

Ministry of Health Reports Increased COVID Rates

Bans Travelers from African Countries

By **Gevorg Gyulumyan**
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia held a press conference on November 29 to raise awareness concerning COVID and other respiratory viruses.

At the conference, the officials warned that a high rate of acute respiratory infections continues to be reported in Armenia, based on the records of outpatient polyclinics and hospitals. Epidemiological analysis indicates that 50 percent of patients at the outpatient polyclinics and 81.3 percent of those at hospitals and in-patient clinics are children up to 18 years old, especially of younger ages. Ongoing spot testing revealed that Type A (H3N2) influenza is spreading.

Minister of Health Anahit Avanesyan, in response to a question from the *Mirror-Spectator*, said that at present, 1,217,391 COVID vaccine shots have been delivered in Armenia. Though seemingly a large figure, it is far from what is necessary.

“The first dose of the vaccine was given to 781,011 citizens, which is 39 percent of the adult population and the second dose to 436,380 citizens, which is 21 percent of the adult population,” she said, adding that at present, only 1,092 have been vaccinated among those infected with COVID.

Furthermore, she said, “Out of 2,900 hospitalized citizens, only 102 were fully vaccinated, and only 9 among the critically ill citizens. Of those vaccinated and then infected with coronavirus, 23 people have died. At present, 8.1 percent of patients with coronavirus have been vaccinated [previously].”

Avanesyan spoke about booster shots, declaring: “Those citizens who have received non-RNA-based vaccines (Moderna or Pfizer) are advised to get vaccinated with the latter type of vaccine, which, according to recent studies, has a high rate of effectiveness. It is important that priority for receiving the third booster shot be given to those in high-risk groups.”

Avanesyan declared at the press conference that a plan has been prepared according to which restaurants and entertainment venues can only be entered with proof of either vaccination or a negative COVID test results starting on January 1. This decision has caused dissatisfaction among some businessmen and citizens.

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Minister of Health Anahit Avanesyan

Few Details Available from Pashinyan, Putin, Aliyev Talks

Meeting Deemed Positive by Participants

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) — The leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to move towards starting a process of delimitating and demarcating their Soviet-era border and pursue unblocking of all economic and transport links in the region as a result of Russia-hosted talks on Friday.

In a trilateral statement released after their meeting in Sochi Russian President Vladimir Putin, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said, in particular, that they have agreed “to take steps to increase the level of stability and security on the Armenian- “Azerbaijani border and to work towards the creation of a bilateral commission on the delimitation of the state border between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia with its subsequent demarcation with the consultative assistance of the Russian Federation at the request of the parties.”



President Vladimir Putin meeting with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Ilham Aliyev

The statement said that the parties also agreed “to intensify joint efforts aimed at the earliest possible resolution of the remaining tasks arising from the statements of November 9, 2020 and January

11, 2021” that includes the resumption of all economic and transport links in the South Caucasus.

“We have emphasized the need to see TALKS, page 4

(DR. ASADUR JORGE TCHEKMEDYIAN PHOTO)



The Armenian Square in Montevideo

Hola from Montevideo

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

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay — About 8,700 miles separate the Uruguayan capital and Boston. However, it seems the Armenian community there can bridge this impressive distance with their warmth.

One of the people interviewed for this overview of the Armenian community there, Dr. Asadur Jorge Tchekmedyian, had initially been interviewed for an earlier story on a conference organized by doctors in the diaspora to help their fellow physicians in Armenia and Artsakh to advance their medical training and certification at no expense.

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Syunik and Gegharkunik Villages Face Difficult Winter and Newly Established Azerbaijani Military Posts

By **Gevorg Gyulumyan**
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — The forthcoming winter for a number of villages of Syunik and Gegharkunik provinces of Armenia promises to be a difficult one due to the sudden losses of land and placement of Azerbaijani military posts in their proximity in the aftermath of the 2020 Artsakh war. The uncertainties and difficulties of daily life are already causing emigration.

In the village of Aravus in Syunik, for example, the villagers complain that the government has neither provided them with wheat nor fuel. Former village head Argam Hovsepyan confirmed this and related that while he was the village head, he had applied to the government to obtain these supplies free of charge since their lands had come under the control of the Azerbaijanis, creating difficult economic circumstances for the villagers.

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Dynamic Development in Armenian-German Relations



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Zhengyalov Hatz in Downtown Washington, D.C.?



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Guitarist for More than Half a Century



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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

UN Court to Deliver Verdict On Armenia Claim against Azerbaijan on Dec. 7

THE HAGUE (Panorama.am) — The International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, will deliver its order on the request for the indication of provisional measures made by Armenia in the case concerning Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Armenia v. Azerbaijan) on December 7.

A public sitting will take place at 3 p.m. at the Peace Palace at The Hague, during which the President of the Court, Judge Joan E. Donoghue, will read out the ruling, the court said in a press release on Monday, November 29.

Armenia filed a case against Azerbaijan at the World Court in September, stating Azerbaijan has violated the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Among Armenia's requested measures are an order to release Armenian prisoners of war and other captives being held in Azerbaijan, as well as to close the so-called "military trophies park".

Armenia's representative before the European Court of Human Rights Yeghishe Kirakosyan noted that Armenia was asking the court to "prevent and remedy the cycle of violence and hatred perpetrated against ethnic Armenians."

5165 Opposition Movement Demands Resignation of Pashinyan

YEREVAN (Panorma.am) — The 5165 opposition movement in Armenia will continue its efforts to prevent the risky process of border delimitation and demarcation, its member Menua Soghomonyan said at a news conference on Monday, November 29.

His remarks came after the movement announced a decision to end its participation in the street protests and rallies held jointly with the Liberation Movement in Yerevan.

Soghomonyan thanked reporters for covering the protests in the Armenian capital over the past week. He recalled that the demonstrations followed Nikol Pashinyan's statement that Armenia had accepted proposals from Russia on the "preparatory stage" for delimitating and demarcating its border with Azerbaijan.

"The 5165 movement demands the resignation of Nikol Pashinyan and his government in order to prevent the ongoing anti-Armenian steps in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, threats to the security and territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia," said the movement's statement read out by Soghomonyan.

He noted that the 5165 movement will start discussions with Armenia's all political forces, non-governmental organizations and well-known individuals who share the movement's concerns and agree with their demand.

Syunik and Gegharkunik Villages Face Difficult Winter And Newly Established Azerbaijani Military Posts

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He said, "A French foundation provided each family with 300 kilograms of wheat. Nothing else has been given so far. When I was the administrative head, I had said that the people are not able to live since our lands which we plowed and sowed have remained under the control of the enemy. This is not living. I don't know how they are going to get through the winter." Furthermore, he explained that due to the lack of pastureland, people are selling their animals at incomparably low prices compared to market value.

It is the lack of wheat and diesel fuel which is the main problem, but he said that the people need everything. There is also the question of security, he explained. One of the villagers two days ago moved to Goris with his children due to the situation.



Argam Hovsepyan

Hovsepyan said that at present the new mayor is from Tegh village, and objecting to this, exclaimed, "In this state of war, the administrative leader must be from the village, a resident of Aravus, who will be here day and night. He must sleep and awaken



Nerkin Shorzha

together with our people...He won't be here on Saturday and Sunday. It's possible he will come one or two days a week, show up, and leave."

A similar situation exists in several villages of Gegharkunik Province. Some days ago we visited the village of Nerkin Shorzha in this area. It was practically empty. There were only one or two houses where

there were people and they were cattle keepers from Vardenis who were keeping their animals here.

The village is only 1-2 kilometers from the Azerbaijani military posts. The only village herdsman we encountered said, "This is not living. Excuse me, but I do not wish to talk. What can I say? You have seen everything with your own eyes."

Vardanyan Says He Wants to Launch Political Career, Serve Armenia in Any Capacity

YEREVAN (RBC) — Billionaire Ruben Vardanyan, sitting for an interview last week with RBC TV, spoke about plans to start a political career, and also admitted hoping for an opportunity to become President of Armenia. At the same time, he noted that for the sake of the Armenian people he is ready to take any position, "even as a cleaner, even as a president."

The ex-owner of the Troika Dialog investment company, Vardanyan is worth \$1 billion according to *Forbes*.

Answering the question whether he was going to go into Armenian politics, Vardanyan said that recently he has been very often asked about this. "I answer it [the question] shortly: yes. But in politics, which I believe, I formulate the answer to this question in a different way than just a political party, a desire to lead the country," the businessman said.

According to Vardanyan, now he is in the active phase of wanting to find answers to very important questions concerning the development of Armenia. "These are all questions that go beyond me as a businessman and go beyond my usual everyday life. In this sense, of course, I am in politics," he explained.

Answering the question whether he is ready to become the President of Armenia, Vardanyan noted that he was also asked about this "already for many, many interviews." "Now, to want to lead the country in its current state, from the point of view of the ordinary Armenian society, that 'he wants to be the leader of the country,' this must be an illogical person. Because the country is in a very difficult condition. The real future is completely incomprehensible," said the businessman.

The entrepreneur believes that at present



Ruben Vardanyan

the issue of preserving Armenia as an independent state is acute; therefore, in such a situation, to take on the responsibility of becoming the head of the state is to be a very brave and risky person. "Everything I say, I always say, if the elite that consolidates and together thinks that this is the right decision, whether it is me or someone else, any decision is possible, because I am ready to be both a shoemaker for my nation and a cleaner and a leader," Vardanyan said.

"If I took responsibility, I am one of those who are ready to take responsibility for the future of Armenia, then must be ready for any position and for any position, which may be like this or may be completely different. For example, an ambassador to Guatemala, if it is important for Armenia," Vardanyan added.

Health Ministry Reports Increased COVID Rates, Bans Visitors from S. Africa

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For example, Ashot Barseghyan, head of the Association of Restaurants NGO, thought that such a decision could have serious consequences for business, which could lead to reduced tax revenues. He noted that any economic restrictions, if not accompanied by economic assistance, will inflict economic and social harm.

"If suddenly protests emerge, how will we deal with it? Will they seize people on the streets and forcibly vaccinate them? The state debt has reached 10 billion dollars, and now it is dangerous to do such a thing," said Barseghyan.

The Health Ministry's summary of the COVID situation in Armenia, as of November 29, is that 338,120 cases of infection have been registered in Armenia and 316,198 people have recovered. At the moment, 12,947 people are receiving treatment, while 7,535 people have died, along with 1,440 from related diseases.

Avanesyan added that due to the danger of new COVID mutations, entry to Armenia from a number of countries, including South Africa, Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Madagascar, will be banned.

(RFE/RL contributed to this report.)



ARMENIA

New Program Trains Social Workers to Deal with Artsakh's Needs

By Margarita Arakelyan

STEPANAKERT — The 2020 Artsakh war instigated by Azerbaijan dragged on for 44 days. In that agonizing six and a half weeks, thousands were killed and wounded. Hundreds of POWs still languish in Azerbaijan's prisons. The relatives of the missing have been desperately searching for their loved ones for months. Artsakh lost a significant portion of its territory, including Hadrut and Shushi. The war also uncovered the desperate need for an effective system of social protection for families affected by the war.

During and after the war, the Armenian government and several humanitarian organizations provided support to cover the basic needs of displaced people who sought safe haven in Armenia. While the majority of the displaced people (around 110,000, according to official data) returned home following the declared ceasefire on November 9, more than 20,000 are still struggling with uncertainties in terms of housing and other legal/social issues. Many in this latter group remain highly dependent on various humanitarian programs.

To improve the life and conditions of the traumatized population of Artsakh, the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) Children's Center, in collaboration with Armenia's Association of Social Workers, has developed and launched an inclusive psychosocial protection program, something beyond the provision of food and clothing. In the long run, the initiative will employ a network of skilled social workers to defend and promote the rights of Artsakh's people, and primarily, the least advantaged ones, like displaced people and families who lost their breadwinners. Support includes access to healthcare and social services and family reunification efforts.

'How Are We Going to Live?'

Twenty-six-year-old Kristine Petrosyan, a mother of five, used to live in a dilapidated apartment in Stepanakert which was damaged during the second Artsakh war. Since then, the roof has fallen apart and the windows destroyed.

For months, the family has been renting an apartment in the suburbs of Stepanakert at a monthly cost of 12,000 drams. No longer able to make ends meet, Kristine applied to the Artsakh Ministry of Social Affairs for support.

"I was shy about speaking about our problems because there were so many displaced people on the waiting list whose issues are much more urgent than ours, but we cannot live like this any longer. The rent is too expensive, we have five children, and Mher [Kristine's husband] can hardly make ends meet. We receive 70,000 drams as a state benefit which, along with my husband's daily earnings, hardly covers the rent, diapers and formula for my two-month old, Mark," she notes.

With the support of Armine Arzangulyan, a social worker from Stepanakert, Kristine has applied to the Artsakh Urban Development Committee to evaluate and fix the damages of their apartment.

Kristine frankly notes that without Armine's support, she would still be agonizing over the decision to contact the committee. "Hopefully, they can fix our house soon and we'll be able to return," she mentions. In fact, the family was supposed to receive a new apartment for their fifth child but they no longer want that. "Let the displaced receive houses; we can live in our old one. I just wish they could fix it as soon as possible."

Valeri Poghosyan, 71, a beneficiary from Ivanyan Village in the Askeran Region, is

trying to apply for a government-supported social program to start an animal husbandry business. Narine Beglaryan, a newly trained social worker assigned to support his family, is helping him gather the necessary documents. She has also helped Valeri to overcome psychological and health problems, in addition to addressing his housing and social issues.

"Whatever I do now my number one counselor is Narine. First I call her, and only then, my daughter," he says, smiling.

Poghosyan was captured by Azerbaijan during the war. He was among the last inhabitants of Avetaranots, a village in the Askeran Region. Until the very last minute he didn't know that Azerbaijani soldiers had occupied his village. In captivity for more than a month, Valeri was sent to Armenia, through the efforts of the Red Cross, on December 15, 2020. Soon after his arrival, he underwent heart and then brain surgery.

Through Beglaryan's support, Poghosyan has resettled in a house in Ivanyan Village. Recently he received some furniture too. "Narine helped me to rebuild my life, both by strengthening me and by mak-



Armine with her assigned family

ing use of social services through government entities. To me, she is part counselor and part aid facilitator," he said, beaming.

"I feel well now and do not need any more help. What I need the most is a small business to busy myself. Narine promised to help me apply for such programs," he notes, adding that he has a garden in front of the house and is planning to grow tomatoes and cucumbers next year.

I Am a Refugee in My Own Country

"I am a refugee in my own Artsakh," says Armine Arzangulyan, 30, with her eyes betraying the months-long exhaustion. "But as a social worker I have to be strong to help other displaced families."

Arzangulyan, along with at least 40,000 others, has no roof over her head. She fled her home with nothing but the clothes on her back and some personal documents in a hastily packed bag. She is now renting an apartment in Stepanakert where she lives with her two children, her husband, her grandmother, and her father-in-law, a wounded veteran of the first Artsakh war who participated in the 1994 battles to liberate Shushi. He lost his right arm in an explosion.

The kitchen window of her apartment overlooks Shushi, which looks like a ghost city in the darkness of the night. At that window Armine often reminisces about her childhood in the village of Khtsaber and later in Taghavard, where her in-laws lived. Taghavard, in Martuni, was divided by an Artsakh Defense Army checkpoint. Azerbaijani soldiers now stand beyond the boundary line.

Arzangulyan was among the first volunteers to offer help for the post-war chaos. She helped other displaced people find lodging in the middle of winter. "Before the

war I would have never thought that one day I would become a social worker, because I thought it was not important. When I came back to Stepanakert after the war, I began to feel this nudging in my soul to do something. Displaced myself, I had a desire to move beyond distributing food, and to become a part of a systematized social protection unit, which was non-existent in Artsakh. Soon a Facebook announcement grabbed my attention and I applied for the program," she said, as she turned yet another page of a thick notebook where she records information about the displaced families. So far, she has interviewed around 500 families and is currently working with 70 of them.

Psychosocial Support

This new project, launched in February 2021, focuses on psychosocial support free of administrative bureaucracy. The system is based on human rights principles and is intended to build resilience and restore the psychosocial health of vulnerable, displaced individuals and families.

The project aims to place a part- or full-time social worker in every remote village of Artsakh. Social workers would work directly with families to identify their needs and provide support through targeted intervention. While social workers work to solve social and psychological problems on a community level, case managers will work together on a regional level to analyze the big picture.

The Artsakh Ministry of Social Affairs, together with the FAR Children's Center, have interviewed more than 300 candidates to be social workers in the initial phase of the project. Ninety applicants who were selected have received training to work with displaced people. In June 2021, the ministry hired 22 of them as full-time employees.

"This was an evidence-based concept that was generated based on our observations in post-war Artsakh. We saw chaos, desperation, and incomprehensible human suffering. We saw thousands of people in lines in front of the Artsakh Ministry of Social Affairs waiting for humanitarian support packages. Violence against women and children required immediate intervention too," said FAR Children's Center Executive Director Dr. Mira Antonyan.

