



More Armenian POWs Freed through French, European Council Efforts

By Nane Sakahian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL and Armenpress) — Azerbaijan set free eight more Armenian prisoners of war on Monday, February 7, three days after a virtual Armenian-Azerbaijani summit organized by French President Emmanuel Macron and Euro-

pean Council President Charles Michel.

The soldiers were flown to from Baku to Yerevan by a French military plane. The Armenian Foreign Ministry said they were repatriated “through the mediation of the French government and the EU.”

see RELEASE, page 2

NBA’s Rex Kalamian Is Heading to Armenia

By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

DETROIT — Rex Kalamian, the assistant coach of the Detroit Pistons, has been in the news lately.

The Los Angeles native has been an assistant coach in the National Basketball Association (NBA) for 28 years, but won his first game as an acting head coach with the Detroit Pistons on January 10 while head coach Dwane Casey was absent due to COVID protocols (he ended up testing negative). The win against the Utah Jazz was a career landmark for Kalamian, the first time he could say he took home a professional game ball. In fact, he was only the second Armenian-American in history to do so, following legend-



ary college basketball coach Jerry Tarkanian’s short pro stint with the San Antonio Spurs in the early 1990s.

Detroit’s ABC affiliate, WXYZ-Channel 7 shared a video inside the locker room after the game; in a show of celebration, the team showered Kalamian with water as he entered to discuss the win. The visibly flattered coach immediately shifted to praising the players, who had been having a less than stellar season, saying “we should be throwing water on you guys.”

As if that weren’t enough for Armenian-American sports fans and in particular Detroit area residents of Armenian descent, just a week later, ESPN’s Adrian Wojnarowski tweeted that Kalamian had agreed to be head coach of the Armenian National Men’s Basketball team, competing in the

see KALAMIAN, page 11

Armenia Rounds On Belarus Leader

By Astghik Bedevian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia on February 8 shrugged off Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko’s claims that it will have no choice but to join a Russian-led “union state” of former Soviet republics.

In a televised interview with a pro-Kremlin Russian journalist broadcast on Monday, Lukashenko predicted that Moscow would cobble together a “union of sovereign states” with common defense, national security and economic systems over the next 10 to 15 years. He said it will comprise not only Russia and Belarus but also Central Asian states, Armenia and even Ukraine.

“Armenia has nowhere [else] to go,” claimed the long-serving Belarusian strongman. “Do you think anyone needs them?”

“They have already seen that. Nikol Vovaevich [Pashinyan] has seen that,” he added in reference to the Armenian prime minister.

Pashinyan’s government hit back at Lukashenko through the Armenian Foreign Ministry and pro-government parliamentarians.

“We believe that the Belarusian president’s peculiar geopolitical analyzes aim to first and foremost serve his domestic political agenda and have nothing to do with Armenia and its foreign policy,” the ministry spokesman, Vahan Hunanyan, said in written comments to the press.

see BELARUS, page 6

FAST with Orujyan Advances Armenian Technological and Scientific Innovation

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Scientific and technological prowess do not emerge from nowhere. A small, landlocked country without many natural resources, Armenia benefited from the broader Soviet system prior to its independence but now must work hard to create a new system to support cutting edge work that can provide the country with practical economic benefits. There are various government and university programs as well as a number of centers and nonprofit organizations working in this vein. One of the latter, the Foundation for Armenian Technology and Science (FAST), focuses on the route from education and research to commercialization of products, attempting to foster the development of an ecosystem that would drive scientific advancement and technological innovation in Armenia. FAST is celebrating its fifth anniversary this year, and its chief executive officer, Dr. Armen Orujyan, provides some insights into its achievements, challenges and projects.

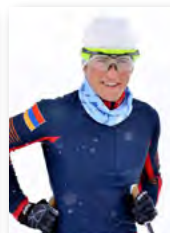
Orujyan was born in Armenia but immigrated to California with his family in 1989 as a teenager. After graduating the University of California, Los Angeles, he obtained a master’s and then a doctoral degree (2007) from Claremont Graduate University’s



School of Politics and Economics. In 1999, he founded and served as chairman of Athgo, an entrepreneurship platform and nonprofit organization enjoying consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the UN Department of Public Information and the World Intellectual Property Organization.

see INNOVATION, page 3

CHINA
Armenian Olympic Team Has 6 Athletes



Page 6

CZECH REPUBLIC
How Marlenka Conquered the World



Page 7

MOSCOW
22nd Armenian International Medical Mission to Armenia



Page 8



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenians Are Shot at by Azerbaijani Forces

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — On February 5, Azerbaijani forces opened fire on Armenians across the border in the village of Khramot in Artsakh's Askeran region, Azerbaijani forces used large-caliber machine guns at around 12 p.m., the Artsakh Prosecutor's Office reported, to target three employees of the Foundation for Future Generations LLC, who were repairing a tractor at the time.

The workers had to take cover for two hours before the arrival of police officers. The men called their administration and alerted about the incident during the shooting.

Armenian Ambassador to US Presents Armenian State Award to Rep. Costa

WASHINGTON (News.am) — On February 7, Armenian Ambassador to the United States Lilit Makunts met with US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Relations, Congressman Jim Costa (D-CA). Makunts presented the Mkhitaryan Gosh Award to the Congressman in light of the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Armenia and the US and the latter's significant contribution to the development of US-Armenia relations. The two discussed issues related to the further deepening of bilateral relations and also touched upon international and regional developments.

Analyst: Pipeline to Link Persian Gulf and Black Sea To Run Through Armenia

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The pipeline connecting the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea is to run through Armenia, political analyst Hrant Melik-Shahnazaryan said this week.

"Iran has made a final decision not to use the territory of Nakhichevan for the establishment of the Persian Gulf-Black Sea corridor; the pipeline will pass through the territory of Armenia," he wrote on Facebook on February 7.

The analyst says negotiations on the project will continue in Bulgaria soon. The states that are part of the energy corridor — Iran, Armenia, Georgia, Bulgaria and Greece — are expected to sign a relevant agreement.

"Thus, the Iranian side recognizes Syunik as a region of strategic importance for itself in deed, and not only in word. It is also known that an Iranian consulate will soon open in Kapan," Melik-Shahnazaryan added.

"Naturally, this is good news. Armenia will finally break through the communication blockade and Turkey's presence in Artsakh will, in a sense, be compensated by Iran's presence in Syunik.

"However, these geopolitical and geo-economic reshuffling also poses a serious problem for us. In particular, Armenia's opportunity to make decisions on issues of vital importance to it is practically nullified.



The released POWs in Armenia

POWs Freed through French, European Council Efforts

RELEASE, from page 1

Both Michel and Macron hailed the release, implying that it resulted from their video conference on Friday with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. The four leaders also discussed efforts to reduce tensions along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and open transport links between the two South Caucasus states:

"Thank you to our diplomats as well as to our soldiers involved in this operation," Macron tweeted. "We are moving forward!"

Four of the freed Armenian soldiers were taken prisoner in Nagorno-Karabakh in December 2020 shortly after a Russian-brokered ceasefire stopped a six-week Armenian-Azerbaijani war for the territory. The others were apparently captured during heavy fighting on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in November 2021.

According to the Armenian authorities, nearly four dozen Armenian soldiers and civilians remain in Azerbaijani captivi-

ty. Many of them were given lengthy prison sentences last year after short trials condemned by Armenia.

Yerevan regularly demands the unconditional release of the remaining captives, saying that they are held in breach of the 2020 truce accord. Baku claims that the agreement does not cover them.

On February 4, a remote meeting between the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev took place at the mediation of Emmanuel Macron and Charles Michel.

The released POWs are Sargis Tarzyan, Vardges Balayan, Armen Petrosyan, Artur Babayan, Hmayak Sargsyan, Gurgen Galoyan, Grigor Kyureghyan and Vagharshak Maloyan.

"The release by Azerbaijan and repatriation [sic] to Armenia of 8 Armenian detainees is another sign of positive developments following the meeting with Emmanuel Macron, Ilham Aliyev and Nikol Pashinyan.

The EU supports stability and prosperity in the region," he said, Michel said.

Special Representative of NATO Secretary General for the Caucasus and Central Asia Javier Colomina wrote on Twitter, "This is good news. NATO values our partnership both with Armenia and Azerbaijan, supports the normalization of their relations, which will contribute to the stability and prosperity in the region."

Governor of Shirak Nazeli Baghdasaryan said the POWs will undergo medical examination shortly.

"Four of the repatriated POWs are from Shirak Province: Tarzyan Sargis, Galoyan Gurgen, Kyureghyan Grigor, Maloyan Vagharshak," Baghdasaryan said. She said she will soon contact their families.

The governor thanked the President of France Emmanuel Macron and the President of the European Council Charles Michel, as well as Armenian governmental agencies and international partners for the support in repatriating the POWs.

Vardenis Troubled due to External and Internal Tribulations

By Gevorg Gyulumyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

VARDENIS, Armenia — In a number of villages of the Vardenis region, which in 2020 after the war, ended up on the border with Azerbaijan, human rights are being openly violated in the most crude way. This primarily concerns the villages of Kut, Azat, Norabak and Sotk. From these villages, the military strongholds of the Azerbaijanis who invade the sovereign territory of Armenia and the movement of their armed forces and military equipment are clearly visible. Some conversations of members of the Azerbaijani armed groups can be clearly heard in the villages, while the sounds of their shooting cause alarm among the people.

The distance from the Azerbaijani strongholds to the aforementioned villages is 500-2000 meters, which means that the schools and in general all the children of the village are targets.

"I do not believe in the humanitarian policy of the world. I think it is false, because you see what is happening here. Children are directly targeted. Schools are directly targeted. Azerbaijanis shoot at the walls and windows of people's houses, but the world is silent — that is, we are alone with our problems," said Hakob Avetyan, the former

head of the enlarged Geghamasar community.

In his opinion, the only salvation is to arm, to have a strong army and to solve the existing problems with one's own forces.

"We must expel the Azerbaijanis from here, expel them as we did in the 1990s," he added.

Harutyun, a resident of the village, who was also forcibly displaced (from northern Artsakh in 1988), thinks that the authorities of the day are not capable of solving the matter.

"They can do nothing. They only blame the former [Armenian regimes], but during the period of the former, I could not even see in a bad dream that the Azerbaijanis reach the outskirts of my village and shoot at my house."

Community teacher Jemmara Vardanyan mentions that the Armenian authorities should work with international organizations, especially on the issue of children.

"After all, our children are targeted by the enemy's forces. Why is the government not working? Our main goal is to protect the children, but this is not being done now."

Post-Election Crisis

In addition to all this, Vardenis is currently in a post-election crisis. On February 2, the Administrative Court partially upheld

the claim of the former mayor of Vardenis, Civil Contract party mayoral candidate Aram Melkonyan and members of the municipal council who also are Civil Contract members, to annul the first session of the municipal council, during which Aharon Khachatryan, the leader of the Aharon Khachatryan Bloc, was elected mayor of Vardenis.

The lawyer of the Aharon Khachatryan Bloc, Varazdat Harutyunyan, considers this decision illegal, seeing no basis for it. "Of course we will protest this illegal decision because there are no grounds for it. Now we are preparing the necessary documents," he said.

It should also be noted that in the December 5 elections in Vardenis, the Civil Contract party won 13 seats, the Aharon Khachatryan Bloc 10, and United Vardenis 4 seats (see "Post-Election Vardenis Political Divisions Continue" in the last issue of the Mirror-Spectator). The last two opposition forces formed a coalition, together securing 14 seats, after which the number one of the United Vardenis list of candidates, former mayor of Vardenis Aram Harutyunyan, was charged in a criminal case and arrested.

At the moment, Vardenis remains in a tense and uncertain atmosphere emanating both from outside its borders and internally.



ARMENIA

FAST with Orujyan Advances Armenian Technological and Scientific Innovation

INNOVATION, from page 1

In 2016, Orujyan met Russian-Armenian entrepreneur Ruben Karlenovich Vardanyan and was invited to visit Armenia and explore working with him and his partners. Orujyan's first visit in February 2017 went so well that he started to go back and forth over the next six months to see if a working relationship could be established. Orujyan said he was extremely impressed by Armenia as well as the projects that Vardanyan and Boston-based entrepreneur Dr. Noubar Afeyan had achieved and exclaimed: "It was very exciting. It was a different Armenia. There was a spark in young people, in their eyes, and in their thinking. They were more hopeful than a decade ago, when I last had visited Armenia."

FAST was formally established in late June of that year and Armenia became Orujyan's permanent home. He began working as FAST's CEO from November 1. Vardanyan had brought Afeyan onboard as cofounder, along with Fr. Mesrop Aramyan, who at the time represented both the Ayb School and the Luys Foundation, and entrepreneur and engineer/physicist Artur Alaverdyan, who served as chair of the FAST board of trustees for three years. Orujyan said that, while this happened before his own involvement, he had learned that Vardanyan spoke to the government of then President Serzh Sargsyan and made all the initial arrangements to put together a team.

FAST took its place among the numerous other philanthropic, educational and entrepreneurial projects that Vardanyan and Afeyan had initiated in Armenia, including the IdeA Foundation (Initiatives for the Development of Armenia), Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, United World Colleges Dilijan College, and Revival of Tatev Project. As such, Orujyan said that many of the leaders of these and other related institutions, primarily in Armenia, would have weekly calls to discuss what they were focusing on, their accomplishments and sometimes their challenges. This facilitated cooperation when suitable, while at times ad hoc opportunities for collaboration also arose.

The work conducted by FAST is also reflected in the planning for the future of Armenia through the Future Armenian public initiative and other related strategic studies and approaches of the Armenia 2041 Charity Foundation funded by Afeyan, Vardanyan, Alaverdyan and several sponsors.

Education

In order for Armenia to maintain its historically high level of scientific achievement, it needs a high level of education. FAST works to bolster such education through a variety of programs.

FAST periodically offers bootcamps in the fields of artificial intelligence and chemistry when there is a need and provided graduate students with a course on the mathematical foundations of deep learning in 2021. Through its SciNova program, it also developed a curriculum on research design and science commercialization for graduate students which is to be shared with higher education institutions in Armenia.

One of the FAST initiatives which Orujyan qualified as very successful is called Unit 1991. It is an educational platform it created some three years ago to teach upcoming Armenian army recruits mathematics, machine learning and some other subject matters that would be useful for them to continue their education while they will be serving for two years. It first began with about 40 highly intelligent "cream of the crop," as Orujyan put it, Armenian youth, but that number then was raised to 100-110 every quarter. Now, there will be 120 youth who will be trained to be competitive in knowledge of artificial intelligence.

FAST is working with the Armenian government, Orujyan said, to expand and scale the program on a national level and is working on a pilot project for 10-12 high schools. He declared, "We are very proud of this particular educational program. It was an arduous process, both putting this together and learning how to provide both curriculum and the right type of faculty." The graduates of the program will enter a special track within the armed forces.

Research

FAST began giving out fellowships for 25 individual PhD candidates in STEM fields studying in Armenian in 2018. Orujyan said that this approach was helpful for the recipients but not effective for broader systemic impact.

In its place, FAST created what it calls the ADVANCE STEM Research Grant program. The grants it issued were up to \$65,000 per researcher team and four were given in 2020, he continued. Armenian scientists are connected to an international high caliber scientist, called a principal investigator. The university where this principal investigator works is connected to a local university in Armenia and

FAST funding helps pay the salary of all the scientists, the cost of publications, lab materials, and travel. The outside scientist is brought to Armenia to help build capacity, not only for the individual local grant recipients but also in the broader sector, as they teach while in Armenia. Meanwhile, local Armenian grant recipients can do what they love to do, scientific exploration, without having to worry about how to financially maintain their families.

This year, the amount of each grant will be raised to \$125,000 per principal investigator plus local team, and if fundraising efforts go well, ten of them will be given. In other words, ten principal investigators with five local scientists each, for a total of 50 local scientists, will be supported from two to four years. Over the next five years, if this program can be funded and further expanded each year, Orujyan said he expects "it will change the narrative about scientific discovery in Armenia."

FAST also has sponsored a new grant program for teams of local and international experts to develop a roadmap for Armenia to attain energy independence. FAST initially was interested in exploring the capabilities of solar energy in Armenia and the Armenian solar panel manufacturing company SolarOn (founded by FAST cofounder Artur Alaverdyan) agreed to fund the entire grant and expand it into an investigation of other energy sources as well. When asked whether there might be an inherent bias due to the funding source, Orujyan replied that in fact it was SolarOn which wanted to expand the study to include various non-solar alternative energy sources. It wants uncompromised data on the capability and projections for other alternative energy sources in Armenia to be able to plan for the future in a smart way, he explained.

Commercialization

There were two main programs aiming at commercialization that FAST attempted. The first one was called In-Vent, which was a 15-week venture development program to form startup teams focusing on artificial intelligence ideas provided by FAST and partners. After a competition for \$5,000 seed money prizes, winners made pitches for early stage funding to the Science and Technology Angels Network of investors put together by FAST. Orujyan said that though there were a few extremely successful startups produced which are already funded, the time and effort put in did not give sufficient value. Instead, FAST is looking at another model which it will soon unveil.

However, a second program, Advanced Solutions Center (ASCENT), was created some three years ago that Orujyan said despite his initial reservations, ended up being quite successful. It was modeled after what Noubar Afeyan's Flagship Pioneering in the US did. Research groups are formed to explore "out-of-the-box" research ideas and when they come up with something appearing successful they create a prototype and patent it if possible. A proto-company is formed with the involvement of business members, which eventually will lead to a full-fledged new company under ASCENT leadership raising money for investments.

ASCENT first focused on artificial intelligence and then began a second round to create companies dealing with molecular biology, microbiology, biochemistry, biotechnology, computational biology, pharmaceuticals and biomedical sciences. After scientists were given fellowships for training at Flagship Pioneering, they were hired to study research ideas to find unconventional breakthrough concepts, and, just like the AI program, eventually create companies to promote those products.

