

# Azerbaijan to Eliminate Armenian Cultural Heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh

By Lilit Shahverdyan  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Azerbaijan resolutely is pursuing its cultural policy of threatening Armenian historical and cultural heritage in the occupied territories of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), denying their links to Armenia.

On February 3, the Azerbaijani Minister of Culture Anar Kerimov announced that all traces of Armenian heritage from cultural and historical sites would be removed in Nagorno-Karabakh. He claimed that they distort the original Albanian identity of the monuments.

Caucasian Albania is a former kingdom once located in modern-day Azerbaijan, inhabited by the Udi people. According to the minister, international experts familiar with Albanian culture and history will be invited to the working group.

Kerimov’s announcement was condemned by the foreign ministries of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh and local non-governmental organizations, calling for action the international organizations, such as the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). On February 7, several Armenian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were the first to issue a statement as a response to Azerbaijani intentions.

“This action is obviously aimed at eliminating the Armenian cultural heritage of Artsakh, as a result of which the basis for the demands of the Artsakh Armenians to see MONUMENTS, page 4



The Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi shelled by the Azerbaijanis.

# Putin Again Talks To Armenian, Azeri Leaders

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan by phone February 26 as Russia continued its military assault on Ukraine.

Official Russian and Armenian sources did not mention the intensifying war in their statements on Putin’s call with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The Kremlin said they continued to discuss “practical aspects” of implementing Armenian-Azerbaijani agreements brokered by Moscow during and after the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Those include “issues of ensuring security and stability on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border,” it said without elaborating.

Pashinyan’s press office reported, for



Russian Defense Minister Shoigu, left, and Armenian Defense Minister Papikyan

its part, that the two leaders also discussed Russian-Armenian relations as well as unspecified “issues related to activities” of Russian-led alliances of former Soviet republics.

According to a separate statement issued by the Kremlin, Putin spoke to Aliyev “in continuation” of their meeting held in Moscow on February 22 two days before Russia launched a full-scale military attack on Ukraine.

At that meeting, they signed a joint declaration on “allied cooperation” between their nations. The declaration says, among other things, that Russia and Azerbaijan will avoid “any actions directed against each other” and could consider “providing each other with military assistance.”

Putin said after the talks that he and Aliyev also agreed to closely cooperate in implementing the Russian-brokered agreements on the opening of economic and transport links between Azerbaijan and Armenia and the demarcation of their long border. Moscow will keep helping Baku and Yerevan to settle their “border issues” and other “acute problems,” added the Russian leader.

The Russian ambassador to Armenia, Sergei Kopyrkin, likewise said on Saturday that Moscow will use its close ties with the two South Caucasus nations to prevent fresh fighting on the border.

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Georgii Shatilova speaking to the crowd (photo Brandon Balayan)

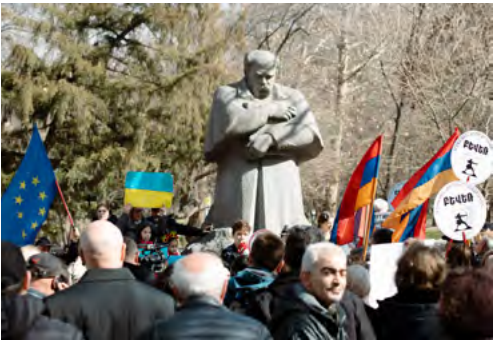
# Ukrainians Organize Yerevan Rally

By Brandon Balayan  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — The Ukrainian Embassy in Armenia initiated a rally in solidarity with Ukraine on February 27 at the Yerevan monument of Taras Shevchenko, a Ukrainian writer and ethnographer of the nineteenth century.

There were a little over 100 protestors gathered around the monument, and some took turns using a megaphone to deliver speeches. After their speeches, the speaker would say “slava Ukraini,” or glory to Ukraine, and the crowd would respond with “heroiam slava,” or glory to the heroes. One of the speakers was Georgii Shatilova, a Ukrainian national who has been in Armenia for two weeks with his wife Yelyzaveta. The airspace in Ukraine is currently closed for civilian flights, so the

Shatiloas cannot return to their families. “Fascist forces of the Russian Federation led by their fascist leader Vladimir Putin have invaded Ukraine,” Georgii said. “Peaceful citizens of Kiev, Kharkiv,



The monument of Taras Shevchenko overlooking the demonstrators of the rally (photo Brandon Balayan)

[and] Odessa are currently under Russian bombardment and this has to stop.” see UKRAINE, page 20





ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### FlyOne Armenia Resumes Flights between Yerevan and Moscow

YEREVAN (ARKA) — FlyOne Armenia airline has resumed regular direct flights between Moscow and Yerevan, the press service of the company reported. It said flights will be operated from Zvartnots International Airport in Yerevan to Vnukovo International Airport in Moscow twice a week - on Mondays and Fridays.

FlyOne Armenia Board Chairman Board Aram Ananyan said the airline plans to increase the frequency and number of flights in the near future. The airline said tickets and additional services can be purchased on its website at [www.fly-one.am](http://www.fly-one.am) or in a mobile application, as well as in the offices of all partner companies.

### Bill Condemning Shushi Declaration Not on Parliament Agenda

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — An opposition-drafted bill condemning the Shushi Declaration signed by Turkey and Azerbaijan has not been included in the agenda of the Armenian National Assembly because the ruling Civil Contract party did not participate in the vote, it was announced on March 1. The said declaration was signed by Turkey and Azerbaijan in Shushi, a Nagorno-Karabakh city that went under Azerbaijan's control during the war in fall 2020.

Gurgen Arsenyan from Civil Contract had said earlier that his party would not join the initiative, arguing that the government has already unveiled its position. According to him, the Foreign Ministry and the National Assembly "pursue a common foreign policy."

Seyran Ohanyan from the opposition Armenia bloc maintained on March 1 that the parliament's silence on the matter means the country "agrees to the defeat in the war initiated by the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem"

### Vanetsyan: Armenia Needs Diasporan Involvement, Secure Borders

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenian society has become indifferent, which is best evidenced by the high emigration rates, Member of Parliament Artur Vanetsyan, head of the opposition With Honor faction and Homeland Party, told a panel hosted by the Alternative Projects Group in Yerevan's Congress Hotel on March 1. The lawmaker lamented that the 2021 statistics show a huge number of people emigrated from Armenia, which is a direct threat to Armenia and its future. Listing the problems in the security sphere, Vanetsyan underlined that the Artsakh issue is not resolved, Azerbaijani troops have been stationed on Armenia's sovereign territory since May 2021, the borders are not determined, Armenia's relations with its allies are unclear and there are problems in relations with its international partners.

# Yerevan Worried About Wider Impact Of Western Sanctions Against Russia

By Astghik Bedevian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Friday, February 25, signaled concerns over the economic impact of Western sanctions, imposed on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, on other members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), including Armenia.

In a clear reference to fallout from Russia unprecedented military action, Pashinyan spoke of a "sharp escalation of the geopolitical situation" as he visited Kazakhstan to attend a meeting of the prime ministers of five ex-Soviet states making up the Russian-led trade bloc.

"Of course, it is obvious that sanctions actions will have a direct impact on the economic climate in the Eurasian space," he said at their joint meeting with Kazakh President Qasym-Zhomart Toqaev. "In this regard, we must discuss what operational decisions need to be made to ensure that

these negative effects are minimal or, if possible, circumvent them through appropriate decisions."

Toqaev and Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin discussed the issue during their separate talks held in Kazakhstan's capital Nur-Sultan. The Kazakh presidential press service said they spoke about "joint efforts to prevent a decrease in trade volume between the two nations amid the escalation of the situation in Ukraine and the international sanctions being imposed on Russia."

The talks between Toqaev and Mishustin were held as European Union leaders agree to impose additional sanctions on Russia which they say will have "massive and severe consequences." A day earlier, US President Joe Biden had announced another round of harsh US sanctions against Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine.