In the 1990s, during the first Artsakh War, Antonyan worked with displaced people from Artsakh and refugees from Baku and Sumgait while also hosting 14 displaced persons in her own three-room apartment. More than 30 years later she faces the same challenges as the newly-trained social workers do.

"My role in social work is new and I still have to establish myself and my responsibilities. The biggest challenge was dealing with families who lost their close ones in the war and/or have POWs," said Armine Arzangulyan. "At first, we didn't know how to knock on their doors, introduce ourselves, or start a conversation. It was hard to gain credibility with them and try to understand their needs."

"Back in the 1990s when I started my career in this field, people would hardly trust me. Every time I entered a home, people would ask: 'Are you his/her relative? Why are you so concerned about his/her issues? Why do you want to help him/her? What is in it for you?' Having said that, this is

quite a familiar challenge for me and, in the course of these years, I have learned how to deal with it," said Antonyan. "On one hand, these families have been facing insurmountable problems. They feel dehumanized and need time and support. On the other hand, social work is a new phenomenon in Artsakh and people have to understand the need and its importance," she notes.

Developing Institution of Social Workers of Artsakh

Although a substantial number of displaced people have been linked to appropriate resources, including charitable organizations present in Artsakh, many have fallen through the cracks.

"There has also been poor mobilization of government resources to facilitate displaced people's social and psychological recovery and their integration into new realities," said Antonyan. "In the past, the essence of the support to people in need was limited to the provision of monthly allowances, which were given to them year after year. That approach has developed a culture of dependency and did not encourage them to become self-sufficient. Our greatest impact would be that, starting in 2022, with our support, the Artsakh government will use an integrated and holistic approach to provide social and economic support to people in need. This approach will help the population of Artsakh to achieve self-sufficiency by starting their own enterprises or family businesses."

The newly established Master of Social Work program at Mashtots University of Artsakh has also changed the field. Arzangulyan and Beglaryan started the hybrid program in September.

"This is my dream job," said Arzangulyan of her social work career.

Added Antonyan, "Our approach to helping Artsakh is based on the concept that, in this post-war phase, every citizen of Artsakh, young or old, needs encouragement, understanding, and psychological support. This applies to professionals as well as to doctors and healthcare providers who have suffered from burnout, to teachers who find it difficult to formulate clear messages to children, to servicemen who have been injured both physically and psychologically, and to those burdened with other losses. This applies to families who are still searching for their captive and missing relatives, to parents who are suffering, and to children who are struggling to cope with trauma. Everyone needs to be supported."

"People who are experiencing the most vulnerable time in their lives — which relates to almost the entire Artsakh population, and not only to the displaced — should have anchors to rely on, to connect them with resources and find solutions to their complex problems. It is these anchors that we want to develop through our project."

"That is why we believe that there is a need for a social worker in every village, in every region. Artsakh needs psychosocial community centers, family support, child protection, and family strengthening programs. My dream is to be able to help more people than we can today."

"In other words, the overarching goal of our project is to train our beneficiaries to grow and become good, professional social workers so that not only will they acquire the skills and knowledge that a social worker needs, but so that they also become the ambassadors of the new mission in Artsakh, a moral mission of empowering the people of this wounded republic and addressing both private and public issues," concluded Antonyan.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

IS Member Found Guilty Of Genocide against Yazidis, Sentenced to Life

FRANKFURT (BBC) — An Iraqi member of the Islamic State (IS) group was found guilty of genocide against the Yazidi religious minority on November 30 in a landmark German trial.

A court in Frankfurt sentenced Taha al-Jumailly to life for crimes including the murder of a Yazidi girl in Iraq.

The jihadist was accused of enslaving the five-year-old in 2015, chaining her up and leaving her to die of thirst.

Al-Jumailly is the first IS member to be convicted of genocide against the Yazidis.

During the trial his defense lawyers rejected the allegations.

The Yazidis, a Kurdish-speaking minority, were persecuted by IS after the jihadist group seized large swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq beginning in 2014.

Thousands of men were killed and women and children were enslaved and raped when IS fighters stormed into the ancestral heartland of the Yazidis in northern Iraq.

In 2016, the United Nations said IS had committed genocide against the Yazidi community.

Kim Kardashian West Helps Evacuate Afghan Women Soccer Team

LONDON (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Members of Afghanistan's women's youth development soccer team arrived in Britain early Thursday, November 18 after being flown from Pakistan with the help of a New York rabbi, a U.K. soccer club and reality TV star Kim Kardashian West, CBS reports.

A plane chartered by the beauty mogul and carrying more than 30 teenage players and their families, about 130 people in all, landed at Stansted Airport near London. The Afghans will spend 10 days in coronavirus quarantine before starting new lives in Britain.

English Premier League club Leeds United has offered to support the players.

Erdogan Says Turkey Ready to Mediate between Ukraine and Russia

ISTANBUL (Reuters) — Turkey is ready to act as a mediator between Ukraine and Russia, President Tayyip Erdogan was cited as saying by broadcaster NTV on November 29.

"It is our hope that this region does not become a region dominated by war," Erdogan said. "Let this region walk into the future as a region dominated by peace."

"It is our desire that the attitude in this matter develops in a positive direction. There could be a mediation about this, we will discuss this issue with them, we would like to have a share in the solution of this by developing these talks both with Ukraine and with Mr. Putin," he added on his return from Turkmenistan.

Few Details Available from Pashinyan, Putin, Aliyev Talks

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launch specific projects as soon as possible in order to tap the economic potential of the region. The Russian Federation will continue to provide all necessary assistance in the interest of normalizing relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia, creating an atmosphere of trust between the Azerbaijani and Armenian peoples, as well as building good-neighborly relations in the region," the statement added.

After their talks that, according to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, lasted for about three hours, the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia also made statements for the press, in which all described the meeting as positive.

"We have worked very constructively today. It was a deep analysis of the current situation," said Putin, adding that agreements had been reached" on a number of key issues. "

"The first of them is the creation of mechanisms of the delimitation and demarcation of the border between the two states, which we have agreed to do by the end of this year. I hope it will be done as soon as possible. There are no obstacles to the creation of these mechanisms," the Russian leader said.

Putin said that "significant progress" was also made on issues of humanitarian nature. He did not elaborate.

He also said that the parties discussed in detail issues of developing economic ties and primarily the issue of unblocking "transport corridors."

"It concerns both railway and road links. I think that here we should thank our vice-premiers who have been working on this issue for quite a long time now," the Russian president said.

He said that as part of the agreements made during the November 26 talks deputy prime ministers of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan will gather in Moscow next week "to summarize some results and announce the decisions that we have coordinated today."

In his remarks Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev expressed a hope that the Sochi talks will lead to results that will make the situation in the South Caucasus "more secure and predictable."

"Today we had a very detailed and I would say frank conversation on issues of border delimitation and demarcation and unblocking of transport arteries. We openly discussed our plans, we openly discussed issues that cause concern with both sides. The most important thing is that the decisions that we've made in the issue of settling disputes, differences will contribute to a more secure and predictable situation in the South Caucasus," he said.

Aliyev said that Baku also sees willingness from the Armenian side "to create preconditions for the situation in the region to become more predictable."

"I have repeatedly said that in Azerbaijan we feel like turning over the page of many years of confrontation with Armenia to begin a stage of normal interaction," Aliyev said. "I think our meeting will lead to good results that will not make us wait for too long."

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in his remarks described the meeting as "very positive," saying that "we have, in fact, discussed all issues of the agenda."

"This was not a meeting to hide problems. This was a meeting during which we openly discussed all issues. I want to point out that it is very positive that on many issues we clarified our positions, and it turned out that on some issues we have no misinterpretations as it would seem before this meeting. I want to say that, indeed, we stated that in regards to the issue of the opening of all transport and economic links in the region we have a common idea as to how these links will work," Pashinyan said.

"On the whole, I too assess today's talks very positively. I think we can expect concrete results if we manage to build on the dynamics of our talks," Pashinyan said.

"I reaffirm the readiness of Armenia and its government that has received a man-

date from the people of Armenia to open a peaceful era for our country and our region. This is what we are striving for and today's meeting is beneficial for the realization of this agenda," the Armenian leader added.

"Unfortunately, not all issues have been settled. I know about tragic incidents at the borders in which people have been killed and wounded on both sides. These are things that require special attention on our part." "Strictly speaking, it is for this purpose that we've also gathered together today, that is, to avoid such incidents in the future," Putin said, as quoted by the Kremlin.

"The goal of all our efforts is to create conditions for the revival of the region, for people there to feel secure and be able to engage in economic activities, which will have a favorable impact on the living standards of people in both countries. It also has a great importance to Russia, considering the special nature of relations it has with Armenia and Azerbaijan. For centuries we lived as part of a common state. We have deep historical ties. One would not want these ties to be destroyed. On the contrary, we should seek to restore and maintain them in the future," Putin said.

The Armenian leader said that despite the fact that the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan is neither delimited nor demarcated, "the state frontier still exists."

Pashinyan also said that the point of the ceasefire agreement concerning the return of all prisoners of war and other detainees has not been fully implemented by Azerbaijan yet. He also reiterated Yerevan's position that Nagorno-Karabakh settlement should proceed within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Minsk Group.

Pashinyan and Aliyev are scheduled to meet in Brussels on December 15 on the sidelines of the European Union's Eastern Partnership Summit. The two leaders agreed on the meeting following talks with European Council President Charles Michel last week.

Ballet Dancer Gor Sargsyan Wins Gomel Fest International Art Festival

GOMEL, Beralus (Panorama.am) — Armenian ballet dancer Gor Sargsyan has won Grand Prix at the Third Gomel Fest International Art Festival held in Gomel, Belarus from November 18 to 21, becoming its absolute winner.

Gor is an artist from the ballet troupe of the Armenian National Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet named after Alexander Spendiaryan, it said on Sunday, November 28.

The Gomel Fest International Art Festival brought together 300 ballet dancers from 15 countries.





INTERNATIONAL



Protesters in Berlin Call for Azerbaijani Forces To Withdraw from Armenia, Return POWs

BERLIN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Several German-Armenian associations protested in Berlin on weekend, raising awareness about the situation around Armenia and Republic of Artsakh and human rights violations by Azerbaijan.

In a statement addressed to the Bundestag, the AGBU Germany, the Armenisch-Akademischer Verein-1860 e.V., the Armenische Kulturgemeinde Leipzig e.V., Hay Stab Germany and the Theophanu Club Germany, on behalf of the wider German-Armenian community called upon the German Government and Bundestag to:

- Assume a role in peacebuilding between the two nations and demand Azerbaijani government to remove its troops from the

- sovereign territory of Armenia as a precondition for negotiating a lasting peace in the Southern Caucasus;
- Urge Azerbaijan to fully and expeditiously complete the return of all Armenian POWs, detainees and the remains of any deceased Armenians during or after the war;
- Condemn Azerbaijan for violating international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions; and
- Assume a leadership role in defending the victims of human rights violations and implement sanctions towards Azerbaijan as a measure for violating the Geneva Conventions and refusing to immediately release all Armenian POWs.

Masdar Signs Agreement to Develop Armenia’s Largest Solar Power Plant

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — On November 29 Masdar signed an agreement with the Government of the Republic of Armenia to develop a 200-mega-watt (MW) solar photovoltaic (PV) plant. The Ayg-1 project will be Armenia’s largest utility-scale solar plant.

The Government Support Agreement (GSA) was signed by Gnel Sanosyan, Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Republic of Armenia, and Mohamed Jameel Al Ramahi, Chief Executive Officer of Masdar, at a ceremony in Yerevan.

Sanosyan commented: “The gradual increase of renewable sources in our coun-

try’s energy system is one of the priorities set by the Government of Armenia. We regard this cooperation with Masdar as an important step towards this goal, as well as towards endorsing Armenia’s investment potential. The Ayg-1 industrial 200 MW solar plant project is a milestone on this road. We expect the signing of this document to mark the start of a fruitful and lasting cooperation on this and for new upcoming projects.”

The Ayg-1 project will be developed on a design, finance, build, own, and operate basis and the project company will be 85 percent owned by Masdar, with the Armenian National Interests Fund (ANIF),

a government-owned investment vehicle, holding 15 percent. In July, the Armenian Government announced that Masdar was the winning bidder for the project, having submitted a tariff of \$0.0290 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) in a competitive process.

Ahlam Rashid Ahmed AlAbd AlSalami, Chargé d’Affaires of the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, said: “This agreement will strengthen the already powerful ties that exist between the United Arab Emirates and the Republic of Armenia. The UAE and Armenia are united in our commitment to take positive action against climate change, while creating greater economic opportunities and this project marks a key stage in Armenia’s clean energy journey and our hopes for this project to serve as an exemplary success to attract opportunities for Armenia from the UAE.”

David Papazian, Chief Executive Officer of ANIF commented: “We are glad to welcome Masdar into Armenia’s journey towards the decarbonization of the country’s energy supply. Ayg-1 is an ambitious step towards the fulfillment of this goal, and Masdar’s expertise and experience in the field is key to the success of the project. Ayg-1 is set to become a highly visible investment project, benefitting the country, its citizens and investors, while committing to highest sustainability standards in the industry.”

Al Ramahi added, “This agreement marks a milestone on Armenia’s clean energy journey, and the development of this



Mohamed Jameel Al Ramahi, Chief Executive Officer of Masdar and Gnel Sanosyan, Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure in Armenia

Russia ‘Ready’ To Help Armenia, Turkey Normalize Relations

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) — Russia is ready to promote efforts to repair relations between Armenia and Turkey, a Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said on November 25, confirming that Yerevan has made a request for Russian mediation in the mending of ties with Ankara.

Maria Zakharova said during a weekly news briefing in Moscow that Russia is interested in this process and has made efforts on the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations before.

“Our country is ready to further promote this process in every possible way. The launch of this process, as we believe, would undoubtedly contribute to the improvement of the general situation in the region,” the diplomat said.

Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesman Vahan Hunanyan told RFE / RL’s Armenian Service earlier this week that Yerevan had informed Moscow that it was ready for normalization with Ankara without preconditions and asked for its mediation in the process.

During the news briefing Zakharova also stressed that Russia is “taking all measures to restore economic ties and transport links in the region.”

“We are taking all steps to establish a peaceful life and strengthen stability in the region. Special attention, of course, is now paid to the restoration and development of trade and economic ties and transport links,” the official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan reiterated Yerevan’s readiness to normalize its relations with Ankara during an online press conference on Tuesday, but he warned that such a process cannot take place if Turkey presses conditions like Azerbaijan’s getting an extraterritorial corridor to its western Nakhichevan exclave via Armenia.

“We want to normalize our relations with Turkey. We cannot discuss any corridor issue. But we want to discuss opening of regional transport links,” Pashinyan said.

Pashinyan and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan exchanged public statements in August about reciprocal “positive signals” for normalizing relations after decades of feud over historical events, including the Ottoman-era massacres of Armenians that over two dozen governments in the world recognize as the first genocide of the 20th century.

project will support the nation’s sustainable economic development. We look forward to working with the Armenian National Interests Fund on further opportunities in this field, and leveraging the experience we have gained as a global leader in renewable energy projects to support the diversification of Armenia’s energy mix.”

The Ayg-1 plant will be located between the Talin and Dashtadem communities of Armenia, in an area where solar radiation is high and land is unusable for agricultural purposes. The plant will span over 500 hectares, and will create numerous direct and indirect jobs.



INTERNATIONAL

The Dynamic Development In Armenian-German Relations

(The following exclusive interview was conducted by correspondent Muriel Mirak-Weissbach with Ashot Smbatyan, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia in Berlin, at the conclusion of his term, on November 26.)

Through your association with Germany for almost 30 years, as a scholar, a teacher and a diplomat both here and in Yerevan, you have witnessed truly historic developments, German reunification and Armenian independence. What would you regard as your biggest achievements on the post of Ambassador and which events made the greatest impact on your life and memories?

Taking a retrospective look at the Armenian-German relations of the last six years, it would not be an exaggeration to describe them as dynamically developing and reflecting the interests of the two countries at both bilateral and multilateral levels.

In terms of both chronology and importance, the year 2016 should unequivocally be singled out. The adoption of the resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide by the German Bundestag on June 2, 2016 was not only a step forward in the process of the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, but also reflected Germany's attitude towards such crimes against humanity. Furthermore, the adoption of the resolution opened a new page in Armenian-German relations, drawing the attention of German society not only to the process of the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, but also to Armenia itself, as a country with a rich cultural heritage and of possible political, economic and other significance for Europe.

In recent years, there have been numerous bilateral official visits. From the Armenian side, in particular, two official visits by the Presidents, two official visits by the Prime Minister, and one official visit of the Speaker of the National Assembly have taken place in recent years. By the way, the previous visit on the level of the Speaker of the Armenian Parliament to Germany took place more than 20 years ago.