Two companies in particular emerged from the ASCENT approach that have been successful so far. Denovo Sciences is a pharmaceutical company using artificial intelligence approaches to create therapeutics. In 2021 it participated in the Entrepreneurship World Cup, a contest with some 100,000 entries from 200 countries throughout the world. There were two winners from each of the countries involved, and Denovo was one of the winners from Armenia.

Out of the 400 winners at the first stage, 25, including Denovo, were selected to go to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for the next round. While Denovo did not make it into the top ten, Orujyan said, "We take pride that on the first try we were able to create a company to place among the top 25 in the world."

The fintech company 8Nook, which helps banks to cut down their default rates for individual loans using AI, also came out of the ASCENT process.

Orujyan exclaimed, "ASCENT is an incredibly successful model, a well-oiled machine. We are in the process of expanding it and possibly putting together a multimillion dollar fund to do more exploration." While FAST is a non-

profit, its spinoff, ASCENT, has a for-profit component which one day may hopefully allow even further expansion of its activities, especially, Orujyan said, if any of the companies it nurtures become unicorns (startups reaching a valuation of \$1 billion or more).

Velvet Revolution, Covid and War

FAST, like the rest of Armenia, has had to deal with the triple challenges of the Velvet Revolution, Covid and the 2020 Artsakh war. Orujyan said that there would be challenges expected in a country like Armenia no matter what type of governing system it has, while many of the FAST initiatives require cooperation with the Armenian government, especially for the purposes of scaling them up for broader education.

Speaking only on his own behalf, he remarked that the new government brought some new stability in certain areas, and instability in others. He continued: "We are not naïve to expect that everything is going to be smooth, regardless of who is in power...I think the revolution had brought new hopes for an accelerated process of development in Armenia, at least for a few years. Now Armenia is in a tough place. Perhaps Armenia was on the right track before Covid and the war hit the nation. One was unpredictable, and the other a matter of time, as the conflict [with Azerbaijan] needed to be resolved."

The war did lead to at least one new project, called Revive Deep Tech Accelerator. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was interested in supporting war veterans, and in multiple conversations with FAST, Children of Armenia Fund, and a number of other partners, came up with the idea of Revive, to invite growth stage startups from around the world to give a demonstration of what they can create which would help veterans.

Research in Armenian hospitals first defined the needs of the veterans. Twelve successful startup applicants, from Armenia, India, Iran, Tunisia and the United States, were provided assistance through accelerator programs and relocation and support to produce products ranging from 3D prostheses to software systems. After deployment in Armenia, ideally the work of the new companies will have global application.

While Armenia may still in a sense be licking its wounds over a year after the end of the war, which makes focusing on modernization difficult, Orujyan and the FAST team remain very hopeful that they can help in building a prosperous Armenia.

Covid forced FAST staff to largely work remotely, Orujyan said, though it was able to continue to work with local teams and achieve funding for local startups. Several international projects, such as collaboration with Indonesia or several East African countries, could not take place. Furthermore, FAST had to cancel big gatherings of people. The most important, he noted, was its Global Innovation Forum, which for three years up until 2019 had brought together leading scientists and thinkers from throughout the world in Armenia to share their expertise and help build networks and knowledge for many FAST programs. After two years in abeyance, Orujyan said that new dates have preliminarily been set for this October.

Funding

Considering all its activities, it seems like it should be much larger, but FAST's annual budget, paying for all the programming and overhead, has been approximately two million dollars so far. Orujyan said that to this date, it has almost exclusively been provided by the founding team of FAST. The understanding was that its own resources would be used to test all its new ideas and see what works well. At the point when some projects will be ready to be scaled (in business lingo, scaling implies exponential growth without comparable costs), others will be invited.

In fact, this year, for the first time, outside fundraising will be attempted through a gala on March 31 in Los Angeles to support and expand the ADVANCE Stem Research Grant program mentioned above. For more information on the gala or FAST, see www.fast.foundation.org.

FAST's vision, according to its three-year report covering 2017-2020, is "Armenia's transformation into a top 10 global innovator nation and a top 5 data science and artificial intelligence innovator by 2041." While it seems like a long time till 2041, the 50th anniversary of the current Republic of Armenia, to see the full realization of FAST's work, certainly it has already launched some fruitful programs.

Orujyan was optimistic, concluding, "I tell you, it has been the most rewarding experience of my professional life to be here at FAST in Armenia...Everyone has a stake in this and ownership in bringing prosperity to Armenia."



ARMENIA

An Armenian Village Rooted In Genocide And Survival

By Brandon Balayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — “More than half a century passed after these days of deportation and killings, but they left an impression on my then-young mind in an indelible manner. It’s essential to render to history a few of those terrible events because of their general nature. And what is written here, believe me, are not stories collected from secondary sources, but events that I saw, heard, and lived.”

These are the words of Sargis M. Kasparian an Armenian from Gurin, Sepasdia (Sivas, in Turkish) born in 1906. Today, it is known as Gürün. After the Armenian Genocide, many of the Western Armenian city and town names became toponyms for villages in Armenia, often with the addition of *Nor*, or “new,” in front of the name. Nor Kyurin (Eastern Armenian transliteration) is one of those places.

Before the genocide, Armenians from Gurin — especially the men — began to immigrate to the United States for economic and security reasons. One of the many cities they settled in was Boston, where the local Armenians formed the Compatriotic Union of Gurin in 1899.

It started as a student association, and briefly adopted the name Gurin Reconstruction Fellowship after World War I. During this time, the group was raising funds to construct the village of Nor Kyurin 15 kilometers south of Yerevan.

However, the name was not given to the land until after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992. The origins of the village’s toponym are rooted in the survival of the Sargis, his brother Avetis, and his sister Tagouhi, and the unlikely encounter of Avetis with Hamazasp Sargsyan in 1976 —

currently one of the oldest residents of Nor Kyurin and one of the leaders that helped name the village after the old town in Central Anatolia.

Sargsyan’s Documents

The municipality of Nor Kyurin does not know much about the village’s founding, other than having a government decision published in 1992 showing that the sovkhoz, or Soviet state farm, near Nor Kharpert village in the Massis region would become Nor Kyurin. This same document showed the name change of Leninakan to Gyumri.

The staff then brings Hamazasp Sargsyan, a resident of Nor Kyurin since 1969, to me to see what insight he can provide.

“I am the founder of this village,” claimed Sargsyan. The municipality employee near him scoffed and did not believe him.

At his home, Sargsyan displayed the documents in his possession. He had the governmental decree, decision, and a petition signed by the residents of Nor Kyurin declaring their wish to secede from Nor Kharpert and Marmarashen, as well as a letter from Avetis Kasparian, a doctor from Boston, who was the younger brother of Sargis.

The Kasparians Deported from Gurin

Together, Sargis, Avetis, and their sister Tagouhi had escaped the atrocities but had lost everything.

In Gurin, like many villages in the Ottoman Empire, the men were arrested first to prevent any revolts the Ottoman Army could not handle. Sargis’ father Manouk was one of these men.

However, Manouk was ill and he also had a Turkish



In 1935, Gurin natives living in Armenia are shown meeting with deputies from the Union to determine the location of Nor Kyurin.

friend who happened to be a high-ranking civil servant. He went with Sargis to the local prison and demanded the release of his friend.

Shortly after Sargis’ father was freed from prison, they sent Armenians from Gurin to the deserts by caravans. Except for Sargis’ ill father, there were no men on these caravans. Sargis realized that starvation, torture, and death were imminent.

“That day, the weather was pleasant, the sun shining, the vineyards and gardens were all green, all nature smelled like life and cheerfulness, but the Turkish state



Sargis Kasparian (second to left) and Dr. Avetis Kasparian (right) posing on Kyurin Street in Nor Kharpert – August 16, 1976

had decided to deprive us of our rights,” said Sargis.

Sargis’ caravan was moving slowly, moving about 15-20 miles within the last two days, when they stopped near a stream for the night. Once the light dimmed into dusk, Turkish bandits attacked the caravan, and Sargis’ father ordered him to bring their mules near him, only for him to be rushed by a bandit.

“I had barely reached one of our mules [when] I heard a gunshot and noticed that a Turk with a baton was advancing in my direction. I immediately ran back and dove in the stream and hid under reeds. I stayed there for four to five hours. From where I hid I could hear the cries and entreaties of Armenian girls and women, addressed at the Turks kidnapping them. Transfixed, I was afraid to move and say a word. My head was full of all sorts of terrifying images.”

Realizing the caravan’s guards were not preventing the bandits from pillaging the Armenians, many decided to escape back to their initial stop in Elbistan.

The caravan stayed there for 2-3 weeks, and Sargis’ ill father died and was buried there, unable to endure the mental and physical tortures.

Trying to speed up the process of the deportations and exterminations, the guards rushed the caravans into the Arabian deserts and did not allow the Turkish bandits to rob the Armenians for this exact reason. There was nothing more to rob, anyway.

Sargis and his family eventually reached Arel, 15 miles away from Aintab, with the caravan. This is where Sargis’ mother Nazeli died and they are unaware of what happened to her body.

“That night a few times, in her delirium due to fever, she advised me to do good things, cure patients, and take care of them...It looked like she had in mind my father’s plan of sending me to Beirut to study medicine. It was strange that, after so many ill-treatments by the Turks, she did not urge

revenge on me, or to seek blood against blood, but instead, she recommended education and good acts.”

From that point on, nine-year-old Sargis, his seven-year-old brother Avetis, and three-year-old sister Tagouhi were on their own.

Sargsyan Meets Avetis

In 1980, Dr. Avetis Gasparyan visited Armenia. He was aware of villages being named after some cities in Anatolia, such as Nor Kharpert. He was also aware that some Armenians from Gurin had been living in Armenia for quite some time now, so he wanted to visit.

He met with a friend in Nor Kharpert, and his friend wanted to welcome him properly with a good meal so he asked a friend, Hamazasp Sargsyan.

Sargsyan took them both out to eat and that is when he learned about Gurin.

“He told me about the history of Gurin and then left,” Sargsyan said.

It was after he met with Avetis that he became interested in the history of Gurin and learned a Compatriotic Union of Gurin of Boston had been formed in 1899, in which Avetis and Sargis were both members at one point. He also learned that since 1936, the Union’s goal had been to name a city in Armenia “Nor Kyurin,” but all their requests were turned down by the Soviet government.

Information about the Union is kept in an archive in Boston, and the information about the group has been compiled by Luc Vartan Baronian, Associate Professor of Linguistics at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi — whose grandfather was also from Gurin.

The Union had periodicals from 1930-1933 called *Gurini Housh*, and they were also later published from 1976-1981 under the title *Gurini Housher*.

According to the Union’s 1936 Constitution and by-laws, in 1935 they had raised \$5,000 for the construction of the village, and some of the members visited Armenia to sort out problems of obtaining land. This was sent as a formal request to the Armenian Relief Committee (ARC), which consented to the Union’s request to use the \$5,000 to build five homes on a street named Kyurin in Nor Kharpert, and they promised it would double the number to 10 by 1936.

The Union then launched a campaign to raise \$15,000.

Sargsyan said he publicized this information with a radio program he had, which would broadcast to the diaspora in 30-minute sessions, twice a week. He said he wanted to let the diaspora know about the story of Gurin and the desire Gurin Armenians had to create a Nor Kyurin.

The immortalization of their city was an approach adopted by many Armenians after the genocide to pay tribute to their beleaguered homes.

Return to Gurin

After the death of their mother, Sargis and his siblings were transferred by village police to the local station and stayed in Arel at the home of Khaliloghlu Mehmet Kahya. They stayed there as shepherds until the beginning of 1919, when his cousin Vartan found them and took them to Ayntab.

The armistice period had begun in the spring and therefore Sargis, his siblings, and some friends decided to visit Gurin using the route of Marash and Elbistan. Sargis recalls standing on top of the hill and seeing his town destroyed and in an unrecognizable state.

“We contemplated the quarters, streets, houses, the river that was familiar to us, from Shoughoul to

continued on next page



ARMENIA

from previous page

Tsakhtsor. The beautiful town of gardens, Gurin, which used to smile with an invigorating mellowness, like a huge bunch of flowers, with its fruit trees in blossom, during this awakening season of spring, had ceased to exist. The old, joyful, and beautiful Gurin did not exist anymore,” Sargis said.

Before the war, 28,000 Armenians lived in Gurin and by 1921 there were none left, according to the Armenian-language book *The History of Gurin*.

Sargis eventually found his home in Gurin, but it was occupied by a Turkish woman from Kemakh with her two children. He told her that it was his house and wanted her to leave. She eventually agreed. Sargis explains how during this time, some Turks tried to win over the hearts of Armenians and he thought he knew the reason why.

“The reason for that was not the willingness to expiate the crimes they had committed, or to ease their consciences, but simply to lessen and avoid the punishment that they thought was going to be inflicted to them by the Allied forces,” said Sargis.

After witnessing the destruction of their hometown and people, the Kasparians and many other Armenians from Gurin fought to keep the memory of their town alive.

The Union’s Mission and the Kasparians’ Role

The Kasparian family was torn apart due to the Genocide, but this did not stop Sargis and his siblings from finding their way in a world that had just taken everything from them.

According to the first issue of *Gurini Housh*, Sargis traveled from Greece to study in Boston, where the Union was founded. It is not clear what he studied or worked on, but was monetarily successful given the hundreds of thousands his brother Avetis and him donated to the Armenian General Benevolent Union in Armenia, according to a letter from Avetis.

It is unclear what happened to his sister Tagouhi, but Baronian believes he has a documented border crossing going into Canada. The name of the woman was Tagouhi Casparian Sohigian, and she crossed into Canada at age 35 in 1950.

Avetis completed medical school in Milan in 1936 and traveled all over the world. He and his brother Sargis would become heavily involved in the Union, and would eventually make a trip to Armenia, which is documented in the 1976 introductory issue of *Gurini Housher*.

The brothers can be seen walking around Gurin Street



The Armenian Genocide memorial of Nor Kyurin

in Nor Kharpert. Until that time, the Union had sent over \$80,000 worth of electronics to Armenia. According to *Gurini Housh*, Sargis Kasparian and Harootyun Chooljian were tasked with funding and sending the equipment.

This is when Avetis met Hamazasp Sargsyan, a local living in the Nor Kharpert sovkhov, who has been there since 1969.

As mentioned before Avetis told Sargsyan about Gurin when they were out to eat, so the memories of Gurin and Avetis stuck with him since the village’s founding.

Years later, in 1991, the Soviet Union was collapsing and Armenia was at war with Azerbaijan over the sovereignty of Nagorno Karabakh, and many villages were

beginning to change their toponyms.

Sargsyan and his brother led their sovkhov to petition for their own village and name. On February 18, 1991, the petition which contained the signatures from the residents of the sovkhov was recognized.

Then on November 14, 1991, the Supreme Council of Armenia signed a decree, stating that the sovkhov near Nor Kharpert would be on the list of settlements of Armenia and it would form its village council.

Finally, on March 13, 1992, the Supreme Council of Armenia signed the decision to give the former sovkhov the name of Nor Kyurin.

Sargsyan claims his influence and petition helped rename the village into Nor Kyurin and says he was the president of the Union of Nor Kyurin at the time.

At the time, Avetis was still in Boston, and he presumably did not hear about the decision of the Supreme Council because he sent a letter on August 27, 1992 to the Prime Minister Gagik Harutyunyan, a copy of which Sargsyan had. In his letter, he explained how he has fulfilled his duties as a doctor and as an Armenian doctor. He mentions donating hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Armenian General Benevolent Union in Yerevan, along with his brother Sargis. He also mentions how Sargis passed away on December 24, 1987, from a heart attack. He did not get to see the village be named after his hometown.

He ends his letter with one final request: “I would like to plead for you to give the local people of Gurin land in the city. Thank you very much,” Avetis said.

A little under a year later Sargsyan wrote a letter to Avetis, wanting to share with him the news and updates on the village. At the time, there were about 800 residents, many refugees from Sumgait and Baku.

“The new leaders of the Republic cannot help us, but we are making no demands,” Sargsyan said. “Nor Kyurin was just founded at a bad time.”

He continues to describe the condition of the village, mentioning how it does not have a school, administrative building, or doctor’s office yet.

Life did and does continue for the people of Nor Kyurin despite three wars and emigration.

The Compatriotic Union of Gurin and Sargis and Avetis achieved their ambition. The Cilician town’s name is memorialized and will serve as a reminder for the Gurin Armenian blood spilled during the Genocide. Although the *Gurini Housh* periodical is no longer in circulation, the memories of Gurin live on.

Arnold Ghazaryan – Filmmaker and 40 Day War Veteran

(This is Part II of the series Inspiring Armenian Young Adults, which highlights the accomplishments of 4 of Armenia’s brightest, bravest, young adults. Their brief profiles showcase the talents of Armenia’s upcoming generation and shed light on the impressive achievements they have accomplished thus far.)

By **Cristopher Patvakian**

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

STEPANAKERT — Some people never find their calling in life; for others it never escapes their minds. Filmmaker Arnold Ghazaryan falls into the latter. Arnold is 20 years old, and was born and raised in Khachmach, Artsakh. At the young age of 14, Ghazaryan said after seeing a movie filmed in his village, “My love for film was born right away. I always truly believed in and stayed motivated to reach my goal.” For Arnold, to say has stayed motivated is truly an understatement.

For the majority of his life, Ghazaryan did not have access to the internet or to a camera in Khachmach, despite having a passion and love for films. One night, at the age of 14, he came to the decision that nothing would stop him from reaching dream, and started to work in construction to buy his first camera. He even admits asking his parents to give him the money he would have spent for lunch to go to his camera fund.

