foundation has produced and distributed numerous award-winning films and videos that depict the cultural heritage of the Armenian people. Two of these films have received awards for excellence: "The Forgotten Genocide," narrated by Mike Connors, received two Emmy nominations for production and writing; and "Strangers In A Promised Land," narrated by California Governor George Deukmejian, was the winner of the CINE Golden Eagle Award for Excellence.

The Armenian Film Foundation has been awarded several major grants, including some of the following foundations: the California Endowment of Humanities (received jointly with the Armenian Assembly), Milken Families Foundation, United States Office of Education, Arshag Dickranian Foundation, George Ignatius Foundation, Alex Manoogian Foundation, J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation, and ARCO Foundation.

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Support the work of the Armenian Film Foundation by sending a tax-deductible donation to the above address or by donating by credit card or PayPal. Contact the Armenian Film Foundation office directly at (818) 702-6877 to make a donation via credit card. Go to: <http://www.armenianfilm.org/drupal/donate>.

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Aram Gavor Appointed Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at George Washington U Law School

WASHINGTON — George Washington University Law School recently appointed Assembly Board Member and intern alumnus Aram A. Gavor as its Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

A senior Department of Justice attorney with years of trial and appellate experience and public law policy expertise, Gavor also teaches Constitutional Law, Federal Courts, and other courses at The George Washington University Law School, where he received the school's Distinguished Adjunct Faculty Teaching Award in 2020 and 2017.

Gavor is a nationally recognized scholar in the fields of administrative law, federal courts, and national security law whose scholarship was cited by the Supreme Court of the United States. He was recognized by the National Law Journal as a D.C. Rising Star (40 under 40) honoree.

An Armenian Assembly Board Member since 2014, Gavor participated as an intern in the Assembly's Terjenian-Thomas Internship Program in 2003. Gavor regularly meets with summer interns to share his experiences as an Assembly intern on Capitol Hill as well as the trajectory of his professional career.

"On behalf of the Assembly family and all our friends, we congratulate Aram on this milestone in his already distinguished career," stated Assembly Co-Chairs Van Krikorian and Anthony Barsamian. "And we congratulate The George Washington Law School for making such a good choice."





Arts & Culture

The Common Reader: The Case Of William Saroyan

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

“Today he’s forgotten, the most forgotten famous writer of the 20th century.” — Mark Arax

The reception of a literary text would probably be different if we did not espouse various theories to read literature. In other words, if we approached the text as “common readers,” to invoke the title of Virginia Woolf’s collection of essays, *The Common Reader*, we might bring appreciation back into our reading and reclaim “the pleasure of the text.” “The common reader,” writes Woolf, “differs from the critic and the scholar. . . . He reads for his own pleasure rather than to impart knowledge or correct the opinions of others.” This is the reader that Dr. Johnson, the revered 18th-century critic and writer, from whom Woolf borrows the notion of the common reader, “re-joice[s] to concur with.”

It is no secret that for an academic readership literary theory, that is the adoption of various critical perspectives to analyze literary texts, influences the reception of an author’s work. Theory can be very useful. Each new perspective, such as feminist or psychoanalytical, helps us get new insights into the meaning of a text. Yet, adopting a specific perspective as an analytical tool could also “force” a certain “meaning” onto the text to support the theory. More importantly, the emphasis on theory excludes readers who are, in Dr. Johnson’s words, “uncontaminated by literary prejudices and the dogmatism of learning.” These are the readers through whose common sense “must be finally decided all claim to poetical honors,” notes Dr. Johnson.

Academia plays an important role in mediating the popular reception of a text as well. In the United States, the dominance from the 1930s to the 1960s of New Criticism, a critical perspective that separates the work from its author and the context in which the work was produced, may have had something to do with Saroyan’s oeuvre falling out of favor. Much of Saroyan’s writing is “simple” and does not require the close textual analysis that texts with more complicated structures and imagery do to interpret. Thus, an author who was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his play “The Time of Your Life” and whose *The Human Comedy* was required reading in high schools, is no longer on the reading lists of many academic departments.

Times change and the standards that guide our reading change with the times. The trend to contextualize in contemporary literary study should make a comeback for Saroyan inevitable. When the socio-cultural

see SAROYAN, page 15



Scene from filming “Die Like a Man,” with Eric Nazarian at far right (photo Liana Grigoryan)

Eric Nazarian’s New Movie Tells Story of an Unseen LA And the Dangers of Machismo

By Ani Duzdabanyan

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

LOS ANGELES — “I always wanted to tell stories about LA in an honest way,” movie director Eric Nazarian continues the conversation about his new movie, “Die Like a Man,” when we finally meet in person after many telephone calls and text messages. After shooting the movie in July, Eric was incessantly traveling between Guadalajara, Mexico and Los Angeles operating the post-production process with Luis Guillermo Navarro and Paco Navarro, with whom he had worked before on the movie about the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies in Yerevan and the animated movie “Aurora.”

“‘Die Like a Man’ is a global film set in the heart of LA. It’s a movie about urban naturalism that I haven’t seen much before. I wanted to make a film about the lived-in, faded corners of LA, the underrepresented, kind of ‘Third World of LA,’ the city with all these pastel colored, crooked asphalt streets, and spray-paint rusted backyards, the lived-in, older LA,” Eric says, drawing a vivid picture before the actual movie reaches the big screen in 2022.

It tells the story of a young boy who desperately wants to impress his mentor, a leader of a gang that he is involved in. On the other side is his mother, who is trying to keep her son off the streets. In a way, this is a big “civil war” between his mentor and his mom.

The motivation for the movie came when Nazarian saw a boy on a bicycle with a gun in his backpack. With his film, Nazarian strives to show another picture of Los Angeles, mostly unseen and often demonized. Cinema of the street is how he classifies his work. He asks: “Why do boys have to shed blood to be considered men? Why is it that we live in a globalized society of machismo where guns and violence, military and gangsters and tough guys are always in the forefront of our consciousness, but the mothers and people who suffer, the people who have been the victims of the excessive toxic machismo, fall by the wayside?”

He tries to find the answers through his art.

Even though the cast and crew are truly international — from Mexico, Los Angeles, Trinidad and Poland — the characters are based on people that Nazarian has known during his childhood and adolescent years. “I am part of every single character,” he says, adding: “I am so proud and grateful to my magnificent actors Miguel Angel Garcia, Cory Hardrict, Mariel Molino, Frankie Loyal and so many of our talented cast who really trusted me.”