Meanwhile, in 2018 the German Chancellor paid the first-ever official visit to Armenia. Of course, it was a sig-



Ambassador Smbatyan

nificant event in terms of deepening cooperation in political, economic and other fields. In this context, I would also like to emphasize the opening of the TUMO Center in Berlin, which became a reality thanks to the initiative and dedication of Federal Chancellor Merkel.

The fact that the German Economic Union was estab-



Ambassador Smbatyan with Chancellor Angela Merkel

lished in Armenia during these years and a number of visits of German businessmen to Armenia took place also prove the wide economic representation of Germany in Armenia.

I am glad to note that this year Lufthansa, the largest German airline, resumed flights from Frankfurt am Main to Yerevan.

As for the relations in the field of education and science, it is gratifying that the German side is also coming up with initiatives of its own. During recent years, the Goethe Center was opened in Yerevan, which is a crucial stage in the establishment of a full-fledged Goethe Institute. I am really hopeful that in the near future the Goethe Institute will be fully operational in Armenia.

Continuing the topic of scientific-educational cooperation, I would like to single out the cooperation agreements between several Armenian and German universities, in particular, between the Yerevan State University (YSU) and Friedrich Schiller University Jena, YSU and Saarland University, YSU and Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Yerevan State Medical University and Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg, National Polytechnic University of Armenia and Cologne University of Applied Sciences, and so on.

Bright examples of the deepening of decentralized cooperation were the establishment of partnerships between the cities of Yerevan-Leipzig, Gyumri-Halle, as well as Davtashen-Muggensturm, Getap-Zuchau communities.

In Germany, several centers of Armenology continue their activities. For instance, the MESROP Center for Armenology at the Martin Luther University in Halle plays a unique role in this regard. Besides, the Lepsius House in Potsdam has also made a significant contribution to the study of the Armenian Genocide. Not to mention the Institute for Diaspora and Genocide Studies at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum.

In recent years, the number of honorary consuls of Armenia in Germany has increased by 5. At present, there are offices of Honorary Consuls of the Republic of Armenia in Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hamburg, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein. It should be noted that the honorary consuls carry out their tasks very effectively, for which I am immensely thankful.

Thus, I can confidently announce that every effort has been exerted to solve the problems we face in favor of deepening cooperation between our two countries.

Do you think there are lessons to be drawn from the German experience for the further development of democracy in Armenia?

It is no secret that Armenia is a young democracy. From this point of view, it has a lot to learn from established European democracies, including Germany. Some aspects of democracy, of course, can be borrowed from the German political system, which, by the way, has already been done to some extent in the form of the introduction of the parliamentary system of government in Armenia, which is very similar to the German model. At the same time, these reforms should also be adapted to the peculiarities of Armenia's political culture.

As you might know, the electoral systems of Armenia and Germany are more or less similar. Armenia is trying to increase the role of political parties in democratic decision-making at both state and regional levels. Personally, I would like to see the political parties of Armenia resemble the German ones, in particular – to have a rigid ideological basis, when supporters focus on the ideas and the programs proposed by the given party. From this point of view, we have a lot to learn from the German experience.

Three years ago at the Lepsius House in Potsdam, you spoke about Armenia's efforts to strike a balance in foreign relations, considering what you called its "geographical interface between Europe and Asia."



INTERNATIONAL

Armenia had been developing closer ties with Europe and the European Union and at the same time maintaining good relations with countries of the former Soviet Union. How do you evaluate the current situation?

Indeed, the geographical location of Armenia and the overall region is such that it can act as a bridge between Europe and Asia. This approach has been one of the underlying pillars of Armenia's foreign policy for many years. In this context, on the one hand, Russia remains a strategic ally of Armenia. At the same time, Armenia is also a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), and attaches high importance to cooperation in these formats.

On the other hand, Armenia maintains close partnership with the European Union (EU), as well as with its member states on a bilateral level. Since the independence of Armenia, the EU has made a great contribution to the implementation of reforms in a number of spheres in Armenia, providing great support to the democratization processes. As you know, since 2009 the EU has launched the Eastern Partnership (EaP) framework, which, along with 5 other countries, includes Armenia. As a result of the deepening ties within the EaP, in 2017 the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was signed between Armenia and the EU, which opened a new stage in Armenia-EU relations and outlined the prospects of cooperation for the coming years. We can even call it the "constitution" of today's Armenia-EU relations. Due to the ongoing democratization process in Armenia, there is solid ground to expect a further increase in EU financial and other assistance.

Summing up the topic and attaching high importance to the cooperation with the EU, I would also like to mention that Armenian society, which has chosen the path of democracy, was expecting more from the EU during last year's 44-day war. I am hopeful that this will be taken into consideration and properly analyzed by our European colleagues.

The 44-day war in Artsakh last year has led to a dramatic deterioration in the region and fear of renewed aggression by Azerbaijan. How do you think the Minsk Group of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) could make progress towards a just diplomatic solution?

The OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship remains the only internationally recognized format aimed at the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It should be noted that the essence and the underlying problem of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict - the issue of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh - has not been resolved yet. This can only be achieved through the expression of the will by the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. Today, the destructive stance of Azerbaijan greatly hinders the work of the OSCE MG. On the one hand, Azerbaijan, while in front of the international community hypocritically rooting for peaceful coexistence and peace in the region, refuses to return Armenian prisoners, disregarding the respective provision of the November 9 trilateral declaration, which clearly states that both sides are obliged to return all prisoners and which the Armenian side has fully implemented. Moreover, since May 2021, Azerbaijan has been carrying out aggression against the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia, with another episode of the latter taking place literally several days ago. Talking about peaceful coexistence of the two peoples, while targeting and killing civilians carrying out agricultural, construction and other work, which has happened quite recently, are simply incompatible.

Thus, it is too early to talk about stable peace or effective

negotiations until Azerbaijan stops its reckless and irresponsible behavior. The desire and the outstretched hand of one side alone is never enough for establishing lasting peace.

As for the position of the German government, Armenia has always appreciated the balanced stance of Germany. As a member of the OSCE Minsk Group, Germany has always supported the peace negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE MG Co-Chairs. Germany has always paid close attention to the ongoing processes over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and tried to promote the peaceful settlement of the conflict.

In addition, it should be noted that today the EU can provide targeted humanitarian assistance to the Armenian population of Artsakh, thus contributing to the stabilization of the situation in the region. In this regard, why not, we should also expect active steps from Berlin.

Armenia, like Germany, has a rich cultural heritage, in literature, art and architecture, and especially music. Fruitful collaboration has developed among cultural institutions of the two countries, including the Matenadaran and the Fraunhofer Institute, the German Academic Exchange Service, as well as tours by the Little Singers of Armenia and the Ars Musica



Ambassador Smbatyan with German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier

chorus, as well as the Armenian Cultural Days held in several cities, and the twin city partnerships. How do you think this cooperation can be further nurtured?

As you rightly mentioned, the cooperation between Armenia and Germany in the fields of culture and art has been quite effective so far. The main idea here is not only to preserve those well-established relations, but also to search for new common points, which, in the end, can pave the way for new spheres of cooperation. For example, last year, with the support of the German government and the International Search and Rescue (ISAR) organization, 16 leading German health professionals traveled to Armenia to assist Armenian specialists in the fight against Covid-19. This is a rather vivid example of cooperation in a "new field".

In my opinion, the proper presentation of our centuries-old and rich culture should have a strategic place in our foreign policy, because both in terms of cultural presentability and the performance skills of our talented cultural figures, it is totally possible to present and expand

Armenia's cultural wealth abroad, while also making Armenia attractive for foreigners.

Historians have appreciated the way Germany has dealt with its past, working through the history of the Shoah and building a culture of remembrance. In recent years, there have been initiatives to honor the victims of the Ottoman genocide, like the Altars of Remembrance at the Evangelical Luisenkirchhof in Berlin-Charlottenburg, Khachkars in Berlin and elsewhere, as well as the annual April 24 commemorations. Yet, classroom instruction about the Genocide is still very rare, despite the fact that the 2016 resolution passed by the Bundestag called for such programs to be introduced. Do you have any thoughts about this?

Indeed, the adoption of the resolution on the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the German Bundestag on June 2, 2016 was a key event through which the German legislative body properly assessed the crimes committed by Ottoman Turkey against Armenians in the early 20th century. This resolution, together with the statements by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany Joachim Gauck and the President of the Bundestag Prof. Dr. Norbert Lammert, made on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, are a valuable contribution of Germany not only to the process of international recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide, but also in the context of the universal struggle against genocides and the prevention of such crimes against humanity.

I think that Germany, as a country which has courageously embraced its history and which serves as a clear bearer of the politics of memory, can also contribute to incorporating the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide into the overall "European memory." In this regard, your question was very relevant, because it is through education, especially during school years, that we should talk about such crimes. That is how one should prevent them.

You mentioned *Khachkars* or monuments in different German cities, yes, they not only symbolize and perpetuate the memory of the victims, but also have educational significance, because everyone who visits these places understands the essence of the issue.

This provision has always been in the center of our attention. I think that both the Embassy and the Armenian community have a lot to do here, as it is officially only in 4 states, where the topic of the Armenian Genocide is included in the educational programs. But Germany has 16 states, so there is a lot of work to be done.

It should be noted that the German Conference of Ministers of Culture, which coordinates school education in Germany, has also submitted a proposal to the states, whereby each of them has to discuss and make a decision on the issue. Of course, the Armenian community also has some work to bring the issue to the attention of Landtags (State Parliaments) in these states.

With the recognition of the Namibian Genocide, the German government once again showed its special attitude towards the politics of memory. It should not be forgotten that back in 2016 Mr. Wirtz, the then spokesman of the Chancellor, had told the German media the day before the resolution on the Armenian Genocide was adopted, that the Chancellor supported the Resolution.

There are several German intellectuals of Turkish descent here who have dealt with the genocide in art, filmmaker Fatih Akin, for example, and the recently deceased novelist and playwright Doğan Akhanlı. How do you evaluate the role of such artistic endeavors in the process of education, dialogue and remembrance?

Indeed, the topic of the Armenian Genocide, as one of the most catastrophic events of the 20th century, has not been overlooked by various artists of the world, including those of Turkish origin, which is definitely commendable. In this context, I would also like to mention the Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk.

I personally attended the premiere of director Fatih Akin's "The Cut," I also knew Doğan Akhanlı in person, who, unfortunately, passed away prematurely. One of their most important missions is that they bravely and honestly tried to communicate with Turkish society in their mother tongue, Turkish, and to present the realities. Unfortunately, looking back, we can say that years ago the Turkish intelligentsia was much more courageous in this regard than lately, given the decline of democracy in Turkey in recent years. Therefore, such people should always be encouraged and supported.

Thank you, Your Excellency. Our best wishes to you and the people of the Republic of Armenia.



Community News

Want to Try Zhengyalov Hatz In Downtown Washington, D.C.?

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

WASHINGTON — It was about seven years ago. “Can we meet at an Armenian restaurant?,” asked Alexis Ohanian, the co-founder of Reddit, in an email. I was looking forward to interviewing the prominent Armenian internet entrepreneur, and Alexis had kindly agreed to meet during his upcoming visit to Washington. He wanted to meet at an Armenian cafe. Guess what my answer was: I am sorry, Alexis, but there is no Armenian restaurant in Washington. For years, I had to repeat this type of exchange. Why was there no Armenian café or restaurant in the US capital, when Armenian cuisine is so delicious and the Armenian community is so well organized?

When Arman and his wife Stella moved to Washington nine years ago, this awkward situation drew their attention too. “An Armenian cafe was long overdue, said Arman, when we sat down for an interview in his recently-opened cafe in Adams Morgan area of Washington, D.C. They started their preparations about a year ago.

In May of 2021, social media broadcast the long-delayed update: an Armenian cafe called Yerevan would be opening in Washington very soon. “Not only Armenians come,” Arman continued. “Ever since we set up



The entrance to Yerevan Market and Café

Yerevan, people from the neighborhood or tourists have been frequent visitors.” Armenian coffee, yogurt drink, lavash, gata, lahmajoon, qufta, eggplant caviar, honey-cakes, and perhaps the most popular of all, Artsakh’s authentic flatbreads stuffed with herbs, are served here. Americans learn how to pronounce the latter’s name, zhengyalov hatz as, they like the organic herb-stuffed bread rolls.

“Everyone likes them a lot. It’s natural [and] delicious. It’s not uncommon when we are sold out of them,” Arman added. Indeed, it’s hard to find chercherok, semsemok, tetapashar, and all these ingredients with strange Armenian names in the United States.

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Ari Wartanian, right, with Congressman Barney Frank, Chairman of House Financial Services Committee 2007-2011

Ari Wartanian Works for Civil Rights through Change for Progress

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BRIGHTON, Mass. —There is a stereotype that most Armenians go into careers for the money and personal advancement, but this is belied by the plethora of Armenians in the arts and academia. There are also some Armenians who follow their own piper and work for the realization of ideals such as human rights or civil rights. Ari Shahe Wartanian is one such individual. Two years ago, as a 36-year-old, he founded the organization Change for Progress (<http://changeforprogress.com/>), which primarily strives to improve voting rights in the United States, but he started working for civil rights many years earlier in his college days.

Education and Military

Wartanian traversed a long and complicated career path, learning not only through formal education but a variety of jobs in different fields. Born in the United States of parents from Lebanon, Wartanian studied political science and history at Boston University. He said when he started college he was totally focused on rowing crew the first two years, from 2000 to 2002, “but crew was not taking me where I wanted to go.” However, perhaps as foreshadowing his future focus, he did work four months as a field organizer for the Fund for Public Interest in 2000, and later, in 2002, for three months as an assistant field manager and campaign coordinator, supporting energy efficiency and renewable energy.

One day, Wartanian went to an army recruiting station where he saw a poster of a guy jumping out of an airplane. That triggered something in him. Wartanian said that he asked whether he could do that, and they promised that if he signed up they would get him to Airborne School. “So I got to jump out of planes with the 18th Airborne Corps when I was in the military, which was really cool. I did my five jumps and got my Airborne wings,” Wartanian exclaimed.

He went through what is called One Station Unit Training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and learned to work as part of a four-man cannon crew as part of a larger team, but afterwards, when he was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia, in March 2003, the Iraq War broke out. He worked the telephones to patch through morale calls to soldiers from their loved ones, as well as working checkpoints to protect the base and shipping care packages overseas to troops.

After his two years of active service was completed, Wartanian came back to Boston University to complete his education. The G.I. Bill helped with his tuition and expenses while he remained part of the Individual Ready Reserve for six years.

Focus on Civil Rights in the South

What happened next changed his outlook on life and his future. Hurricane Katrina caused great damage to life and property in late August 2005, especially to New Orleans and surrounding areas, and the situation there worsened when Hurricane Rita struck the next month, in September. Thousands of Americans could not return to their homes.

Wartanian said, “I think hearing growing up from my grandmother about what it was like growing up in a Syrian refugee camp — she being a child of genocide survivors — made me connect with internally displaced people of all cultures.”

continued on next page

Davidian Receives SAS Outstanding Dissertation Award

FRESNO — The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) announced this week that Dr. Vazken Khatchig Davidian has been chosen to receive the SAS Distinguished Dissertation Award (2017-2020) for his dissertation “The Figure of the Bantoukhd Hamal of Constantinople: Late Nineteenth-Century Representations of Migrant Workers from Ottoman Armenia.” The SAS Award is accompanied by a \$1,000 prize. Dr. Hrag Papazian’s “Contesting Armenianness: Plurality, Segregation and Multilateral Boundary Making among Armenians in Contemporary Turkey,” received an honorary mention.

Davidian’s thesis examines late nineteenth century visual representations of the subaltern figure of the bantoukhd (migrant worker) from Ottoman Armenia, synonymous — in both Russian Armenian and Ottoman Armenian contemporary popular imaginations — with the iconic hamal (porter) of Constantinople. The period under scrutiny spans the two decades loosely bookended by the immediate aftermath of the Rus-



Vazken Davidian

so-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 and the Armenian Massacres of 1894-1897, a significant historical period that experienced, among others: the internationalization of the so-called Armenian Question; the fraying of the relationship between the Ottoman State and its Armenian population; the unprecedented increase in labor migration from Ottoman Armenia to Constantinople; the advent of a social-reformist intellectual movement, the so-called Constantinople Realists; and the spearheading of notions towards the ‘salvation’ of Ottoman Armenia as a cause by Russian Armenian intellectuals.

Dr. Davidian commented on the award saying, “I am deeply honored and sincerely moved by the recognition conferred upon my dissertation by the Society of Armenian Studies and the Selection Committee. The dissertation was a labor of love by a mature student, arriving to academic pursuits later in life, and was driven by a desire to engage with the

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COMMUNITY NEWS

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Consequently, he made three short trips to Louisiana to do civil rights work from 2006 to 2007 while he was a college student through Common Ground Relief, Inc., a social services organization in New Orleans. He tried to provide the refugees social services and document human rights violations. He said, “Civil rights work in the Black South was my way of expressing my Armenian identity, by saying, these people need help, and I need to help them.”