Another major steppingstone for Arnold beyond having a camera was the ability to attend classes at TUMO Stepanakert, a free educational center for teenagers ages 12-18 teaching technology and design. From the very first day at TUMO, he described himself as ecstatic for the opportunity to take cinematography classes and make his first short films.

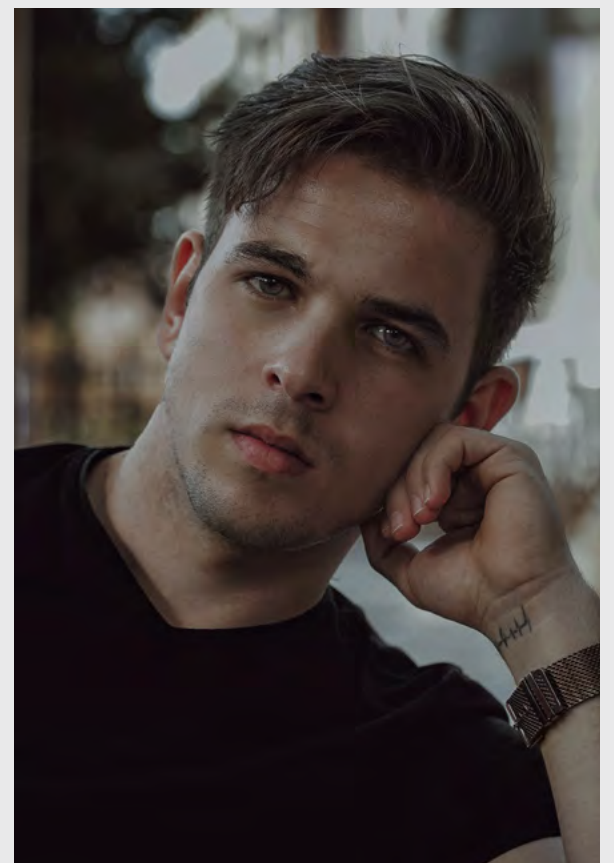
After his courses at TUMO, Arnold at the age of 18 was enlisted in the Army and served as a tank crewman. Ghazaryan’s service in the Army coincided with the 40 days war in Artsakh and had a tremendous impact on

his life both physically and mentally. During the war, Arnold sustained a leg injury and was taken to hospital in Yerevan. While recovering, he had the opportunity to film the music video for System of a Down’s (SOAD) song “Protect The Land”, working with director Armen Sujyan who he had met at TUMO. Ghazaryan ended up filming a sample video of his ideas and at 4 am the following day, woke up to the news that SOAD would like them to film the video. He notes that there were discussions on whether to film it with actors, but ultimately, he pushed for using authentic footage of actual people from Artsakh to capture reality. And that was only the first of his pieces connected with the 40 day war.

Earlier in 2021, Arnold used his own equipment to film “Arnold’s Story”, which chronicle’s his passion for cinematography, emotions after the war, and dreams to share Artsakh with the world through films. The film was narrated in the Artsakh Armenian dialect (with English subtitles), and part of a broader series called “The Future is Calling”.

The Future is Calling, of which Ghazaryan is the CEO, is a collective of filmmakers and photographers from Artsakh, and he hopes it will grow to share with the world the hidden stories and voices of Artsakh.

More recently, Ghazaryan created a short film called “Bad Dream,” featuring his eight brothers and two sisters, with some scenes of himself included. It is an incredibly intense and personal film about the post-war realities for Armenians living in Artsakh, and can be watched online on YouTube. The film finishes with a powerful quote, that despite all of the hardships Artsakhtsis faced, it is “[o]n this soil we will bloom beau-



Arnold Ghazaryan, 20, Filmmaker and Artsakh War Veteran

tifully like a flower but with stronger roots and sharper thorns.” And Arnold hope that by making all types of films, not only documentary, he can get closer to this goal. In the future, he hopes to create movies, which in his own words “will have their roots in Artsakh but branches all over the world.”



INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Outrage as Historic Monastery in Turkey Converted to Nightclub for Ad

ISTANBUL (Public Radio of Armenia) — The historic Greek Orthodox monastery of Panagia Soumela, in Trabzon, Turkey, was the site of a recent advertising video shoot that turned the courtyard into a nightclub, the International Christian Concern reports.

In the video clip, a DJ played loud electronic music in the courtyard as people danced. According to the producers of the video, the staging was intended to promote the monastery as a tourist attraction and was done so with permission from Turkish authorities. Yet it brought outrage from the Orthodox community as many claimed it desecrated the place of worship.

The Panagia Soumela monastery operates now as a tourist attraction, as a stunning structure built into a steep cliffside. It was first built in approximately 386 AD and forcibly abandoned during Turkey's genocide targeting Greek, Armenian, and Assyrian Christians. Following its abandonment, the monastery was vandalized, used by tobacco smugglers, and later ruined by a fire.

After a long period of reconstruction, the monastery has been reopened for tourism. Not long after its reopening, the historic site was vandalized.

Putin, Macron Discuss Karabakh in Moscow

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Russia and France have reaffirmed the importance of the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chairs in solving problems in Nagorno-Karabakh, Russian President Vladimir Putin said following talks with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron on February 7.

When considering the situation around Nagorno-Karabakh, they noted the positive role of Russian peacekeepers, who ensure the ceasefire is maintained and help establish a peaceful life.

“We reaffirmed the importance of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, including in solving pressing humanitarian, socio-economic problems in the region,” the Russian leader said after the meeting.

The French president, meanwhile, spoke about the results of his recent virtual meeting with the President of the European Council, the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Days after the meeting, 8 Armenian prisoners of war were repatriated from Azerbaijan.

Armenia Lawmaker Decries EU's €2b Pledge for Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Lawmaker from Armenia's ruling Civil Contract party Sona Ghazaryan on February 8 slammed the European Union's €2b financial assistance package for Azerbaijan.

Armenian Olympic Team Has 6 Athletes

BEIJING (Armenpress) — Skier Mikayel Mikayelyan and figure skater Tina Garabedian (above) were Armenia's flagbearers at the opening ceremony of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympicson February 4, the Armenian National Olympic Committee said.

Hailing from Ashotsk, Mikayel Mikayelan and his family are considered a record-holding family in this history of Olympics.

Mikayel Mikayelyan, his brother Sergey and mother Alla were Team Armenia flagbearers five times during the Olympic Games (Alla Mikayelyan in 1998 Nagano, Sergey Mikayelyan in 2014 Sochi, and Mikayel Mikayelyan in 2016 Lillehammer Youth Olympics).

The team has a total of six athletes, three women and three men, competing in Alpine skiing, cross country skiing and figure skating.



Tina Garabedian



Mikayel Mikayelyan

Azerbaijan Walks Back Plans to Erase Armenian Traces from Churches

By Heydar Isayev, Ani Mejlumyan

Azerbaijan's Ministry of Culture has responded to controversy resulting from its earlier announcement that it intended to erase Armenian inscriptions from churches located in territories the country reclaimed as a result of the 2020 war against Armenia.

On February 7, the ministry published a statement addressing what it called “reports circulated by some biased foreign mass media outlets over the past few days.” It emphasized that “Azerbaijan has always been respectful of its historical and cultural heritage, regardless of religious and ethnic origin.”

Four days earlier, Minister of Culture Anar Karimov told a press briefing that it would be forming a working group tasked with removing “the fictitious traces written by Armenians on Albanian religious temples.”

That referred to a theory, which has become prominent in Azerbaijan but is dismissed by actual historians, that Armenian inscriptions in churches on Azerbaijani territory were later additions to churches built under Caucasian Albania, an ancient Christian kingdom that ruled the territory that is today Azerbaijan.

The new statement reaffirmed that “a working group has been set up to study this heritage” and that “[s]hould any falsifications be identified, they will be documented with the participation of international

experts and presented to the international community.” But it did not mention removing any Armenian traces, as Karimov's earlier announcement did.

That news had attracted widespread criticism.

“We are deeply concerned by Azerbaijan's plans to remove Armenian Apostolic inscriptions from churches. We urge the government to preserve and protect places of worship and other religious and cultural sites,” the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom tweeted, quoting its chair, Nadine Maenza.

TV Zvezda, a news outlet run by Russia's Defense Ministry, published a piece on February 8 in which it pointedly referred to the Dadivank Monastery, in Azerbaijan's Kelbajar region, as “one of the greatest monasteries of medieval Armenia.” A 2,000-strong Russian peacekeeping contingent is currently stationed in Karabakh. In earlier comments, Karimov had claimed that the monastery was Albanian.

After an initial period of conspicuous silence, Armenia's Foreign Ministry issued a statement on February 8 condemning Karimov's comments: “It once again demonstrates the fact that the cases of vandalism and destruction of the Armenian historical, cultural and religious heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh during the 44-day war and the following period, are deliberate and pre-planned, and are part of the policy of

annihilating Nagorno-Karabakh's indigenous Armenian population.”

The announcement occasioned widespread public anger among Armenians. “It's time to take the government of Azerbaijan at its word when it says it intends to erase all traces of Armenians beginning with their churches and ancient heritage sites,” wrote Elyse Semerdjian, a professor of Middle Eastern history at Whitman College, on Twitter.

In Azerbaijan, meanwhile, there has been near silence around the news. Pro-government media, which in comparable cases often actively publicizes plans announced by the government, barely covered the announcement or responses to criticism of it. Commentators and activists, pro-government or otherwise, devoted little attention to it.

A rare exception was Javid Agha, a social media commentator who researches Caucasian Albanian heritage in Azerbaijan, speculated that the plan may have been motivated by corruption, which is endemic in Azerbaijan.

“There is no logic behind it. No tourist will come to see barren churches, Azerbaijanis won't care about it, nobody will applaud the government for it from outside. Just another excuse to write some checks,” Agha tweeted.

(This article originally appeared in Eurasianet.org.)

Armenia Rounds On Belarus Leader

BELARUS, from page 1

Lawmakers representing Pashinyan's Civil Contract party went further, launching scathing attacks on Lukashenko on the Armenian parliament floor.

“The leader of a partner state has no right to express such thoughts about another partner state,” one of them, Vagharshak Hakobyan, said.

Another Civil Contract deputy, Hovik Aghazaryan, accused Lukashenko of “doing the Russian authorities and Russian statehood a disservice.”

Aghazaryan also said: “Before making statements, Lukashenko had better inspect the airport of [the Belarusian capital] Minsk, which looks more like a pigsty.”

Russia and Belarus signed a Union State

treaty in 1999 and have been negotiating on and off since then.

Lukashenko for years resisted much closer integration between the two nations envisaged by the treaty. But the authoritarian president has grown more supportive of the project since Moscow helped him stay in power following a disputed 2020 presidential election and his ensuing crackdown on dissent which led to more Western sanctions against Belarus.

Artur Khachatryan, a lawmaker from the main opposition Hayastan alliance, said the Armenian authorities have only themselves to blame for Lukashenko's “unacceptable” remarks. He said they have become too reliable on Russia in dealing with serious security challenges facing Armenia after the

2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

“The government deliberately lowered the degree of this country sovereignty, and of course Lukashenko and others will not hesitate to take advantage of that,” charged Khachatryan.

Lukashenko, who has a warm rapport with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, has repeatedly raised eyebrows in Yerevan in the past with pro-Azerbaijani statements on the Karabakh conflict and arms supplies to Baku. In 2018, he also questioned Armenia's role in the Collective Security Treaty Organization after Armenian law-enforcement authorities indicted Yuri Khachaturov, the then secretary general of the Russian-led military alliance.



INTERNATIONAL

How Marlenka Conquered the World: This Traditional Armenian Pastry Is Exported to 50+ Countries

By Haykaram Nahapetyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WASHINGTON — Korean characters known as hangul, Arabic abjad from right to left, German, British, Austrian, American and other websites, and endless Instagram and Facebook pages connected with nearly five dozen countries worldwide advertise Marlenka, the Czech-made Armenian honey cake.



When in 2003, in a small town of the Czech Republic, Gevorg Avetisyan launched a honey cake business with a single oven in nearly 200 square feet of working space, it would have been impossible to imagine such a success. Now Marlenka bakes more than 4.5 million cakes every year in addition to nuggets, rolls, snacks, and a wide variety of different pastries. Avetisyan became known as the creator of one of the most recognized (if not the most recognized) brands of the modern Czech Republic. If you think it's beer, I can point to other countries that produce wonderful beers, but there is no second Marlenka anywhere.

"I have been recognized nearly ten times as the businessman of the year of our region and/or of the entire Czech Republic. Marlenka is officially named the superbrand of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, where it has become trendy," said Avetisyan during a recent Zoom conversation.

He expects Marlenka to be recognized as the superbrand of Austria in 2022. "Any store or a coffee shop of Austria nowadays serves Marlenka," added Avetisyan.

Meeting the Czech Republic president has almost become routine for our compatriot: The Czech Republic president and the first

lady have visited the Marlenka headquarters on more than one occasion. Avetisyan will see the leader of his new homeland the next time on March 7: Miloš Zeman, the president, will award Avetisyan with the highest award of the country, the Order of the White Lion.

"There are very few non-Czechs who received this award. One of them was Winston Churchill, who got it posthumously in 2014," explained Avetisyan, adding: "This is an exceptional honor."

Starting Small

Everything started with a small oven, and also, with a small miracle.

In 1995, Avetisyan settled down in the Czech Republic. First, he set up a bar. This business was unsuccessful. There were not too many customers. Gevorg was getting ready to sell the bar to return to Armenia, but no one was willing to purchase the bar from him.

"I was nearing bankruptcy. There is a small church in our town. One day I walked there, sat on a bench, and asked God for help. I noticed that the cross on the top of the



Marlenka cakes: the boxes highlight the traditional Armenian recipe of honey cakes

church was tilted. I said, 'God, if you help my business, I promise to fix the cross,'" recalls Avetisyan. But then he changed his mind.

"Am I trying to cut a deal with God? I asked myself after I returned home," remembers Avetisyan. "I felt that if I am a true Christian, I should donate now, without waiting until things get better."

He walked into the church office the next



Gevorg Avetisyan at Marlenka's headquarters in Frydek Mistek (Czechia)

day and gifted his last savings to the parish council.

"I had no more savings. I thought I was finished. And then, my sister asked me: Gevorg, do you remember the honey cakes our family was baking in Armenia? What if I bake and try to sell them at your bar?" related Avetisyan.

The customers liked the honey cakes, and Avetisyan began distributing them in the neighborhood. That's how the new, and, as it would soon turn out, highly successful business started. Avetisyan named his brand Marlenka after his daughter Marlena Avetisyan. Marlena is also the name of Gevorg's mother.

and even emulated the brand's name: fake cakes under fake names like Marmetka, Marchenka and others, however, did not succeed. Varazdat Melikian's authentic recipe and the hard work of his descendant paid off.

Incidentally, the very first café in Prague was set up by another Armenian whose name also happened to be Gevorg. The café in the old part of the city, near the famous medieval bridge of the capital, still exists.

"Ever since I settled down in the Czech Republic, I have heard talk about Armenian Gevorg Deodatus, the founder of the first coffee shop of Prague. But I wasn't sure if this was a well-established historical fact or



Prague's first coffee shop opened by Armenian Gevorg Deodatus in the 18th century

The story with a cross sounds like a miracle, doesn't it? But it is an ever-present narrative in the Czech Republic. It has been told in different programs and literally a dozen films, both documentary and fiction movies, dedicated to the story of Marlenka. Commercial billboards of Czechia's main Volksbank, which financed Marlenka's growth at some point, feature the picture of Avetisyan in the downtown of Prague. Volksbank cites Marlenka as one of the best investments it ever made.

"Our origins go back to the historic town of Van. My great-grandfather Varazdat Melikian traveled from Van to Istanbul to set up a pastry firm there. He was very successful. He developed some recipes that made his pastry distinguished. I have been told that in 1915 the Turks hung him in front of his mill. Our family preserved the secret of his honey cakes. That's why Marlenkas are different from other honey cakes that exist on the market," Avetisyan continued.

After Marlenka became popular, other companies tried to produce similar pastries

not. As it turned out, this story is completely true. I visited the National Archives and discovered that all the documents pertaining to our compatriot Gevorg from Damascus are enshrined there. I have the story about Deodatus inside the box of my cake. Also, it's on display at the museum I have set up at my headquarters," concluded Avetisyan.

In 2015, the country's spiritual leadership gave one of the city churches to the growing Armenian community. "I believe that sooner or later, it would still have happened," said Avetisyan. However, Marlenka's proprietor expedited the work.

Follow the video link at www.mirror-spectator.com to learn more about Gevorg Avetisyan's visit to Armenia with the president of the Czech Republic in 2014. He relates how the Czech Republic recognized the Armenian Genocide and how Armenian students from Damascus Gevorg Deodatus (Astvadaturian) opened the first café in Prague in the 18th century.

To try the pastry, visit <https://marlenka.us/>



President of the Czech Republic Milos Zeman visits Marlenka's headquarters



Community News

Yerevan State U. Delegation Signs Agreements on Cooperation with Calif. Higher Education Bodies

GLENDAL — On January 31, Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles Ambassador Armen Baibourtian met with the Rector of Yerevan State University (YSU) Dr. Hovhannes Hovhannisyan, head of the YSU International Cooperation Office Dr. Alexander Markarov, and Director of YSU Center for American Studies Dr. Vahagn Aglyan at the Consulate General. The YSU delegation arrived in Los Angeles from Arizona, where YSU enjoys partnership relationship with Arizona State University.

Hovhannisyan and members of the delegation discussed with Baibourtian their intent to establish cooperation with public and private universities and colleges in California. One of the prime objectives of the cooperation agenda was the establishment of close ties with the institutes and centers of Armenian Studies at various American educational institutions in the West Coast. Baibourtian expressed his full support to the YSU's initiative in establishing close ties with the US higher education institutions in California.