Emigrating from the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic when he was only 4, Eric grew up during a crucial period when so many diaspora communities were finding the new prospect of a homeland in LA. They brought with them their unique cultures and characters, creating new battlegrounds in the city by forming allegiances and claiming their turf with blood and violence.

Eric sees himself as an interpreter, a peacemaker between these diverse groups. “Die Like a Man” is as personal as it can be to him. “To die like a man is a part of every street society of the world, from the gangs of Johannesburg to Tony Soprano, to the medieval Medicis. The idea of a manhood is defined by violence. I remember all these parties that we used to go to, the DJ’s. Guns were like cigarettes in ‘80s and ‘90s LA. It was scary,” he remembers.

see NAZARIAN, page 15

Metro Detroit Couple To Tell Story of Armenians in Music

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

DETROIT — Can music heal? That’s the question husband and wife filmmakers Lisa Hagopian and Eric Harabadian are asking in their upcoming documentary, “We Thrive.”

The documentary, which they are working on now, will highlight Armenians in Michigan who have made their career or their avocation in the music world — not only Armenian music, but Classical, rock, pop and more. Hagopian and Harabadian’s thesis is that many Armenians have found music as a way to move on from the scars of a troubled past.

“We started the project a few months ago, and it came out of conversations that Lisa and I have been having,” said Harabadian.

Hagopian and Harabadian were born and raised in the Metro Detroit area; they had recently finished a documentary “Paradise Boogie,” about the past, present and future of Detroit’s blues scene. (Music fans around the country will recognize the classic song Boogie Chillun from radio and countless films, TV shows, and even commercials, but few may realize that it is by Detroit’s John Lee Hooker, rather than a Chicago bluesman.)

Eric Harabadian is a musician and guitarist, who has played rock, blues, and even some jazz. He had a band called Chain Reaction for some 30 years, playing the local bar scene. But he also always took an interest in Armenian music growing up as



Left to right: Sean Blackman (guitarist), Eric Harabadian, Lisa Hagopian (filmmakers)

his grandmother always played it at home. Of course, the Detroit area has no lack of live Armenian music, from numerous wedding bands to well-respected church choirs.

The duo says they were fortunate to get Paradise Boogie on local public television, and were thinking “more about a personal story” since the first two were more music oriented. “Lisa wanted to not do another music documentary,” Harabadian states. “We were thinking about doing an environmental topic.”

But then Hagopian came across an article about an Armenian immigrant in Detroit who had a short-lived record label in the 1940s and 1950s, producing Armenian folk and classic songs (<https://www.armenianmuseum.org/the-tar-haig-ohanaian-and-george-shah-baronian>). She realized that Armenians have had a long history on the Detroit music scene.

Harabadian, for his part, says he was inspired by the Armenian see DOCUMENTARY, page 17



ARTS & CULTURE

The Case Of William Saroyan

SAROYAN, from page 14

context, such as consideration of history, gender, class, ethnicity etc., becomes part of the discussion of the “meaning” of a text, works that, for example, explore the struggles of immigrants trying to construct a new life caught between cultures and continents, also become part of the discussion. The rootlessness, the sense of loss, the homesickness, the loneliness and the sadness of these immigrants are very much part of Saroyan’s stories.

The focus on context, as opposed to text, may also make it possible to include in the curriculum a writer who is not of Anglo-Saxon origin. As I have argued elsewhere, the majority-minority mentality in the United States has relegated “ethnic” writers to ethnic literature classes. Being of Armenian descent, Saroyan is classified as “minority,” in a so-called Anglo-Saxon “majority” culture, and thus pushed to the margins.

Saroyan’s writing appeals not because it lends itself to a certain reading strategy, but because it insists on the goodness and the beauty in the hearts of all men. “I know how full of goodness this life is. And that’s a good thing to know,” says Joe who, in “The Time of Your Life,” sits at a table in Nick’s bar drinking champagne, “but as always completely under control; only sharper.” Seeking goodness everywhere and yearning to live life as it could be lived is not a flight from the suffering of humanity. Indeed, in Saroyan’s world, death, loss and the sorrows and the sadness of life are ever-present. They are simply not dwelt upon. This is how Saroyan describes Harry, an awkward and funny character in the play: “His philosophy is simple and beautiful. The world is sorrowful. The world needs laughter. Harry is funny. The world needs Harry. Harry will make the world laugh.” This “simple and beautiful” philosophy permeates Saroyan’s entire oeuvre. In “The Summer of The Beautiful White Horse,” in the short story collection *My Name Is*

Aram, Uncle Khosrove, seven thousand miles away from home, is homesick, but he “pay[s] no attention to it.” The Garoghlanians and the other families in the stories are poor but they play music, they sing and they laugh together. Saroyan wants “to help make the world happy again,” to borrow Harry’s words. In *The Human Comedy*, “Be happy! Be happy! I am unhappy but you must be happy,” shouts the melancholy grocer of Ara’s Market in exasperation, when his son rejects everything he gives him to make him happy.

The Human Comedy delivers a message of love in the midst of a war. After she learns of her son Marcus’ death in the war, Mrs. Macaulay, although “sick to death,” “smiles at the soldier,” her dead son’s friend in the army, and asks him to “please come in and let us show you around the house.” In contrast, her son Homer, who delivers news of soldiers “killed in action” all day, tells the old telegraph operator, “If my brother is killed in this stupid War, I shall spit at the world. I shall hate it forever.” Nonetheless, one leaves the novel with Mrs. Macaulay’s words to her son, “It’s natural for fathers and mothers to be afraid of the world for their children but there’s nothing for them to be afraid of . . . Try to love everyone you meet.”

A message of love is always relevant. To highlight this relevance, Mark Arax, the award-winning writer from Fresno, in collaboration with Valley Public Radio, put together a podcast, “The Time of Our Life” (2020), which consists of seven episodes featuring Saroyan’s short stories as read by San Joaquin Valley authors. The series is a labor of love. The contributors’ love for Fresno, William Saroyan’s birthplace, their love of the author himself, and their love of language and writing, come through. One hopes that the podcast will open the door to exploring the technological innovations available today — new platforms, web sites, social media — to bring attention to Saroyan’s work.