He collected information to support a class action suit, *Anderson v. Jackson*, against the Bush Administration’s Department of Housing and Urban Development for violating the 5th and 14th Amendments for deprivation of property without due process of law, since people were not allowed to return to their homes, as well as violating the Geneva Convention. Furthermore, the US Housing Act of 1937 says that the federal government should provide housing to people in need, while the Civil Rights Act of 1968 includes the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race in providing housing.

Wartanian explained that these three trips “opened my eyes to a social condition present in every city and state in the Union, and it made it clear to me that we needed civil rights on a universal basis for all God’s children.” Quoting Robert F. Kennedy’s June 1966 speech in Cape Town, South Africa, Wartanian pointed out that it is youth who must break down the barriers of race, religion, social class and ignorance, not those who cling to “the cruelties and the obstacles of this swiftly changing planet.”

Though this was such an important turning point in Wartanian’s life, he said, “I kind of fell into all this. It was natural, very organic. I had no idea that I would ever be in the military or that I would be a civil rights worker.” During this process, his parents, he said, “screamed bloody murder,” both for joining the army, and then the trips down south.

After graduating Boston University, Wartanian wanted to continue to help the people displaced from their homes in the South, and founded an organization called Civil Rights Council, which later became called Civil Rights Pilot. Its goal was to support the passage of a law called the Gulf Coast Housing Recovery Act (in the Senate S. 1668 and in the House HR 1227), which asked for \$7 billion to protect the housing of people displaced by the hurricanes in Texas, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

Why a standalone organization for this? Wartanian responded that there was no real field presence to lobby for this law. The reason why he focused on Massachusetts though the problem was centered in the South, he said, was that this state had political representatives at that time who were disproportionately influential on a national scale, including Senators Ted Kennedy and John Kerry, and Governor Duval Patrick.

The Civil Rights Pilot was not very large, with 1,700 members, which still was a respectable number, Wartanian said. There was a board of 6 or 7 volunteers, but Wartanian was the only paid staff member. Field work and lobbying contributed to Congress approving 50 million dollars of community development block grants for Alabama but the larger \$7-billion agenda was only accepted by the House and died in the Senate.

Wartanian said, “I thought that we could do field work and have an impact. We did have an impact, but it was not as strong as we were hoping for. With all of us being novices, we were unable to fully leverage our strengths to pass a 7-billion-dollar bill. We were trying something that was very difficult so I forgive us for not being totally successful...Look at Armenian Genocide recognition: it took 100 years but eventually we overcame.”

The Civil Rights Pilot was disbanded after 27 months (2007-2010). Wartanian said, “The country had moved on. It was an unsuccessful first attempt of a young organizer but it was good. I learned a lot and it was worth doing.”

Transition Period

After this, for the next five years Wartanian did a variety of different jobs. He worked for over two years for the US Department of Veterans Affairs, investigating policies and practices concerning the terminally ill and monitoring violations of the rights of the latter. He then worked five months as a volunteer relief worker for the Inter-



Aris Wartanian, right, with journalist David Zenian, 2018

national Rescue Committee in Baltimore. Wartanian recalled that the refugees came from a lot of different countries, including Nepal. He would help new arrivals in various ways, preparing clothing for them and sorting through donated goods. He helped prepare presentations that translators would give in various languages so the new refugees would learn how basic issues should be solved in the US. This included training in financial literacy and budgeting.

From March to August 2012, he worked at Erikson Senior Living in Baltimore, which was an assisted living home. He operated the switchboard to connect calls for the residents and ran the reception area.

He took a few graduate courses in social work from 2012-2013 at the University of Maryland, after which he served as an intern for five months in 2014 in the US Senate for Senator Barbara Ann Mikulski of Maryland, doing legislative research, attending hearings and answering correspondence.

An old friend of Wartanian’s mother from Beirut opened the door to a new position in Washington, as the latter was a trustee of the Armenian Assembly of America. Consequently, Wartanian worked at the Assembly as a Fellow from 2015 to 2018, doing the daily morning news briefings. He covered topics such as incidents on the line of contact between Armenia and Artsakh and Azerbaijan, exchange of prisoners, demining, and the Syrian refugee crisis. He contacted Congress to make the case for Armenian Genocide recognition and did various other tasks. Wartanian reminisced: “I had a great experience. It was very educational and informative. You learn what is going on in Capitol Hill and you learn about the Armenian newspapers.”

While working at the Assembly, Wartanian also served for six months in 2016 as the director of the Chesapeake Zen Center in Maryland, where he led Zen meditation.

He realized by the end of this period in his life that he was ready to establish his own organization to work for civil rights.

Change for Progress

Wartanian moved to Brighton, a neighborhood of Boston. He had become interested in voting rights while working for change in the South and thought more about universal civil rights while working for Senator Mikulski. Wartanian recruited two people, James F. White, who is retired but has served on the Disability Access Advisory Committee for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and worked as warranty administrator for General Motors for several decades, and Marie Suchan, a New York city Department of Education school teacher who had worked with the disabled and now is teaching science, to form a three-member

and decides what position Change for Progress should take on upcoming legislation.

He explained: “It helps to seek forward motion on a broader range of issues. We can’t always be assured that the voting rights provisions that we are seeking will go through, so if we embrace a greater portfolio of issues, we are more likely to achieve success.”

Ideologically, it is a liberal organization. Wartanian said, “I like to say we are liberal but we are not crazy. Our views align somewhere in-between those of the Congressional Progressive Caucus and the Blue Dogs. We are liberal but are practical. We want to get things done.”

He gave the example of the \$6 trillion infrastructure and social spending legislative package proposed by Senator Bernie Sanders as costing too much money, whereas the \$3.5 trillion version would have been just right. He concluded, “I like to say we are Kennedy liberals. You focus on the 80 percent around the [political] center that most people can agree upon, and then go from there.”

There are other organizations working on the same issues as Change for Progress, Wartanian declared, most notably People for the American Way, under the leadership of Ben Jealous. However, Wartanian pointed out that while a variety of groups are pushing for voter rights, there is no real field presence for the Freedom to Vote Act in Massachusetts, and this is what is different about Change to Progress’s efforts. He added that the weekly call to action on its website on a variety of other issues about which people are not always aware also distinguishes its work

What Comes Next?

Change for Progress is in a pilot phase. Wartanian revealed that its weekly Facebook posts reach anywhere from 50 to 80 people, while its petitions obtain somewhere in the realm of 2,000 signatures. He said that the constrictions of the pandemic created great difficulties for the organization’s outreach activities and fundraising. This meant he could not be paid any longer after March 2020, but he continued working 15-20 hours a week because, he said, “It is a labor of love. You have to make sacrifices if you choose to work on a startup. You live like you are still in college.” Wartanian said he continues to maintain the organization’s website, does field organizing, organizes petitioning of Congress for passage of legislation, registers voters, recruits volunteers, and in general educates the public for the protection of civil rights.

Optimistically, Wartanian declared: “We survived the pandemic, which is what matters, and we are still around. We can grow. Now we can put people in the field to knock on doors, since most people have had two vaccinations and the booster shot is coming out. We are going to keep on going.”

The way to become a full-scale program is to recruit new cadres, Wartanian said, and there are two ways Change for Progress will attempt to do this. In the summer, it will run a field canvas, recruiting people to go out and knock on doors to talk to voters and persuade them to support the Freedom to Vote Act. Secondly, it will recruit volunteers from college campuses in Massachusetts to get petition signatures and do telephone calling.

The goal more specifically for the summer is to find 5 to 15 people to knock on doors and get the message out that way, along with 5-10 part-time volunteers to work on telephones from the office space of the organization at Reservoir Towers. Either Wartanian himself or a new volunteer will serve as coordinator of these new forces. Wartanian said that it will take a couple of years to see whether Change for Progress can move forward and succeed in its mission, but his commitment to civil rights clearly is unwavering no matter the vehicle he may use to express it.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Hola from Montevideo

MONTEVIDEO, from page 1

As it turns out, Uruguay has a proud and rather large Armenian community (in proportion to the population of the country). Perhaps that is one reason Uruguay was the first country to recognize the Armenian Genocide in 1965, on its 50th anniversary.

The four representatives of the Uruguay Armenian community interviewed — Tchekmedyan, Daniel Karamanoukian, Dr. Gustavo Zulamian and Archbishop Hagop Kelendjian — agreed on a couple of things regarding the community: the number of those active in the community is fairly small and there is a rapidly decreasing number of Armenian speakers.

Uruguay gained its independence in 1830 and ended up receiving a lot of Armenians after the Genocide.

“Uruguay has around 12,000 Armenians,” Tchekmedyan said. “There are different estimates. No official numbers but not everyone is involved or deeply involved are around 2,000, 3,000.”

“The Armenian community has been doing a terrific job here,” said Tchekmedyan, an active member of the community, from his Montevideo home. “During all the years, Uruguay has become the first country to recognize the Armenian Genocide. The Armenia Square is the most beautiful Armenian square in the world. It is the most expensive and beautiful part of the county.”

In fact, it is located on the harbor, where “per square meter it is the most expensive part of the country,” along the coast with boats in the harbor, “we have a huge square, not a small square. We have one statue that was done during the 50-year anniversary of the Genocide.”

The area was also the backdrop for a commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in which many danced Armenian dances at the harbor.

More recently, they brought a *khachkar* to the square. “Uruguay is a country with no state religion. And so no religious symbol can be present in the square. The Armenian community worked on that and said that this is not a religious symbol but a cultural symbol,” said Tchekmedyan.

World renowned in his field of gastroenterology, Tchekmedyan is the Chief of Endoscopy at Asociación Española, Montevideo-Uruguay and President of the Interamerican Society for Digestive Endoscopy. He was involved in GI education and endoscopy activities as Assis-



Dr. Asadur Jorge Tchekmedyan

tant Professor of Gastroenterology at the state university in Uruguay for many years. He was president of the 24th Panamerican Congress of Digestive Endoscopy (March 2020) and co-chair of the LoC for the 2nd World Congress of Endoscopy – ENDO 2020. He has often worked with the World Health Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency regarding radioprotection for patients and staff. In addition, he is an Aurora Forum Goodwill Ambassador.

Karamanoukian added that in Montevideo one can see the Rambla [Boulevard] Armenia, Yerevan Street and Nersés Ounanián Street (sculptor). There is also an Armenia Plaza in the city of Punta del Este and another in Piriápolis, the two main tourist centers on the coast. In addition, there is a public school in Montevideo that bears the name of “Armenia” and another in the city of Salto



Surp Nerses Shnorhali Cathedral

called “Republic of Armenia”.

In Montevideo and the city of Maldonado there are many Armenian restaurants. Armenians introduced Armenian and Middle Eastern foods into Uruguayan society. Karamanoukian said, “there is no inhabitant of Uruguay who has not eaten a *lehmeyun* [*lahmejun*], a shawarma with *lavash*, a *bastermá*, *hummus* or Middle Eastern desserts.”

The ties between Armenia and Uruguay date back to 1920, when the Uruguayan Foreign Minister participated in the Peace Conference of the League of Nations meeting in Paris. Currently, Uruguay has a consulate in Yerevan (Consul General Eduardo Rosembrock), which after the last visit of the Uruguayan Foreign Minister Bustillo to the Armenian capital, announced the opening of an Embassy. To date, Armenia has not announced the opening of either a Consulate or an Embassy in Uruguay, and the Armenian representative for Uruguay is Ambassador Hovhannés Virabyán based in Buenos Aires. In Montevideo, an honorary Consul Ruben Aprahamián was appointed in 2009 and currently his daughter Alicia Aprahamián is the Honorary Consul of Armenia in Uruguay.

Organizations in Montevideo

Kelendjian, speaking this month, said that he had been in Uruguay for the past 38 years, as the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, after serving a few years serving in Germany. The Syrian-born cleric is a graduate of the Gevorkian Seminary in Echmiadzin.

Kelendjian said he saw a big change in the community. Currently, the newcomers are from Armenia rather than the Middle East. He lamented that the majority of the Armenians — 95 percent, he guessed — did not speak Armenian.

In addition to the Armenian Apostolic Church, there is an Armenian Catholic Church and two Armenian Evangelical churches (the First Armenian Evangelical Church and the Armenian Evangelical Brotherhood Church).

The Surp Nerses Shnorhali Cathedral, where Kelendjian serves, has been open for service every week, even during the pandemic.

Like many communities, the Armenian community attends church primarily during the high fest days, but he added, he loves the community, whose members are cooperative and helpful.

“I am very happy because it is a very welcoming nation. The Armenians are very kind here and have a lot of human values,” he said. “They are very good people and it is wonderful to be among them.”

Noted Zulamian, “The Armenian community of Uruguay, like others in the diaspora, is going through a major crisis, which has to do, on the one hand, with assimilation into Uruguayan society, but also due to fatigue, problems in local Armenian institutions and also economics. The interests have been changing and the institutions have not found a formula to summon the Armenian families. Before, the community space was practically the only one in which Armenian families participated, and today the new generations do not see the link with the community or

with Armenians as a priority. Armenian churches perform few baptisms and very few marriages. Armenian schools are no longer an option for parents. No newspapers are published or books are printed periodically. Censuses have not been done to determine how many Armenians live in Uruguay, but there are probably about 20,000 Armenians. The community was made up of the descendants of the survivors of the Armenian genocide.”

Karamanoukian said there are many organizations. The AGBU, which in addition to its own activities, runs the Nubarián School. In addition, from the early 1970s to 2016, the Alex Manoogian high school was in operation.

The Nersessián Primary School operates under the aegis of the Central Administrative Council of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Uruguay.

The Armenian National Center, founded in the 1930s, continues to operate with cultural activities.

There are two Armenian dance groups: Shiraz dependent on Hamazkain and Gayané from the Armenian National Center.

In addition, he noted, the Uruguayan Armenian Cultural Association -ASCUA carries out cultural activities in defense of human rights and policies on Armenian claims. It has organized seminars with the participation of prestigious international researchers.

In addition, there have been Armenian radio programs since. Currently the Gomidás Armenian Cultural Audition (Founded in 1935, official voice of the ARF) has daily programs. And on weekends the Armenian Radio Arax Audition (founded in 2007 by Diego Karamanukian).

All Armenian institutions in turn are gathered in a body called CADU (Colectividad Armenia del Uruguay) which was formed in 2013-2014.

Karamanoukian added that he was in the first generation who graduated from the Manoogian High School, where he later taught and participated in the school’s leadership. He has been a dedicated supporter of recognition of the Armenian Genocide and Armenian land claims, as well as a member of the Commission for the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide of the Armenian organizations of Uruguay.

Zulamian said the Armenian community, despite the existing crisis, has an active community life, especially around the commemoration on April 24 and the fight for the Armenian Cause. The AGBU also has a Youth League, Scout Yerevan 50, Choir Polifónico Grunk, Young Professional (YP), as well as social groups and sports teams, and a new proposal called UGAB (AGBU) Tech.

The community was made up of many families from Marash and the Armenian Compatriotic Union of Marash maintains a large community presence. They also work in the Casa Armenia Hnchakián community, the Uruguayan Armenian Cultural Association, the Armenian Ladies Charity Association and the National Armenian Center of Uruguay.

Karamoukian said that according to a census carried out in 1931, most who arrived there were from Marash (460) followed by Aksenhir (212), Amanos (190), Sis (182), Hadjin (164), Adaná (154), Harunié (147), Zeytun,



COMMUNITY NEWS

Deurtyol, etc.

“The Armenian community is mainly concentrated in the capital, Montevideo, and since the early 1920s it has organized around regional, religious, political, educational, cultural and charitable organizations,” Karamanoukian said.

Zulumian was the editor of the last publication, *Hay Endanik* (1993-2001). Recently, the Armenian National Center of Uruguay has launched a digital newsletter (Av-arair), published quarterly.

In recent times, an attempt has been made to bring the Armenian language and culture outside of traditional community structures. In this sense, university students, of any orientation, can access the Armenian language and culture through the courses taught by Hovhannés Bodukián at the Center for Foreign Languages of the Faculty of Humanities and Educational Sciences. On the other hand, a cooperation agreement was recently signed between the AGBU of Uruguay and the ANEP (National Public Education Administration), to promote the so-called heritage languages such as the Armenian language, for which the teaching of language and culture is taught Armenian in courses taught for the community and the general public through the Language Policy Directorate, at Public School 156 “Armenia” and at Escuela Técnica del Cerro, a traditional immigrant neighborhood in western Montevideo.

But Why Uruguay?

During the time of the Armenian Genocide, Tchekmedyian said, both Uruguay and Argentina were powerful, with strong economies. “The economic situation was very strong. Most of the people after the Genocide moved to Lebanon or France, and then this part of the world was very attractive to them, mostly in Argentina.” Boats arrived in Buenos Aires or Monte Video and “both communities started to develop.”

Tchekmedyian praised the nation’s education system. “We have a very powerful education system, or at least we used to have. Everyone, doesn’t matter if they came from, very poor places,” he said, they could still become a doctor or lawyer.

Now, it is changing, he said, adding they are more from the elite, but before, everyone came from wherever and whatever, doctors and other professions.