Organized by the Consulate General of Armenia, a meeting was held at the California State University, Northridge (CSUN) with its President Dr. Erika D. Beck, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Mary B. Walker, and with the Director of the University's Armenian Studies Program Dr. Vahram Shemmassian. The participants of the meeting learned about the respective organizations and outlined the areas for prospective cooperation.

Several thousand Armenian students study at CSUN, which serves as an additional boosting factor for establishing and developing close mutual cooperation and partnership. President Erika D. Beck gladly accepted Rector Hovhannisyan's invitation to visit Armenia in the Fall of the current year to get acquainted with YSU on the spot and to launch one or two cooperation projects in the scope of discussed cooperation.

Accompanied by Baibourtian, the YSU delegation also visited the construction site of the Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of California in Glendale. Executive Chairman of the Museum Berdj Karapetian and architect of the Museum building Aram Alajajian presented details about the project. During the meeting, which continued at the Consulate General, an agreement was reached that YSU will support with the realization of the content of the Armenian American Museum. In addition, it was agreed upon that the YSU students can have their internship at the Museum after opening of its doors.

see AGREEMENTS, page 10



Razmik with his parents in fall 2021

Armenian International Medical Fund Completes 22nd Medical Mission to Armenia

LOS ANGELES — In October 2021, Armenian International Medical Fund (AIM Fund) completed its 22nd medical mission to Armenia. Akira Ishiyama, MD, surgeon and professor in the Division of Head and Neck Surgery, UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine, and Salpy Akaragian, PhD, RN, director emeritus at UCLA Health, gave the gift of hearing to children and young adults in Armenia for the second time in 2021. The trip was partially funded by UCLA's Operation Armenia, which operates under the umbrella of the Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA and is implemented thanks to the generosity, advocacy, and support of UCLA Health.

During this mission, 10 children received cochlear implants and began hearing for the first time, in addition to one adult whose hearing was restored through the same procedure. Moreover, AIM Fund operated on two soldiers from the recent war in Artsakh and one adult with complicated inner ear problems. Furthermore, Ishiyama consulted on several patients with different hearing problems.

Ten-month-old Razmik was implanted during the October medical mission. He is the youngest cochlear implant recipient in Armenia. Razmik's mother, Marine Gevorgyan, said, "Words alone are not enough to express my gratitude to Drs. Ishiyama and Akaragian. Thanks to them, my Razmik can now hear the world. They are kind people who volunteer their time and are extremely attentive to every child. I'm grateful to the AIM Fund for their financial support. We are a fortunate nation that God has sent such people to grant hearing to our children."

In 2021, AIM Fund completed two medical missions and marked another milestone by implanting 24 children and young adults in one year. "We are extremely fortunate to be able to complete two missions in one year. This is all thanks to our donors who believe in our mission and continue to support our work, and of course to Dr. Ishiyama who, year after year, continues to volunteer his time and efforts to help the children and young adults of Armenia," said Akaragian, PhD, founder and president of the AIM Fund.

Since 2004, through their ongoing dedication and commitment, more than 150 children and young adults have joined the hearing world through cochlear implant (CI) see MISSION, page 10



Dr. Akira Ishiyama with a young MD, Fall 2021

Levon Pogolian Wins 2021 Buchalter Cosmology Prize

VANCOUVER, Canada (sfu.ca) — Simon Fraser University (SFU) of Vancouver's Physics Professor Levon Pogolian won the 2021 Buchalter Cosmology Prize. Pogolian and his collaborator Karsten Jedamzik from the University of Montpellier will share the First Prize award for their research on relieving the Hubble tension with primordial magnetic fields.

The Hubble tension is one of cosmology's greatest puzzles that concerns the apparent difference in the Hubble constant, or how fast the universe is expanding today, determined using different types of observations. Pogolian and Jedamzik showed how accounting for magnetic fields in the early universe can help to reconcile the difference.

The award committee recognized the work as "a novel and original framework to naturally resolve the Hubble tension via additional baryon inhomogeneities induced by primor-



Professor Levon Pogolian

dial magnetic fields, which if confirmed, would have significant impact on our understanding of the Universe and to future of cosmology."

The Buchalter Cosmology Prize established in 2014, recognizes "ground-breaking theoretical, observational, or experimental work in cosmology that has the potential to produce a breakthrough advance in our understanding of the origin, structure, and evolution of the universe." This year's winners were announced by the American Astronomical Society.

Pogolian graduated from Yerevan State University in Armenia and received his PhD from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. He was a research fellow at Imperial College London, Tufts University and Syracuse University before taking on a faculty position at SFU, where he is now Professor of Physics. He is a theoretical cosmologist using the observable universe as a laboratory for testing the laws of nature. He is particularly interested in dark energy and modified gravity, cosmic magnetic fields, cosmic strings and other relics of the Big Bang.



COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

Edmund L. Gergerian, MD

Family Man, Played Vital Role in Release of Genocide Documents

REGO PARK, N.Y. — Edmund L. Gergerian, MD of Rego Park died on January 29, 2022. He was 82.

Classically trained in Cairo, Egypt, Edmund attended College De La Salle and Cairo University. After immigrating to the United States in 1968 he completed his pathology fellowship at Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia. He completed his internship at West Jersey Hospital followed by his Psychiatric residency at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, PA. He then completed a research fellowship in Clinical Psychiatry at State University of New York (SUNY) Downstate Medical Center.

He married Therese Kavoukian in 1969 and within a couple of years had two daughters Nayiri and Taleen.

He was clinical director at the South Beach Psychiatric Center in Staten Island, NY and had been the chief psychiatrist at the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Services Office until present. In addition, he was an attending psychiatrist at the New York Armenian Home in Flushing, NY until it closed. All the while he had a part time private practice in psychiatry and energy work.

Edmund had extensive research experience and training which included studies on facial expressions, on which he co-authored the book, Atlas of Facial Expressions, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Genocidal Trauma Research, EMDR and EFT Balancing Technique.

A humanitarian with a deep interest in human rights, Edmund participated in several missions of mercy trips to Soviet Armenia following the earthquake in Armenia in 1988, specifically to Yerevan, Spitak, Kirovakan and Karabakh. He was awarded the Humanitarian Assistance Award by

President Levon Ter-Petrosian in 1994, the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Armenian Behavioral Science Association, Recognition Award from the Armenian American Society on Stress and Genocide and finally the AAH-PO Service Award for his hard work and selfless dedication.

In 2018, Edmund donated to the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) one of the most significant archives of documents relating to the Armenian Genocide — the archive collected by his uncle, the late Very Fr. Krikor Guerguerian — for research and study in NAASR's Mardigian Library at Clark University.

Papers in the late priest's archive were vital for research on the Armenian Genocide, and were shared by Gergerian with Prof. Taner Akçam for used in writing his book, Killing Orders: Talat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide.

Gergerian was a founding member of the organization that was a precursor to AAH-PO and served as a long-time Board Member of Armenian American Health Professionals' Organization (AAHPO).

"Edmund was a passionate, dedicated physician, who was tireless in his efforts to guide his family, minister to his patients and pursue his research interests which led him to develop friendships throughout the world. So typical of Edmund was his never-ending caring for his patients whom he expressed concern about, last week, even while he, himself, was hospitalized," said Lawrence V. Najarian, MD, president of AAHPo.

He is survived by his wife, Therese, their daughter, Nayiri Mesrobian, son-in-law Viken Mesrobian, their daughter, Taleen Gergerian and grandchildren Tatiana, Jack and Haig.



Sona Lynn Manuelian

Former Daughters of Vartan Grand Matron, Volunteer with Fuller Center for Housing

MAYWOOD, N.J. — Sona Lynn Manuelian, 68, of Maywood, passed away on Christmas Eve morning, December 24, 2021, after a short battle with pancreatic cancer. With fresh snow sprinkled on the ground outside it was an idyllic setting during her favorite holiday season. She spent her last moments surrounded by family.

Sona was born on August 23, 1953, and raised in, New Milford and Maywood, NJ. After graduating from Hackensack High School in 1971, she attended nursing school at Bergen Pines Medical Center. She then went on to work as a licensed practical nurse which began a life of service and charity work.

During an Armenian Students Association (ASA) ski trip she met Leo and they wed on September 23, 1979. Together they had two daughters, Ani and Lori, and later, four grandchildren.

Sona was actively involved in the volunteer Armenian-American community. As a child she attended camp Haiastan, was a member of Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Apostolic Church in Ridgefield, NJ, chaired the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) Arsen Chapter, participated in AYF Olympic events (winning medals for swimming). She enjoyed outdoor activities canoeing, white water rafting, water skiing and, in particular, downhill skiing.

Sona was a dedicated member of the Daughters of Vartan, where she rose to the level of Matron of her lodge (Sahaganoush) and eventually national Grand Matron.

Since 2003, Sona and husband Leo traveled to Armenia each summer with the Fuller Center for Housing, helping to build simple, decent homes for families in need. She

was a proud member of St. Leon Armenian Church in Fair Lawn, NJ, where she loved participating in annual church events and traditions.

Sona was involved in many cultural events, activities, and organizations throughout her life. She and her husband participated in the St. Francis Players and Incognito theatre groups. Sona performed in many plays and shared warm memories with a close-knit group of friends. She loved the holidays. Every year her home shone brightly with colorful lights, inside and out, and was featured on Channel 12's Bergen County Holiday Edition. In her spare time, she mentored individuals struggling with alcoholism.

Sona was predeceased by her parents, Lucie and Edward Baroutjian. She is survived by her husband Leo, daughters Ani and Lori, sons-in-law Brian and Douglas, grandchildren Clare (age 4), Dean (age 2), Harley (age 2), and Jackson (10 months) and extended members of the Manuelian, Varjian, Donofrio, Lewin, Hagopian, Thompson, Javizian, Asadourian, and Kourtjian families.

Arrangements were by the William Basralian Funeral Home in Oradell, NJ. Funeral services were conducted on December 30 at St. Leon Armenian Church. Interment was at George Washington Memorial Park in Paramus, NJ.



Martin Barooshian

Painter and Printer (1929-2022)

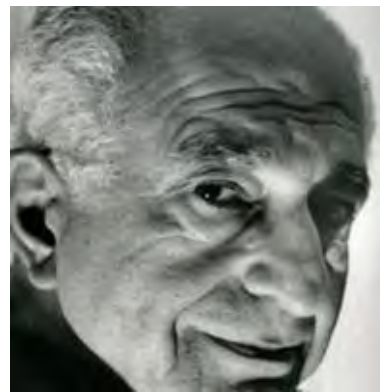
WILMINGTON, Mass. — Martin Barooshian, age 92, passed away peacefully while taking a nap on January 25, 2022.

Martin was a groundbreaking American surrealist painter and master printmaker, as well as an internationally recognized expert in American

and European prints and printmaking. His artwork is in the permanent collections of many of the world's great museums including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NY, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the National Gallery of Art (Smithsonian), the Addison Gallery of American Art, the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and the National Gallery of Armenia.

His complex yet life-affirming Surrealist works received international recognition for his artistic contributions. His art was exhibited in over 50 solo shows and hundreds of exhibitions. In a review of one of those solo shows in Boston in 2006, Boston Globe art critic Cate McQuaid dubbed Barooshian's biomorphic surrealist style as "Pablo Picasso meets Stan Lee." Martin smiled after reading that review and said, "I'll take that — I like both those guys!" He made art daily up until his last day, and was gratified at the resurgence of interest in his work in recent years. His art can be seen at www.martinbarooshian.org.

A Boston native and first-generation



child of Armenian Genocide survivors, Martin was trained at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and also earned a B.S. in Education from Tufts University and a M.A. in art history from Boston University. He continued his education at the famed Atelier 17 in Paris. Upon his return

to the U.S., he settled in the greater New York City area where he taught printmaking at the Pratt Institute, and was a public school art teacher until his retirement. He also served as the works-on-paper expert at Swann Auction Galleries. He and his wife Mary later relocated to their native Massachusetts, where he spent his final years devoting himself to his artwork and family.

Martin was a loving husband, father, stepfather, and grandfather. He is survived by his beloved wife, Mary; his daughter Margo Goody and her husband John, and grandchildren Spencer and Aidan; his son, Dana Barooshian and his husband Andy Martin; and his sister, Virginia Karamanian. He also leaves behind his step-children Richard Balekdjian and wife Laura and step-grandchild Janine; David Balekdjian and his husband Michael Russo; Arline Carboneau and her husband Brian, and step-grandchildren Jacob, Julia, and Jacqueline.

A memorial service will be announced at a later date.

Arrangements are being made by Anderson-Bryant Funeral Home: www.anderson-bryantfuneralhome.com.

Giragosian

F UNERAL H OME

James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC
Mark J. Giragosian
Funeral Counselors

576 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472, TEL: 617-924-0606
www.giragosianfuneralhome.com

Telephone (617) 924-7400

Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN

DENNIS M. DEVENY & SONS

Cemetery Monuments

Specializing in
Armenian Designs and Lettering

701 Moody St. Waltham, MA 02543
(781) 891-9876 www.NEMonuments.com



COMMUNITY NEWS



Dn. Harout Markarian, far left, Dn. Bishop Miguel Angel Alba Diaz, 3rd from left, and Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, 4th from left

One Step Closer to Establishing a Mission-Parish in La Paz, Mexico



Bishop Miguel Angel Alba Diaz, left, with Archbishop Hovnan Derderian

BURBANK, Calif. — The Diocese of the Armenian Church of Mexico was transferred to operate under the jurisdiction of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of North America in November 2014. Diocesan Primate Archbishop Hovnan Derderian has made several pastoral visits to the Armenian-Mexican community in Mexico City following the transfer. On October 30, 2017, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II paid his inaugural pontifical visit to Mexico City.

The Diocesan Primate, accompanied by Diocesan Executive Director Deacon Harout Markarian and representatives of the mission parish, traveled to La Paz, Mexico (Capital of Baja California) this week where they were welcomed by Roman Catholic Bishop Miguel Angel Alba Diaz of the Diocese of La Paz. Bishop Alba Diaz was briefed about the establishment of the Armenian-Mexican community and was introduced to the members of the mission parish.

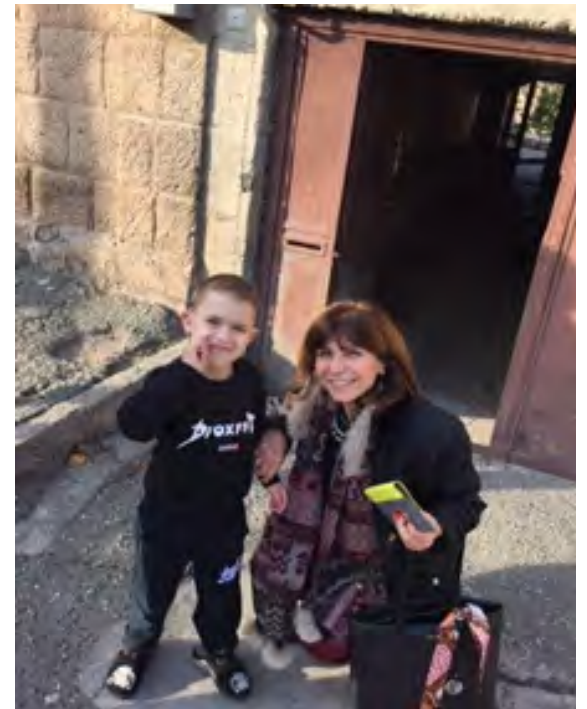
22nd International Medical Fund Mission to Armenia

MISSION, from page 10

Surgery. In addition to the CI surgeries, Ishiyama has also performed Bone Anchored Hearing Aid (BAHA) surgeries on four adolescents. Furthermore, AIM Fund ensures proper follow-up and provides the necessary speech processor accessories and programming to over 180 children and adults with CI or BAHA.

The Armenian International Medical Fund was formed in May of 2003 as a non-profit organization. Its mission is to create and maintain innovative healthcare programs in Armenia. The objectives of the cochlear implant program are to consult on newborn hearing screening, perform BAHA and Cochlear implant surgeries, train future young otologists in Armenia, consult on complex ear surgeries, and ensure the quality of otology service in Armenia.

AIM Fund is grateful for the support from the office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Japanese Embassy in



Salpy Akaragian with Gagik, a CI recipient

Armenia, the Erebouni Medical Center, and supporters around the globe.

To learn more about the AIM Fund and contribute to its work, visit armenianimf.org.



Razmik in 2021

Yerevan State U. Delegation Signs Agreements with Calif. Higher Education Bodies

AGREEMENTS, from page 10

On February 1, upon the initiative of Dr. Baibourtian, the YSU delegation visited Glendale Community College (GCC), where a meeting was held with the President of the Board of Trustees Dr. Armine Hacopian, Board member Sevan Benlian, GCC Superintendent/President Dr. David Viar and Vice President of Instructional Services Dr. Michael Ritterbrown.

The GCC leaders presented the College's structure, governing and academic system, its educational opportunities, and the many services provided to its multiethnic student population. It was highlighted that 4,600 Armenian students study at GCC, which constitutes another incentive for creating bridges of partnership between YSU and GCC. The YSU leaders presented YSU as the mother university of Armenia, with its various educational programs and educational opportunities catered towards foreign students. Among the cooperation priorities, the need was outlined to enable GCC stu-

dents to study for a semester at YSU in Yerevan this summer in the framework of the Study Abroad program. In order to solidify the partnership objective, the interlocutors agreed to draft and subsequently to sign a memorandum of cooperation, specifying the areas of mutual interest.

Accompanied by Baibourtian, the YSU delegation visited the Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of North America, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, discussing the matters related to supporting the educational programs of the YSU.

The YSU delegation also had a virtual meeting with Dr. Ann Karagozian, inaugural director of the Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA, devising plans of mutually beneficial plans of cooperation. A meeting with Prof. Peter Cowe, Narekatsi Chair of Armenian Studies and Director of the Center for World Languages at UCLA also took place, where matters of cooperation were touched upon.