Armenia has not yet officially reacted to the large-scale Russian military at-

tack launched on Thursday and strongly condemned by the West. The Armenian Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday that Yerevan regards both Russia and Ukraine as "friendly countries" and hopes that they will resolve their conflict through "diplomatic dialogue."

Russia is not only Armenia's closest ally but also number one trading partner. According to official statistics, Russian-Armenian trade rose by almost 21 percent, to \$ 2.6 billion, last year.

Armenian exports to Russia were up by about 25 percent at \$847 million, contributing to renewed economic growth in the South Caucasus country. They could be hit hard by an ongoing weakening of the Russian ruble.

Russia is also the main source of multimillion-dollar remittances sent home by Armenians working abroad. A weaker ruble could slash the monetary value of these cash inflows.

## Ombudsman Tatoyan Will Continue Human Rights Work After Leaving Office

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Dr. Arman Tatoyan, Ombudsman or Human Rights Defender of Armenia, spoke at the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) press forum via Zoom on February 23, the last day of his six-year term in office, on Azerbaijan's Armenophobic policies and ongoing violations of human rights. Sevag Hagopian, editor of the ADL newspaper *Zartong* of Beirut, introduced the speaker to the audience.

Tatoyan was elected the Ombudsman of Armenia by the Armenian parliament in February 2016, two years before the "Velvet Revolution" and the coming to power of Nikol Pashinyan. The 40-year-old has three degrees from the law faculty of Yerevan State University (Bachelor of Law, Master of Jurisprudence, and Doctor of Law), concluding his studies there in 2007. He also obtained a master's degree in law in 2013 from the University of Pennsylvania Law School. Prior to serving as Ombudsman he was adviser to the chair of the Criminal Chamber Cassation Court of Armenia (2007), the legal officer for the South Caucasus Anti-Drug Regional Program, V Phase, at the United Nations Development Program (2010), adviser at the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Armenia (2012-13), and a member for Armenia on the Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) of the Council of Europe at various times since 2011. He has served as ad hoc judge in the European Court of Human Rights and has taught as a lecturer in several Armenian universities.

A rapid and passionate speaker, Tatoyan related that he and his office conducted fundamental investigations during and after the war concerning the Armenophobic policies of the Azerbaijani government, and published a report based on evidence. He said that it indicates that nothing has decreased since the war, with the same hostile approach based on national and religious identity.

Tatoyan stated the religious element of this enmity has increased. For example, he said that Armenian war captives were tortured partly on a religious basis. When they saw a cross tattooed on the hand of a captive, they burnt it off. Whoever was wearing a cross was killed. Whoever was baptized was treated more severely. In one case, Azerbaijanis burned captives' feet, forcing them to accept Islam.

Tatoyan observed that the president of Azerbaijan last September called upon the Muslim world basically for revenge, accusing Armenians of Islamophobia and Azerbaijan-phobia. Yet, he said, this accusation is false. In his report, he traced good relations of Armenians with Muslims back to the 7th century and related the good relations today of Armenians in many predominantly Muslim countries.

Though on the one hand, Armenia has preserved the Iranian Blue Mosque, which operates in Yerevan, and Armenians renovated several mosques in Shushi, Tatoyan said, the Baku Armenian Church has been completely desecrated and many Armenian churches are being destroyed by Azerbaijan after the 2020 war. Furthermore, when two Azerbaijani representatives recently visited Yerevan, they went to the Blue Mosque, and wrote something to the effect that we have come to the Blue Mosque on our historic Azerbaijani land and hope that the true owners will come in the future.

Armenophobia is part of Azerbaijani policies, Tatoyan continued, and ever-present in the realms of education, culture and even sport like a red thread. Tatoyan said that this is one of the means the government uses to keep power. It is a classic way of diverting domestic attention to an external enemy. Yet, he said that this policy is not only dangerous for Armenians but also for Azerbaijanis. The two people live together in various countries like France, the United States and Russia, and the inculcation of hostility led to mass attacks during the 2020 Artsakh war by Azerbaijanis and Turks on Armenians abroad. Tatoyan said that whenever he met ambassadors of these countries, he pointed out that Azerbaijan will continue to play with the stability of those countries by organizing such attacks.

In Artsakh and the Azerbaijani border with Armenia, Tatoyan said Azerbaijan is more aggressive, directly killing people. Azerbaijani soldiers make life very difficult for Armenian villagers near their borders with periodic shooting. For example, he said that in Gegharkunik Province, some villages do not have their own sources of water and have to go on foot with pails to nearby villages to bring water back, or pay others with vehicles to bring them water. The constant shooting makes this difficult. Azerbaijani soldiers enter people's homes and their fields and lands. They view with video cameras the comings and goings of

the Armenian villagers.

Tatoyan proclaimed that the policy conducted by the Armenian state in this respect is wrong. It does not take into account this evidence and give it priority. Instead, as he proclaims in conferences, the Armenians must have guarantees for their rights under these hostile conditions, especially if the borders are opened.

Tatoyan gleefully related that he informed the Azerbaijani government that very day that he had bad news for it: he is going to continue his work even after leaving office. He said that he knows the Azerbaijanis follow him closely and he thought they got very upset.

He emphasized that the unity of Armenia, Artsakh and the Armenian diaspora was very important. The diaspora both provides platforms throughout the world for Armenia to have a voice and also participates in the development of the country. Tatoyan spoke in the question period in appreciation of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party press throughout the world and said he had seen how useful it has been.

He pointed out that time works against the Armenians, with Azerbaijan daily using international companies to spread the idea that Artsakh is a domestic matter for Azerbaijan, while working to annihilate Armenian identity in the areas they occupy.

When asked by an audience member what the true number of Armenian war captives was, he replied that officially the Azerbaijani government has said it is 36 or 38, but he thinks the number must be much higher. However, no one really knows, he said, because it has been lying. The Azerbaijan government does not publish how many captives it has so it can continue to keep them in order to conduct trades or deals for political and military considerations, such as the recent Hungarian mediation returning several captives to the Armenians.

Azg newspaper editor Hakob Avedikian proposed the creation of a platform allowing the quick transmission of information among Armenia, Artsakh and the diaspora in a coordinated and professional manner. Tatoyan found this interesting and said he himself had in mind the creation of such a platform, perhaps something in the manner of the Hayastan All Armenian Fund. He promised to think more in this direction, while continuing the work of collecting evidence relating to human rights and visiting various Armenian provinces for this purpose.





## ARMENIA

# Azerbaijanis Conduct Psychological and Physical Attacks against Khramort Village, Artsakh

By Gevorg Gulyumyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — A new example of Azerbaijani aggression against Armenians took place on February 26 at the village of Khramort in Artsakh. This village of Khramort has become a border post after the 2020 Artsakh war, with Azerbaijani positions located right next to it. Azerbaijanis had on a number of occasions fired at the civilians in Khramort, as previously reported in the *Mirror-Spectator*.

This time, they approached the village, threatening the villagers carrying out farm work by demanding in the Armenian language that they leave the village or submit to them since it is “Azerbaijani territory and the laws are regulated by Baku.” Here is the text of their statement.

“You are on the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Any action carried out here is regulated by the laws of Azerbaijan. Everything you do without official permission is illegal. The agricultural work you are currently carrying out is illegal. Do not prepare for war and do not try to create a border in our territory. If you want to stay and live here, obey the laws of Azerbaijan. For your safety, we demand you stop working and leave the area immediately. Otherwise force will be used against you. The responsibility for the losses will fall on you. Do not endanger your and your family members’ lives. Leave the area, leave the area.”

What has happened is blatant terrorism, a gross violation of human rights. International organizations must not only make a clear assessment of this, but also take measures to prevent terrorism.

“The recent provocation by Azerbaijan against the population of the village of Khramort is a classic example of psychological warfare, which was obviously prepared in Baku,” said military expert Vladimir Harutyunyan to Artsakhpres, referring to the statements made by Azerbaijanis in lit-



Khramort Village

erary Armenian over a loudspeaker that the village is Azerbaijani territory and that the locals should leave it.