If Saroyan’s writing is “simple,” it is the profound “simplicity” of a child’s vision which is uncorrupted by the lies, the hypocrisies and the hatreds of the grown-up world. Saroyan describes the smile of the four-year old Ulysses Macauley in *The Human Comedy*, as the “gentle, wise, secret smile of the Macauley people which said Hello to all things.” When Ulysses’s older brother, 14-year old Homer Macauley, applies for a job at the town’s telegraph station, “I shall expect of you a depth of understanding one may not expect from men past the age of twelve,” the old telegraph operator tells him. Perhaps, if grown-ups retained some of the innocence of the child, something of his “naïve” wisdom, the world would be a better place to live in.

I would like to add a note about the misconception that Armenians appreciate Saroyan’s writing because of Saroyan’s Armenian origins. It is probably true that there is not a single Armenian who cannot recite the famous Saroyan lines, “I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people. . . Go ahead, destroy Armenia. See if you can do it.” Yet, many Armenians I

have spoken to have not read even a single work by Saroyan. One does not have to be Armenian to appreciate an author whose relevance transcends time and place. Saroyan well knew that “my work will be discovered again and again and again.” Indeed, the choice of classical names for his characters and their setting in *The Human Comedy* must be an indication of Saroyan’s awareness of the universal appeal of his writing. Ithaca is the name of the hometowns of both Odysseus, the protagonist of Greek poet Homer’s celebrated epic poem, *The Odyssey*, and of Homer, the main character of Saroyan’s novel. Homer’s 4-year-old brother’s name, Ulysses, is the Roman equivalent of the Greek Odysseus, giving the novel the universality of the epic.

I must concur with Dr. Johnson and with Virginia Woolf that reading with one’s own instincts, with no mediation, yields the greatest pleasure. We may just have made complexity a virtue for too long. And if the larger cultural and social issues are connected to literary texts, as is contended today, we might as well read as Armenians, and read with the blessing of the Establishment.

Eric Nazarian’s New Movie Tells Story of an Unseen LA

NAZARIAN, from page 14

He would attend parties with his cousin in Hollywood, Montebello and Los Angeles River, where he grew up with Mexican, African-American, Cuban and Asian friends, kids who were obsessed with hip-hop and trying to impress the girls. Eric sees that street culture served as a “way in” at that time. A mini militarized state is how Eric describes the city when Daryl Gates was the chief of the Police Department.

Even though Nazarian went to a public school, he never felt the need to prove his national identity: it was there all along thanks to his family for whom Armenian culture was “the flagship.” He grew up in the area close to Atwater Village, where he would go for walks with his grandfather.

The theme is not purely American: it deals with Armenia, with the Middle East, with LA. It’s about the rites of passage of boys becoming men. “Whether it’s a young kid in the village in Armenia who’s taught to hold a gun in the military at the age of 18, or it’s a little kid in Brazil who’s basically given a package and told to run from here to there for his big boss to be impressed by his work, boys are always expected to prove their toughness in order to be considered a man. It’s extremely dangerous,” he adds.

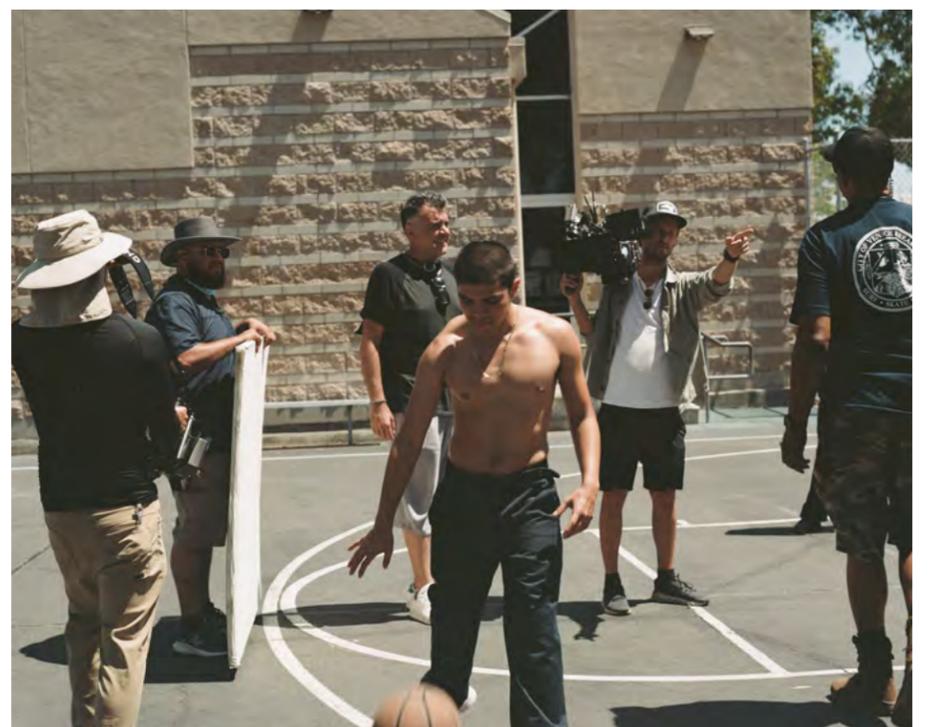
Where does the Armenian kid fit into this picture of the city? “Armenians have

always fit into the greater narrative of the world. We are one of the most globalized people in the world,” he answers.

“I am a global citizen who happened to be born of an ancient culture. But I am also an Angelino who has been here since four years old, way before the actual Armenian invasion occurred after the Soviet Union [collapsed],” he specifies. Eric has a very close affinity with the Latin, Mexican and Chicano people as well as with the African-American people because these were the kids who he grew up with, best friends and community as much as the Armenians. He said: “I am trying to tell a much bigger narrative, gravitating towards a multicultural awareness in an awakening of the Armenian artists, the Armenian history of the storytellers.”

Eric Nazarian developed an innovative approach in his new movie called C.I.C. (Community Inclusive Cinema) in which instead of casting professional actors, he chooses and trains regular people, representatives of minority groups, and gears them up with all the tools and skills to present his vision as realistically as possible.