The visiting delegation at the site of the future Armenian Museum of America, with Consul General Baibourtian and Executive Chairman of the Museum Berdj Karapetian and architect of the Museum building Aram Alajajian.



COMMUNITY NEWS

NBA's Rex Kalamian Is Heading to Armenia

KALAMIAN, from page 1
International Basketball Federation (FIBA) European Championship for Small Countries, which will take place in Malta from June 28 to July 3 this year.

It was a surprise to basketball fans, but less so to insiders who know the coach well; Kalamian has been in talks with the Armenian Basketball Federation for a few years now, but scheduling issues and the like have prevented the coach from joining Team Armenia.

With so much buzz in air, Kalamian agreed to sit down for an exclusive interview during which he shared his thoughts on his career and the opportunity to coach for his ancestral homeland.

A Hardworking Career

Kalamian grew up in Los Angeles, where he played basketball in high school and for two years at East LA College. An injury prevented him from continuing, and he started coaching instead. "I was very young, 20-22, and I caught the vibe of it," Kalamian says.

Continuing with his coaching career, he hooked up with the LA Clippers and started as a video coach. His first mentor was the Clippers' head coach, Bill Fitch, who was recently inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame. "He taught me a lot about the NBA game, the work ethic, preparation. I've worked for about 10-12 different head coaches and I've taken a little bit from each coach that I've worked for and created by own philosophy. It changes because the league changes year to year. We are always search as coaches for the better way of doing things and a different way of teaching"

After nine years with the Clippers, Kalamian transferred to the Denver Nuggets, and then the Minnesota Timberwolves. That's where he first worked under head coach Dwane Casey; Casey tapped him again as assistant coach nearly a decade later for the Toronto Raptors and now this season for the Detroit Pistons. In between, Kalamian spent time in Sacramento and then with the Oklahoma City Thunder, which he describes as "just an unbelievable six years of learning and teaching and

growing and being in an organization that was all about positivity and growth."

With now-legendary players like Kevin Durant, James Harden, and Russell Westbrook, the team advanced to the NBA Finals in 2012. Although they lost to the Miami Heat, it was the first time the team had gotten to the finals since moving from Seattle (where they were known as the SuperSonics) to Oklahoma City.

In 2015, Kalamian moved to Toronto to work under Casey, and they made it to the Eastern Conference Finals. He states that the club had "great ownership, great management," and that it was "really a positive time for me living in Toronto and working for the Raptors; working with Doc Rivers, another future hall of fame coach."

After two seasons with the Clippers again and then last season in Sacramento, this past year Kalamian was asked by Casey to come work for him in Detroit. The team has had a less-than-stellar season, but Kalamian stresses the positive: "Our focus is on developing our young talent. We've done a great job of securing great young players. [We have] full support of ownership, management, coaches."

Coaching in cities like Los Angeles, Toronto, and now Detroit, Kalamian has often ended up in places with a lot of Armenians. "It's always fun connecting with the Armenian community in any city I've been in, but specifically in Los Angeles and Toronto," he says. "And even last month we went back to Toronto to play the Raptors. Someone in the stands yelled 'Inch bes es, Rex?'...I hear people scream Armenian words at me all the time."

Kalamian was coaching for the LA Clippers when COVID hit. "I spent 75 days in the Bubble, and that was a lifetime experience as well," he says, referring to the 2020 NBA Bubble, the isolation zone created at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla., to protect players from COVID during the latter part of the season as well as the playoffs that year.

Having moved from the LA to Sacramento to Detroit since the pandemic started, he mentions that "things have certainly

changed because of COVID. Recently it has subsided a bit; the number of people infected in the NBA has lessened recently. There was a time around the holidays when our team [the Pistons] was decimated with COVID illness. It's changed how we prepare. We've had more Zoom meetings, sometimes cancelled practices and [we have to] be very cognizant of the amount of time we spend in close areas. And it's hard because we have practices, film sessions, locker rooms. We have a great medical team and they do a great job of keeping everyone healthy."

Ironically, COVID also gave Kalamian his opportunity to step in for coach Casey when the latter had to miss the January 10 game "against Utah, a very cool moment," Kalamian says. "The players' reaction after the game, I really appreciated the moment so much, and I appreciated the players, how special they made the moment for me." Kalamian also remarked, "It was a great opportunity and an experience that I'll remember for a very long time. Coaching these 5 games has given me, shown me that I'm prepared and capable of being a head coach in the NBA. Waiting for an opportunity hopefully that will arise for me."

Coaching for the Homeland

But first, a very different opportunity has arisen for Kalamian — being asked to coach the Armenian national team.

"I've been in contact with them for a few years actually," Kalamian says. "Because of scheduling and COVID we've had to put off any type of formal talks or announcement. Our dialogue continued for the past 2-3 years, and this felt like the right time with Armenia competing in the Small European Tournament of FIBA this summer, to finally go to Yerevan and coach this team, and try to start to establish a foundation there for what we would like Armenian basketball to be." He added, "It means also the youth, the under 16, the under 18 teams, because they are the future of Armenian basketball — boys and girls."

Kalamian mentions that the Armenian community's response to the news has been enthusiastic: "The amount of people that

have reached out to me, some to just congratulate and say thank you. And some who have wanted to get involved and be helpful. I think basketball is a growing sport in Armenia. And what we're trying to do is bring more attention to it. Anybody we can get involved is a positive, not only for the sport but for the entire country. There's a certain excitement surrounding this. We hope our team can come together and win this tournament and gain more interest."

Basketball in Armenia is growing, Kalamian said: "In Armenia they have a professional league there now, there are new gyms and new courts, it's a very exciting time. And there are many Armenians around the world that have reached out to me, and they all want to help our country. People want to get involved and I think it's very cool." He added, "It's probably time for us to all come together under the circumstances."

Kalamian's vision doesn't just include the national men's team and its tournament this summer, though. As to the current state of the sport of basketball in Armenia, he says: "The program today, there is a structure. They have an Armenian Basketball Federation. They are very structured and organized. They have a vision of how to grow basketball from the youth level all the way to the national team level. I plan on helping to build that, and continuing with the vision that they have, working together to not only build players and develop players but also to help develop coaches. My commitment to Armenia is not just one summer, it's hopefully long term. I can see myself doing camps and clinics there in the future as well. And there are so many growth stages ahead of us, it's an exciting time."

Hero Close to Home

Kalamian's parents were born in the Bronx at a time when that borough of New York still hosted a large Armenian immigrant community, survivors of the Genocide and other refugees from Ottoman Turkey. His grandmother, who hailed from the Amasia/Sepasdia region, helped raise him. Growing up in Southern California, Kalamian has been involved with Armenian athletics in the past. "At probably the age of 20, the AGBU reached out to me about competing in the Pan Armenian games in Yerevan. That was the last time I was in Armenia. It's very special to represent your homeland"

Kalamian shared that "My grandmother survived the Genocide as a teenager. She literally ran for her life and had to hide and live in an orphanage for a short time before she eventually immigrated to New York by ship through Ellis Island, as a teenager living in New York and not knowing any English. I think about my grandmother now very frequently and the things she had to endure, losing her mother and father and family, and brothers and sisters in the Genocide, and her will to survive. That's what makes us strong as a community, we're strong because of what our ancestors had to endure. And I think it permeated down to our generation today. Resilience. Some people say to me 'who's your hero?' That's an easy one, I say, my grandmother. Because when she told me the stories, it's mind boggling. I think what she's instilled in me also is respect, I think for sure resilience, and hard work. Those are things that I carry with me."

He added that his mother, Aghavni, though born in the Bronx, also did not know English as a child.

"It's very deep; these stories are very deep," he concluded.



ՀԽԲԿ

Երուանդ Ազատեանի

Ազգային-Քաղաքական Յորձանուտի Մեջ
Գիրքերուն


Կազմակերպութեամբ՝
Թեքեան Մշակութային Միութեան

Հովանաւորութեամբ՝
Արեւմտեան Թեմի Բարեգան Առաջնորդ
Յովնան Արք. Տերտերեանի

Գիրքերը կը ներկայացնէ՝
Տոքթ. Գրիգոր Սիմոնեան

Տեղի կ'ունենայ Հինգշաբթի, 24 Փետրուար 2022-ին,
Երեկոյեան ժամը 7:30-ին,
ԹՄՄԻ Պէշկէօթուրեան Կեդրոնին մէջ, Ալթադենա:

1901 N Allen Avenue, Altadena





Arts & Culture

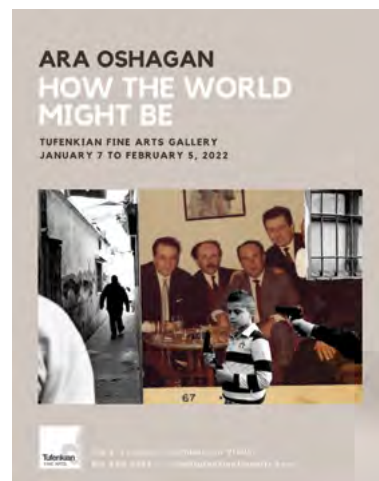
Books

Ara Oshagan Is An Art World Triple-Threat

By Christopher Atamian

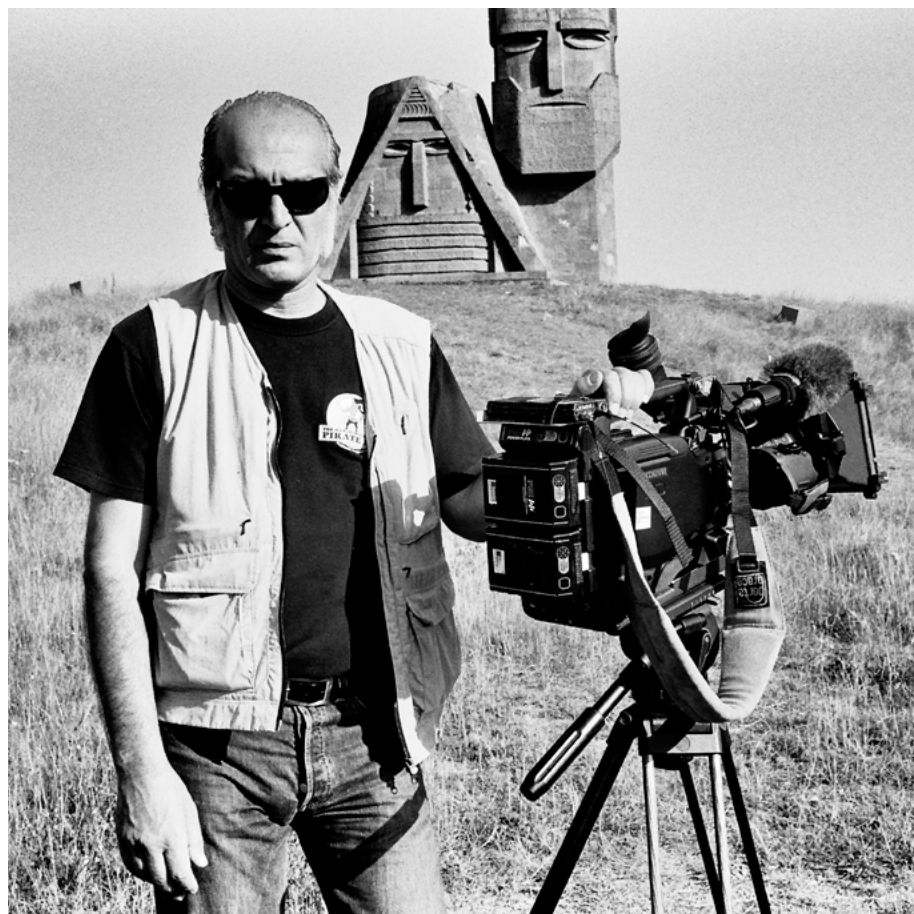
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES — Ara Oshagan was having a busy year and a busy day. It was December 30th, and the year 2022 of our Lord Jesus Christ was just a day away. Oshagan had recently published a book of photography, displaced, about the Armenian ghetto of Bourj Hammoud in Beirut. His first foray into short filmmaking, a short experimental video in Western Armenian called “Resurrection Myth” had screened on several continents at festivals and won an important award. Recently returned from an invitation-only trip to South Korea, he was now scrambling to fill Tufenkian Fine Arts which had offered him their entire gallery space to exhibit his work. All this and Oshagan



was still in charge with his wife Ani of curating @ReflectSpace Gallery at the Glendale Central Library, now an important L.A. venue for socially relevant art. The multimedia wunderkind and father of three was on a roll.

At 9 A.M. Oshagan was auto-graphing a copy of his latest book displaced for a friend on the East Coast. The black-and-white photographs within chronicle the mythic Armenian Ghetto of Bourj Hammoud in Ras-Beirut where an entire people — the Western Armenians of Cilicia — recovered after the Armenian Genocide. The photos form a deeply personal vision of families at dinner; kids hanging out on a street corner; an Easter procession that reproduces the ceremonies, foods and traditions of Cilician Armenians on streets named after their old villages and towns in the Ottoman Empire-Nor Marash, Nor Sis, Nor Adana etc... Says Oshagan: “displaced is perhaps my most personal work to date. Because there is a return to the spaces of my youth and a deep-seated, decades-long longing to see and touch across the dislocation that was my original flight from Beirut. It is a dark book and difficult to wrap my head around, to give it structure, to give it stability...Its complex layering and overlapping sensibilities are see OSHAGAN, page 14



Frédéric Tonolli

Making Films from Chukotka to Artsakh

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / VILLEBON SUR YVETTE, France — French documentary filmmaker, writer and cinematographer Frédéric Tonolli (born 1959) spent most of his childhood in Villebon sur Yvette, where he still resides. He has filmed and directed numerous documentaries for French public television channels. In 2009 he directed for France 5 a series of documentaries of four episodes retracing nearly a century of geopolitics around oil, from Norway to Iraq. From 2011 to 2014, he directed a new series of four documentaries on love stories in cities at war (“Sarajevo, my Love,” “Berlin, my Love,” “Baghdad, my Love” and “Belfast, my Love”). His filmography includes also “Blood of the Mountains” (1994), “The Lords of Behring” (co-director: Patrick Boitet, 1995), “Profession Profiler, Micky and the Black Wind” (1999), “The Nine Moons of Behring” (2003), “The Powder Box of Caucasus: My Little Papers from Armenia” (2005), “People of Water” (2006), “Upside down, the Arctic” (2008), “Children of the Whale” (2008), “The Death of a People” (2009), “The Secret of the seven Sisters” (documentary series of four 52-minute episodes, 2009), “Baghdad Taxi” (2012), “Syria, the Children of Freedom” (2013), “Normandie-Niemen” (2014), “The Forger of Vermeer” (2017), “Guyana: the Gardeners of Exile” (2018), “Trapped: The Bataclan” (2020), etc.

Frédéric, I have an impression that for you the whole planet is a big family and you easily access the homes of all family members. Am I right?



Difficult to answer if the world is one big family. I cannot say that I feel good everywhere, it can happen that the environment is hostile and does not want you. So I try to manage to get invited or to be invited. I do not come as a conqueror. I am not at home, but I like that they make me feel at home. That is different.

You have worked in many countries, including Madagascar, Ethiopia, South Africa, Yemen, India, Indonesia, Equator, Guyana, Armenia, etc. What was your most memorable adventure?

It is impossible to answer. It would even be a lie or a distortion of the truth. Every journey, every film is an extraordinary adventure. I am not a tourist. I have the chance to live my life working. My work is my life, my life is my work and it all blends together. I often say that I am lucky to earn my living by living, even if sometimes I earn it very badly, in the pecuniary sense (*laughing*). All my adventures have been great because they were my adventures. Otherwise to try to answer your question: the years I lived among the Chukchi in the Behring Strait are unforgettable and all the stays I made in the early '90s in the Martakert region of Artsakh with Vladimir's Squad remain engraved in my heart and I think about them almost every day. But I do not live in the past, I just keep it with me forever, like suitcases that accompany me all the time.

Although your experience on those countries has been reflected in your films, have you considered writing a book on your travels?

I have already written a book about my travels in Chukotka. Then I wrote another see TONOLLI, page 13

NAASR to Host Webinar on 'Medieval Armenia In Los Angeles' on Getty Manuscripts

LOS ANGELES — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, and the J. Paul Getty Museum will present a webinar with Dr. Elizabeth Morrison on “Medieval Armenia in Los Angeles: Manuscripts at the Getty Museum” on Tuesday, February 15, 2022, at 7 pm (Eastern) / 4 pm (Pacific).

The webinar will be accessible live on Zoom (registration required) and



Mesrop of Khizan, Gospel Book. Isfahan, 1615. J. Paul Getty Museum, Ms. Ludwig II 7

on NAASR's YouTube Channel.

In this talk, Dr. Elizabeth Morrison, Senior Curator of Manuscripts at the J. Paul Getty Museum, will discuss the small but important collection of Armenian manuscripts at the Getty. Highlights will include leaves by perhaps the most famous Armenian illuminator, T'oros Roslin; a new acquisition formerly unknown to manuscript scholars; and a Gospel book the Getty has been putting back together for almost 40 years.



Dr. Elizabeth Morrison

Morrison is senior curator of manuscripts at the J. Paul Getty Museum. During her 25 years there, she has curated numerous exhibitions, including “Imagining the Past in France, 1250-1500” in 2010 and “Book of Beasts: The Bestiary in the Medieval World in 2019,” both of which were finalists for the College Arts Association award for outstanding exhibition catalogue. She has served on the boards of the International Center of Medieval Art and the Medieval Academy of America, and is currently the Vice President of the Association of Art Museum Curators.

For more information contact NAASR at hq@naasr.org.