Artsakh Human Rights Defender Gegham Stepanyan also referred to the incident, stating that a stunned atmosphere prevails in the village. He said: “It is already the third day that the Azerbaijani side, positioned near the community and located on a hill 500 meters from its habitable part, by means of loudspeakers and with the threat of the use of force issues ‘calls’ to the peaceful inhabitants of the village to abandon the village. This is with the clear intent to intimidating the residents of the Khramort community of Askeran region, create an atmosphere of fear in the village and empty the village of Armenians. The collected evidence proves that the ongoing Azerbaijani actions to intimidate the population of the village are carried out under the specially planned direct coordination of

the Azerbaijani leadership. These are actions directed against the psychological inviolability of the people of Artsakh, as evidenced by the fact that the so-called ‘calls and appeals’ are videotaped and spread on social networks during the 44-day war and after which via Azerbaijani propaganda channels.

“It is clear from the content of the calls that the Azerbaijani side is threatening to use force against the civilians of the Khramort community with the aim of depriving them of their own homeland, the right to live in peace and security, and to lead a normal life with decent work. Among the more than 300 peaceful inhabitants living in the community, there are more than 80 children of preschool and school age, members of the elderly and other psychologically vulnerable groups. The normal life of the village is paralyzed. People have mainly stopped agricultural work, which is

the main means of livelihood for civilians.

This is due to the atmosphere of tolerance, leaving Azerbaijan unpunished for its criminal acts, under which conditions the Azerbaijani side uses new methods and means to advance its Armenophobic and terrorist policy.

In order to ensure the security of the residents of the community and their physical and psychological inviolability, it is very necessary that additional security measures be taken both by the security bodies of Artsakh and by the representatives of the Russian peacekeeping troops. In particular, the constant presence of a group of Russian peacekeepers in the community can increase the sense of security among the community residents, promote the normal life of the civilian population in the community.”

Political scientist Hrant Melik-Shahnazaryan thinks that what is happening is also connected with the Russian-Ukrainian war. He declared: “There are serious risks in our region. There will be many provocations. Everything in the region is heating up and it cannot be ruled out that clashes may take place here too. Of course, we are not the target. The goal is to turn Russia’s life into a hell. However, that does not make our situation any calmer. On the contrary, everything becomes more complicated. Therefore, it is necessary to be prepared for the worst-case scenarios.”

Khramort village head Zorik Abrahamyan said to the *Mirror-Spectator*: “I told the media yesterday that the situation here is serious. I am repeating myself, but since it is for a media outlet abroad, I want to say once again that Azerbaijan is carrying out terrorism against us. All our rights have been violated, people are terrorized. It is no secret to us that if possible, the Azerbaijanis will attack and massacre peaceful civilians. I have nothing more to say. Everything is clear. We are subjected to Turkish-Azerbaijani terrorism.”

## Vigen Khachatryan – AR Startup and NGO Cofounder, Educator, and Community Leader

By Cristopher Patvakanian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Creating an augmented reality startup, teaching more than 100 students robotics, and founding an NGO could all on their own be full time jobs — but not for Vigen Khachatryan. At the age of just 19 years old, the proud native of Talin, Armenia has somehow managed to accomplish all three feats and even more thus far in his life. Vigen describes himself as “A big dreamer, and a dreamer who turns his dreams into reality”, and his accomplishments to that end prove his point.

Khachatryan’s journey into the tech world began when he attended [Armath Engineering Laboratories](#) (Armath for short), an interactive after-school program of classes, competitions, and camps beyond in the various sciences. His focus was on robotics, and though initially the skeptic of his friend group, ended up becoming the most passionate of them all. However, Vigen’s activity went far beyond taking classes - when teachers were absent, he stepped in and substituted for them at the age of 14. Eventually became a group leader for Armath for the entire marz (region) at 16 years old. And Vigen’s lessons were for the entire school, which entailed teaching 118



Vigen Khachatryan

students at a time some days.

After his experiences in Armath, namely attending events like the [Digitech Expo](#), Khachatryan and his peers were inspired to venture more seriously into the informational technology sector by creating their own augmented reality (AR) app. And that is how his startup, [TakeAR](#), was created. TakeAR is a phone application that allows users to scan images and produce a 3D digital model of that image. Vigen and his

cofounder envisioned the tool to be used in school textbooks to provide students with a holistic, engaging image. Additionally, they’ve created 3D models of ruins of Armenian churches based on historic sketches. By showing how churches looked in their original form, they hope to preserve cultural heritage and encourage people to visit the sites.

Vigen’s next goal is to create AR laboratories such that students in schools which may not have the proper facilities can still participate through a virtual lab environment. Thus far Khachatryan noted there was some interest from the government, but he has not had the opportunity to collaborate.

In addition to TakeAR and teaching at Armath, Vigen is also a cofounder of the [Lyupin NGO](#), which empowers young adults through volunteering, civic leadership, and education programs. Through various grants, Vigen and other volunteers from Lyupin created an “InfoTun” or “Information House,” where youth can undergo various personal development classes. They also have plans to create a tourism center where youth can also learn about entrepreneurship and business. In addition, Lyupin has a cultural component to their mission. One recent project was creating recordings of elderly men and women in villages to

preserve their non-physical culture, such as local songs, stories, phrases and poems which might have otherwise been lost.

Looking back at all he’s accomplished thus far, Vigen thinks his leadership skills and passions come from a deep rooted desire to be helpful and solve problems he noticed in his community. And as a result of being so engaged, Khachatryan’s responsibilities and network expanded, and he formed connections beyond Talin to become the more well-rounded and knowledgeable young man he is today.

“There’s no question that you cannot just accommodate to the problems of society — as Armenians we must feel and take on that social responsibility and change it. If not us, then who else will build our future?” In his life, Khachatryan aims to eventually work on bigger, worldwide issues, and through building solutions, turn Armenia into a country with substantial contributions to global society.

( This is Part IV 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.)





## ARMENIA

# Azerbaijan to Eliminate Armenian Cultural Heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh

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live on their land and the protection of their rights will be questioned,” they announced.

On December 7, 2021, the UN International Court of Justice announced its decision on Armenia’s claim against Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan was obliged to take necessary measures to prevent and punish all acts of vandalism and desecration committed against the Armenian cultural heritage, including churches, other religious places, monuments and graves. However, the Azerbaijani government’s actions violate the UN declaration.

In the light of recent news that UNESCO will soon send a delegation to Nagorno-Karabakh, the issue of protecting the Armenian heritage has become relevant again.

“We continue working to send a UNESCO Independent Technical Mission within the framework of the 1954 Convention. We hope that it will be possible soon, but for the moment, the necessary conditions are not in place. So discussions are still ongoing,” said Thomas Mallard, press officer at UNESCO, to Public Radio of Armenia.

Armine Hayrapetyan, the director of the Artsakh State Department of Historic Environment Protection, emphasized that the Azerbaijani tendency of desecrating Armenian sites in Nagorno-Karabakh had been going on for many decades.

“Azerbaijan resolutely pursues its cultural policy of de-Armenianization of historical and cultural heritage in Artsakh which was initiated back in the Soviet times,” she said. “Armenian churches in the lists of the Council of Ministers of Culture of Azerbaijan were already represented as Albanian.”

Hayrapetyan assured that Azerbaijan’s long-term goal is erasing all the traces of Armenian presence in Artsakh.

“Azerbaijan is creating a commission which will consist of Azerbaijani and international members, and we can guess that there will be foreign experts whom they succeeded to corrupt,” Hayrapetyan said, adding, “it gives them the freedom to distort Armenian cultural sites to ‘retore the histor-



Zoravor Surb Astvatsatsin completely destroyed in Mekhakavan (Jabrail)

ical justice.”

In the aftermath of the 2020 war, the Artsakh Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the Foreign Ministry, attempted to reach out to UNESCO, the UN Office, and the French Senate with the request of reviewing the Azerbaijani attitude towards the Armenian monuments and churches in Nagorno-Karabakh, but they got no response. Azerbaijan rejected UNESCO’s previous attempts to inspect the area. (Azerbaijan’s First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva is a Goodwill Ambassador with UNESCO.)