“Die Like a Man” is the first part of a trilogy. The second part will present the life of the main character ten years later from the period featuring the original movie and the third part will tell the story of his father and mentor in the 1980s and 1990s, completing



Scene from filming “Die Like a Man,” with Eric Nazarian center background (photo Liana Grigoryan)

the story of generations.

With the increased gun violence in the US, the message to society that “Die Like a Man” proposes is a bold question: Why do we glorify, sexualize and glamorize

strength, violence and militarization of the mind? “We are trying to control a woman’s body in the Congress now, but we can’t control our guns, right? That’s hypocrisy for me!” Eric exclaims.



ARTS & CULTURE

Centennial of Composer Arno Babajanian Commemorated by Tekeyan Cultural Association

GLENDALE — The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Los Angeles Chapter together with the Metro Los Angeles Chapter, organized a commemoration of the centennial of Armenian composer Arno Babajanian (1921-1983) at the hall of the Armenian Society of Los Angeles. More than 200 people attended the event.

The event was held under the auspices of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, who attended together with Fr. Zaven Markosyan. Guest of honor was the First Secretary of the Consulate General of the Republic of Iraq Aqeel Al-Sodanie, who attended with his family.

The evening began with the screening of a short documentary film about the second Artsakh war, in which Arno Babajanian's song, *Boys Who Are Not There* [Dgherk, voronk chgan] was performed by the Little Singers of Armenia children's choir, and a moment of silence was observed in memory of those who lost their lives in the war.

Professional musicians presented the audience with some of Babajanian's compositions, including a string quartet composed of Armen Mangasaryan (first violin), Hovhannes Meghrikyan (second violin), Hovhannes Fishyan (viola), and Hovik Hovhannesian (cello), with Armine Ghazaryan on piano. Singers Anahit Nersesyan (soprano) and Suren Mkrtychyan (tenor) also participated.

Lilit Keheyan, a member of the board of the TCA Los Angeles chapter and a literary critic, helped organize the



Anahit Nersisyan with quartet



Lilit Keheyan as master of ceremonies

event and served as master of ceremonies. She said that many famous figures of culture and art have expressed admiration for Arno Babajanian, but quoted William Saroyan in particular. Babajanian wrote the music for the 1975 movie version of Saroyan's play, "My Heart Is in the Highlands."

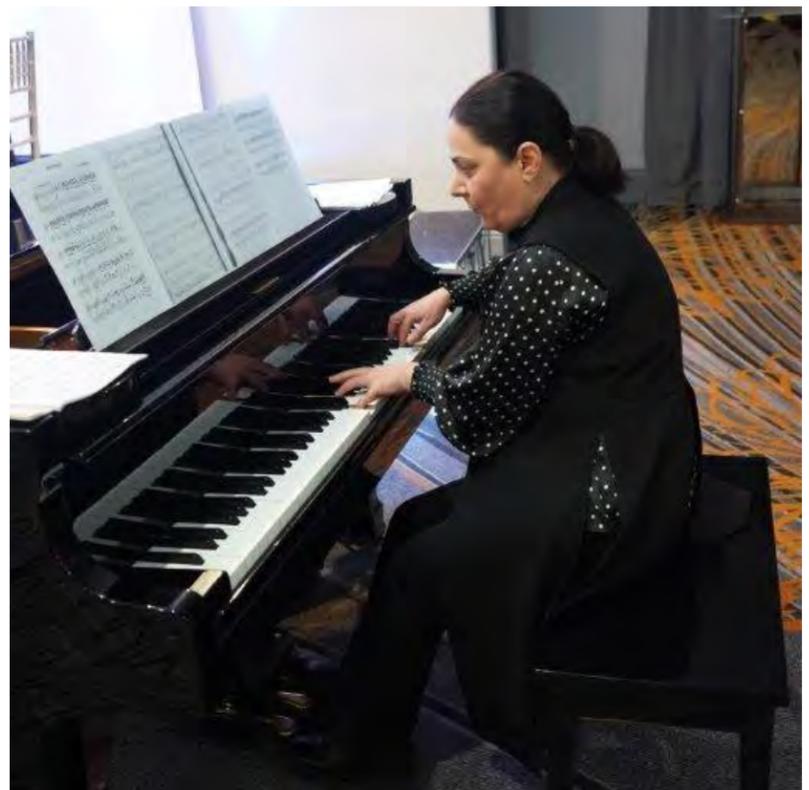
The evening's program included a performance of Babajanian's songs *Mer sireli Yerevan* [Our Beloved Yerevan], *Chknagh Yeraz* [Wonderful Dream], *Arajin Siro Yergeh* [The First Love Song] and *Im Yerevan* [My Yerevan], the words of which were written by Aramays Sahakyan and Vladimir Harutyunyan; *Meghedhi* [Melody] performed by the string quartet; and two Russian songs sung by Suren Mkrtychyan, whose words were written by two famous Russian poets who were best friends of the Armenians – Robert Rozhdestvensky and Yevgeny Yevtushenko.

The audience also enjoyed *Elekia* [Elegy] performed by Anahit Nersesyan, which is nothing other than the Ba-

bajanian elaboration of Sayat Nova's *Kanim Vur Jan Im*, and *Vocaliz* for voice and orchestra written by Babajanian specifically for Lusine Zakaryan. At the end, Mkrtychyan performed the famous *Azg Parabants* [Glorious Nation], with lyrics by Ashot Grashi, with which the majority of those present sang along. And all this was to the professional accompaniment of string quartet and piano.

The closing words to the event were given by Archbishop Derderian, who shared his pleasant memories of Babajanian and reflected on his remarkable influence on Armenian culture, before giving his blessing to those present.

After an understandable break in public activities, the Tekeyan Cultural Association, faithful to its principles, mission and name continues to present high-quality events to the Armenian public, thereby contributing to the difficult process of the preservation of Armenian identity in the diaspora.



Pianist Armine Ghazaryan



Archbishop Hovnan Derderian



Suren Mkrtychyan with quartet



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Baci di Dama (Lady's Kisses) from St. John Armenian Church Women's Guild. Photo: Carol Cholmakian

Baci di Dama (Lady's Kisses) from St. John Armenian Church Women's Guild



The cookies for Baci di Dama (Lady's Kisses)
Photo: Carol Cholmakian

Baci di Dama ("Lady's Kisses) are melt-in-your-mouth Italian hazelnut cookies joined together with some good chocolate. This recipe comes from *In the Cookie Jar*, the cookie booklet created for the 2020 Holiday Bake Box held by the Women's Guild of St. John Armenian Church in Southfield.