ARTS & CULTURE

Frédéric Tonolli: Making Films from Chukotka to Artsakh

TONOLLI, from page 12

one: *The Secret of the Seven Sisters, the Untold Story of Oil*. Afterwards, the trips are so intimate that I put off writing about them out of modesty and also laziness (laughing).

What did you find most exciting in that eternal kingdom of cold in Chukotka, the Arctic region of Northern Russia?

After the Arctic night there is the Arctic summer. Nothing is eternal. When it is too cold, well, we take shelter, we warm up together, we talk and we share what we have. It is great. And then I had the chance to walk on the ice floe, to hunt whales with a harpoon on a small boat in the middle of the sea with men of great courage who did not hunt to kill, but to feed their families as they have always done. I learned to catch my own fish, to smoke it and even to make my own “samagon” – homemade vodka.

In short, I had the chance to live a unique experience.

If I am not mistaken, your second name is Karekine, which reveals your Armenian origin. Please tell us about your Armenian side.

Yes, my name is Karekine. On my passport it says Frédéric Karekine Tonolli. And I am very proud of it. My mother Alice was born in France of two parents (two orphans) who survived the Genocide. You don't choose to be Armenian, you are Armenian. You cannot explain it. As a child I read Armenian; I have since forgotten. Then in the '70s and '80s in the West the Armenian question came back with *Hay Baikar* (the Armenian fight) and ASALA and after the earthquake, the independence, the Artsakh war, there I had to commit myself, it was not a choice but a duty.

Yes, I am French. And yes, I am Armenian.

Have you met any Armenian in some of the exotic places you have visited? For instance, in Russian documentary “Welcome to Enourmino” by Alexey Vakhrushev, telling about a Chukcha rural locality, there is a visiting seller, who, according to director, was an Armenian.

Yes, of course, all over the world, as far as Chukotka I met Armenians. Some good and some not so good. For the anecdote, in 1995, I had a visa problem in Chukotka and was going to be expelled. I went to the administration in Anadyr, the capital, and I saw on a door an Armenian name. That was the prosecutor's office! I knocked and went inside and before he could speak I said to him in Armenian: “I am Armenian, you are too, we are far from our homeland, you must help me.” He helped me, although at first he did not want to!

I see, you met Aramais Dallakian, who

later became the first deputy chairman of the Council of Chukotka and even he was the deputy governor of Chukotka. Frédéric, you were one of the first documentary filmmakers who shot a film in 1994 about the war for Artsakh's independence, “Blood on the Mountains,” based on real events and screened widely. Unfortunately, recently the mountains of Artsakh were covered by blood again. And now foreign documentary filmmakers are denied entry to Artsakh. However, do you think documentary filmmakers still have a job to do on this direction?

Of course I was very proud to make the “Blood of the Mountains” and to have shared these unique moments with these everyday heroes, these discreet heroes, these men and women ready to die for their mountains. But I was especially happy that a public television channel (ARTE) broadcasted it. Making a film is nothing if it is not being broadcasted. And my most difficult struggle was not in Artsakh but in finding a broadcaster. You don't make a film to please yourself or to show off but to inform and in a way to fight. Of course we have to continue, we have to film in Artsakh and we have to keep on filming!

One of your close friends in Armenia was late Sarkis Hatsbanian, whom many know in Armenia. How you characterize that brave Armenian?

It is not my job to hand out medals of bravery. In fact, some people have done it for themselves! I did not come those years to receive a medal, a gratitude, an award. I simply came because I had to, as a duty. Yes, I met Sarkis, and we were friends. But we were all friends, and we were few! Levon Minassian helped me a lot, he was the one who managed to get me out of a helicopter in Martakert, when everything was closed. I was also lucky enough to meet Monte Melkonian in Paris. Yes, a hero, but the heroes are all those Armenians who fought when all was lost. These are the brave Armenians.

You also directed a documentary about a squadron of French pilots who fought on the Soviet front in 1942, offered by General de Gaulle to Stalin. Many Armenians, while hearing the name of this legendary regiment, Normandy-Niémen, recall the name of Sergey Agavelyan, who was the deputy commander of the squadron regiment for engineering and aviation service. Is Aghavelyan in your film?

Of course Major Agavelyan is in the film. There is even a picture of him and an actor playing him. In all my films I try to talk about Armenia as much as possible. In my job I try to be fair, honest, ethical, and if I can do something for Armenia, I do it! In my latest film, which will be broadcasted on ARTE in February 2022, about Putin's diplomacy, I have imposed a whole chapter on Artsakh. My producers did not see the point, but I insisted. In a journalistic sense I was right, but my heart also forced it on me.

Do you have new projects regarding Armenia?

Of course I have a big file on the history of Artsakh, from yesterday to today (I have a hundred hours of personal archives). But the channels do not take films on Artsakh every day and there is a lot of competition from other journalists. For me it is harder, but I am glad that others are interested in Armenia and Artsakh. And I am fighting to get my next documentary on Artsakh produced.

THE ARARAT - ESKIJIAN MUSEUM &
ARMENIAN DRESS & TEXTILE PROJECT
PRESENT

1860 GESARIA (KAYSERI)
TO LOS ANGELES 2022:
MAPPING CULTURE & SHARING STORIES



Gesaria (Kayseri) circa 1912. Tina Demijian collection.

**INTERNATIONAL HYBRID CONFERENCE AND EXHIBIT
FEBRUARY 26 - 27, 2022**

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND ZOOM REGISTRATION
VISIT: ARARAT-ESKIJIAN-MUSEUM.COM**

MID-19TH CENTURY ARMENIAN LIFE AND CULTURAL HISTORY FEATURED
IN THE NEWLY TRANSLATED MEMOIR OF SETRAK TIMOURIAN AND HIS
FAMILY'S MIGRATION FROM GESARIA (KAYSERI) TO LOS ANGELES

*“This project was made possible with support from California Humanities, a non-profit of the
National Endowment for the Humanities. Visit www.calhum.org.”*

In collaboration with: Armenian Film Foundation - CA State University Northridge Armenian Studies Program -
CA State University Fresno Armenian Studies Program - Armenian Rugs Society - Houshamadyan -
NAASR - Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives - The Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA -
Narekatsi Chair of Armenian Studies at UCLA.

**IN - PERSON LOCATION: ARARAT HOME OF L.A. - SHEEN CHAPEL
15015 MISSION HILLS RD.
MISSION HILLS, CA 91345**

PROOF OF VACCINATION & MASKS INDOORS WILL BE REQUIRED



ARTS & CULTURE

Ara Oshagan Is An Art World Triple-Threat

Ara Oshagan Is An Art World Triple-Threat

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES — Ara Oshagan was having a busy year and a busy day. It was December 30th and the year 2022 of our Lord Jesus Christ was just a day away. Oshagan had recently published a book of photography, displaced, about the Armenian ghetto of Bourj Hammoud in Beirut. His first foray into short filmmaking, a short experimental video in Western Armenian called “Resurrection Myth” had screened on several continents at festivals and won an important award. Recently returned from an invitation-only trip to South Korea, he was now scrambling to fill Tufenkian Fine Arts which had offered him their entire gallery space to exhibit his work. All this and Oshagan was still in charge with his wife Ani of curating @ReflectSpace Gallery at the Glendale Central Library, now an important L.A. venue for socially relevant art. The multimedia wunderkind and father of three was on a roll.

At 9 A.M. Oshagan was autographing a copy of his latest book displaced for a friend on the East Coast. The black-and-white photographs within chronicle the mythic Armenian Ghetto of Bourj Hammoud in Ras-Beirut



Shushi Portraits

where an entire people — the Western Armenians of Cilicia — recovered after the Armenian Genocide. The photos form a deeply personal vision of families at dinner; kids hanging out on a street corner; an Easter procession that reproduces the ceremonies, foods and traditions of Cilician Armenians on streets named after their old villages and towns in the Ottoman Empire—Nor Marash, Nor Sis, Nor Adana etc... Says Oshagan: “displaced is perhaps my most personal work to date. Because there is a return to the spaces of my youth and a deep-seated, decades-long longing to see and touch across the dislocation that was my original flight from Beirut. It is a dark book and difficult to wrap my head around, to give it structure, to give it stability... Its complex layering and overlapping sensibilities are

see OSHAGAN, page 14

OSHAGAN, from page 12

important to me, though for the casual reader of the book, they are not easily seen, subterranean.”

The photos in the book are accompanied by a superb text by Krikor Beledian titled “The Bridge.” Beledian was born in 1945, Oshagan in 1964 — both in Bourj Hammoud. Both left their native country and their Armenian upbringing in this almost parallel universe — Beledian came to Paris and Oshagan to Philadelphia and then Los Angeles, where he currently resides. Both have chronicled the lives of exiles — Armenian exiles in this case, an ex-



Installations from “How the World Might Be”

perience that parallels in many ways that of other diasporas — Arab, African, Palestinian, Greek, Chinese, Jewish and more recently Southeast Indian.

In the case of Armenians however, the dispersion has been a forced one, born of tragedy and not a desire for economic gain or personal freedoms; it has been a matter of survival. That makes the end of Beledian’s text all the more poignant: “When a car speeds down the Hill, the traveler can sometimes see in detail the other world that has acquired the status of a remnant; the traveler may even presume to master, penetrate its secret. But what endures on the maze-like net of a map, like the most powerful and recognizable labyrinths of a recollection, is the exile’s unknown station from which all the others begin, branch out across the expanse of world. It has happened — and the event can always be repeated in Australia, Uruguay, China or America — that you will meet someone who is a descendant of the other world, was born in the year that you used to frequent Hayg agha’s house, when you used to eat Miss Lipanouhi’s sweets, and by the world’s most extraordinary coincidence, will be no other than one of Armen’s legitimate daughters, smiling, but a little plaintive, on her lips the only question for which you have no answer. I searched and searched but could not find. My father had a son, they say with Miss Lipanouhi. Do you know where he is?”

At 12 A.M., Oshagan was entering his short film, “Resurrection Myth,” in the Socially Relevant Film festival run by Nora Armani. In a little over four minutes this short experimental film tells the story of what might happen if Pokr Mher — one of the heroes in the Armenian epic David of Sassoon were to finally escape from Raven’s Rock where he has been locked up for centuries and judge the



Photos from Bourj Hammoud in displaced

world, as according to prophecy.

Written By Christopher Atamian in response to the sudden onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic, “Resurrection Myth” is a poetic meditation on alienation, dread and the possibility of (un)imagined futures. Weaving darkness and light, in both word and imagery, the film’s foreboding



Photos from Bourj Hammoud in displaced

and hypnotic rhythm explores questions of history, current-day societal crises, love of another (man), technology, indigenous rights, good/evil and apocalyptic ends. Amid the sound of sirens and dark light, where are the headed, the mysterious young men walking silently along the highway? What does a post-pandemic world, especially one facing unprecedented violence and environmental disaster, hold for us? Will Pokr Mher bring salvation or doom? This film narrated in Western Armenian loosely parallels the structure of an equally poetic Marguerite Duras short film, “Les Mains Négatives.” Oshagan’s two children acted in “Resurrection Myth.” “As my first foray into directing a film, it was wonderful to collaborate with my kids. And also this was my first film in Western Armenian. So, there is an element of a transference of an inheritance here—an endangered language being passed on, symbolically, from me (having myself lost my indigenous connection to that language) to the next generation.”

At 3 P.M. Oshagan was checking up on images from his book that he had sent to the Hye-Phen Magazine to accompany another, shorter essay, “The Ghosts of Bourj Hammoud,” written by another American-Armenian returning to Lebanon where his father was born and finding his roots on Bourj Hammoud in a way a reverse (and parallel) journey from the one that Oshagan and Beledian describe in “displaced.”

At 6 P.M. Oshagan was crazed with excitement at the



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Dolly Matoian bakes choreg in her kitchen. (Photo: Christine Matoian)

Dolly Matoian's Choreg From Guild Gatherings

Choreg is an Armenian specialty, especially baked at the holidays and for special occasions. For their annual Bazaar at St. John Armenian Church in Southfield, Michigan, the Women's Guild bakes thousands of choreg to sell each year. The recipe they still use was created by the talented Dolly Matoian.

"My mother (the late Helen Sarkisian Baltayan) was an outstanding cook and baker. She encouraged me to learn to cook, and inspired me to create Armenian breads, desserts, and sweets. She loved making katah the Sepastatzi way by rolling strips of dough into a ball, and I recall seeing sou beoreg dough drying on large tables. I still use her okhla (thin rolling pin). She would say every Armenian young man would want you to know how to make Armenian food," says Dolly.

Later, when she was married, Dolly's husband Mike was transferred to Paris for his work, and she gave up her job as vice president of the Dorsey Business Schools to join him. They lived in Paris for 3 1/2 years, and Dolly took full advantage of the opportunity by attending Le Cordon Bleu culinary school. Founded in 1895, Le Cordon Bleu focuses its education on hospitality management, culinary arts, and gastronomy (See: <https://www.cordonbleu.edu/home/en>). Upon returning to Michigan, Dolly was asked to teach at a local gourmet store, and to include some Armenian recipes. "One of my first classes was teaching how to make choreg. Luckily, my students, Armenians and non-Armenians, loved the class and the tasty choregs we baked."

Dolly continues to teach others how to bake. In response to the 2020 pandemic lockdown, the Women's Guild began recording a series of instructional videos called Guild Gatherings. Dolly was an early contributor. Her "Choreg with Tips on Making Dough" video has been viewed over 600 times. "This recipe makes a sweeter choreg. For Easter, my mother would add bits of candied fruit." See Dolly's video plus more Guild Gatherings videos at: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgaajJ5B015V_fCalkqdiHwLZU3qTyV71

INGREDIENTS:

- 5 medium eggs
- 1 1/4 cups sugar (plus 1 teaspoon for yeast)
- 1 cup milk, warmed
- 3/4 cup butter, melted
- 1/4 cup shortening, melted
- 1 1/2 tablespoons yeast (or 1 1/2 envelopes)
- 2 – 2 1/2 lb. flour (1/2 bread, 1/2 all-purpose)
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 tablespoon ground mahlab (found in Middle Eastern markets)
- 1 cup chopped candied fruit, dusted with flour (optional)
- Egg wash (2 eggs plus 2 teaspoons milk)
- Sesame and black seeds, as desired

PREPARATION:

In a mixer with paddle attachment, mix 5 eggs and 1 1/4 cups sugar. Add the milk, butter, and shortening.

Proof the yeast: In 1 cup measuring cup with 1/2 cup warm water (110 to 115 degrees), add yeast and 1 teaspoon sugar, stir to combine. In 5 minutes, the mixture will double (if it doesn't, replace with fresher yeast). Add some flour and the yeast mixture to the liquids in the bowl. On low speed add the rest of the flour along with the baking powder and mahlab, one cup at a time. When most of the flour has been added, replace the paddle with the dough hook. At this point add the candied fruit, if using.

Be careful not to add too much flour. The dough should be "tacky" but not stick to fingers when touched. This will result in a light and "cottony" choreg. The dough will come away from the sides of the bowl almost around the dough hook. Place dough into a large, oiled bowl then turn the dough over once to oil the top. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap or a tea towel and place in a warm, draft-free place.

Allow dough to double in size, approximately one hour. (If you wish to delay baking the choreg, you can put the bowl in the refrigerator before rising, even overnight. When ready to use, allow it to rise.)

For individual choregs take 2 to 2 1/2 oz. of dough, roll each into approximately 9" snake and twist into a very loose twist or knot. For braided loaves weigh 5 oz. balls. Roll each into a 12" strand, place 3 side by side, and braid (preferably from the center towards each end).

Place the individual choreg on parchment or Silpat-lined trays 2" apart, more for the loaves. Cover with a tea towel or plastic wrap to rise 1 1/2 to 2 hours, until they are soft to the touch and double in size. Before baking, gently egg wash all over, especially at the point where choreg touches the tray. Sprinkle with seeds of your choice. Egg wash a second time, especially on tops—this gives a shiny surface. Bake in a preheated 350°F oven 15-17 minutes for individual choregs, or in a 325°F oven for 25 minutes for loaves, until golden. At the midpoint of baking, reverse tray, and complete baking.



Note: Choregs may be frozen in plastic freezer bags; defrost in the refrigerator. They may be warmed in a microwave or wrapped in foil in the oven. They are also delicious sliced and toasted.

Yield: 6 loaves, or 4 loaves and 16 individual choregs, or 36 to 40 individual choregs

Connect to Guild Gatherings and learn more about the Women's Guild at: <http://stjohnwomensguild.square.site>.

Also available on the Women's Guild website:

Armenian Cuisine: Preserving Our Heritage Cookbook

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

Pomegranate Apron

With 2 handy pockets and adjustable straps. Great for the kitchen, garage, or garden. \$20 with free shipping. To order, go to: <https://stjohnwomensguild.square.site/>

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

For information, contact:

Women's Guild of St. John Armenian Church

22001 Northwestern Highway

Southfield, Michigan 48075

Tel: (248) 569-3405

Fax: (248) 569-0716

sjacwg@gmail.com

<https://stjohnwomensguild.square.site/>

90 years in Greater Detroit (1931-2021)

Copyright © 2021 Women's Guild of St. John Armenian Church.



ARTS & CULTURE

Armenian Culture Celebrated at the US Museum of the Bible

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Among the vast number of American establishments in the nation's capital the Museum of the Bible is perhaps the one most actively cooperating with the Armenian community and the Armenian Church at this time. The relationship was launched several years when replicas of Armenian medieval khachkars were delivered from Armenia for a permanent display at the museum. The establishment also has an Armenian Bible and a Gospel book.

On Saturday, January 29, the Bible Museum hosted what it called an Armenian Culture Celebration. The students of the Shnorhali Sunday School of Washing-



A scene from the dance performance at the Bible Museum event



Khachkar replica at the Bible Museum

ton's St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church staged a play, sang, and danced. The music of Gomidas, Aram Khachaturian and Ara Gevorkian accompanied the artistic performances. Also, Armenian religious and folk songs were performed by the Hye Choral Group.