This kind of openness helped the Armenians too.

“The Armenians did the same. They pushed their children to go to university. It happened in my family too,” Tchekmedyian said. “We have 11 medical doctors in three generations.”

Also there are Armenian politicians, such as Liliam Kechichian, a Senator who formerly served as minister of tourism, and Alvaro Hagopian, who is the conductor of the Montevideo Philharmonic Orchestra.

“There has always been contact with the Armenian communities of South America. More fluid among those that bring together the Armenians of Buenos Aires and Córdoba in the Argentine Republic and Montevideo. And also with the Armenians of Brazil, although to a lesser extent in recent years, with the Armenians of Sao Paulo,” Karamanoukian said.

The Armenian community in Argentina is obviously much more powerful, much bigger and richer, Tchekmedyian said. Yet, he added, “despite the fact that we are not so rich or powerful, we are deeply involved in the community.”

Tchekmedyian’s family, like so many in the diaspora, spans continents, in his case, from Uruguay to the US and France. His youngest uncle, Simon Tchekmedyian, an oncologist, moved to California in the 1980s.

Zulumian said the Armenian community of Uruguay was formed with the Armenians who survived the Armenian genocide and who after living for some years in the Middle Eastern countries, mainly Syria and Lebanon, reached the Río de la Plata and settled in Montevideo.

“My paternal grandparents Artín Zulamián and Azniv Darakjián had been born in Marash. My grandfather was a miller,” he said, grinding pepper and chili peppers, among other spices. “After surviving the Armenian Genocide, with the arrival of the Turkish nationalist forces of Mustafa Kemal to Marash in December 1919 and the withdrawal of the French army in February 1920, the city was left without Armenians. My grandparents came to Aleppo, where they got married and had three children.

“My grandfather came to Montevideo in 1930 and in 1932 he brought my grandmother and their children. Here they had four more children, including my father, Antonio,” he added.

His maternal grandparents were Artín Ohanián (born in Mersín) and Armenuhi Domburián (born in Adaná). “My grandfather Artín Ohanián was the only one in his family

who came to Montevideo in 1926 after the capitulation of Turkey in October,” he added.

Zulamián was born in Montevideo in 1973 and is a graduate of the AGBU Colegio Nubarián and Alex Manoogian High School. He is a dentist specializing in orthodontics and maxillofacial orthopedics. He is a member of the Uruguayan Dental Association and the Dento Maxillofacial Orthodontic and Orthopedic Society of Uruguay. He had previously served on the Faculty of Dentistry of the University of the Republic. He has a private practice, as well as serving in public and private health centers in the country.

Zulamian has also been deeply involved the community. He was editor of *Hay Endanik* magazine between 1992 and 2002, a publication directed by his mother, Prof. Dr. María Ohanián. He is the author of *Between History and Memory: The Armenians of Marash in Uruguay*



Dr. Gustavo Zulamián

(2018). He also wrote the preface for the third edition of the book *The Armenian Church: Source of Faith and Patriotism* (2021) of the Primate of the Armenian Diocese in Uruguay Archbishop Hagop Kelendjián. He is regional editor of the Spanish translation of the book *A Century of History of the Armenian General Benevolent Union* by Prof. Raymond Kevorkián and Vahé Tachjián.

He is a correspondent for the weekly *Sardarabad* of the Armenian Liberal Democratic Organization in Argentina and participates frequently as a guest on Radio Arax.

He founded and directed the Armenian Audiovisual Center of Uruguay (1992-1998) and made several documentaries. The center has an important archive of images of the Armenian community with more than 20,000 photographs and old films, having collaborated with its collection in different literary projects, book presentations, photographic exhibitions or the Government House Museum, the Museum of the Armenian Catholic Church, as well as with programs and documentaries for television.

In 2015, together with Karamanoukián, he put together the photographic exhibition “A hundred years after the genocide, Uruguay and the Armenians make history,” at the Prado Photo Gallery, with the Montevideo City Hall Photography Center.

He was president of the local AGBU between 2009 and 2011 and received the President’s Award granted by the Central Council of the AGBU at the World Assembly in Armenia in 2012.

Karamanoukian was born in Uruguay in 1962. He is Italian on his mother’s side, and Armenian on his father’s. His mother’s side, he recalled, have been in Uruguay at least three generations while his Armenian grandfather, Hagop Karamanoukián arrived in Montevideo on March 12, 1926 at the age of 24. Like many other immigrants who made their way to South America eventually, he was in Beirut before ending up in Marseille. He was joined months later by his wife Ieghsabeth Aintablián, who traveled with their little daughter Vartanush (born in Beirut shortly after Hagop’s departure for Uruguay), who arrived on November 15, 1926. The young family settled in Montevideo and had 4 more children born in Uruguay.

Karamanoukian served as one of the community spokespersons during the last wars of aggression against

Artsakh and Armenia. He studied anthropology in Uruguay and Armenology at Yerevan State University as a fellow (1988).

“In Armenia I took an active part in the mobilizations for the reunification of the N. Karabagh Region with Armenia,” Karamanoukian said. He has published several articles on the subject.

Integrated Members of Country

Added Tchekmedyian, “We are very well integrated into the community and we have a good image in the community. People like Armenians. They have Armenian friends. Armenians are very open and very hospitable, like everywhere. When you go to an Armenian family, they give you food and open their house.

Uruguayans were more shy and the open doors were much appreciated.

Added Zulamian, “Despite the cultural differences, language and religion, and bringing other customs and traditions, the Armenians were integrated, I would say quickly. The country with doors open to immigrants and the secular state, facilitated integration, especially for the first generation born in Uruguay. This integration, however, had for the generation of immigrants and their children, the fear of assimilation and the possible loss of the traits of an Armenian identity that was also in danger in the Ottoman Empire and in the Middle East in general. And it is true that on the one hand there has been integration and on the other an assimilation of the Armenians in this country. “The characteristics of Uruguay as a democratic and secular country, allowed the recognition of the existing diversity as Armenians, with the freedoms to develop all kinds of practices. So, the Armenians built churches, schools, sports clubs, cultural centers, dance ensembles, choirs, and orchestras. It even allowed that starting in 1953, the Armenians could modify their documents. Where Turkey said, now it would say Armenia, that is, that the document would bear the nationality of ethnic origin and not territorial. In Uruguay, Armenians have that double identity, Uruguayan by birth and Armenian by inheritance.”

Zulamian further explained that Armenians, mostly settled in Montevideo, would soon go on to lead the market for neighborhood shops, as well as shoe workshops and shoe factories. In 1946, one in seven Montevideo grocers was Armenian. Shoemaking has been a tradition among Armenians, particularly in the Marashtsi families. The first professionals were Surén Keulyián and Yervant Andonián, both dentists, and obtained their degrees in 1943 and 1944, respectively. Kourkén Aharonián received his medical degree in 1945. A decade later, women began to obtain their university degrees. Over time, Armenians have held important responsibilities in universities. Such is the case of Prof. Roberto Markarián (Rector of the University of the Republic), Prof. Esc. Dora Baghdassarián (Dean of the Faculty of Law) and several professors such as Prof. Dr. Vartán Behesnilián and my mother Prof. Dr. María Ohanián (dentists), Prof. Dr. Vartán Tchekmedyian, Prof. Dr. Carlos Ketzoian and Prof. Dr. Yester Basmadjián (doctors), or Isabelle Chaquiriand (Dean of the Faculty of Business Sciences of the University Católica del Uruguay), among others. Armenians have excelled in other areas such as construction.

A cousin, he said, Dr. Daniel Zulamián, is the owner of Zulamián Desarrollos Inmobiliarios, a large firm that builds and sells luxury real estate in Punta del Este, the main tourist city in Uruguay.

Genocide Recognition

Zulamian said that in 1965, after intense efforts by young Armenians through the Coordinating Group of Armenian Youth Organizations of Uruguay, managed to get the Uruguayan Parliament to pass a law which declared in its first article April 24 as a day of remembrance. of the Armenian Genocide. Uruguayan Presidents, Ministers, Senators and Deputies have actively participated in the successive commemorations of the Armenian Genocide and the Uruguayan people show solidarity with the Armenian nation, participating in the acts of remembrance.

Tchekmedyian added, “The Turks and Azerbaijani governments are now putting a lot of money and pressure here, and they are succeeding,” because Armenia and Armenians lack the resources to match them. “The pressure from the enemies is very, very strong,” he said.

“The society and the community in the end are the ones that put the vote in during the elections,” he said.

Therefore, the government is still supporting the Armenians.

“We are deeply involved in the government and the people that are involved feel their Armenian heritage in a strong way,” he said.

Davidian Receives SAS Outstanding Dissertation Award

AWARD, from page 8

contexts and complexities of the Ottoman Armenian past, and especially some of its more neglected aspects. Using art and social history as a prism, my work has sought to identify artists as central figures of a late nineteenth-century Ottoman Armenian intellectual milieu and actors in the movement for social and political reform. I am grateful to be part of a new generation of scholars who are constantly building upon and pushing the boundaries of the pioneering work of those who established Armenian Studies.”

Davidian is Calouste Gulbenkian Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Oriental Institute, University of Oxford. He defended his doctoral thesis in art history at Birkbeck College, University of London in 2019. He is, along with Boris Adjemian, co-editor of the journal *Études arméniennes contemporaines* published by the Bibliothèque Nubar (ABGU Nubar Library), Paris. He edited the volumes *Towards Inclusive Art Histories: Ottoman Armenian Voices Speak Back* (EAC 6, 2015) and, with Susan Paul Pattie and Gagik Stepan-Sarkissian, *Treasured Objects: Armenian Life in the Ottoman Empire 100 Years Ago* (Armenian Insti-

tute, 2012). His published articles include 'Portrait of an Ottoman Armenian Artist of Constantinople: Rereading Teotig's Biography of Simon Hagopian' (EAC 4, 2014) and 'Image of an Atrocity: Ivan (Hovhanness) Aivazovsky's Massacre of the Armenians in Trebizond 1895' (EAC 11, 2018). He is currently working on a monograph based in part on his doctoral dissertation.

Papazian's dissertation deals with the ways in which Armenianness in Turkey in the past three decades witnessed an unprecedented process of diversification. Whereas members of the Christian-Armenian minority had traditionally been the sole representatives of Armenian identity in Turkey, they now find themselves next to two other groups of Armenians: first, officially Muslim and hence 'non-Armenian' citizens of Turkey who, drawing on their Armenian ancestors Islamized or Alevised decades or centuries earlier, have started to publicly identify as Armenians; second, citizens of neighboring Armenia who engaged in a labor migration towards Turkey after the independence of their country and its sinking into a political, economic, and energy crisis in the early 1990s. Going beyond the official categorization of Armenians in Tur-



Hrag Papazian

key, limited in scope and imposing a particular interpretation of Armenianness, his ethnographic research studies the various people self-identifying as Armenians in today's Turkey. It examines the often-differing meanings, productions and experiences of Armenianness among the Christian Armenians, the Muslim/Alevi Armenians, and the migrant Armenians. The study aims at understanding and explaining the boundary-making processes between these three Armenian factions. In that endeavor, it argues that the making of symbolic and social boundaries between them are con-

ditioned both by irreconcilable differences between each one's understanding and expectations of Armenianness, and by practical factors related to interest and security. Finally, broadening its scope of analysis, the dissertation argues that the making of intra-Armenian boundaries is also influenced or conditioned by the Armenian factions' relations and boundaries with third parties, namely the Turkish state and Muslim majority, thus advancing a theory of multilateral social boundary-making.

Upon receiving the title of honorary mention, Papazian said, “Please accept my deepest gratitude for selecting my doctoral dissertation for this honorary mention. I am delighted that ‘Contesting Armenianness: Plurality, Segregation and Multilateral Boundary Making among Armenians in Contemporary Turkey’ is appreciated by scholars in our growing and diversifying field of Armenian Studies.”

Papazian is Promise Armenian Institute postdoctoral scholar in the Department of Anthropology at UCLA. He earned his doctoral degree in anthropology from the University of Oxford (2020) where his dissertation about Armenians in contemporary Turkey was awarded the David Parkin Prize. Papazian's research interests include religion and race, ethnicity and nationalism, migration and diasporas, politics and activism, and the (un)making of social boundaries. He has conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Turkey and Armenia and has previously taught at the American University of Armenia for two years. As a visiting scholar at Cambridge, Papazian examines the popular perceptions and the political instrumentalization of Turkey and the "Turk" in Armenia after the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war.

“This year we have received the largest pool of dissertations in the history of the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS),” said Bedross Der Matossian, president of the SAS. “All of them were excellent dissertations from a variety of fields: history, political science, sociology, linguistics and anthropology. This is a testimony to the advancement of the field of Armenian Studies from interdisciplinary perspectives. For the past seven months a committee of four closely examined the dissertations and ranked them. I would like to thank the members of the committee for their hard work.”

The SAS (societyforarmenianstudies.com) is headquartered at the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Fresno. For more information contact Prof. Bedross Der Matossian at bdermatossian2@unl.edu.

Zhengyalov Hatz In Downtown Washington, D.C.?

CAFE, from page 8

However, Yerevan's bakers try to get as close to the authentic ingredients as possible.

The market section also offers natural juices, preserves, herbal teas, Armenian coffees, and souvenirs for sale. The music played here is mainly Armenian, with the walls decorated with images of Yerevan's Cascade and other notable constructions next to photos of ordinary people sitting in their yards in Yerevan.

"We plan to deliver more variety. Stay tuned for new additions to our menu and market selection," Arman noted.

A video at mirrorspectator.com presents snapshots of Yerevan Market and Café.

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OBITUARY

Anahid (Derderian) Megerian

Pillar of Philadelphia Community

PHILADELPHIA — Anahid (Derderian) Megerian passed away on November 22, 2021. She was 81.

She was born June 25, 1940 in Aleppo, Syria, to Armen and Marie (Alabashian) Derderian who were survivors of the Armenian Genocide. She was their second child and only daughter. She was a doting sister to her older brother Anto, and younger brothers Jano and Boghos.

Anahid met her husband of over 50 years, Papken, while they both served on the Gili-gian Elementary School Alumni Association; Anahid as the secretary and Papken as the Treasurer. Papken always said he knew from the moment he met Anahid that she would be his wife. They were married on August 19, 1962 and were blessed with their first child, Garo in 1963. Anahid worked as a school teacher before realizing her dream of emigrating to the United States on July 4, 1968. They settled in the Philadelphia area and developed deep roots in the community. In 1970 they welcomed their second son Aram and in 1972 their daughter Tanya.

After arriving in the US Anahid worked as a seamstress in a shirt factory for many years until ultimately opening her own tailor shop “Ann’s Alterations” in Newtown Square, less than a mile from her home so she could be accessible to her children. She was a talented seamstress and could alter anything. After closing the shop she served as the beading and evening gown tailor for Apropros boutique in Norristown and continued to work from her home as a seamstress and serve as the personal tailor to the entire Megerian, Derderian and Kailian

family until her last breath.

Anahid was a pillar of the Armenian community. She was always quietly working behind the scenes to ensure that whatever needed to be done, for whichever organization needed it, was successfully accomplished. At St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Church, Anahid was a three-term member of the Parish Council, former chair of the Women’s Guild’s Hokejash Committee for many years, and an active member of the Youth Committee from its early inception days.

She was instrumental in bringing Khoren Mekanejian to the parish when he taught the Jr. Choir. She hosted him, in her home, preparing dinner every two weeks for him and the lay leaders of the parish who worked with him, every other Wednesday night when he came down from New York to rehearse with the children.

As an active member of the Tekeyan Cultural Association, with which the church collaborated for the Lenten Lecture Series for a number of years, she successfully brought the community together for not just the Lenten programs, but any programs organized in our parish. Within the community-at-large, she also coordinated many events for the Armenian Democratic League, the AGBU, the Armenian Sisters Academy and the Arapkir Union.

Anahid and Papken were the benefactors of many projects in their local community, in Armenia and internationally. Their philanthropic giving includes The Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern); the Mother See of Echmiadzin; the Arme-



Since 2001 she visited Armenia 25 times. She and Papken helped raise funds within the Philadelphia region for innumerable cultural, educational and religious purposes for many years, frequently hosting events in their home.

Anahid was above all else the matriarch to an extended family. She was a loving sister, sister-in-law, aunt and cousin. She loved, supported and helped them all with her whole heart.

She was an incredible mother and mother-in-law to Garo, Annette, Aram, Tanya and Nerces. She supported and loved her children and their spouses unconditionally.

Anahid’s eight grandchildren were the center of her world, there was no title she cherished more than that of “Medzmama”

nian Patriarchate of Jerusalem; the Armenian Mirror-Spectator newspaper; the Philadelphia Art Museum; the Diocesan Center in Javakhk, Georgia; the Armenian Sisters Academy, Society of Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR) and Our Lady of Armenia Boghossian Educational Center in Gyumri.