"We made a total of 5,700 cookies and Armenian sweets for our sold-out fundraiser," says Denise Boyagian, Women's Guild Chairman. Normally we would get together and bake in the church kitchen, but we couldn't because of the pandemic. Instead, our members baked in their homes and, in small groups working in shifts, assembled the boxes in our cultural hall. This was done while observing safe distance practices distributed by our parish's Medical Advisory Committee. It was a bake sale like no other."

Baci di Dama are delicious served with hot coffee or tea — and they make the perfect gift for special occasions and holiday cookie platters. The *In the Cookie Jar* booklet contains recipes for Armenian favorites like simit, nazook, and khurabia, plus Christmas cookies and new favorites like Lemon Nut Wafers, Fruitcake Cookies (even fruitcake-haters love these), Earl Grey slice-and-bake, Polish Butter Cookies with Jam, and more.

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup hazelnuts, toasted and skinned
1/2 cup all-purpose flour (2 1/2 oz.)
1/4 cup sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon salt
5 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut 1/2-in. pieces and chilled
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup bittersweet chocolate chips

PREPARATION:

Adjust oven racks to upper middle and lower middle positions and heat oven to 350°F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.

Process hazelnuts, flour, sugar, cornstarch, and salt in food processor until finely ground, about 30 seconds. Add butter and vanilla and process until dough comes together, about 30 seconds. Transfer dough to counter and divide into four pieces. Working with one piece at a time, press into a 10" by 1" rope. Cut the rope into 20 half-inch pieces, then roll the pieces into balls and space them 1" apart on prepared sheets.

Repeat with remaining dough. Bake until edges are lightly browned, 10-12 minutes, switching and rotating pans halfway through baking. Allow cookies to cool completely on trays before touching them as they'll be very soft and will need to harden before filling.

Microwave chocolate chips in small bowl at 50 percent power, stirring occasionally, until melted, 1 to 2 minutes. Spread 1/4 teaspoon chocolate over bottom of half of cookies then top with remaining cookies, pressing lightly to adhere. Let chocolate set about 15 minutes before serving.

Makes 40 sandwich cookies. These cookies may be stored in an airtight container for up to two weeks.

The *In the Cookie Jar* recipe booklet is available for \$7.00 each plus free shipping. To order, go to: <https://stjohnwomensguild.square.site/>

Also available on the Women's Guild website:

Armenian Cuisine: Preserving Our Heritage Cookbook

Over 450 tested recipes from the Detroit metropolitan Armenian community, updated using modern techniques and equipment. Detailed description of cooking and baking methods including tips for preparation. \$35 with free shipping.

Pomegranate Apron

With 2 handy pockets and adjustable straps. Great for the kitchen, garage, or garden. \$20 with free shipping.

Consider a Donation to Support the Mission of the Women's Guild of St. John Armenian Church: Women's Guild strives to nurture fellowship and service to our Church and community through a variety of activities and events. Your funds will help us continue outreach activities in Armenia such as sponsoring orphans and supporting Mer Doon, which provides young women with a safe home and instructs them in life skills.

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90 years in Greater Detroit (1931-2021)

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Metro Detroit Couple To Tell Story of Armenians in Music

DOCUMENTARY, from page 14
community events in the Detroit area. "I always saw the joy and vibrancy. My family all know the history; I heard all the stories about the Genocide. All ethnicities have had oppression, but don't let it define them, but the music has this rich history. And I don't think a lot of people know about Armenian culture."

The hard part of the project, the couple says, is the funding. There are fees for music licensing, which historically have been extremely restrictive, (only in the last few years have changes in the law made it possible for sound recordings to be in the public domain, and so far it only applies to those that are more than 100 years old). There are fees for photo licensing to be paid to libraries, universities, and public archives in order to use historic photos in their possession. The two would also like to use Genocide survivor accounts, but

those videos are also copyrighted by whoever owned them.

Some filmmakers use materials like this without permission, but Hagopian and Harabadian want to do it the right way and PBS won't show it unless all the legalities are in place.

Fortunately, the duo found an organization, Fractured Atlas, which provides "fiscal sponsorship" to creative projects like theirs. The organization uses its nonprofit status as a clearinghouse for donations to similar endeavors. Those who wish to donate to the "We Thrive" music documentary, can do so through Fractured Atlas and get the tax deduction, without Hagopian and Harabadian having to file for nonprofit status. (The link is [<https://fundraising.fracturedatlas.org/we-thrive-documentary-film/campaigns/4555>].) The couple is also using GoFundMe.

Some of the local Armenian-American

musicians who are slated to appear in the documentary are Dan Yessian (composer and music producer), Sean Blackman (guitarist, performing artist in world-fusion style), Rubik Mailian (classically trained vocal soloist and conductor of St. John's Armenian Church Komitas Choir), Ara Topouzian (folk and kef style kanon player, record producer), Eliza Neals (blues-rock singer), Chuck Alkazian (record producer), Simon Javizian (clarinetist, elder statesman of the local kef music scene), Kim Kashkashian (world-renowned classical violist), Hachig Kazarian (Juilliard-trained clarinetist, folk/kef musician and noted authority on West-



Kanonist Ara Topouzian being interviewed in his home

ern Armenian folk music).

"Something I was told by other creatives is, write about who you are and where you come from," said Harabadian, who has also been a freelance writer for years.

The project is slated to be completed by Fall of 2022.



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EDITORIAL

Turkey's Self-Serving Peace Initiative



By Edmond Y.
Azadian

As a new political order shapes up in the Caucasus, Armenia will face new risks and new opportunities. The question is how Yerevan will cope with new realities after suffering the devastating impact of a disastrous war.

Armenia would have been better equipped to deal with such opportunities before the war. Also, there is a serious concern regarding the ability of the current inexperienced

leadership to successfully navigate through these turbulent waters and come out a winner.

One of the major developments is Turkey's apparent change of heart and new desire to make peace with Armenia.

Almost a year ago, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan claimed, during a victory parade in Baku, that he had arrived there to achieve "the goals of his forefathers," evoking the memory of Enver Pasha, one of the three architects of the Armenian Genocide.