The Bible Museum's Chief Curatorial Officer Jeff Kloha referred to the Saturday event as "just the latest of the Armenian events that the museum has done with the Armenian community and the Embassy of Armenia." Another exhibition is planned for the March of 2023. For that reason, Kloha occasionally visits Armenia: his

most recent trip was in last December.

Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan, the pastor of St. Mary's Church in Washington, D.C., added that many other events, including academic lectures are coming. "For about three years now our cooperation with the Museum has become constant," the priest observed.

On Saturday, one of the halls screened videos of the endangered Christian Armenian heritage of Artsakh's occupied areas. In a virtual lecture, Dr. Christina Maranci of Tufts University spoke of Christmas traditions in Armenia and focused on im-

ages of the infancy of Christ as shown in medieval Armenian manuscripts from the seventh to seventeenth centuries. The lecture of Dr. Jesse Arlen, director of the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America was about the history of the Armenian Bible.

A video link at mirrorspectator.com provides snapshots of the artistic performances of and interviews with the officials of the Museum and members of the Armenian American community.



The Hye Choral Group at the Bible Museum



An image of the Armenian cathedral of Shushi (Artsakh) prior to the 2020 war at the Bible Museum event

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

NEW YORK

OCTOBER 15 — Save the date! The Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York Chapter is celebrating the diamond anniversary of the Tekeyan Cultural Association with a gala. Details to follow.

MASSACHUSETTS

10th Anniversary Celebration Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Join us for events during the year at the Park. Watch this space for details.

APRIL 3 — ANNUAL RECONFIGURATION OF THE ABSTRACT SCULPTURE (Rain Date: April 10) A crane lifts and pulls apart the two halves of Abstract Sculpture, rhomboid dodecahedron made of steel and aluminum, to create a new sculptural shape. 7.30 a.m. The Park's Endowed Fund for the Annual Reconfiguration, the generous gift of Charles and Doreen Bilezikian, supports the annual reconfiguration. A&A Industries, Anahid and Aurelian Mardiros, manufacturer of the Abstract Sculpture, their generous gift in kind, oversees the annual reconfiguration. Coffee, hosted by Starbucks & Conversation is from 8:00am—9:00am. RSVP appreciated, hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

SEPTEMBER 21 — GALA BENEFIT CELEBRATING CONTRIBUTIONS OF OUR NATION'S IMMIGRANTS! InterContinental Hotel, Boston. 6 p.m. Honoring **STEPHEN KURKJIAN**, Distinguished Citizen, Leader, Pulitzer Prize Journalist and Author, and Recognizing Organizations Serving Immigrants and Refugees. Funds raised support the Legacy Fund, endowed fund to care for and maintain the Park year-round. Advance Reservations only. To receive the invitation, please send name and address to hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

MICHIGAN

FEBRUARY 24 — The four Armenian Churches of Greater Detroit (St. John Armenian Apostolic Church, St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church, St. Vartan Armenian Catholic Church and Armenian Congregational Church) along with the Knights and Daughters of Vartan will commemorate the Feast of Sts. Vartanank, 6 p.m., St. Vartan Armenian Catholic Church, 256000 Drake Road, Farmington Hills. Celebrant will be Monsignor Andon Atamian. No reception will be held due to COVID



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST

Edmond Y. Azadian

STAFF WRITER

Harry Kezelian III

CONTRIBUTORS

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

**REGIONAL
CORRESPONDENTS**

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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

Baikar Association, Inc.

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

Other than the Editorial, views and opinions expressed in this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the policies of the publisher.

COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

Aliyev's War on Armenian History



By Edmond Y. Azadian

During the Soviet period, Azerbaijan was the butt of many jokes. Such jokes were produced supposedly by the "Armenian Radio." One such joke goes like this: A citizen calls the Armenian Radio to ask why Armenia does not have a Ministry of the Navy. The answer: because we don't have access to the sea. Then the questioner asks, "Then why does Azerbaijan have a Ministry of Culture?"

It is not a racist statement to say that the Turks have been historically notorious for destroying other cultures. They destroyed the very sophisticated Byzantine culture after they conquered Constantinople and on their way to Istanbul from Central Asian highlands, they destroyed Armenian, Georgian and Hittite culture in Anatolia and elsewhere.

That destructive plan has been most active — if not intensified — after the eradication of the native Armenian people from its habitat in historic Armenia. More than 2,000 churches, monasteries, chapels and other monuments created by Armenians have been victims of the path of destruction of successive Turkish governments.

The Turks had even threatened to blow up Hagia Sophia Church, the Byzantine Orthodox Church, built in 537 AD, during the rule of Emperor Justinian, but settled on converting it into a mosque.

Azerbaijan boasts of being a Turkic nation and thus it has adopted the penchant for destroying other nations' cultural symbols.

In 2005, the Azerbaijani army destroyed thousands of unique khachkars (cross stones) in the Julfa Cemetery of Nakhichevan, now an exclave under that nation's rule, an act that was met with utter silence from the civilized world. Armenia's voice and protests did not reach the proper authorities and the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), tasked with the mission of preserving the world heritage, did not lift a finger. In fact, Mehriban Aliyeva, the wife of President Aliyev, and currently the vice president of her country, was named a Goodwill Ambassador by UNESCO in 2004, a position she still holds.

During the 44-day war, Azerbaijan conquered the seven regions under Armenian control plus 75 percent of Karabakh (Artsakh). President Ilham Aliyev believes that he has settled the Karabakh conflict by force, which is contrary to the principals of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, tasked with arriving at a permanent peace, and the world powers think otherwise.

The co-chairs of the Minsk Group — Russia, France and the US — maintain that the issue of the status of Karabakh has not been settled and further negotiations must take place. Azerbaijanis have been dragging their feet and hampering any visit by OSCE representatives to Karabakh.

Besides the Minsk Group co-chairs, some interesting initiatives have been undertaken by the United Kingdom, which has heavily invested in Azerbaijan's energy sector.

First, a bill recognizing the Armenian Genocide is on the agenda of the British Parliament, and now Britain's Ambassador to Yerevan John Gallagher has expressed the official position of his government, in an interview with Armenpress, which coincides with the position of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs — that the Karabakh issue has not been settled and a solution needs to be finalized.

In the meantime, President Aliyev is in a race against time to erase all traces of Armenian culture in the occupied territories. While the rest of his country is neglected completely, Azerbaijan's leader demonstrates an inordinate zeal to rebuild the territories recently captured from the Armenian forces.

Official sources in Stepanakert inform us that 1,456 Armenian architectural monuments face destruction or defacement in the territories recently occupied.

Azerbaijan's government has vowed to erase Armenian in-

scriptions on Armenian religious sites in the territory reclaimed in the 2020 war. A video disseminated this week on social media shows that Azerbaijan has removed the cross from the Spitak Khach [White Cross] Church in the village of Vank, in Hadrut. In November 2021, the Azerbaijan government had organized a visit to this same church by the representatives of the clergy of the Udi community to declare that the church is part of the Albano-Udi heritage. This is the sophistry the Aliyev administration uses to misidentify the monuments of Armenian heritage. Despite the fact that many leaders of minorities, including the Udis, suffer in Azerbaijani prisons, in this case, they have become handy tools to usurp the Armenian monuments.

In March 2021, President Aliyev took a trip to Hadrut, accompanied by his wife and daughter. During that trip, dressed in military fatigues, he visited the 12th-century Armenian Holy Mother of God Church and said, "The Armenians wanted to Armenianize this church and wrote inscriptions in Armenian here. But they failed ... All these inscriptions are fake. They were written later."

Although Mr. Aliyev does not have any claim to fame as an archeologist, he knows better than all archeologists. He has assigned a committee of so-called experts to prove what he already knows. This is the Soviet style of scientific research; in Soviet times, Stalin used to concoct a theory and the experts in respective areas had to "prove" it scientifically. That is how



they drained huge lakes, reversed the flow of rivers and rendered barren fertile farmlands.

President Aliyev cannot claim either to be the author of the theory that all the vestiges of Armenian heritage in the Caucasus belong to the Caucasian Albanians, who were supposedly the ancestors of the Azerbaijani people. That fake theory was promoted by a historian called Ziya Bunyadov in the 1950s. But he was successfully challenged by Armenian scholars in Soviet media and academic circles and it led to Bunyadov's ridicule in scholarly circles.

Up until the creation of the so-called Republic of Azerbaijan, its population was known as the Tartars of the Caucasus, a people who had never achieved statehood of their own.

Very much like Turkey, which has developed a utilitarian narrative of its history to fit its current ideology, Azerbaijan has also resorted to the tactic to claim ownership of the territory that has belonged to other ethnic groups.

President Aliyev had promised President Putin to protect Christian sites now under its power, and UNESCO had urged Armenia and Azerbaijan to refrain from damaging cultural property belong to any people whatsoever, because cultural heritage belongs to all mankind. However, attempts by UNESCO to dispatch a mission to Karabakh to inspect the cultural heritage sites have been stalled. Even worse, UNESCO is not see HISTORY, page 19



Another Attempt at Normalizing Armenian-Turkish Relations

Opportunity or New Threat to Pan-Armenian Unity?

By Davit Safaryan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

One of the latest and hottest news topics from Armenia refers to diplomatic consultations held for the declared purpose of normalizing bilateral relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey.

At first glance one could only rejoice at this goal because after a hundred years of inherited hostile relations, the two countries might finally move on along the path of peaceful dialogue and economic interaction and get an opportunity for safe co-existence. However, those with a deep knowledge of the process would immediately argue that these superficial judgments are too weak in consideration of the profound obstacles that may again cause the process to fail. In this analysis we try to specify the difficulties in the current social-political discourse, the influence of which is strongly felt in the ongoing diplomatic discussions.

State of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and Its Influence on Armenian-Turkish Diplomatic Dialogue

Specialists dealing with the issues of Armenian-Turkish normalization know that the biggest problem while signing the Zurich Protocols during the “Football Diplomacy” of 2008-2011 was the difficulty in diplomatic processes connected with the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Despite its complexity, Turkey could solve the problem relating to the “Armenian Cause” package much more easily than issues associated with the dispute between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh. It was clear and understandable then that Turkey’s political machine, whoever headed it, would not make any concession that was unacceptable to its brother state and ally Azerbaijan. Even the Western diplomats who had been attentively and carefully trying to guide the Armenian-Turkish diplomatic process were surprised to see how strong the influence of Azerbaijani public opinion was on Turkish domestic discourse.

It is worth recalling that for that very reason, Turkey’s foreign minister first visited Yerevan within the framework of the Black Sea Cooperation Organization to urge high-ranking Armenian officials to concede at least one district in the zone of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, thus creating a possibility for the signing and further ratification of the Zurich Protocols. This was considered then to be a unilateral concession on Armenia’s behalf, so the Turkish precondition was rejected. The strong impression left by the entire “Football Diplomacy” process on the Armenian side was that the Turkish political elite was very tenacious and consistent in defending and promoting Azerbaijani interests.

Currently when the situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has totally changed, when Russian peacekeepers are standing between the antagonists and when the indigenous territory under the control of Nagorno-Karabakh has shrunk to just 3,300 sq. km., it may seem that the basic condition of the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem is solved and no longer a hinderance to bring the process of normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations to its logical conclusion in conformity with the norms of international law. In fact, this statement is not true, because the new circumstances occurring as a result of the 44-days war have brought forward new threats and challenges for Pan-Armenian unity.

How will the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict be Resolved?

Extremely excited by his victory, the president of Azerbaijan declares that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict exists no more and the OSCE Minsk Group has nothing to do there. In this logic the question as to whether Azerbaijan would mercifully grant some autonomy to over 130,000 Armenians living in Artsakh seems superfluous. In its domestic discourse, Azerbaijan tries to represent the process of trilateral negotiations under Russian mediation, substantiating that the main goal is the conclusion of a peace treaty in which, after one hundred years of delay, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the parties would be finally recognized.

In this situation there is a dominant conviction in Armenian social and political circles that the Republic of Armenia can never give up the recognition and defense of the right of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to self-determination, where the demand for self-determination extends also to the possibility of creating an independent state in Artsakh. Consequently, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, created on March 24, 1992, should continue its work and the OSCE is the only international forum where the basic principles of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, including the right of territorial integrity and effective exercise of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, are harmoniously reconciled.

Thus the approach governing the Armenian political field is that a peaceful Armenian-Azerbaijani settlement is possible if it does not renounce the right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to create its own state. Consequently, we see a play on words or an attempt to drag out the negotiation process for an uncertain

period of time, but this is the only possibility to continue defending the vital rights and physical existence of the Artsakh Armenians pursuant to the letter of international law. This is true especially when all three chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group – representatives of the USA, France and Russia – do not mind continuing their mediation, considering that it is an important lever to preserve some influence in the South Caucasus.

After the 44-day war, Russia has already made a significant concession to Turkey and Azerbaijan by creating the “3+3” format where in three countries of South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) and three regional states (Turkey, Russia and Iran) create a platform for ensuring economic cooperation, solving transportation and logistics issues and ensuring the free movement of commodities and people. And although Georgia is not yet participating in this format, it has started looking for its place in the region and future activities aimed at establishing peace and recovery after the confrontation and de-blocking of communications.

Turkey and Russia, as well as Iran, propose that Armenia and Azerbaijan set aside the seemingly unsolvable Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and focus on the search for new opportunities. How to overcome the hatred towards Armenians that has ruled public policy in Azerbaijan for the last 25-30 years or how safe would the roads opening for transportation before the parties remain big questions. These questions are very complicated and there are well grounded concerns in Armenia that the proposals concern the economic and further political expansion of the Turkey-Azerbaijani tandem.

Uncertain Future of the Armenian Genocide Recognition and Condemnation Process

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Turkey recognized the independence of the Republic of Armenia without establishing diplomatic relations with the latter. During the past 30 years, anti-Armenian sentiments crystallized in Turkey into the demand to set some preconditions. Against establishing normal relations with Armenia, the Turkish side demanded the abandonment of Armenia’s pursuit of the process of recognition of the Armenian Genocide on the international level. Even during the course of “Football Diplomacy,” as a result of domestic Turkish political discussions, the authorities decided to continue an almost century-old policy of Genocide denial, which in some sense consolidated the Turkish deep state. In these circumstances, it seems right for Armenia to adopt the same approaches as those used earlier and negotiate about normalizing relations with Turkey without any preliminary condition, while moving forward cautiously but insistently.

During the “Football Diplomacy” this approach was fully understandable and acceptable to the US and diplomats of other countries. However, now that Armenia has been defeated in the 44-day war and there is an unprecedented opportunity for Turkey to advance and expand, Turkey, taking advantage of the opportunity, would try to activate its precondition again. There are already statements by the Armenian political elite that pursuing the cause of the Armenian Genocide is the problem of the Armenian diaspora and not the Republic of Armenia, and the diaspora should be the moving force in the process of its recognition. Let’s recall that since the 1990s Turkey, being guided by the demand of Genocide denial, had been consistently trying to drive a wedge between Armenia and its diaspora.

From 1998 to 2018, the problem of the international condemnation of the Armenian Genocide was a political priority of the Republic of Armenia and a strong base for the unity of Armenia, Artsakh and diaspora. Now it seems the issue is beginning pan-Armenian discussions to determine whether Armenians in their unified outcry would be able to influence the negotiation processes between Armenia and Turkey, and Armenia and Azerbaijan, in order to disallow a split between Armenia and its diaspora.

As in 1918-1920, Armenia, situated between Turkey and Azerbaijan, is facing the question of preserving its sovereignty and defending its internationally recognized borders. The assistance of the diaspora would play, if not a decisive role, then at least a very significant one. The problem of the Armenian authorities is to develop a policy that would be the beginning of new consolidation and unity, and not to weaken ties with the diaspora and its participation in pan-Armenian matters.

Davit Safaryan, with a Ph.D. in History, was born in 1989 in Yerevan, Armenia. Graduate of the Department of Turkic Studies, Faculty of Oriental Studies of the Yerevan State University (bachelor and master degrees), post-graduate of the Institute of Oriental Studies, National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, co-author of one monograph and author of a number of articles, and participant of international conferences, he worked at the National Assembly of Armenia, Ministry of Diaspora, Noravank Scientific-Educational Foundation and at the provost administration of Yerevan State University.



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Poll Finds More Armenians Feel Country Is Going in the Wrong Direction

The Washington-based International Republican Institute's public opinion poll, conducted November 22-December 5, 2021, measured the Armenian population's

views on political, economic, and security issues. The survey was funded by the US Agency for International Development.

The poll revealed a key finding: 46 percent of the population thinks that "Armenia is headed in the wrong direction," while only 34 percent thinks that the country is headed in "the right direction." This indicates that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's often-repeated boast that he enjoys "the people's mandate" is not necessarily so. This is a significant shift from the 54 percent of the votes the Prime Minister's political party received in the June 20, 2021 parliamentary elections. More importantly, the number of those who think that Armenia is headed in the wrong direction increased from 20 percent in May 21, 2021 to 34 percent in July 2021 and 46 percent in December 2021.

However, on another important question, "Do you believe that you or people like you can influence decisions made in our country," 66 percent said yes, while 33 percent said no. This is definitely a positive indication for the authorities.

The next question: "Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way democracy is developing in our country?" the country was almost evenly split: 51 percent yes and 47 percent no.

To the question: "Do you consider our country to be governed in the interest of the majority of people or in the interest of some groups?" 61 percent said it was governed in the interest of "some groups," while only 31 percent said it was governed in the interest of "the majority." This reflects negatively on the current government.

On the positive side, 66 percent of the people surveyed said they are "not afraid of openly expressing their opinions," while 31 percent said they were afraid to do so.