When Catholicos Karekin II, gave her husband, Papken, the Krikor Lousavorich medal in 2009, he gave Anahid a special pin as a gesture of his acknowledgment and thanks for the many projects both she and Papken supported in the local community and the greater Armenian community at large. When we did not have an active priest, she was the hostess for our visiting clergy. And when young clergy from Echmiadzin were either studying in our area or in need of medical assistance, she opened her doors to alleviate their burdens and help them heal. In 2016 Anahid was awarded Woman of the Year by the St Sahag and St Mesrob Parish.

to Gregory, Cariné, Ariana, Haig, Lena, Lily, Sona and Seta. Anahid’s primary goal, above all else, was to raise her family to be proud of their Armenian heritage and their culture. She taught them how to be proud, yet humble, diligent and above all else compassionate and accepting of all individuals. She led by example and has left a legacy that her children and grandchildren will surely carry. Her life-lesson to us all is best described by the following quote: “Do the kinds of things that come from the heart. When you do, you won’t be dissatisfied. You won’t be envious, and you won’t be longing for somebody else’s things. On the contrary, you’ll be overwhelmed with what comes back.”

The funeral was held on Saturday, November 27, from St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church. Burial was at Edgewood Memorial Park, 325 Baltimore Pike, Glen Mills, Pa.

DONATIONS IN MEMORY OF GEORGE MANDOSSIAN

The following donations were received by Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc. in memory of its former Vice President of the Central Board of Directors, George Mandossian, as of November 22, 2021.

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List as of 11/22/2021

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The Armenian Mirror-Spectator would like to thank the following donors for their generous support.

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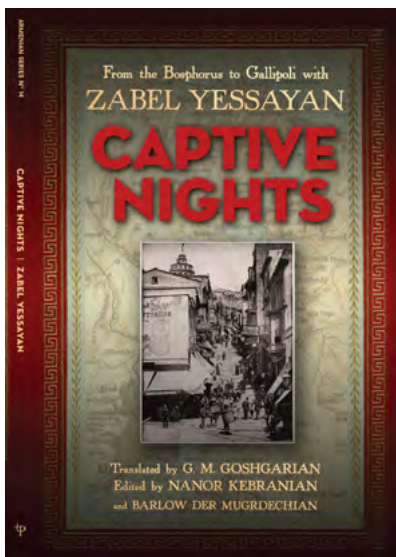


Arts & Culture

Captive Nights

From the Bosphorus to Gallipoli with Zabel Yessayan
Published by Armenian Series at Fresno State

FRESNO — The Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno announces the publication of its 14th volume, *Captive Nights: From the Bosphorus to Gallipoli with Zabel Yessayan*. This new collection of translations from Zabel Yessayan's (1878 – 1943?) internationally renowned body of work presents three of her least-known and most revealing stories: *Meliha Nuri Hanum*, *The Veil* and *Enough!* Written between 1914 and 1928, these works share a common theme of women — both Armenian and Turkish — struggling against adverse social, political, and cultural circum-



stances, as they also examine questions of identity and marginalization.

Commenting on its significance, Dr. Vahé Tachjian, director of Houshamadyan, stated that these are “three impressive works from Zabel Yessayan that shed light on Turkish society and Turkish-Armenian relations during a crucial period of the Ottoman Empire marked by wars, dictatorial regime, military defeats, territorial losses, and genocide.”

“*Captive Nights: From the Bosphorus to Gallipoli with Zabel Yessayan* is an important addition to the Armenian Series,” stated co-editor Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian. “The new book broadens the scope of the series by introducing the English-speaking world to a gem of Armenian literature. Zabel Yessayan's work maintains its timelessness and vitality today.”

In recent years, Yessayan has become one of the best-known Armenian intellectuals of the early 20th century, earning international acclaim as author, humanitarian, and an activist for social equality and women's rights. Her career spanned a cosmopolitan and eventful life that took her from Istanbul to Paris and that ended tragically in Soviet Armenia.

This groundbreaking book was initiated by its main editor, Dr. Nanor Kebranian, with funding from the see YESSAYAN, page 17



Boris Andreasyan

Guitarist for More than Half a Century

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Solo guitarist, singer and songwriter Boris Andreasyan (born in 1953 in Nakhichevan) is one of the most unique figures of the Armenian music scene. He plays a variety of music: blues, rock, pop, folk, funk, fusion, jazz, flamenco, but in a recent interview said his preferred style is jazz rock fusion.

In addition to bass guitar, he plays the banjo, bouzouki, tar, oud, keyboard and percussion instruments. In 1970, he founded his first rock band, “1 + 2,” which Russian music critic Artemi Troitsky mentioned in his book *Back in the USSR* on Soviet rock music as the leader of Armenian rock. Boris played in different groups, in 1975 at the fifth All-Soviet Competition of Pop Artists in Moscow, he was awarded the title of laureate with the “Armina” vocal and instrumental ensemble.

In 1975–1978 he worked as a solo guitarist and singer in the State Jazz Orchestra of Armenia led by Konstantin Orbelyan. In 1978–1979 Boris played in the jazz quartet of the Armenian Television and Radio Committee, from 1982 to 1989 in the “Armenia” band of the hotel of the same name. Between 1991 and 1995 he lived and worked in the US, and between 2002 and 2004 in Moscow.

Currently Boris Andreasyan composes, writes music, and two of his books have been published recently.

Boris, your life is very interesting.

First, let me thank you for the interview. I was born in a family of teachers: my father taught mathematics, my mother Armenian language and literature. I was raised in a neighborhood next to St. Sarkis church of Yerevan. First my parents took me to ballet first, but the ballet moves seemed girlish to me, so I ran away from the dance school. The same happened when they took me to the folk dances. Yet, I attended a sports school for three years, where I became a champion in in-school gymnastics competitions. I almost reached the status of a master of sports, but one day after hearing about the possibility of muscle injuries, I left the sport.

And how were sports replaced by music?

I can say that God saved me by giving me musical ability, and the guitar revolutionized my whole life, due to which I was cut off from the bad influences of the neighborhood as a child. So, it was 1967, I was not yet 14 years old. My father took me to the Philharmonic Orchestra for a concert by the Czech guitarist Karel Duba and his “band. We entered the hall, I noticed the milky color guitar on the stage. For the first time in my life I came across an electric guitar. I saw it and... almost fainted. My legs weakened, I trembled, I was delighted by the beauty of the instrument. And listening to the sound of the guitar during the concert, I went completely crazy, and at that very moment I decided on my future profession. I told my father that if you do not buy a guitar for me, I would not go to school. From that day on, my life changed completely. There was no music store in Yerevan at that time, people bought instruments for their children from abroad. I started to wonder who would have a guitar around. Eventually I found a half-broken Soviet guitar. I bought fish hook strings, there were also tar strings in the house. I put them on the guitar and my

see BORIS, page 15

Armenian Cultural Foundation, Amaras Arts Alliance Present Homage to Alan Hovhaness

ARLINGTON, Mass. — Cellist Christina Gullans joins the Armenian Cultural Foundation to host “Senza Misura” (“Without Measure”), a chamber music concert dedicated to Alan Hovhaness' life and narratives, on December 15. The program of duos and trios, for violin, cello and piano, is inspired by mountains, Bach, Hindu mythology, love, and Hovhaness' own Armenian heritage as well as works by Armenian women composers. The concert will offer listeners a cross-cultural experience about foreign traditions, people, and places, in a musical setting endowed with empathy and understanding.

The concert, co-sponsored by the Amaras Art Alliance is part of the Armenian Cultural Foundation's Mirak Chamber Music Series which aims to place the world's finest classical music in the center of cultural life for the Armenian community in Boston and for the general public in Arlington, MA. It will feature Cellist Christina Gullans praised for her “incredible depth” [Broadway World Review], “haunting sound” [Boston Arts Review], “exemplary musicianship” [Guy Rickards, Musical Opinion]. She is a Washington, D.C. based chamber musician who will be joined by violinist Courtney Orlando and pianist Christopher Schmitt.

The concert, free of charge and open to the public, and will be held on December 15 at 8 P.M. on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xbwDdnUHOE>).

The repertoire also includes a work, *Seyran*, by Komitas (1869-1935), musicologist, composer and the founder of the Armenian national school of music, arranged by award-winning young and promising composer and pianist Kristina Arakelyan and Piano Trio (1945) composed by composer and musicologist Gayane Chebotaryan (1918-1998) one of the prominent woman composers of Armenia.

The Mirak Chamber Music series, is named in memory of John P. Mirak (1907-2000), entrepreneur, philanthropist, community leader, sole benefactor for decades, and late president of the ACF. In line with the foundation's mission, the focus of the series is “on the history of Armenian music in the diaspora and on the role of Armenian women in the nation's history.” The Series showcases works by international and Armenian composers, with an emphasis on introducing works by Armenian women composers in Armenia and the Diaspora. On occasion, the series will also feature and promote young and promising performers, and groups and premieres of newly written works.



Christina Gullans



ARTS & CULTURE

Boris Andreasyan: Guitarist for More than Half a Century

BORIS, from page 14

endless training began. Hakob Petrosyan, the guitarist of the first beat group of Armenia, Yerazoghner (Dreamers), lived next to our house. I got acquainted with him and asked him to show me how to play the guitar and a few chords. And I started playing the guitar with everything possible. The first work I heard on the guitar was Enrico Masias' song Oh guitare, guitare, the second one was What I'd Say by Ray Charles. Soon we had a Lithuanian tape recorder, which I used to record my favorite songs on TV or radio and then play them back on my guitar. When I first heard the Beatles' songs, I was just shocked, my eyes filled with tears, my mother said: "Borik, what happened to you?" Thus, I became a guitarist myself. There were no guitarists at that time, so the Beatles, Deep Purple and Chicago became my first virtual teachers, inspiring me, which shaped my musical taste and style preferences.

And in those deep Soviet times, how did Western music reach Armenia?

Our main sources were "Voice of America" and "Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty" stations. We had a hard time catching radio channels. Throughout the Soviet Union, KGB special services disrupted broadcasts with silencing devices. One time I was called to the KGB when I received a letter from a friend living in the US. They interrogated me and reprimanded me: "We know you also propagate capitalist music!" I knew it was more to intimidate or to find out about people's connections. It was an atmosphere of ignorance and disgust, affecting the human psyche to such an extent that one dreamed of escaping from Soviet Union. It was terrible, we had no right to think differently, to have a worldview other than the Bolshevik communist ideology.

But in any case, it is known that Armenia, compared to other Soviet republics, was more free, and alternative music was developing here. What was the reason for that? Maybe the ties with the Diaspora?

Of course it is too. The Kremlin was not very interested in what was happening in Armenia. On the other hand, we Armenians always had outstanding personalities, both in science and art. Few people in many cities in Russia were interested in rock, and we were already playing rock here. It is not accidental that the first rock festival in the USSR took place in Yerevan, in 1968, at the Dinamo sports complex, which was attended by famous Russian singers and bands. Until 1972, such festivals were held every year at Dinamo, organized by Rafik Mkrtchyan, nicknamed Sirkhan, who, in today's words, was a producer, and greatly contributed to the spread of rock and pop music in Armenia, despite the fact that his concerts were illegal, without state permission. For several years he brought bands from Russia and the Baltics to Yerevan rock festivals, and about five or six Armenian groups participated in them. He even brought a group of Papuans from the Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University in Moscow to Yerevan, which was an incredible phenomenon at that time. The ticket cost one ruble, but if 5,000 people came, the profit was already a lot of. Rafik Mkrtchyan even organized the concert of the group Dreamers in Moscow, at the Luzhniki stadium. Sirkhan always had two suitcases with him, he kept the money in one of them, in the other he had false documents about the "legality" of the concerts. He was eventually sentenced to 10 years in prison, after which he died.

Boris, you have been creating groups since you were 15 years old. Was it official, did not the KGB control it?

No, we just got together with the boys and formed a group at the so-called houses of culture. We worked for free. I gave my first concert in 1968 at the Polytechnic Institute with the Amprop (Thunder) group of the institute. During this concert works by the bands Cream and the Jimi Hendrix Experience were performed for the first time in Yerevan. When I started playing Robert Johnson's blues-rock song Crossroad performed very well by Eric Clapton (I believe most of the audience had not heard such music), I saw the first row of audiences start dancing, jumping, moving their chairs, and even how many were broken. The policemen came and threatened me from the side of the stage, shouting, "Stop it!" and after the speech they demanded that I pay for the damage to the chairs, but I, explaining my innocence, avoided it. After that concert, my fame began to spread in the city. In 1969 I was invited as a solo guitarist by the band "Vulkan," with which I had several concerts. Then, after the disbandment of that group, I created my "1 +

(Youth), and the instruments were: guitar, bass guitar, trumpet, two saxophones, percussion. I prepared a program, we had speeches both in the military unit and in the surrounding settlements. Unfortunately, there are no recordings, but I still have the reviews of the local newspapers. We performed songs by the Beatles and Cream as well as Russian songs. It was incredible: Soviet soldiers performing Beatles from the stage in uniform. As an exception, they allowed the performance of our orchestra at the youth song and orchestra competitions held in Tobolsk and Tyumen, where we took the first place, received a first class diploma and became a laureate. It was a real sensation.

Once I went to a dance hall, approached the musicians, and asked them to let me play. I told them the chords, the rhythm and started the song Crossroad. A furor arose, as it was not common for a soldier to play that style of music and still sing in English. After my talk, a man approached me with his wife and introduced himself as the city commandant. I was confused for a moment, because I was out of the military unit, it was late, but the guard told me

Armenia highly praised our victory. Konstantin Orbelyan was one of the members of the jury of that competition, who invited me to work in the State Jazz Orchestra of Armenia as a solo guitarist and singer. My professional development took place there, I also specialized in jazz music. Orbelyan was very strict, often rude, maybe it was due to that strictness that there was discipline and musical professionalism in the group. During the Soviet era, musicians were qualified by the Ministry of Culture, and I had the highest music rate of that time - 13 rubles, 50 kopecks. Orbelyan also assigned me a high salary of 220 rubles.

But there were always ideological pressures.

Yes. It was a law that a Soviet citizen was not allowed to enter a capitalist country until he visits a socialist country. That was the reason the in 1976 KGB did not allow me to tour France as a member of the State Jazz Orchestra of Armenia. It would be difficult for the orchestra to be without a guitar, and many songs and compositions would be left out of the program, so Orbelyan and Minister of Culture Gurgen Arake-



Boris Andreasyan with George Benson

2" big-bit quartet. After its disbandment I was drafted into the Soviet Army, where I served in 1972–1974.

I spent my military service mainly in the Tyumen region. There were many interesting episodes in the army. We traded goods with northern Khanty people, some of whom did not even have passports. In the taiga I even met a bear, a lynx, a deer, an elk, a wolf and a fox, and from a helicopter I saw a pack of wolves chasing a deer. Another time I barely escaped drowning in a swamp when my cinematographer and I went deep into the forest to pick mushrooms and berries. God has saved me from many dangers. Anyway, I was appointed the head of the military unit club. I opened a library in the club and installed a film screening device. I flew 500 miles by helicopter to Tyumen, where the military paid me to buy books for the library and instruments for the orchestra, and I rented ten foreign films from the city cinema to be screened at the military unit, which was unheard of in the army. I managed to find musicians from our military unit of 120 people. I formed an orchestra, which we called Molodost

I have no problem, that he liked the guitar very much, and invited me to stay at his house for a few days and teach him a few chords. The commandant even called our military unit and told my commander that I was with him so that they could meet me in all matters, not give me any physical work and take me home for another 10 days. I stayed at his house for about a week, then I returned to my military unit and it happened, I was given a 10-day vacation. I remember very well, on December 31, at exactly 11:55 pm, I knocked on the door, my mother opened it and an unspeakable joy erupted in our house. I returned to the military unit, served for another five months, was demobilized with honor, and returned home to Yerevan. A month later, the director of the Armina orchestra Aksel Bakunts invited me to work in his group. There I met my first wife, singer Zara Tonikyan.

In 1974, in the competition of all-Soviet pop groups held in Moscow, we took the third place with the Armina"orchestra and received the title of laureate. We returned to Armenia as heroes, even the Central Committee of the Communist Party of

lyan went to the KGB and explained that if the guitarist did not come, the tours would fail. As an exception, the KGB allowed my departure, but they rejected the three female singers, Alla Pugacheva, Larisa Dolina and Zara Tonikyan, apparently fearing that they might not return.

For many of our musicians, the borders of Armenia were narrow, you too worked abroad for some time.