Therefore, a statesman who publicly admits that his political goal is to continue the genocidal intentions of imperial Turkey must have other reasons and motivations to launch a peace initiative with those same people, which cannot be anything but a tactical and temporary retreat from its primary goals. Even if

Thus, when Azerbaijan's leader Ilham Aliyev insists on the "corridor" through Armenia's sovereign territory, he is looking to join Baku to Nakhichevan, while Mr. Erdogan's intentions go far beyond.

These are the parameters within which regional transformations are taking place.

From a position of intransigence, the Turkey-Azerbaijan tandem reverted to a conciliatory mood, purporting to want to make a peace deal with Armenia. One minor factor in this change of heart is that after the war, the Turks can extract maximal concessions from Armenia, but the major component is Turkey's faltering economy, which helped build up its military might and fueled its imperial ambitions. Writing in the Gatestone Institute publication, Turkish commentator Burak Bekdil states, "Erdogan is heading fast to becoming the victim of his own miscalculations: a dramatically mismanaged economy and geostrategic challenges that went beyond Turkey's political and military might."

Indeed, Erdogan's rule previously brought prosperity to Turkey. In 2002, Turkey's GDP per capita stood at \$3,688 which in 10 years rose to \$11,796. Today, it is down to \$7,500, reducing 50 percent of the population to below the poverty line.

These dramatic changes have caused domestic political unrest in Turkey and undermined the country's expansionist ambitions.



Turkey's intention is not to commit a new genocide, nor continue the first one, its political ambitions of building a Turanic empire necessitate this intent.

Ruben Safrastyan, a Turkologist at the Armenian Academy of Sciences, states: "Armenia continues to be a wall separating Turkey from 'Big Turan.' Turkey signs separate military-technical agreements with all Turkic-speaking states, providing a supply of weapons produced in Turkey to these countries. This is the path, politics, [and] ideology of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his army, towards the formation of 'Big Turan,' which now Turkey quite openly is demonstrating."

He then goes on to mention that the idea had been earlier promoted by Mustafa Kemal, who had been advocating for Armenia's destruction by removing "that wall."

Safrastyan's cautionary remark jibes perfectly with what the Economist defined as Turkey's role and goal in the recent war, stating: "Though not mentioned in the trilateral agreement [of November 9, 2020], signed between the two belligerents and Russia, Turkey is a big beneficiary of it. It is to get access to a transport corridor through Armenian territory ... linking Turkey to Central Asia and China's Belt and Road Initiative."

Therefore, it was not surprising that Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu announced recently that Turkey and Armenia have decided to begin negotiations to restore peace in the Caucasus. (See related story on Page 1.) However, Armenia is not the only country that is targeted by Ankara's outreach; that initiative has to be viewed within the context of Turkey's foreign policy transformation. Turkey may reverse that process any time it recovers from its economic downturn and musters enough resources to return to pursuing Erdogan's dream.

It turns out that Turkey's policy change, albeit for tactical reasons, was imposed by the US. Indeed, based on reports from Turkish officials, Bloomberg informs that "Turkey's surprise overture is in line with President Joe Biden's request, who allegedly urged Erdogan to open the country's border with landlocked Armenia during the two leaders' October meeting in Rome."

The report also claims that "Erdogan could reap major benefits from any foreign policy move that helps to stabilize the economy as skyrocketing inflation threatens Erdogan's popularity ahead of the scheduled 2023 elections."

continued on next page



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Jesus, Obama and Muhammad Were Turks, According to Turkish False Claims

There is nothing wrong with being proud of one's nationality, ethnic origin or religion. However, when that pride becomes so fanatical, reaching the level of absurdity, then we are dealing with someone who has lost all sense of reality.

Turkish political analyst Burak Bekdil acknowledged in his article published by BESA Center Perspectives: "The Turkish-Islamist psyche is susceptible to...the pitfalls of honor, fatalism, conspiracism, bombast, publicity, and confusion."

Over the years, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has made many bizarre statements that raise suspicions about his mental sanity.

Here are some examples of Erdogan's nutty statements.

In 2014, Erdogan told a group of Latin American Muslims visiting Istanbul that Muslim Pilgrims discovered America several centuries before Christopher Columbus: "It is alleged that the American continent was discovered by Columbus in 1492. In fact, Muslim sailors reached the American continent 314 years before Columbus in 1178. ...In his memoirs, Christopher Columbus mentions the existence of a mosque atop a hill on the coast of Cuba. A mosque would look perfect on that hill today." Of course, Columbus never said such a thing in his memoirs.

In another outlandish claim, Pres. Erdogan announced that Turkey will send a spaceship with a Turkish astronaut to the moon in 2023 on the centennial of the Republic of Turkey. He speculated that a female astronaut may be a part of the Turkish space team. It would be interesting to see how Turkey, a bankrupt country, could spend billions of dollars on such a far-fetched adventure, not to mention its lack of space technology. Maybe this whole topic is a hoax to divert the people's attention from their woes and empty pockets to gazing at the moon and stars! A skeptical Turk sarcastically said: "We cannot go to the supermarket, so how will we go to space?" Another Turk remarked, "We were not able to distribute masks [for COVID] to citizens, so how do we go to space?"

Before Erdogan can fantasize about going to space, he should worry about the collapsing Lira, millions of unemployed Turks, and a huge percentage of his people suffering from abject poverty. According to Turkish sources, 34 million Turks are on the verge of starvation. In the first six months of this year, 1.6 million Turkish families had their electricity and gas cut off because they could

not pay their bills.

Turkish analyst Burak Bekdil wrote that he "grew up in classrooms filled up with mottoes like 'A Turk is worth the world,' 'Turks have had to fight the seven biggest world powers,' and 'A Turk's only friend is another Turk.' Our textbooks taught us that the supreme Turkish race dominated the entire world for centuries; that the Ottoman Empire collapsed only after a coalition of world powers attacked it; that we lost WWI because we had allied with the Germans, who were defeated (not us); and that one day, we will make the entire planet Turkish. We were taught that an Ottoman warrior could keep on fighting even after having been beheaded by the [Byzantine] enemy."

As a result, Bekdil explained, "Turks are hungry for fairy tales about the good life they did not get to enjoy over the past century, but believe they deserve. Any feel-good news propaganda, even Erdogan's famous 'The West, including the Germans, are jealous of us!' tirade, finds millions of receptive listeners in Turkey's post-modern marketplace of absurdity."