To the question: "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the work of the following state bodies?" the top approval was given to Pashinyan government's frequent critic, Human Rights Defender's (Ombudsman's) office (68 percent satisfied vs. 25 percent dissatisfied); the police (68 percent vs. 29 percent); local governments (63 percent vs. 33 percent); armed forces (58 percent vs. 37 percent); Central Electoral Commission (57 percent vs. 33 percent); and National Security Service (50 percent vs. 41 percent). The Prime Minister's office came in 7th place with 49 percent satisfied vs. 48 percent dissatisfied. The Armenian Parliament came in 16th place with 31 percent satisfied and a whopping 67 percent dissatisfied. This is not surprising as the parliament's televised sessions frequently show scenes of shouting matches, insults, and physical altercations ending with abrupt orders by the parliament's leadership representing the Prime Minister's political party to turn off the TV cameras to hide the disorderly conduct of the rowdy parliamentarians.

Turning to foreign policy issues, those surveyed ranked France on top with 92 percent as having the best relationship with Armenia. Then came Iran (80 percent); the United States (77 percent); China (75 percent); European Union (69 percent); Russia (64 percent); Georgia (58 percent); UK (47 percent); other (10 percent); Turkey (5 percent); and Azerbaijan at the very bottom with 3 percent.

When asked "Which two countries were the most important political partners for Armenia?" Russia (57 percent); France (50 percent); the U.S. (38 percent); Iran (23 percent); European Union (5 percent); China (5 percent); Georgia (3 percent); and India (1 percent).

In response to "Which two countries are the most important economic partners of Armenia?" Russia again came first with 61 percent; Iran (40 percent); (China (29 percent); the U.S. (16 percent); France (14 percent); Georgia (8 percent); European Union (7 percent); India (2 percent); and Turkey (2 percent).

When asked "Which 2 countries are the most important security partners for Armenia?" the answers were: Russia (64 percent); France (32 percent); Iran (31 percent); the US (26 percent); European Union (5 percent); China (4 percent); Georgia (2 percent); and India (1 percent).

"Which 2 countries are the greatest political threat to Armenia?" The survey respondents said: Turkey (90 percent); Azerbaijan (77 percent); Russia (15 percent); UK (3 percent); Israel (2 percent); the U.S. (2 percent); and Georgia (1 percent).

"Which 2 countries are the biggest economic threat to Armenia?" Survey respondents said: Turkey (68 percent); Azerbaijan (52 percent); Russia (17 percent); Georgia (10 percent); Iran (4 percent); the U.S. (1 percent); China (1 percent); and European Union (1 percent).

"Which 2 countries are the greatest security threat to Armenia?" Survey respondents said: Turkey (88 percent); Azerbaijan (81 percent); Russia (11 percent); Iran (2 percent); the U.S. (2 percent); Israel (2 percent); Georgia (1 percent); France (1 percent); and UK (1 percent).

"The relationship with which 2 countries needs to be improved for the development of Armenia?" The survey respondents said: Russia (53 percent); the U.S. (35 percent); Iran (29 percent); France (25 percent); China (15 percent); European Union (9 percent); Georgia (7 percent); Turkey (5 percent); Azerbaijan (4 percent); India (1 percent); and UK (1 percent).

The survey then asked if the respondents agreed or disagreed with the following three questions:

1) 73 percent agreed and 25 percent disagreed that "Armenia should start a dialog with Turkey and normalize bilateral relations, while pursuing the agenda of recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey."

2) 70 percent agreed and 27 percent disagreed that "Armenia must establish bilateral relations with Turkey by putting forward its own preconditions such as Turkey's non-hindrance of peace in Artsakh."

3) 44 percent agreed and 53 percent disagreed that "Under no circumstances Armenia should pursue normalization of relations with Turkey."

Most survey respondents disagreed with Pashinyan that opening roads with Azerbaijan is beneficial to Armenia. When asked: "How will the opening of transport routes with Azerbaijan impact Armenia's economic development?" 27 percent gave a positive answer; 59 percent negative.

The same is true for Turkey. When asked: "How will the opening of transport routes with Turkey impact Armenia's economic development?" 35 percent gave a positive answer; 53 percent negative.

When asked: "How important is the resolution to the Artsakh conflict for the future of Armenia in the next 10 years?" The overwhelming 96 percent said "important"; 3 percent "unimportant."

The survey asked: "What would be an acceptable solution of the Artsakh conflict?"

-- 35 percent said: "Recognition of Artsakh as an independent state."

-- 34 percent said: "The unification of Artsakh with Armenia as a region of the Republic of Armenia."

-- 16 percent said: "Establishment of the status of the Artsakh Autonomous Region within Armenia."

-- 11 percent said: "Establishment of the status of Artsakh within Russia."

-- 1 percent said: "Maintaining the current status quo."

When asked: "Is Armenia able to independently defend its borders with Azerbaijan, without the help of any other country?" 46 percent said yes; 53 percent no.

Finally, when asked: "Which country would you prefer to assist Armenia in defending its borders?" 47 percent said Russia; the U.S. (18 percent); France (14 percent); Iran (8 percent); China (2 percent); European Union (1 percent); all three Minsk Group countries of Russia, the U.S., France (1 percent); and NATO (1 percent).

Whether we agree or disagree, these are the answers that the people of Armenia gave. It reflects their current mindset.

Aliyev's War on Armenian History

HISTORY, from page 17

making a fuss about this very clear obstruction.

In addition to all the above promises and warnings, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has ordered that Azerbaijan must "take all the necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration affecting Armenian cultural heritage, including but not limited to churches and other places of worship, monuments, landmarks cemeteries and artifacts."

President Aliyev has ignored all commitments and warnings and in a challenge to the world community, he has assigned a committee to carry on his determination to deface and desecrate Armenian heritage. He has launched his war against Armenian history.

Azerbaijan's Minister of Culture Anar Karimov told the press that a working

group has been established which will be responsible for removing "the fictitious traces written by Armenians on Albanian religious temples."

Endorsing Minister Karimov's action, a Turkish-Islamic researcher, Telman Nusratoghlu has concurred that monasteries and temples in Azerbaijan's Karabakh region are the historical heritage of Caucasian Albania.

"Everybody should know," adds the scholar, "that Agoglan Monastery in the Lachin region, Khudavang [Dadivank] Complex in the Kelbajar region and Holy Elysee Temple Complex in the Aghdara region and Ganjasar [Gandzasar] Monastery there are the historical heritage of Caucasian Albania."

Neither the European Union nor President Putin, who supposedly had taken Dadivank under his personal protection, have

reacted to Mr. Aliyev's challenge.

On the contrary, there is a move to appease Azerbaijan. Indeed, after the war, the European Union had pledged to support Armenia financially to the tune of 2.6 billion euros, but less than two hundred million euros for Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan had protested this disparity vehemently. Now, the European Union has decided to make a total of 2 billion euros in investments in that country, in addition to signing energy contracts.

This is the irony of realpolitik — no official reaction to Azerbaijan's determination to erase all vestiges of Armenian history in occupied lands. There is only a lone voice, if that could be enough consolation. An influential newspaper in Europe has taken a strong position, based on moral grounds, in defying the Azerbaijani sacrilege. That is the newspaper *Le Figaro* in France. Indeed,

the deputy editor-in-chief of the newspaper, Jean-Christophe Buisson, has criticized Europeans for diving into close cooperation with Baku in the energy sector amid that country's cultural genocide against Armenian heritage in Artsakh. In a recent commentary, he stressed that Azerbaijan continues work to that end on Armenian heritage in Artsakh, but there is no reaction to it, neither from the French government nor UNESCO, and the EU welcomes the energy partnership with Baku. He further adds, "It is disgusting to see the European Commission strengthening relations with the Azerbaijani autocrat Aliyev, whose actions are aimed at destroying Armenians, their history, their churches, their heritage in Artsakh/Nagorno Karabakh. What a shame. ... It is disgusting."

Will there be any official follow-up to this courageous stand or will Mr. Buisson's voice remain a sole protest in an echo chamber?

Time is of the essence as Mr. Aliyev's war against Armenian heritage is roaring along.



Articles in the Armenian Constitution Which Serve Neither The Interests of Armenia Nor of the Armenian Nation

By Vahan Zanoyan

The resources of the entire Armenian nation are required to pull Armenia out of the severe crisis created by the defeat in the 44-day war. In fact, it is not difficult to imagine that had the resources of the entire Armenian nation been engaged in the governance of the country in the past 25-30 years, the outcome of that war might have been different, not to mention the distinct possibility that the war may have been avoided altogether. But this commentary will not speculate on how things might have turned out had we managed the past differently. Let us focus instead on the future.

OPINION

75-80 percent of the resources of the Armenian nation reside in the Diaspora. This is true by any measure of the term “resources,” including number of people, education levels, professional qualifications, financial resources, experience in management and administration, competency in science, medicine and technology, global connections, experience in military and strategic affairs and in intelligence operations. And by “Diaspora” we should not understand only ethnic Armenians living outside Armenia with little or no connection to Armenia. This talent resides among: 1) citizens of the Republic of Armenia (RA) who migrated and acquired foreign citizenship and currently reside abroad, while maintaining their Armenian citizenship; 2) citizens of the RA who migrated and acquired foreign citizenship and returned to reside in Armenia, while maintaining both their foreign and Armenian citizenship, 3) ethnic Armenian citizens of foreign countries who acquired their Armenian citizenship since independence, and divide their time between Armenia and abroad, and 4) ethnic Armenian citizens of foreign countries who have not yet acquired citizenship of the RA, but are qualified to acquire it under the current laws of the RA.

This vast national resource is currently restricted, by Armenian law, from serving the Republic of Armenia in some key public posts. Articles 48, 148, 124, 165, 174 and 177 of the Constitution impose critical restrictions on who can be elected to the Parliament, serve in the government in a Ministerial capacity, serve as President, or serve in any high-level position in the judiciary. (See below for the relevant paragraphs of these articles). Specifically, 1) No one can be elected to Parliament unless he or she has held citizenship of *only* the RA, and has permanently resided in Armenia, for the preceding four years (Article 48, Point 2); 2) No one can serve in the government in any Ministerial capacity unless he or she has held citizenship of *only* the RA, and has permanently resided in Armenia, for the preceding four years (Article 148, Points 1 and 2); 3) No one can serve as president unless he or she has held citizenship of *only* the RA, and has permanently resided in Armenia, for the preceding six years (Article 124, Point 2); 4) No one can serve as a judge, regardless of his or her qualifications, in the Constitutional Court, Court of Cassation and Court of Appeals of the RA, unless he or she holds citizenship of *only* the RA (Article 165, Parts 1, 2 and 3); 5) No one can serve on the Supreme Judicial Council, regardless of his or her qualifications, unless he or she holds citizenship of *only* the RA (Article 174, Part 3), and 6) No one can serve as Prosecutor General, regardless of

his or her qualifications, unless he or she holds citizenship of *only* in the RA (Article 177, Point 2).

There is no compelling national interest to be served by these restrictions, especially given the unique circumstances of Armenia and the Armenian nation. While maintaining the key precondition that it should be the citizens of the RA who choose their representatives and their government, the following modification to the Constitution would serve the country and the nation well: *From all six articles, remove the restriction of citizenship of “only” the RA and, where applicable, residency in Armenia in the “preceding four (and six) years.”*

Thus, the conditions for all these positions, as they relate to citizenship and residency would become: 1) citizenship of the RA and 2) permanent residency in Armenia while in office. All other requirements for qualifications and experience, especially for judges, would remain.

In addition to the above, whether explicitly mentioned in the Constitution or not, all government Ministers, vice Ministers and high-level employees in sensitive positions should pass *security clearance* and should have demonstrable qualifications for the positions that they occupy.

This amendment would create the necessary conditions (but not the sufficient conditions) for a more meaningful and consequential involvement of the Armenian Diaspora resources in the governance of the country. Once the process starts, for example, through the appointment of one Minister, it will facilitate the engagement of more Diaspora talent, because the Minister in question might add a few qualified Diasporan Armenian professionals to his or her staff. This will trigger wider interest in the Diaspora to engage in Armenia, including in positions which were not restricted by the current Constitution.

Note that this amendment would *not change the basic principle* that it should be the exclusive right of the citizens of the Republic of Armenia to elect their representatives, which, in turn, would elect their government. Non-citizen ethnic Armenians from the Diaspora would have no say in this process whatsoever. Note also that it may take a long time after such an amendment is adopted before any noticeable change appears in the governing body of Armenia. The selection and vetting process would be time consuming, politicians would proceed with caution, and the considerable gap in remuneration overseas versus remuneration in Armenia would be an important obstacle. Nevertheless, removing the *Constitutional hurdle* would be a critical first step to kick-start the process.

Public policy value should be an important consideration in assessing this amendment. Armenia needs and wants more input from its citizens who have dual citizenship, yet it disenfranchises the Diaspora of Armenian citizens. Armenian citizens with a second citizenship, who live and work in Armenia, pay taxes and, if they have not served in another country’s military, are required to serve in the military. But they cannot be elected to Parliament nor be appointed to high office. This provision violates the basic principle of reciprocity and goes against a key public policy value.

What could be some of the objections and arguments against such an amendment? Here are some anticipated objections and responses.

Argument/objection #1: *The provisions to exclude dual citizens and those who have not permanently resided in Armenia in the preceding 4-6 years are based on national security considerations.*

This argument, while theoretically appealing and with some precedent in other countries, has very weak practical bases to justify a *Constitutional restriction*. The national security of the RA has suffered more devastating damage than at any other time since independence. It is hard to imagine how government officials with dual citizenship could have posed a bigger risk than what we have faced in the last two years. Quite the contrary, as mentioned in the first paragraph, the security of the RA would probably have been enhanced substantially if the vast human capital resources of the Diaspora had been put to the service of the government.

Here it is worth mentioning that for the vast majority of Diaspora Armenians, citizenship of a foreign country represents a work permit or business necessity and does not necessarily stem from an inherent allegiance to a foreign government. The rare exceptions can certainly be weeded out during the standard security clearance vetting process, and through regulatory, administrative, and investigative measures. This is as true for the Armenian citizens who migrated outside seeking employment, as for Diaspora Armenians who were born outside and started as foreign nationals and later acquired Armenian citizenship.

Besides, there is no assurance that someone who fulfills the conditions of the current Constitution cannot be recruited by a foreign intelligence service or serve the interests of another country.

Aside from regulatory, administrative, and investigative measures, the Armenian government should discuss the clearance issue with countries where there are large Armenian communities, and secure a rotation of talent understanding, whereby dual citizens serving in Armenia do not lose privileges in the countries of their second citizenship, and vice versa.

There are hundreds if not thousands of citizens of the RA with a second citizenship who could make invaluable contributions to Armenia in various fields — economic, security, diplomatic, educational, healthcare, technology — without posing any more of a security threat to the country than those with only Armenian citizenship pose. The potential benefits from this vast unutilized human resource far outweigh any potential risks. The government should try to remove as many hurdles as possible restricting the meaningful engagement of these resources in the governance of Armenia.

Argument/Objection #2. *The only positions that these articles in the Constitution affect are President, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers, members of Parliament and various key positions in the Judiciary. There are no Constitutional restrictions for Diaspora Armenians with dual citizenship and less than 4 years of residency in Armenia to serve in any other government positions. Why don’t interested and qualified Diaspora Armenians serve in those positions, instead of waiting for Ministerial or other leadership posts to be available?*

While technically correct, this is a lame argument and misses the point. The point is that the RA must itself actively seek and recruit the best Armenian talent to bring

the country out of this crisis, and that includes positions at the highest levels of government. The exclusion of the entire upper echelon of the government is also discouraging to all other levels from offering their services.

Furthermore, and much more importantly, mid- and lower-level government employees will not be able to introduce the much-needed reforms to address the operational inefficiencies which currently plague the government bureaucracy. An important objective of this exercise is to introduce systemic improvements in the operation of the government, which cannot be achieved through below-Ministerial positions.

A truly exceptional resource, combining competence, experience, global contacts, would need the appropriate rank to make full use of his or her potential in the service of Armenia. This is especially true in multilateral economic, trade and diplomatic matters, where global contacts with high-level counterparties play a key role.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that there are a large number of public service positions where dual citizens of Armenia are prohibited from serving by their own separate laws and regulations, even though the Constitution does not call for such restrictions. These include autonomous bodies and the Defender of Human rights, and others. So the issue is systemic to the entire governance structure of Armenia. Once the Constitution is amended, it may be easier to address these separate laws as well.

Argument/Objection #3. *If there are qualified Diaspora Armenians who can and are prepared to make valuable contributions to the country by being in the government, why don’t they give up their foreign citizenship, establish permanent residence in Armenia, and, after four years, become eligible for joining the government?*

Those making this argument either do not understand or do not want to understand the critical difference that using the full power of the resources of the Armenian nation could make for Armenia, especially at this junction in the history of the Republic. *Armenian law should facilitate the engagement of Diaspora talent, and not impede it.* As stressed earlier, accepting and/or keeping citizenship in foreign countries has been a matter of economic necessity for the vast majority of Diasporan Armenians. Expecting these professionals not only to give up their foreign citizenship, but also to move to Armenia and reside for four years, possibly idly, just for a small chance of eventually being given an opportunity to serve in the government is unrealistic and deliberately prohibitive.

Here, it might be worth mentioning a probable true motive behind keeping these articles in the Constitution. There has been a chronic resistance to power-sharing in all Administrations since independence, primarily to protect vested parochial interests, to the detriment of national and State interests.

In summary, it is time to remove the Constitutional hurdles and, in a considered and calculated way, allow the vast resources of the Armenian citizenry of the Diaspora to serve the fundamental strategic interests of the State.

(To see the relevant articles of the Armenian Constitution, please go to the online version of this article at mirrorspectator.com)