Now Armenia is anticipating the next UNESCO visit, which will allow them to involve local experts in their group to maintain a balance of opinions.

In response to the Armenian criticism,

Azerbaijani Ministry of Culture announced that “Azerbaijan has always been respectful for its historical and cultural heritage, regardless of religious and ethnic state. Restoration of mosques along with two Christian churches in Shusha can be considered a vivid example of this.”

However, Azerbaijani media users keep sharing up-to-date records of new destructed sites or information on the Albanian pilgrimages to Armenian churches.

“The most frustrating thing is that Robert Mobili, the head of Albanian-Udi community in Azerbaijan, claims that Armenians distorted the Albanian-Udi churches and located *khachkars* to falsify their origins,” stated Hayrapetyan.

According to data provided by the Art-

sakh State Department of Historic Environment Protection, there is adequate evidence of destroyed cultural heritage in the villages of Talish, Azokh, Drakhtik, Mokhrenes, Mataghis, Aknaghbyur, Sghnakh, Hin Tagher, and others. The first Nagorno-Karabakh War and World War II memorials are demolished more actively. The number of destroyed *khachkars* and graves is also growing.

“The tendency towards vandalism in villages makes us assume that it is implemented in most villages despite the lack of facts and proofs,” said Hayrapetyan.

The department initiated its struggle to preserve the cultural heritage and raise awareness about the Armenian sites through social media. The Artsakh Monuments page on Facebook showcases the monuments from occupied territories of Artsakh with a particular focus on those targeted by Azerbaijan and Albanians. On February 15, their website went live to strengthen the Armenian arsenal on the information war.

Sergey Shahverdyan, the chairman of the Public Council for the Protection of the Cultural Heritage of Artsakh, sees the solution in mobilizing all the government resources, including propaganda, to counter Azerbaijan’s claims towards the cultural and historical sites in Nagorno-Karabakh.

“We should publicly criticize each act of vandalism and keep addressing to the UNESCO and other organizations with the demand to take practical measures,” he said.

Shahverdyan also emphasized that it’s essential to implement an expert evaluation of the exhibits left in museums and private collections to understand the precise value of artworks now under Azerbaijani control. Regarding the churches in Shushi, Shahverdyan suggested preparing brochures, video materials, presentations to show that the churches of Ghazanchetsots and Kanach Zham in Shushi are Armenian.

“Azerbaijan continues to insist on the Orthodox origin of Kanach Zham and Ghazanchetsots, unlike all the others, which it plans to de-Armenianize through the so-called ‘Albanization,’” Shahverdyan said.

## Putin Again Talks To Armenian, Azeri Leaders

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“And of course, it is important for us that Armenia, the Armenian people feel safe,” Kopyrkin told the Armenpress news agency. “The guarantee for this is our allied relations and our countries’ policy to deepen and strengthen them.”

In their latest phone call, Aliyev and Putin also discussed the dramatic developments in Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said earlier on Saturday that Aliyev and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan have offered to help organize talks between Russia and Ukraine. Although Zelenskyy welcomed the offer, hopes for an immediate move toward talks appeared dim.

### Defense Minister Visit

Defense Minister Suren Papikyan reportedly reaffirmed Armenia’s commitment to closer military ties with Russia and spoke of “new challenges and threats” facing the two allied countries as met with his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu in Moscow on Friday.

“I can assure you that I will do my best

to further develop Russian-Armenian defense cooperation,” the Russian Defense Ministry quoted him as telling Shoigu at the start of their talks.

Papikyan, who was appointed as defense minister in November, began his first visit to Russia in his current capacity on February 24, just hours after the Russian military launched a large-scale attack on Ukraine condemned by the West.

According to the Russian Ministry of Defense, Papikyan said Moscow and Yerevan have to constantly deal with “new challenges and threats.”

“It’s obvious that all of these challenges and threats facing our states can only be overcome by acting jointly,” he said.

A statement issued by the Armenian Defense Minister said the two ministers discussed Russian-Armenian military cooperation as well as “international and regional security issues.” It said they praised Russian efforts to help “stabilize the military-political situation” in the South Caucasus.

“The discussions also touched upon the ongoing reforms and modernization of the

Armenian Armed Forces,” the statement added.

Meeting with Papikyan’s predecessor Arshak Karapetian in Moscow last August, Shoigu said Moscow will continue to help Yerevan reform, rearm and modernize the Armenian army.

Papikyan met with Shoigu two days after Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev signed in the Kremlin a joint declaration on “allied cooperation” between their nations.

The declaration says, among other things, that Russia and Azerbaijan will avoid “any actions directed against each other” and could consider “providing each other with military assistance.”

### EU Visas Waived

In further news related to the war, the European Union has waived its visa requirements for Armenian citizens fleeing the intensifying fighting in Ukraine, according to Armenia’s Foreign Ministry.

The ministry announced on February 26 announced that they do not need Schengen visas to enter Ukraine’s EU neighbors —

Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania — from the embattled country invaded by Russia. The visa waiver is meant for those Armenians who want to return to Armenia, it said in a statement.

“Other options for evacuating them from Ukraine are also being considered,” the statement said. “At the same time, we inform that the Republic of Armenia is ready to receive our compatriots, their family members, as well as other refugees.”

The Foreign Ministry also released emergency phone numbers of the Armenian embassy in Kyiv and consulates in the Ukrainian Black Sea city of Odessa and Rostov-on-Don in southern Russia.

The Armenian diplomatic missions in Ukraine continued to operate even after Russia launched the full-scale military attack on February 24. Nor did Yerevan urge Armenian citizens to leave the country.

All flights between Armenia and Ukraine were cancelled immediately after the start of the Russian invasion.

Ukraine is officially home to some 120,000 ethnic Armenians. According to leaders of the Armenian community there, their actual number is much larger and only half of them are Ukrainian citizens.





## INTERNATIONAL

# An Overview Of Armenians In Ukraine

By Hagop Vartivarian

*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

MAHWAH, N.J. — According to the official Ukrainian census, 99,894 Armenians were permanently settled in Ukraine in 2001, not counting the large number of workers coming from Armenia and other republics to earn their livelihood. As a result of the precarious political situation in the Caucasus region in the post-Soviet period, the country's Armenian population has almost doubled by now, again not including a very large number of temporary Armenian immigrant laborers. Today, the Armenians of Ukraine compose the fifth largest Armenian diaspora community in the world.

## Historical Overview

Armenians were first mentioned in Ukraine during the Kievan Rus period. In the tenth century, individual Armenian merchants and craftsmen worked in the palaces of various Ruthenian princes. However, large numbers of Armenian immigrants fled the Seljuk invasions and settled in southwestern Ukraine in the 11th century after the fall of the capital Ani, generally in the areas of Caffa (Feodosia), Sudak and Solkat in the Crimean peninsula. As a result, the peninsula began to be called Arminia Maritima [Maritime Armenia]. This number is recorded as having increased in the 12th-15th centuries after the conquest of the Mongol tribes. A smaller number of Armenian immigrants settled in central Ukraine, including Kiev, as well as in the western part of the country, near Potolia and Kalijina, near the city of Lviv, which in 1267 became the headquarters of the Armenian Church.

At the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the Armenian population migrated from Crimea to the Polish-Ukrainian border, it brought with it the Armeno-Kipchak language, which until the 16th and 17th centuries was used within the Armenian communities of Lviv and Kamianets-Potilsk, which today is called Ukraine.

After the fall of Crimea to Ottoman Turkey in 1475, the Armenians of Crimea again took up the staff of exile and left Crimea, settling in the northwest of the country, where there was already a flourishing national life. The community gradually became integrated into the local Polish population, while maintaining the Armenian Catholic Church.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Crimea fell under the influence of the Russian Empire, which encouraged the Crimean Armenians to settle in Russia and large numbers of Armenians moved to Rostov-on-Don. Twenty years later, the Russians occupied the peninsula and a large number of new immigrant Turkish-Armenians settled there and formed new colonies.