In an article titled, "'Jesus Was Turkish': the Bizarre Resurgence of Pseudo-Turkology," Luka Ivan Jukic wrote in NEW/LINES Magazine: "You would be forgiven for not knowing that former U.S. President Barack Obama was a Turk. Or that Jesus Christ and the Prophet Muhammad were, likewise, of Turkic origin. You would be forgiven for not knowing that Russia is really a great Turkic nation, that Kazakhs and the Japanese are genetically identical or that the legendary English King Arthur was, you guessed it, a Turk. You would be forgiven because none of this is true. Yet in countries from central Europe to Central Asia and everywhere in between, supposed historical facts like these and the theories they support have made their way from the minds of overzealous and pseudo-academics into national school textbooks, popular culture and, indeed, official government ideology."

In 1932, the Turkish language Institute invented the fake "Sun Language Theory" which claimed that "the Turkish language was the source of all human language and therefore all human civilization," Jukic wrote. "Linguists from the Institute claimed that language had been invented by sun-worshipping proto-Turks in Central Asia as they babbled at the sun." Furthermore, the Turkish History Thesis claimed that "Turks had brought civilization to China, Europe, India and elsewhere when they migrated from the Eurasian Steppe." These pseudo-theories found their way into Turkish textbooks and popular books, brainwashing several generations of Turks. Most adherents of these pseudo-scientific claims are the followers of President Erdogan.

There is no super race. All people are equal. They are all God's children. While claims of superiority may satisfy a vain human inclination, no one should treat other races as inferior.

Turkey's Self-Serving Peace Initiative

from previous page

For all practical purposes, this is virtually an economic rescue plan for Turkey to stop the freefall of the lira and the country's 43-percent inflation.

Turkey had strained relations with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates when Erdogan anointed himself the sultan of the Sunni world. Those relations were further exacerbated by the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Ankara. These days Foreign Minister Çavusoglu is in the UAE to repair relations. Earlier, a UAE representative had visited Turkey with a \$10-billion investment plan and in February President Erdogan is scheduled to visit the Emirates to solicit more help.

Turkey has begun negotiations with another adversary, Egypt, which was alienated because Turkey supported the Muslim Brotherhood, who are considered terrorists in Egypt. Ankara and Cairo almost resorted to an armed conflict in Libya, where both countries maintain interests and back opposite sides. Incidentally, Armenians have benefitted from the standoff between Turkey and Egypt, as the latter opened its archives of the Ottoman atrocities and even the issue of recognizing the Armenian Genocide was presented to the parliament in Egypt.

Turkey is having a tough time mending fences with Israel, although in the past, Turkey was the only Muslim country which had diplomatic relations with Israel, bringing the latter out of regional isolation. But when Erdogan began championing the Palestinian case, highlighted by the Mavi Marmara Incident in 2016, and hosted Hamas leaders from the Gaza Strip, tensions rose and they have yet to recede.

As we can see, Armenia is in good company with all these regional neighbors in conflict with Turkey.

President Aliyev's conciliatory moves are also a function of Turkey's political and economic predicament. Just a few months ago, Baku almost went to war with Iran, intoxicated by its victory against Armenia and emboldened by Turkey's military support, but Erdogan tightened Aliyev's leash, advising that such support is no longer forthcoming. That is why Aliyev dutifully attended the trilateral meetings in Sochi on November 26 and Brussels in December 14, soft-pedaling the corridor issue at the meeting, however,

without any change in his public rhetoric.

Those meetings and negotiations produced an agreement to open a railroad line between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in turn hailed by the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Spokesperson Maria Zakharova.

Upon returning to Yerevan, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan heralded the cautious beginning of an era of peace in the Caucasus.

Turkey and Armenia have appointed their respective representatives to begin negotiations to unblock all roads and communication lines in the region. Mr. Çavusoglu even has publicly entertained the hope of starting diplomatic relations. To that end, Ankara has appointed diplomat Serdar Kilic as its representative while Armenia came up with its choice in the person of Ruben Rubinyan, an MP from the ruling party Im Kayle (My Step). Turkey's representative, Kilic, is a seasoned diplomat with four decades of experience under his belt. During his term in Washington as ambassador, he spearheaded genocide denialist campaign in the US legislature.

Armenia's opposition has been criticizing 31-year-old Rubinyan's appointment as that of an inexperienced envoy and particularly underlining Pashinyan's policy of avoiding seasoned diplomats. They blame the administration for appointing one ambassador to the US because she has command of the English language and now this one who is knowledgeable in Turkish, never mind the diplomatic skills necessary for the post.

Armenia is joining the negotiating table in the wrong way by proclaiming that it is willing to negotiate without any preconditions. Instead, it must start negotiations with at least some conditions, although not all may be realistic. One of those conditions must be the recognition of the Genocide. Mr. Erdogan has expressed his condolences on April 24 to the Patriarch of Istanbul during the last couple of years. He can modify his stance by adopting a more acceptable formula.

Armenia must insist on the abrogation of the 1921 Kars Treaty which has set the current borders between the two countries. Armenia must also seek the return, with certain conditions, of confiscated properties from the Istanbul Armenians and also from the Patriarchate of Jerusa-

lem and the Catholicosate of Cilicia in Sis (currently in Antelias). Even if Armenia cannot meet its terms, those demands will become a matter of public record in the world press.

Although Mr. Erdogan has been expressing through veiled remarks that Turkey will come up with conditions, thus far, Mr. Erdogan has been advising Armenia "to behave and learn lessons from the recent war" to meet Turkey's conditions for negotiations. The Genocide issue should come to the table as well as the Kars Treaty. The constant reference that Ankara will consult Azerbaijan during the negotiations means that Mr. Aliyev will push for the Zangezur Corridor and for a peace treaty with Armenia, forcing the latter to abdicate its claim on Karabakh.

The Armenian side has to keep in mind that Turkey is there with a handicap; it has to deliver if it wants to be in Mr. Biden's good graces and salvage its economy. Ankara has as much stake in the success or failure of negotiations as Armenia.

Opening the border will help Armenia's economy but if tariffs and economic restructuring are not in place, Turkish trade may overwhelm Armenia's economy. There is already an imbalance of trade between the two countries and that may become more alarming.