In 1980–1981 with a one-year contract, I worked in Moscow, in the Jazz Ataka band formed by Stas Namin, with top musicians. In 1991, at the invitation of a friend, my wife and I traveled to Las Vegas. There I started playing, participating in jam sessions with local jazzmen and bluesmen. Many did not believe that I was from Armenia. Two months later my wife returned to Armenia, and I stayed so that I could help my family and relatives financially. Then I moved to Los Angeles and started playing in different nightclubs while dealing with my green card issues, which was resolved a few years later. But I decided

see GUITAR, page 17



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Cherished Memories and Recipes of Fresno's Mary Elia

(FRESNO) These recipes by Mary Elia are included in a remarkable collection that features the recipes of the pioneering Armenian women who first settled in Fresno over 120 years ago: *A Hundred Years and Still Cooking*, from the First Armenian Presbyterian Church (FAPC) of Fresno, Fidelis Women's Society Centennial collection, first published in 1993. (<http://www.fapc.net/>)

Mary's recipes also appear in *Breaking Bread with William Saroyan* by Janice Stevens and Pat Hunter, published in 2016 by Heliograph Publishing. The authors capture the essence of William Saroyan's love for his Armenian culture through excerpts of his written word and selected Armenian recipes, including classic recipes from Armenian-American restaurateur, chef, author, and philanthropist George Mardikian's *Dinner at Omar Khayyam's*. "This book is an intimate portrayal of Armenian foods and culture, celebrating the literary great, William Saroyan."

"Saroyan would inquire around town to find the names of the best Armenian cooks, and would often call and ask to come to dinner." Having heard of my mother Mary's culinary skills in making Armenian food, Saroyan called her one day and invited himself to dinner at our home. Of course, my mother was delighted with his call, as this was an acknowledgment of her mastery of Armenian cooking. Another tradition Saroyan enjoyed was handing out signed copies of his books to old friends or new acquaintances that he liked."

In their retirement years, Mary and Joe stayed active and managed the Marlo Regency Apartments in Northwest Fresno. They were happily married for 55 years until Joe passed away in 1991. On October 21, 2017, Mary attended the 120th Anniversary Banquet of the FAPC, and was honored for her remarkable 72 years of faithful membership and service.

Dedicated couple: Joe and Mary Elia on their trip to Hawaii in 1974

Mary served as a former president of the FAPC Fidelis Women's Society, and was a tireless organizer and volunteer who cherished supporting her church community. "My mother loved collecting antiques, and was a gifted artist who took painting lessons on canvas and flatware," adds Dennis. "Her fine oil and china paintings re-



ceived several awards at the Fresno District Fair between 1975 and 1985."

A lifelong resident of Fresno, Mary Elia passed away on April 4, 2018, a month shy of her 100th birthday. She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, Joe Elia, and son Allen Elia. Her survivors include son Dennis Elia and granddaughter Ariele Elia.

Here are two of Mary Elia's favorite Armenian recipes:

Kurabia or Shakarishee

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 cups sugar
- 1 pound sweet or clarified butter, softened
- 4 cups flour
- 1 egg yolk, beaten
- 1 blanched almond per cookie

PREPARATION:

Add sugar to the butter and knead well. Gradually add and keep kneading the flour and beaten egg yolk. Keep kneading until the dough stays together. Roll in small balls and place on a cookie sheet. Press a blanched almond in the center of each cookie and bake at 300 degrees until light pink. Do not overbake. Remove to cool. Makes 48 cookies.

Mary Elia's Lamb Shanks

INGREDIENTS:

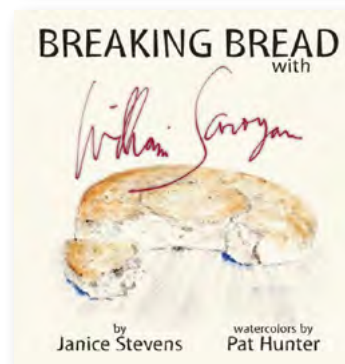
- 6 lamb shanks, trimmed of excess fat
- 2 large onions, sliced
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 large bell pepper, sliced
- 1 large can crushed or diced tomatoes
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 cups water
- 4 teaspoons dry mustard
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 cup vinegar
- 1 cup catsup
- 1/2 cup oil
- 3 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

PREPARATION:

Brown the lamb shanks by putting them in a 450-degree oven in some oil. In a large bowl, combine the onions, garlic, pepper, tomatoes, brown sugar, water, dry mustard, salt, vinegar, catsup and Worcestershire sauce.

Pour this mixture over the brown lamb, cover, and bake for 1 1/2 hours at 350 degrees. Uncover and bake for 1/2 hour longer. Baste often while cooking. Serve with Armenian rice or bulgur pilaf. Serves 6.

A Hundred Years and Still Cooking, first published in 1993 by H. Markus Printing, is a significant 496-page volume cookbook includes instructions for preparing 636 different recipes, a "Cooks in the Heavens" and "Cooking for the Multitudes"



sections, a glossary, index and references. This prized cookbook is a unique compendium of Armenian heritage recipes, Scriptural truths, Old World culinary precepts, and Central California ethnic history. To order copies for your friends and family, send a check or money order for \$35.00 each to: First Armenian Presbyterian Church 430 S. First St., Fresno, CA 93702, Attention: Marine or write to: fapc3@fapc.net.

Breaking Bread with William Saroyan is an authentic Armenian recipe book derived from the heritage of William Saroyan's Bitlis, Armenia. An artistic and literary gem, it is a one-of-a-kind collector book offering the opportunity to prepare and sample foods common to Saroyan and his fellow Armenians. To order, contact:

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ARTS & CULTURE

Guitarist For More Than Half a Century

GUITAR, from page 15

to return to Armenia, saying in my mind, that I will eat black bread with my nation, but will not go anywhere from Yerevan. I came back and I have never regretted that step for a second.

Now tell us please, what international figures have you cooperated with?

I do not even remember the names of many, but I will tell about a few.

At the 1977 World Jazz Festival in Belgrade, I performed in a joint concert with the State Jazz Orchestra of Armenia with American musicians, drummer Leon Chancler, bassist Byron Lee Miller, and guitarist Charles Frank Johnson, accompanied by world-famous keyboardist George M. Duke and trumpet player Freddie Hubbard, with whom I participated in the jam session with many other famous musicians.

In 1980 B. B. King was giving a concert at the Yerevan Philharmonic. Pianist Davit Azaryan and I went and decided to get acquainted with him during the concert break. No one was allowed backstage, but they knew us, so we approached B. B. King and introduced ourselves. He asked who I had played with and was amazed to learn that I had played with George Duke and Freddie Hubbard in Belgrade. "Can you play with me now?" "I can." "What will you play?" "Whatever you ask." I was already excited that we should play together now, and suddenly two people approached, wrapped their arms around me and took me out. B. B. King was amazed at what happened. Fortunately, at that moment the director of the Philharmonic was passing by, who intervened: "Where are you taking him? He is our musician, our guitarist!" They replied, "We thought he

was a black marketer, he wanted to buy dollars," said the KGB people, and let me go. But it was already late, the concert had started, so I was deprived of performing with a great musician. In 1993, I went to the giant Guitar Center on Sunset Avenue in Los Angeles. Suddenly, B. B. King and his entourage entered. I approached and said: "Maestro, do you remember me?" He did not remember. As soon as I said, "Yerevan! KGB!," he immediately remembered, called the store staff and said: "Now I have to tell you how I saw with my own eyes how the KGB catches people, not knowing why."

In 1991–1995, during my time in Las Vegas and Los Angeles, I played with many famous musicians in various nightclubs, such as with Frank Sinatra's drummer in Las Vegas Peppers jazz club (I do not remember the last name). In the Blues Club I met the world-famous singer Al Jarreau. Then I played in different clubs in



Boris Andreasyan with Jermaine Jackson

Los Angeles, the Baked Potato jazz club, Athenian Gardens and Port of Athens, as well as La Strada and Casablanca restaurants in Beverly Hills. There is an interesting episode related to Al Jarreau. During the tour of our Armenian band Melomans in Australia in April 2010, the band's keyboardist Armen Harutyunyan (according to his story), along with humorist Ashot Ghazaryan and his Australian friend, approached Al Jarreau's manager at the Hil-

ton Hotel in Sydney and asked him to meet the singer. Knowing that they were from Armenia, Al Jarreau warmly welcomed them and during the conversation asked: "Do you know an Armenian guitarist with Russian name? Unfortunately, I do not remember his name. I heard him in 1991 in one of the clubs in Las Vegas, I got a good impression from him." The boys immediately guessed and said: "Perhaps you mean Boris?" "Yes, yes, Boris," Al Jarreau shouted, and the boys added, "We know him personally, he is our friend."

In 2006 I met Michael Jackson's brother Jermaine Jackson and his wife Halima Rashid in Yerevan. Jermaine admired Armenia and Mount Ararat, asked several times, "Is this really the biblical Mount Ararat?" He was happy, he was saying he must go home and definitely tell Michael, Janet and other siblings about Armenia and convince them to come together to Yerevan. Alas...

In 2009 the Yerevan Perspectives organization invited the legendary guitarist George Benson. They asked me to take care of him and accompany him everywhere. Together with the organizers we met him at the airport, I said that I consider him my virtual teacher and that I was the first to play and distribute his songs in Yerevan. We immediately became close. When we arrived at the Marriott Hotel, he asked that the presidential bodyguards be released. It was around 12.30, Benson said: "I do not want to sleep, can we go to a jazz club?" I called our famous jazz pi-

anist Malkhas and told him to set the table for 10 people in his club, as George Benson and I were coming. Malkhas thought I was joking. Finally, we went to the club, sat down. There was a guitar on the stage, but it was of poor quality, and I did not understand how I dared to play it in front of Benson. We were together for two days. We took him and his band to the Cognac Factory. At the end, he looked at Mount Ararat with admiration and said: "In fact,

I have come to heaven, I do not want to go to Moscow anymore." We went from the factory to the concert and sports complex. Before the concert, we were resting in the dressing room provided for him. I do not know why I was only allowed to enter, perhaps so as not to disturb them. He offered to drink white wine, then he said suddenly: "Shall we play together?" I would not dare to offer such a thing! Anyway, he brought his guitars (it was already an honor to play his GB-15 and GB-20 instruments!) and we jammed for more than half an hour with question and answer accompaniment. It is a pity that it was not filmed. He said that he had never played with anyone before the concert in his life.

At our Philharmonic, I met world-famous guitarist Stanley Jordan. We had an interesting conversation, we took pictures. Sometime later, I met the equally famous guitarist John McLaughlin and his the 4th Dimension band. Before that, at the request of the main organizer of the concert, I appeared on TV, presenting John McLaughlin and his upcoming concert. A very warm relationship was established between us, even while leaving the airport with the organizer McLaughlin invited us to the opening ceremony of his new house. Years ago I could only dream of meeting and getting closer to such great musicians.

And what do you do now?

Now I am in a creative period. I write music in jazz and jazz-rock styles, I have dozens of works that I want to release on CD. I need a producer, a sponsor for this job, but it is difficult to find. I do not know if anyone will be interested in my project and such music.

The above-mentioned path and all that meetings, collaborations and contacts with artists representing different nationalities, cultures, ideas, as well as my spiritual worldview led me to the idea that for the sake of God and high art, the world, indeed, can and should become a kinder and safer place for people, if, of course, the leaders support that and do not hinder the implementation of such initiatives. All the nations and states of the world can better understand, know, appreciate and love each other, and for that all they need is pure love and respect for each other and free and sincere dialogue.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

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

RHODE ISLAND

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

NOVEMBER 26 – Armenian Spiritual Music

DECEMBER 10 — Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church, Friday, 7 P.M. The Cultural Committee & Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island presents "O Holy Night" Christmas Concert featuring The Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island & Soloists in the Sanctuary of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church 70 Jefferson St., Providence. Donations greatly appreciated. Refreshments following concert.

Captive Nights: From the Bosphorus to Gallipoli with Zabel Yessayan Published by Armenian Series at Fresno State

YESSAYAN, from page 8

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon and the Fesjian Fund at Columbia University. Following the translation and publication of Hagop Oshagan's Remnants (2013), Captive Nights marks Kebranian's second collaboration with award-winning translator, G. M. Goshgarian. Situating Yessayan in the context of larger issues affecting Turkish society and drawing on her research expertise in literature, history, and law, Kebranian's insightful introduction shows how these stories of social justice are as resonant today as they were a century ago.

Addressing the broader resonance of this volume, Dr. Christine Philiou, professor of history at the University of California, Berkeley stated, "Three beautiful stories written by a remarkable person that happened to have been a woman and an Armenian in the early twentieth century. Zabel Yessayan — in her life and work — signified a triumph of humanism and empathy over the violence of ethnic divisions, persecution, and genocide that prevailed in her time. And her stories, lovingly translated here by G. M. Goshgarian, and edited by Nanor Kebranian and Barlow Der Muger-

dechian, remain a fascinating ray of light and redemption for all the suffering she endured."

Dr. Valentina Calzolari, president of the International Association of Armenian Studies, added, "This book is a precious gift. We are deeply indebted to G. M. Goshgarian for this elegant and beautiful translation, and to Nanor Kebranian for the selection of these texts. Kebranian's incisive introduction stresses one of the main concerns of these three short stories: the senselessness of ethno-confessional hatred."

The Armenian Series at California State University, Fresno was established through the generous support of the M. Victoria Karagozian Kazan and Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan Endowment. Prof. Barlow Der Mugerdechian is the general editor of the series.

Captive Nights From the Bosphorus to Gallipoli with Zabel Yessayan is available through Abril Books: <http://www.abril-books.com/captive-nights-from-the-bosphorus-to-gallipoli-with-zabel-yessayan.html> or through the NAASR bookstore at <https://naasr.org/products/captive-nights-from-the-bosphorus-to-gallipoli-with-zabel-yessayan>.

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

Political Fallout after Sochi Meeting



By Edmond Y.
Azadian

Every political development in the Caucasus has an existential significance for Armenia. That is why the news media was in a frenzy while the political establishment was caught in a sadistic self-flagellating mood, during the course of the ebb and flow of politics in Armenia.

Many analysts who serve a specific political agenda do a disservice to the country; only those who dare to speak the painful truth can provide useful guidance and a realistic vision to the public. For example, recently, dour-faced analyst Alexander Iskandaryan was maintaining, during a panel program on Azatutun TV, that Armenia, as the defeated party, is not in a position to dictate the agenda in the negotiations with its adversaries.

Since November 9, 2020, Armenia has been forced to sit down with the Azerbaijani enemy to sort out the situation after the 44-day war, which has changed the balance of power in the region.

Dmitri Trenin of the Carnegie Moscow Center, in the afterword to a Russian-language book, *Storm Over the Caucasus*, published by the Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, stated: “The second Karabakh war, which broke out in the fall of 2020, was a turning point, and not only for its participants, Armenia and Azerbaijan. It changed the political and military balance in the South Caucasus. ... It is Turkey, Iran and Israel, rather than the United States and Europe, which now hold growing influence over what happens in Azerbaijan and Armenia — and between them. This should focus Russian policy on the search for more appropriate approaches to the country’s South Caucasus neighbors in the broader context of the Middle East rather than the post-Soviet or Russia-West context.”

However, many in Armenia, in a Cold War mindset, believe that the alternative to Russia is the West and the democratic values of other nations. The fact that the West sustains medieval potentates in the Middle East, despite its stated values of democracy and justice, just shows how disingenuous its double standard is.

Developments in the Caucasus are happening at a dizzying pace and it is very hard to keep up with them.

It was decided to hold a tripartite meeting between Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan on the painful anniversary of November 9, to assess the work achieved by the deputy prime ministers of the respective parties, and sign a new agreement to execute and finalize the terms of the ceasefire.

However, Azerbaijan preempted that meeting by new border provocations against Armenia, postponing that meeting indefinitely. Incidentally, Baku’s policy is very transparent; by creating new problems, it is pushing back against the primary agenda. The war broke out over the Karabakh conflict; Baku has been creating facts on the ground to keep Armenia busy with problems on its own soil. By forcing the issue of the Zangezur Corridor, neither Armenia nor its partners in the region consider Karabakh as a hot issue anymore. Armenia has to worry about defending its territorial integrity in the Syunik region, rather than pursuing Karabakh’s destiny.

With all these incidents, the situation has become so fluid that European Union President Charles Michel’s announcement a few weeks ago that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Ilham Aliyev were planning to meet in Brussels on December 15, on the sidelines of the Eastern Partnership of the European Union, galvanized the political atmosphere.

The Kremlin, anticipating the Caucasus agenda’s move to the West, decided to reverse the process and invited the two parties to Sochi on November 26 to iron out a deal and make the Brussels meeting irrelevant.

Thus, a new political drama was enacted in Sochi, where Pashinyan and Aliyev met with Russian President Vladimir Putin for three hours of tense negotiations. During the public portion of the meeting, an entirely reformed Aliyev appeared ready for a public relations overhaul as a peacemaker. Gone were his recent unsavory remarks about Armenian dogs, as his belligerence and rude demeanor had rendered him a distasteful dictator on the world political stage. That was certainly not the only reason for his transformation. There were also other political

factors that had contributed to his civility.

Aliyev announced that Azerbaijan had fulfilled 100 percent of its commitments to the November 9 ceasefire declaration, and that he was ready to turn the page and begin a new era of neighborly relations with Armenia.