During World War II, in 1944, Armenians, Greeks, Bulgarians and Tatars were deported from Crimea as "anti-Soviet" elements.



The visit of Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II

It was not until the 1960s that they were allowed to return to their homeland. During the Soviet era, Armenians came with other nationalities of Soviet rule to work in heavy industry factories in the eastern part of Ukraine.

## Armenians of Ukraine Today

The largest number of Armenians living in Ukraine is concentrated in the Donetsk Oblast – about 16,000 Armenians. There are Armenian communities in Dnipro, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kiev,



Lviv's Armenian cathedral

Luhansk, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhia and Odessa, where the great Ukrainian-Armenian artist Sargis Ortyan spent most of his life. The city of Lviv is considered to be the "spiritual center" of the Armenians, becoming the headquarters of dioceses of the Armenian Catholic and Armenian Apostolic Churches. However, after the Second World War, the Catholic Church did not use its church there, which remained under the authority of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Armenians continued to constitute a historical presence in Crimea until 2014, when the Russians occupied the peninsula. Nine thousand Armenians make up 0.43 percent of the population of the region and are concentrated in large provinces such as Sevastopol. It should be noted that the great sea painter Hovhannes Aivazovsky lived and created in the city of Feodosia in the Crimean peninsula. Half of the Armenians are Russian-speaking, 43 percent are Armenian-speaking and the remaining 7 percent are Ukrainian-speaking.

## The History of the Armenian Church of Lviv

St. Mariam is a small Armenian church built in 1363-1370 with the help of merchants from Caffa. It is said that it was built in the style of Ani Cathedral. In 1437 it was enlarged with different sections, but today only the southern part remains. After the fire of

the city in 1527 left it in ruins, a new church was built in 1571 with a new stone structure. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century until 1945, the church was owned by the Armenian Catholic leadership of Lviv. During the Soviet era, the Armenian Catholic Church experienced difficulties.

Prior to the visit of Pope John Paul II, the local Ukrainian authorities handed over the cathedral to the Armenian Apostolic Church, on the condition that the Armenian Catholic and Apostolic Churches use it as a place of worship. The Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church was established in 1997 in Lviv.

On May 18, 2003, the cathedral was re-consecrated by Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II. The ceremony was attended by the Speaker of the Armenian National Assembly Armen Khachatryan, former President of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk, the notables of the Armenian community of Ukraine, French-Armenian singer Charles Aznavour and his son, actor Armen Jigarkhanyan, and the Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Ukraine Hrachya Silvanyan, as well as the representative of the Patriarch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Archbishop Augustin (Markevich).

The church has been undergoing renovations since 2009. Poland has been financially helpful to the renovation work conducted under Polish-Ukrainian supervision.

(Translated from the original Armenian.)

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## Armenian Community Members Joining Ukraine Defense

KYIV (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Armenian community of Ukraine has condemned Russia's military aggression, maintaining that Armenians have been living in Ukraine since the 10th century and describing the country as their homeland.

"Innocent people who have become victims of Russia's aggression are dying today. Many of our fellow nationals have taken up arms and are standing with their Ukrainian counterparts in defense of their cities and villages. Every day the Armenians fill up the ranks of defense," the community said in a statement on February 28.

"We, the Armenians of Ukraine, oppose the military aggression of the Russian Federation against our country and condemn the ongoing occupation. Now, side by side with the Ukrainian people, we are defending our cities, homes and loved ones."

In the statement, the Armenians also appealed to the international community with a request to use all mechanisms to stop the aggression against Ukraine.

## Levon Aronian Advances to 4th Spot in FIDE Rankings

PARIS (Panorama.am) — The International Chess Federation (FIDE) rating list for March 2022 is out. Armenian GM Levon Aronian, who now represents the U.S., gained 13 points from the Berlin FIDE Grand Prix chess tournament, which enabled him to rise to the fourth place with 2,785 points.

Norway's Magnus Carlsen tops the ratings (2,864), followed by France's Alireza Firouzja (2,804) and China's Ding Liren (2,799).

American GM Fabiano Caruana (2,781) is ranked fifth on the FIDE list.

## Armenian FM Discusses POWs with UN Human Rights Commissioner

GENEVA (Public Radio of Armenia) — On the sidelines of the 49th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan met with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michel Bachelet on March 1.

The two sides highly commended Armenia's close cooperation with the UN, particularly with the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Mirzoyan noted that this year is symbolic; it marks the 30th anniversary of Armenia's accession to the UN.

In this regard, he stressed that Armenia has established itself as a responsible and reliable partner of the international community and has consistently contributed to the promotion of multilateralism and the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the world.



# Community News

## Rep. Schiff Calls For Unconditional Release of Remaining Armenian POWs

WASHINGTON — US Congressman Adam Schiff has condemned Azerbaijani attacks on Armenians in Sumgait (1988) and Baku (2000) and ongoing aggression against Armenia and Artsakh, in a statement posted on his Facebook page on March 1.

“Yesterday, we marked the 34th anniversary of the Sumgait and Baku pogroms. Beginning on February 27, 1988, and for three days following, Azerbaijani mobs assaulted and killed Armenians - leaving hundreds of civilians dead and injured and women and girls were raped. Some victims were thrown from windows and burned alive. Tens of thousands were forced to flee.

After two years, it was estimated that only 40,000 of the 250,000 Armenian residents of Baku remained in Azerbaijan. On January 13, 1990, organized Azerbaijani mobs turned on them, too, killing hundreds and injuring many more.

The pogroms came as a direct result of years of vicious, racist anti-Armenian propaganda by Azerbaijani authorities, dehumanizing the Armenian residents of Azerbaijan and laying the groundwork for mass violence. Azerbaijani authorities made little effort to punish those responsible, instead attempting to cover up the atrocities and deny the government’s role in instigating the attacks.

As we reflect on yesterday’s anniversary, we honor the victims of this ghastly injustice and pledge to speak out against hatred so that history will not repeat itself. But tragically, more than three decades later, that is exactly what has happened. Beginning on September 27, 2020, and over 44 days, Azerbaijani forces once again targeted and murdered innocent Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, also known as Artsakh, and displaced tens of thousands more. Today, Azerbaijani aggression against the people of Armenia and Artsakh continues. Armenian soldiers are still illegally detained and subject to torture while thousands of civilians still live in danger. Religious and cultural Armenian sites that have fallen under Azerbaijani control are under constant threat.

These are the horrific consequences when aggression and hatred grow unchecked – and it is why, whether these crimes against humanity occurred one year, thirty years, or a hundred years ago, we can never allow them to go unrecognized. More than that, it is why the United States must fully step into its role as a defender of democracy and peace around the world. We must not relent in our calls for the safe and unconditional release of the remaining Armenian prisoners of war and captured civilians, for the end of U.S. assistance to the Aliyev regime, and for stronger efforts to support democracy in Armenia and a free, independent Artsakh.

So let us pause to remember those who suffered in the atrocities of the Sumgait and Baku programs. But let us also recommit ourselves and our nation to doing everything we can, today, to bring liberation to our Armenian brothers and sisters abroad, once and for all.”



A glimpse of some of the historic photos and documents which make up the church archives

## Philly Church Sets Example By Preserving Archives

By Paul Vartan Sookiasian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WYNNWOOD, Penn. — “A nation that forgets its past has no future.” This quote, often attributed to Sir Winston Churchill, serves as the inspiration and guiding force for a group of hard-working volunteers who are giving of themselves to preserve the past.

The Archives Committee of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church, located in Wynnwood, outside Philadelphia, has been working to collect and organize documents, images, and artifacts from the church’s history. The church has a long history to preserve, with its name dating to the very first sanctuary purchased by the city’s Armenians in 1913. As the community grew, St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church was officially chartered in 1924 to serve the city’s western region and has moved multiple times before settling at its Wynnwood home in 1963.