The Armenian side must sit at the table with the belief that Mr. Erdogan is not doing Armenia a favor by negotiating. It has some self-serving motives above anything else.

The road is replete with minefields and hopefully a durable peace can emerge from the forthcoming negotiations.

Correction

The commentary two weeks ago by senior columnist Edmond Y. Azadian, "One Man's Story Became Another Man's Mission: Bob Dole and the Armenian Genocide Resolution," which paid tribute to the late Sen. Bob Dole, inadvertently misidentified the political affiliation of Mr. Dole's frequent nemesis, Sen. Robert Bird. Mr. Bird was in fact a Democrat.



The Time Is Here for the Unification of The Armenian Democratic Liberal Party

UNIFICATION, from page 1

risen to the occasion and proffered thoughtful solutions. The party and its membership powerlessly watch developments, and that powerlessness is a source of embarrassment because we are hopelessly divided and fragmented.

The ADL fell in disarray after forging a glorious history. Today, no entity which claims the ADL identity in the diaspora — where the ADL was born — enjoys legitimacy according to the party's bylaws. The principle of legitimacy has been left in the past, forging the need for a new era.

We, a group of ADL leaders, acting as a steering committee, feel ourselves responsible before history, our members and our people and determined to achieve unity, resorting, if necessary, even to impossible measures, because we cannot abdicate this responsibility.

The undersigned have had differences and disputes in the past, or even continue to have them today, but we, considering the party's unity as coming before all such issues, hereby join together in this appeal. As former leaders, we believe we have contributed our share to our beloved party and we don't entertain necessarily any intentions of running for office in the future.

We believe it is time to transfer the reins of this historic organization to a new generation of leaders and we are here to support the new leadership with all our means to ensure its success. We are convinced that our group represents the voice of the majority of the party membership, based on the urgent appeals arriving from many quarters.

Our initiative does not have ready formulae for reorganization nor candidates for positions. Our appeal is based on the firm belief that the ADL has to unite and that task is the duty of our generation. Therefore, we hereby appeal to all individual members and entities not necessarily to join us, but to create a common forum where all of us can meet without any reservation and achieve the task of reunification.

Our next appeal will announce our future steps.

The time is here for unification.

The Steering Committee of Leaders for the Unification of the ADL

Dr. Arshavir Gundjian (Montreal)
Hagop Kassarian (Beirut)
Sergio Nahabetian (Buenos Aires)
Edmond Azadian (Detroit)
Vartan Nazerian (Los Angeles)
Dr. Krikor Adanalian (Los Angeles)
Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian (London)
Hagop Avedikian (Yerevan)

December 19, 2021

Massachusetts Mandates Genocide Education

MASSACHUSETTS, from page 8
circumstances, but the history of genocide will also have to be taught. Specific genocides are not mandated to be taught, but several examples will have to be covered. Individual school districts may choose to do it in different ways, he said.

In general, there is no standard approach even among the states that have mandated genocide education. Some only require Holocaust education, but most have adopted a broader type of genocide education. Some specify covering multiple genocides. Some have required it only in high school, while others also include the middle school years. Some states have required the creation of a commission to propose how it should be taught, whereas others leave it to the school curriculum people.

What Next?

Kaligian said that though the bill does not mention specific genocides such as the Armenian one, the latter is already covered in the existing curriculum framework because of the work done in the 1990s. He said, "We are ahead of the game here." If specific genocides such as the Armenian one were listed in the bill, it would have caused difficulties in which ones to adopt, as you cannot just have the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide. Kaligian said at a few points in prior efforts, there were attempts to specify but in the end it was clear that this was not possible.

Instead, different local communities will choose to focus on cases connected with their own populations. For example, Kaligian said that the large Cambodian population in Lowell will probably lead to teaching the Cambodian Genocide there, along with one or two other cases.

While it is good to allow the towns this flexibility, Kaligian said, "It puts the onus on us [the Armenians of Massachusetts] to actually go to these towns and say we want you to include the Armenian Genocide.

That is the next step." Any Armenian with children in local schools can now point to the law requiring the teaching of genocide and ask that the Armenian Genocide specifically be covered. Fortunately, he added, there are Armenians all over the state, so it is possible to go school department by school department. While there may again be Turkish opposition, he said that the Turks do not have a commensurate ability.

Kaligian said that the broader lesson of the struggle to pass the genocide bill from an Armenian perspective is to understand "the magnification of your power when you can find allies outside of your community to push for the same thing. It is hard to make coalitions. You don't always get 100 percent of what you want, but when you do build coalitions you often can succeed politically."

Purutyan declared that the effort was truly a collaboration. He exclaimed: "It is good that finally our children in Massachusetts will be able to learn all about genocide, not just one part, and hopefully such things will not be repeated." For Armenians in particular, he said that the message that the bill sends is, "This isn't just about history. If you look at what is happening in Armenia today, and especially right after the war [with Azerbaijan], it is part of current events." For any students coming out of school, if they are going to be prepared to deal with current events in the world, they need to know this information, he concluded.

Cohen pointed out that now that Massachusetts has joined the list of states that require education, "We now get to do the work to see it happen, and we hope it gets better every year as it goes on." He stressed how important this bill is, echoing Purutyan, and stated: "Genocide is not merely a historical problem. It is real and present. That is why I always argue that it is necessary and urgent to teach about them collectively, to learn lessons from the previous genocides, because it is still with us. ... Many of the conflicts in the world today are not only haunted by earlier genocides but are still animated by the hate that fueled those genocides."



There's Nothing Wrong With Her

A MEMOIR

M.B. YAKOUBIAN

Thrust into the Syrian desert by the Ottoman Turks, young Elise and her mother survived the 1915 Armenian death march. Twenty years later, her new life in America is more than she could ever have dreamed possible. The dream ends when her husband Leon dies and she is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. She has spent her entire adult life filling the woman's role she was taught to in Syria—cooked, cleaned, prayed, and looked after her three children. But she never learned how to drive a car or manage a bank account. Leon saved enough for her to get by after his death. But he didn't think their lawyer son would turn his eye to those meagre savings. Elise's advancing dementia dimmed her awareness of the family strife swirling around her that would mark the last five years of her life. Elise's daughter offers a close-up view here of helping a dependent mother from a thousand miles away.

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