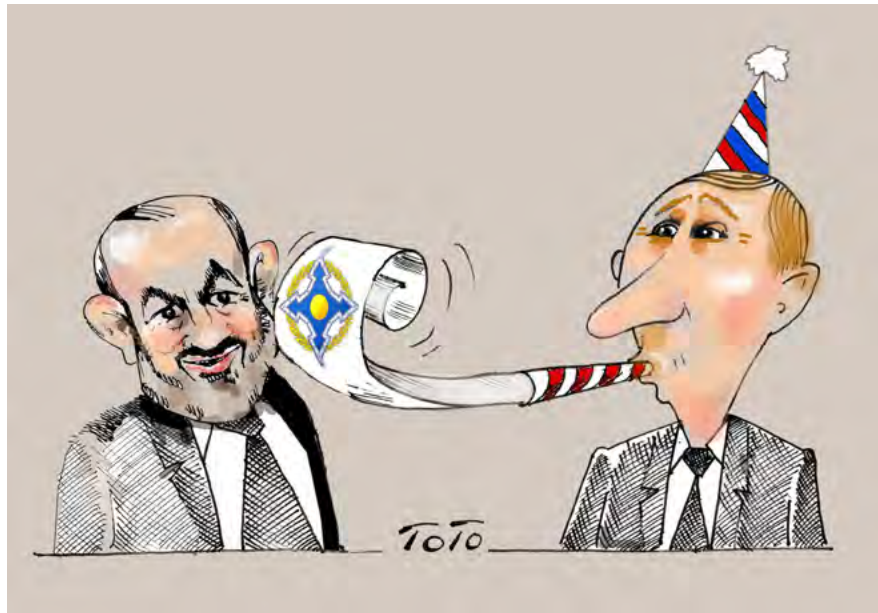
“I beg to differ,” answered Pashinyan, and he brought up the issue of the POWs and the hostages still held in Azerbaijan. And also, the fact that Azerbaijani forces had violated Armenia’s territory repeatedly. All three leaders said they evaluated the meeting as positive and constructive. Pashinyan even stated that he found out that some problems, which had been deemed unsolvable, seemed to have solutions.

What was very unusual was Aliyev’s complete silence over the corridor issue, at least during the public session. That was intriguing, since he and his political master, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, until recently had constantly brought up the issue and even made threats to enforce the corridor.

At the end of the meeting, a benign statement was signed by the three parties, sparing domestic problems for each of them.

However, the opposition in Armenia is up in arms, insisting that Pashinyan had signed an agreement over the corridor and had sold out Karabakh. Demonstrators outside the parliament demanded that the government resign.

The trilateral statement which was released at the conclusion of the Sochi meeting stated that the parties had agreed to “take steps to increase the level of stability and the security on the Armenian-Azerbaijani order and to work towards the creation



of a bilateral commission on the delimitation of the state border between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia with its subsequent demarcation with the consultative assistance of the Russian Federation at the request of the parties.”

Of course, it is easier said than done, as the devil is in the details.

The opposing sides praised the role of the Russian peacekeepers profusely, while it is known that Baku has been actively trying to undermine their presence.

Of course, President Putin did not miss any opportunity to take credit for the peacekeeping force’s role as well as Russia’s role as mediator.

This particular issue has been promoted by many Kremlin advocates, comparing and contrasting the role of Turkey vis-à-vis Azerbaijan and that of Russia towards Armenia.

Now, however, we see a shift in the role of Russia toward Armenia. It has gone from an ally to a moderator — a gamechanger in Caucasian politics. Russia’s treaty agreements with Armenia seem obsolete now.

The political factors which have affected Aliyev’s mood, even to the point of conceding that there are positive signs from Armenia, are many. The first one is the Turkey factor. Ankara’s expansionism had stretched too far to be sustainable by its faltering economy. The tumbling Turkish lira and the opposition’s calls for a snap election almost shattered Erdogan’s dream for his 2023 reelection so he could be anointed as the second Atatürk.

That is why Erdogan tried hastily to mend faces with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Israel. As a reward for its good behavior, the UAE decided to invest \$10 billion in Turkey to boost the latter’s economy.

continued on next page



COMMENTARY



MY TURN

Israeli Cluster Bombs Sold To Azerbaijan Kill & Maim Innocent Armenian Civilians

Israeli journalist Yossi Melman wrote a lengthy critical article in the *Haaretz* newspaper about Israel’s sale of banned deadly cluster bombs to Azerbaijan to kill and maim innocent Armenian civilians in Artsakh. The article, although published on October 22, 2020, retains its relevance given the fact that these cluster bombs were not only used in last year’s Artsakh war by Azerbaijan, but may also be used in a future war. Amnesty International confirmed that Azerbaijan used Israeli cluster bombs in the 2020 Artsakh war. These lethal bombs exploded in a residential area near the city of Stepanakert, the capital of Artsakh.

“The use of cluster bombs in any circumstances is banned under international humanitarian law, so their use to attack civilian areas is particularly dangerous and will only lead to further deaths and injuries,” said Denis Krivosheev, Amnesty International’s acting chief for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. “Cluster bombs are inherently indiscriminate weapons, and their deployment in residential areas is absolutely appalling and unacceptable.”

Melman explained that “a cluster bomb is a kind of container holding a bundle of small bombs. The mother bomb explodes at a certain height and, over a wide area, scatters the smaller bombs, which explode a short time later. The munitions can be launched from cannons of various sizes, with diameters up to 155 mm, from launchers, helicopters and planes.” Children often pick up unexploded cluster bombs mistaking them for toys, resulting in their death or injury.

Melman wrote that he asked Israel’s Defense Ministry, the Israel Defense Forces and the Foreign Ministry “on whether — and if so, when — Israel supplied cluster bombs to Azerbaijan.” Not surprisingly, he received no response.

Melman remarked that Israel’s Defense Ministry, “true to its aggressive habits, is loath to give explanations and refuses to answer questions it doesn’t like. It seems to have something to hide, especially when it comes to its overly intimate relationship with Azerbaijan.”

Melman asked a pertinent question: “Why is Israel arming Azerbaijan against Armenia?” There would be a huge worldwide outcry if Armenia were to transfer missiles to Hamas or Hezbollah to attack Israeli citizens. Israel arming Azerbaijan is no different, but where is the international condemnation of Israel?

Israel used cluster bombs on several occasions: In the 1973 war against sev-

eral Arab states, the wars on Lebanon in 1978, 1982 and 2006, and the Gaza war in 2008-09. Melman reported that “this led to a condemnation by then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and to tension in the United States, because the firing apparently violated the restrictions on using cluster bombs when the weapon was supplied in 1976.”

The Winograd Committee, formed by the Israeli government to review the appropriateness of Israel’s military actions in Lebanon in 2006, “harshly criticized the use of cluster bombs in civilian areas,” according to Melman. It is illegal to use cluster bombs. It is also illegal for the United States to sell them to Israel, which in turn illegally sold them to Azerbaijan.

Regrettably, neither the Republic of Armenia nor the Armenian-American community complained to the American government about Israel’s illegal transfer of U.S. cluster bombs to Azerbaijan.

Melman reported that “in December 2008, the Convention on Cluster Munitions was signed in Oslo. It prohibits the use, development, manufacture, storage and transfer of cluster bombs, which it defines as ‘a conventional ammunition that is designed to disperse or release explosive submunitions’ from a container. Over 100 countries signed the accord, which went into effect in 2010.”

Israel, however, refused to join the convention that banned cluster bombs. Ironically, Israel was quick to condemn Syria for its reported use of cluster bombs inside its own country. It is not clear why Armenia refused to join the convention which would have given it a stronger footing to condemn the illegal use of cluster bombs by Azerbaijan and Turkey, neither one of which joined the convention. In addition to selling cluster bombs to Azerbaijan, Israel also sold them to Turkey, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Romania, Switzerland, Great Britain, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Chile, Colombia and Venezuela.

According to Melman, Azerbaijan was the largest market for Israeli cluster bombs, along with various cannons and rocket launchers. “Israel sold dual-purpose munitions components, which can also be used in cluster bombs, in a way that let Israel bypass the convention.”

Melman reported that, a year ago, Israeli “activist Eli Joseph, who takes part in efforts to ban weapons sales by Israel to dictatorial regimes,” petitioned in vain Israel’s High Court of Justice, “demanding that Baku and Jerusalem’s military connections be revealed. Also, Joseph and his colleagues in the Jewish Heart organization demonstrated in front of the Knesset against arms exports to Azerbaijan, under the slogan ‘No to war crimes, no to the murder of innocents.’” It is heart-warming to see righteous Israelis objecting to the immoral actions of their government.

By selling lethal weapons to the murderous regime of Azerbaijan, Israel has undermined its moral standing and has become an accomplice to Azeri war crimes.

from previous page

Erdogan advised Aliyev to do the same with Iran, with which it had almost gone to war just recently, drawing red lines against border changes in the Caucasus.

Baku had already an unresolved issue with Iran over drilling rights in the Caspian Sea. Iran even almost went to war to stop Azerbaijan from encroaching on the territorial waters off its coasts. Overnight, Baku signed an agreement on the issue and that paid off handsomely as Iran’s Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian congratulated Baku on the anniversary of November 9 for having reconquered its territory during the 44-day war. Iran was also invited to participate in projects in the “occupied territories,” which of course, will provide an opportunity to Tehran to keep an eye on Israeli activities in Azerbaijan.

In the meantime, Turkey’s Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu had visited Tehran and lay the groundwork for the forthcoming visit of President Erdogan. But pre-empting that visit, Erdogan and Iran President Ebrahim Raisi met in Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan, and talked about future cooperation between their two countries. President Raisi even expressed his satisfaction over Azerbaijan’s victory in Karabakh.

All these developments demonstrated that at this moment, Ankara cannot afford to support Baku in a new war.

The other factor which has helped Aliyev to behave is perhaps that he had been assured by President Putin to formulate the corridor issue in a fashion that may not sound as if extra-territorial sovereign rights are being taken from Armenia but rather to have the corridor appear to be under the control of Russian forces, similar to the status of Lachin corridor.

The forthcoming meeting in Brussels will serve as a reactivation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, whose co-chairs are planning to visit the region.

Whether the group will visit Karabakh from Armenia or from Azerbaijan will serve as a symbolic political message.

The political process in the region is not always moving in the direction that Aliyev had anticipated. Therefore, this will give Armenia a chance to build its armed forces in order to be able to maintain the credibility of its diplomacy.

Erdogan Doubles Down On Economic Policy amid Currency Volatility

By Diego Cupolo

Following a volatile week that saw Turkey’s lira fall to record lows against major currencies, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on November 29 doubled down on rhetoric against interest rate hikes and defended a current policy track that he says will boost economic growth.

While speaking to reporters on a flight back from Turkmenistan, Erdogan reiterated his unorthodox claim that lower interest rates would eventually curb inflation, a stance contrary to mainstream economic theory.

“I have always argued for lower interest rates and repeatedly said rates should be lower,” Erdogan told Turkish broadcaster NTV. “I have never advocated and will not advocate interest rate increases.”

The lira slid more than 4 percent in value against the US dollar after the statements and was trading at 12.85 per greenback at 7 p.m. Istanbul time Monday.

With official annual inflation at nearly 20 percent in October, and expected to rise to 20.7 percent in November, according to a Reuters survey, some analysts believe Turkey’s current monetary policies could present further risks for the economy, such as higher inflation and more currency devaluation.

Erdogan last week portrayed currency volatility as part of an “economic liberation war” that would eventually see Turkey become more competitive as an export hub, drawing new investments and production plants through lower labor costs, which are partly driven by the weaker lira.

“We will solve the problems caused by price increases with no economic basis on the exchange rate through investment, employment and production in favor of our nation,” Erdogan said Monday.

News reports over the weekend also indicated Turkey’s State Supervisory Council will launch a probe into whether criminal activity or attempted currency manipulation were behind exchange rate fluctuations in November.

The lira has fallen as much as 45 percent in value against the US dollar since the start of the year, with losses concentrated in the last three months after Central Bank monetary policymakers issued three consecutive key interest cuts. Since September, Turkey’s main policy rate was reduced by 400 basis points to 15 percent, well below the annual inflation rate of 19.89 percent.

The low interest rates are apparently intended to help spur economic activity, particularly in the real estate and construction sectors, with the Turkish economy expected to grow up to 9 percent this year. Taken together, Turkish policymakers’ focus on maintaining high economic growth through cheap credit poses significant risks, said Wolf Piccoli, co-president and political risk analyst at Teneo Intelligence.

“What we see is a determined effort to try to convince the public that they are on top of things, and this is part of a new economic model plan,” Piccoli told Al-Monitor regarding Erdogan’s statements Monday.

Piccoli said Turkish policymakers appear to be replicating an economic experiment they have used in the past, but this time external conditions are less likely to produce similar results. Emerging market currencies have been generally struggling against the US dollar this year, and expectations the US Federal Reserve will soon pull back

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Erdogan Doubles Down on Economic Policy amid Currency Volatility

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on coronavirus pandemic support programs will likely draw investors away from emerging markets like Turkey.

“There isn’t a plan, that is the reality,” Piccoli said. “[Erdogan] is selling something that is not new and something that has not been prepared properly while blaming everybody else for what is going wrong.”

Erdogan has repeatedly pointed to foreign actors as part of the cause for Turkey’s economic troubles, often referring to a malicious “interest rate lobby” in his speeches. At the same time, the Turkish leader has positioned the current lira depreciation as an opportunity to increase exports for Turkish producers.

Yet observers have noted many Turkish manufacturers depend on imported materials, which companies must purchase at foreign currency values, and therefore absorb price increases through the production cycle despite the lower labor costs enabled by a cheaper lira.

Erdogan has also argued Turkey could serve as a supply chain hub where compa-

nies could open factories and take advantage of the nation’s relative proximity to Europe. Such a shift would require long-term planning and sustained education programs to support a high-skill work force, said Cem Cakmakli, assistant professor of economics at Koc University.

“If the production base can shift itself toward a more domestically oriented production ... if they can produce [currently imported products] domestically, then the chance that financial conditions will get better is higher. But this takes — at least from the examples we know — a long time,” Cakmakli told Al-Monitor.

Cakmakli said that a more sustainable business environment would be needed to draw investor interest, primarily with an immediate focus on price stability.

“Because of the high volatility, it’s very hard to make price decisions,” Cakmakli noted. “If it’s very hard to see the near future, then investments are negatively affected.”

The Turkish Statistical Institute is expected to publish November inflation data Dec. 3. On Dec. 16, the Central Bank Monetary Policy Committee will hold its last rate setting meeting of the year, and policymakers hinted further cuts might be

applied.

“The big question is what happens with domestic savings?” Piccoli asked, regarding Turkey’s economic outlook. “Will [Turkish bank account holders] remain cool-headed as they seem to be or will sudden panic kick in and we will see them rushing to the banks to take money out?”

(This column originally appeared on the Al-Monitor website on November 29. The link is <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/11/erdogan-doubles-down-economic-policy-amid-currency-volatility#ixzz7DjRPcxWs>)

Tehran City Council Renames Streets in Dig at Azerbaijan

TEHRAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Tehran City Council on November 23 adopted a law changing the names of a park and 38 public thoroughfares in the Iranian capital, including renaming some streets after Azerbaijani towns and regions in a way that is bound to antagonize Baku, bne IntelliNews reports.

The municipality is to change the name of Panah Alley to Nardaran. The namesake of the new street is a village on the outskirts of Baku, known for its strictly religious Shiite community and home to the Muslim Unity Movement, an unregistered religious group formed in 2015. The founder of MUM, an Iran-educated Azerbaijani Shiite scholar Taleh Bagirzade, has been a vocal critic of the positions of state religious bodies and has accused the government of authoritarian rule and corruption, the source says.

The City Council will also rename Maryam alley as Shushi, the city recaptured by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces on 8 November, during the Second Artsakh War. The traditional and official Azerbaijani name for the city is “Shusha,” while the city council chose to go with Shushi, the Armenian and Iranian name for the town.

Other name changes include Yas Alley to Salyan and Ehtesham Alley to Lankaran – two southern districts of Azerbaijan, the latter having a considerable Talysh ethnic minority, who speak a language belonging to the Iranian group. Lankaran is also the city Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Fazel Lankarani (1931-2007) hails from.

Salar Seyf, an Iranian journalist said in a tweet that the streets were renamed “because they belong to the realm of the Iranian civilization” and hoped that “no one will call the city council tomorrow to remove these names.”

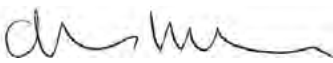


Once again, it has been a challenging year. The Mirror-Spectator has covered the crises in Artsakh, Armenia and Lebanon, supported efforts at humanitarian fundraising, and secured new young correspondents in Armenia, Artsakh and the US. We continue to provide periodic video reports online.

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is the first English-language Armenian weekly published in the US, and for nearly 90 years it has served the community. Readers learn of the most important developments in Armenia, as well as international politics, art and culture throughout the world in a convenient and concise format.

We continue with our annual tradition of publishing your Christmas and New Year’s wishes and greetings to relatives and friends in the final issue of the year. If you wish to give gift subscriptions of the Mirror-Spectator for Christmas, for your convenience, we are placing a gift subscription form in the newspaper as well as one below.

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Editor



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