Being such an old parish, its archives encompass the early generations of Armenian immigration to America. Even its setting is historic, as the church occupies the 1885-built Ballytore Castle, one of the iconic mansions of Philadelphia’s famed “Main Line.” Over the decades, the mansion’s tower had become a repository for all manner of the church’s papers and items. Curious about what it might hold, one summer day in 2015 Alma Alabilikian and Linda Babikian took a peek inside with the notion of organizing it into an archive. What they found was a room stacked floor to ceiling full of containers. Donning rubber gloves, they undertook the herculean task of sorting everything over the next five weeks, salvaging what they could from time-damaged materials.

Very Rev. Fr. Oshagan Gulgulian, pastor, suggested using the tower space as an archive, and by the next spring a committee of volunteers was formed. Alabilikian’s enthusiasm for the project led her to consult archivists from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Arcadia University and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and she took on the role of committee chair. Babikian adapted the suggested archival procedures to create a database for incoming documents and information. They were joined by see ARCHIVES, page 10



From left, seated: Steven Barsamian, Linda Babikian, V. Rev. Fr. Oshagan Gulgulian (pastor), Alma Alabilikian, Raffi Berberian; from left, standing: Elizabeth Barsamian, Haig Geovjian, Pauline Babikian, Peter Paone, Sonia Garabedian (Carol Keosayan, absent)

## ‘New Trends in Genocide Studies’ Topic of Talk by Dr. Suren Manukyan

FRESNO — Dr. Suren Manukyan will present an in-person lecture titled “New Trends in Genocide Studies” on Tuesday, March 8, at 7 p.m., in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, Room 191, on the Fresno State campus.

The presentation is part of the Spring Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program. The Leon S. Peters Foundation is a co-sponsor of the event.

Forty years after the genesis of genocide studies, it has transformed from a topic of interest of a small group of individuals into a field that involves hundreds of scholars and thousands of students and is one of the most dynamic and growing academic fields of social sciences.

Books about genocide are published in the best publishing houses, journals, textbooks, encyclopedias, readers, textbooks bibliographies appear permanently, seminars, round tables, conferences, websites, research centers, and international organizations embrace the field. Numerous universities offer courses on the topic. Several theoretical problems are debated and reconsidered, and new approaches are adopted.

Large macro-histories, the basis of genocide studies, are being replaced by micro-histories, which allow a shift from big narratives to more profound local studies. The analysis of colonial genocides is acquiring a new reevaluation. The crucial question remains on the prediction and prevention of genocide. These and other trends of modern genocide studies will be discussed in the presentation.

Manukyan was the Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at Fresno State for the Fall 2021 semester. He is the head of the UNESCO Chair on Prevention of Genocide and Other Atrocity Crimes at Yerevan State University and Head of the Department of Comparative Genocide Studies at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (Yerevan). He is also a visiting lecturer at the American University of Armenia. He has been a Fulbright Scholar at the Center for the Study of Genocide and Human Rights at the Rutgers University in New Jersey.

The lecture is free and open to the public. Free parking is available in Fresno State Lots P6 and P5, near the University Business Center, Fresno State. Parking permits are required and a free parking code is available through the Armenian Studies Program.

For more information about the lecture visit [www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies](http://www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies).



Dr. Suren Manukyan





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Lecture on Armenian Manuscripts in LA's Getty Museum

By Harry Kezelian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BELMONT / LOS ANGELES — The vibrant artistry and rich history of medieval Armenian manuscripts continue to retain the power to enthrall Armenians and non-Armenians alike, many centuries after their creation.

That seemed to be the theme of last week's talk by Dr. Elizabeth Morrison of the J. Paul Getty museum in Los Angeles, sponsored by the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), in Belmont.

Morrison is the senior curator of manuscripts at the Getty, and though her specialty is in early French and Flemish manuscripts, she is enthusiastic about sharing the art and history inherent in the Armenian manuscripts which reside in the museum.

The talk, which took place on February 15, was hosted by NAASR's Marc Mamigonian along with Maggie Mangasarian Goschin of the Ararat-Eskijian Museum (LA) and NAASR's new executive director, Silva Sedrakian.

After opening remarks by Goschin and Sedrakian, Mamigonian introduced the main speaker, Morrison.

## The Getty Collection

The Getty Museum was formed from the art collection of oil magnate J. Paul Getty in accordance with a trust after his death. Getty primarily collected Greek and Roman antiquities and Renaissance European paintings, Morrison related. However, since the board of trustees desired to tell a more complete history of painting from Antiquity to the 19th century, the Ludwig collection was acquired in 1983. At the time, Peter and Irene Ludwig of Aachen,

known as the *Zeytun Gospels*.

Without going into too much detail, the *Zeytun Gospels*, dating to the Cilician period, came into the possession of an Armenian family from Marash around the time of the Genocide. A family member removed some of the illuminated pages and kept them within the family in the Boston area for about 90 years, when they came to the attention of art historians and were purchased by the Getty Museum from the family. Later, the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Church sued the museum for ownership, claiming the pages belonged to the Catholicosate of Cilicia. The museum agreed to acknowledge the Catholicosate's ownership of the pages and the Catholicosate donated the pages back to the museum. (The original manuscript, minus these "lost pages" is in the Matenadaran in Yerevan, Armenia.)

The manuscripts that the Getty has in its collection date from the 13th century to the 17th century. Morrison noted that Armenians in the Near East continued to create manuscripts in the 17th century and in some cases as late as the 18th century, at a time when Europe had shifted completely to printed books. (Manuscripts, being painstakingly hand-written and delicately hand-painted books, generally produced on parchment made from animal skin, served as the primary form of communication of the written word throughout the ancient and medieval period until the print revolution of the 15th century.)

## The Armenian Michelangelo

The first examples that Morrison showed were a series of Canon Tables from the *Zeytun Gospels* (these were the famous "lost pages"). The original manuscript was created in 1256 in Hromkla, then the seat of the Catholicosate of All Armenians. The artist, Toros Roslin, is often referred to as "the Michelangelo of Armenia," noted Morrison. Roslin is undoubtedly the most famous name in the history of Armenian manuscript art. The manuscript was created under the auspices of Catholicos Constantine I and apparently for his own use.

Morrison noted that Roslin's artistry is "absolutely superb" and "every detail is thought out and executed." The lush colors and exquisite designs of the illuminations are evident from the available images. The lecturer noted that to look at these in person, however, is a different experience. For one thing, the gold leaf which is heavily used in these creations reflects light differently from different angles, something that can't be seen in a photograph. Morrison related how gold leaf, which is actual gold that is hammered extremely thin, can be hard to work with. Medieval scribes would actually wipe a brush across their forehead to pick up oil, and then pick up the pieces of gold leaf with the tip of the brush to put them in place. The areas where gold leaf was to be placed had been painted with glue so that the gold would stick. This is why gold leaf was actually the first thing to be applied after the text, then came the painting.

Gospel books were the most commonly produced type of manuscript in Medieval

Armenia, says Morrison, and often included a table of cross-references (known as Canon Tables), which existed not just as an index to the stories in each gospel, but to show that the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) were interrelated and told the same story. Nevertheless, such an index was probably somewhat boring even to medieval monks, and so the artist Roslin created detailed illustrations to decorate these pages, combining static architectural elements with depictions of flora and fauna in designs that had "incredible vivacity and style," in Morrison's words. Oftentimes the illustrations on two facing pages are almost identical, yet the birds which are a part of the composition may be positioned differently, which gives the illusion of movement when one looks from page to page.

The *Zeytun Gospels* were created in the year 1256 at the castle of Hromkla, on the Euphrates River directly west of Urfa. Hromkla had been a possession of a European Crusader whose Armenian wife deeded it to the church after his demise. It became the seat of the Catholicos from 1149 to 1292. Morrison also noted that Toros Roslin likely derived his unusual last name (for an Armenian) to crusader influence, speculating that he may have had a European father. His works were studied by later Armenian manuscript painters for whom he became an icon.

## 'The Sinful Petros'

Morrison next showed a less extravagant manuscript from the 14th century, which was produced by a scribe named Petros in a region to the north of Lake Van. This manuscript was made on paper rather than parchment and features artwork that is nowhere near as lush as that of Toros Roslin, however it shows some interesting features. Morrison suggests that while only the wealthy could afford manuscripts, this one probably belonged to a family in the lower echelon of the upper class.

At the beginning of the manuscript, the Life of Christ is depicted in pictures, which are done in a bit of a primitive style. (The student of Armenian history will note that the Lake Van region had been bereft of Armenian rule for about 300 years at this point, and the area was not necessarily prospering due to trade, either.) The typical scenes such as the Nativity, Crucifixion, and Resurrection are shown, though there are some features of interest to scholars. The most interesting picture depicts Petros handing the quill and inkpot, tools of his trade, to his student. The image symbolically depicts the passing of the Armenian manuscript tradition from one generation to the next, in this case, both bearded and hooded *vartabeds* (celibate priests). Perhaps even more interesting, are the two other figures depicted below — younger students of Petros, not in clerical garb who are depicted in the process of paper-making. The arduous process of polishing with large glass cylinders was the final step in the manufacture of paper. Petros, who in traditional monastic humility refers to himself as "the Sinful Petros," not only depicts his students and thanks them for their service, but even gives them haloes!

The next manuscript, also a gospel book, was done by an artist named Ghukas in the 16th century. Again made of paper and done in a simple style, the illustrations in this manuscript are also of great interest. One page depicts figures ascending from hell into heaven in an iconographic image known as "the way to eternal life." Demons are shown attempting to ensnare the good souls with hooks and drag them to the mouth of a dragon, representing hell, how-

ever angels that are on guard are shown battling off these demons with swords to ensure the safe ascent to heaven. Ghukas also shows the very human side of the manuscript artists; in his annotations he thanks the friend who brought him lunch during the process, and urges the reader not to blame him for the rough quality of the paper used in the book!

The student of Armenian history may be tempted to observe that quality in the art of manuscripts declined in times and places when Armenian communities were overrun by outside forces; thus the Van region in the 14th century, and pretty much everywhere in the 16th century, were not great times and places for the Armenian people, until they were able to gain dominance in trade in other places. 17<sup>th</sup>-century Persia was one of those places.

## Armenian Art Flourishes in Iran

As is well known, the large and prosperous Persian-Armenian community is often dated to the deportations of Armenians from the homeland by Shah Abbas in 1604, the destruction of Julfa in the Nakhichevan region, and the construction of New Julfa adjacent to Isfahan. Subsequent to this, Armenians became dominant in the economy and trade of the Safavid Persian Empire. It would seem to be no surprise that the arts also got a boost from this newfound prosperity, shown by the last piece in Morrison's presentation, an Isfahan gospel book from 1615.

The artist, Mesrob of Khizan, was evidently a native of that region just south of Lake Van and adjacent to Bitlis. His vibrant, beautiful illustrations have their own unique style in the tradition of what is often referred to as the Vaspurakan school. However, in Mesrop's case, an even more vibrant color palette seems to have been made possible by the availability of different pigments in the Isfahan area.

One of the most striking images in all of Armenian manuscript art was created by Mesrob of Khizan for the frontispiece of the Gospel of John. John is depicted with rays of light from God entering his mouth, giving him the Word of God. He simultaneously directs his assistant to transcribe the words of the gospel. This image was chosen for the cover of the art book released for the Armenia exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2018.

Mesrob's art is in vivid colors and uplifting. The artist's sense of joy is emphasized in such small details like the shepherd in the Nativity scene playing a flute — causing his dogs to dance!

The illustration pages from the Isfahan Gospel had also been removed and had been purchased from different sources. Morrison believes that the noted scholar Jacques de Morgan, head of Egyptian Antiquities for the French (and author of a well-known, but probably outdated "History of the Armenian People"), who also did archaeological research in Persia and Syria, likely acquired the Isfahan Gospel and brought it back to Paris, where someone later in the chain of possession removed the pages.

A question-and-answer session followed the presentation. Morrison shared that she is responsible for manuscript acquisition at the Getty, and the museum's goal is to represent as well as they can the history of manuscripts across the medieval world, which includes Armenia. She mentioned that not all manuscripts can be displayed all the time as they are always subject to damage and fading from exposure to light, and they also have to think about the bindings of the books as well, all of which are historic.



Elizabeth Morrison, Curator of Manuscripts at the J. Paul Getty Museum

West Germany, had the best private manuscript collection in the world. These manuscripts were primarily from European sources though there were a few Armenian items as well.

Armenia is a part of the story of manuscript creation the world over, says Morrison, and although the Getty's collection is mostly focused on European manuscripts, she has learned a great deal about Armenian history and culture in the process of coming to understand the artistry of the small but very valuable number of Armenian manuscripts which the museum possesses. She also noted that the museum has a few Ethiopian and Hebrew manuscripts, adding to their collections from Eastern cultures. Morrison stated that some of the top-notch Armenian scholars in the US, such as Sylvie Merian and Helen Evans, have helped her along the way, and particularly mentioned Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh who has done extensive work on the provenance of the lost pages from what are





## OBITUARY

## Dr. George A. Bannayan

### Extraordinary Physician, Polymath and Family Man

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — George A. Bannayan, 89, died peacefully at home in San Antonio on June 4, 2021, with Odette, his wife of 61 years, by his side.

He was born in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City on December 15, 1931, to one of the oldest Armenian families in the Quarter. His father, Abcar Bannayan, was a blacksmith, mayor of the Armenian Quarter, and amateur musician. His father's ironwork remains on display throughout Jerusalem's Old City, including the decorative iron that adorns the Armenian Chapel of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In 1948, the family, consisting of his father Abcar, his mother Suzanne (nee Sultanian), his younger brothers Maurice and Elie, and his older sister Madeleine, emigrated from Jerusalem to Amman, Jordan. After finishing high school in Amman, George began his studies at the renowned American University of Beirut, receiving a bachelor's degree in 1953 and then a medical degree in 1957. During medical school he met Odette Hanna, a native of Beirut, Lebanon, who was working as a secretary at the American University. He and Odette were married in September, 1959.

As George would be the first to tell you with tears of gratitude, his family sacrificed for him to attend the American University of Beirut. His mother sold her wedding ring and his sister Madeleine sent him a portion

of her monthly earnings from teaching English. Devoted to his family, he sold his plasma each week to make ends meet and would later pay for his younger brothers to attend university.

In return for the scholarship that he received from the Jordanian army that helped him pay for medical school, George joined the Jordanian medical corps in 1957 as a captain and army physician. One of his primary duties was to treat Bedouin families in the Jordanian desert, often staying with them overnight while he cared for family members. He routinely purchased medications with his own money to help treat families in need. During his nine years of service in the Jordanian army, he was well-known and beloved among the Bedouins.

In 1960, his daughter Suzanne was born in the Italian Hospital in Amman. In 1966, George, Odette, and Suzanne immigrated to the United States where George interned for one year at St. Joseph's Hospital in Denver, then spent four years in pathology residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, and one year at Sloan-Kettering Memorial Hospital in New York City.

In July 1971, while he was a resident at Johns Hopkins, George published an article in the medical journal *Archives of Pathology* that described a congenital syndrome that had not been previously identified. In 1982 the condition was named Bannayan Syndrome, now also known as Ban-



nayan-Riley-Ruvalcaba Syndrome.

After completing his postgraduate training in New York in 1972, George accepted a position of tenured associate professor of pathology at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSC) and was promoted to tenured professor in 1977. During this period, he emerged as a definitive authority of kidney pathology, receiving numerous accolades for his contributions to the education of his students. His knowledge of kidney transplant pathology reached an international audience and was instrumental to the success of kidney transplant programs.

In January 1982, George accepted a position of associate medical director of laboratories at Methodist Hospital in Dallas. He returned to San Antonio in May of 1986 as medical director of laboratories at Methodist Specialty and Transplant Hospital. Beginning in 2001, until his retirement from private practice in 2015, he provided anatomical pathology services to Methodist Hospitals in San Antonio through his work with the distinguished pathologists at South Texas Pathology Associates (STPA). In addition to his private practice, he maintained his position as clinical professor of pathology at UTHSC through 2017.

Over the span of his long career, George had 40 manuscripts and abstracts published in medical journals, written alone or in collaboration with others, and contributed to chapters in textbooks on kidney disease.

In 2003 George received the Gift of Life Award from the National Kidney Foundation. In 2016 he returned to New York, where he received the prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor, awarded to native or naturalized American citizens who have made a significant impact on their communities through a life of service.

Throughout George's life, beginning with the school years at the American University of Beirut, his residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital, his tenure at UTHSC, his time at Methodist Hospital in Dallas, and then with STPA in San Antonio, he developed lifelong friendships with many colleagues. They came to know him for who he was: a kind, humble, and generous man with a relentless intellectual curiosity, a great sense of humor, someone with the ability to make complex concepts lucid in the classroom, and someone with extraordinary expertise in kidney transplant pathology.

In addition to his enthusiasm for pathology, George had a passion for exotic foods, wine, and opera. He and Odette were lifelong members and contributors to the San Antonio Symphony and the Houston Grand Opera.

George was especially passionate about his Armenian heritage, cognizant of the suffering of the Armenian people, who have endured and even flourished through periods of strife, persecution, and genocide. He and Odette were staunch supporters of the Armenian General Benevolent Union for many years.

A true polymath, George was equally capable of discussing the history, geography, and politics of Europe and the Middle East, the novels of Tolstoy, or the methods of fermenting various grapes. He was fluent in Arabic and Armenian as well as English. He loved to read, often being in the middle of two or three books that he stacked on the family room table. He was re-reading the classics. His bookmark now rests within the last quarter of Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, the latest classic that he was tackling again but unable to finish.

Although his intellect and achievements were extraordinary, George's greatest joy was always his family. His devotion to Odette, Suzanne, and his grandchildren was steadfast and profound.

George is survived by his wife Odette Bannayan, his daughter Suzanne Rostomian and partner Jeff Dahl; his grandchildren George and David Rostomian; his brother Maurice Bannayan and wife Sonia, his brother Elie Bannayan and wife Taline; niece Aline Bannayan, and nephews Abkar Bannayan, Aram Bannayan, Sevan Bannayan, and numerous relatives in the United States and abroad.

Special thanks to Dr. Marvin Forland, excerpts of whose wonderful profile of George have been used here.

A memorial service will be held at the Eilan Hotel and Spa, 18603 La Cantera Terrace, San Antonio, TX 78256 on Saturday, July 17th, 2021 at 11:00 a.m.

## Antranig Afarian

### Active Tekeyan Cultural Association Leader, ADL Member

DUARTE, Calif. — Antranig Diran Afarian, who passed away on February 19, was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on April 8, 1933.

His family took a vacation in Beirut, Lebanon while Antranig was still a child, and they were forced to remain there due to the onset of World War II. There Antranig got married and had three sons. Eventually, in 1975, they emigrated to the United States. Afarian worked for over 15 years, until retiring in 1998, as a civil engineering drafting technician for Los Angeles Water and Power.

He and his late wife Sirouhi ("Siroug") were active in the Tekeyan Cultural Association Pasadena-Glendale chapter for many years. They played a prominent role in the special monthly dinners that for a time were important in local community life. Moreover, Antranig faithfully served as the treasurer of the Tekeyan Cultural Association's Beshgeturian Center in Altadena for a long period. Antranig was also a member of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party. Funeral services and interment took place at Mountain View Cemetery in Altadena, California on February 26.

He is survived by son, Diran and Rosalin Afarian; grandson, Anto Afarian and Christina Melkonian; granddaughter, Garin Afarian and Khatchik Arabian; son, Raffy and Debby Afarian; grandson, Armen and Sarah Afarian; grandson, Alec and Valerie Afarian; son, Ara and Rita Afarian and daughter, Christine; sister, Ardemis and Sarkis Teshoian; deceased brother, Mardiros Afarian's wife, Maral Afarian; nephew, Hagop and Aleen Afarian and children; nephew, Sevag and Cindy Afarian and children; and the entire Afarian, Teshoian, Nazarian, Madenian, Klein, Tanielian, Der Stepanian, and Semerdjian families, relatives, and friends.



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## COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

## Ambassador Baibourtian Calls LA Mayor Garcetti Great Friend at Farewell Reception

GLENDAL — On February 17, Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles Ambassador Armen Baibourtian took part in the farewell reception in honor of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, organized by the Armenian National Committee of America-Western Region (ANCA-WR). The event was attended by the spiritual leaders of the Armenian community of California, members of the Los Angeles City Council and the Deputy Mayor of Los Angeles, and numerous political and public figures. In their speeches, they expressed gratitude to Mayor Eric Garcetti for his dedicated support and fruitful cooperation with the Armenian community spanning more than two decades.

At the outset of his speech, Baibourtian commended the ANCA-WR and its Board of Directors Chair Nora Hovsepian, Esq. for hosting the event. Baibourtian, who previously served as the first ambassador of Armenia to India, highly appreciated the work of Mayor Eric Garcetti and thanked him for being a great friend of Armenia. Garcetti's contribution as the Mayor of the second largest city in the United States is tangible in deepening the US-Armenia ties, establishing the Los Angeles-Yerevan sister-cities partnership, promoting the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, recognizing the Republic of Artsakh, and supporting Armenians throughout the 44-day Artsakh war. Briefly presenting the history of Armenians in India, Baibourtian shared his firsthand knowledge about the small Armenian community of India, which is considered to be one of India's oldest trading communities, while wishing success to Eric Garcetti as he is preparing to embark on the position of the U.S. Ambassador to India. The Consul General of Armenia urged him to visit the Armenian community of Kolkata and continue his friendship with Armenians in his new diplomatic post.

On February 17, Baibourtian took part in the concrete pouring ceremony of the Armenian American Museum of California, which followed the groundbreaking cere-

mony in July of last year. The museum is being built in the downtown Glendale, in an area adjacent to the Glendale Central Library. The event was attended by elected officials of the State of California and the City of Glendale, spiritual leaders of the Armenian community, representatives of community organizations, journalists, and members of the team supervising the construction of the museum.

The spiritual leaders of the Armenian community blessed the foundation slates of the museum. The executive leaders of the Armenian American Museum presented the progress of the construction site works and its phases. At the event, Baibourtian said, "This project, being born out of the vision of the Armenian American Museum, brought the entire California Armenian community together. It will be an important center that displays the Armenian identity and heritage, represents the Armenian civilization, and projects the global image of Armenians. At the same time, it will address some of the most pressing global issues of today, thus further elevating our Armenian culture to the level of the international community."

The Police Chief of Glendale Carl Povilaitis highlighted his regular working meetings with the Consul General of Armenia - from routine contacts to more intensive interaction in the 44-day war period. In his turn, Ambassador Baibourtian expressed his deep gratitude to the Armenian Community of the Western U.S. for strong continuous support, close cooperation, patriotism, effective pursuit of the Armenian cause, and backing of the mission of the Armenian Consulate General. He stressed the proven capability of the community to unify and work together as a single fist in addressing the agenda items of importance for the Armenian Community, which he witnessed during his three and a half years of diplomatic service in California.

The community also expressed gratitude to Ambassador Baibourtian's family members and thanked them.

## Gail Talanian O'Reilly to Receive Armenian Assembly's Distinguished Humanitarian Award

BOSTON — The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) will honor Gail Talanian O'Reilly with the Distinguished Humanitarian Award on Thursday evening, May 19, 2022 at the Hyatt Regency Boston/Cambridge.

A longtime Assembly supporter and life trustee, O'Reilly has served as a Board Member, Development Chair, Vice Chair, and Endowment Chair, providing her time and talent to the mission of the organization.

"Gail has always worked for positive outcomes — whether it is working to address basic needs during a humanitarian crisis, like the 1988 earthquake in Armenia, to providing hope and economic opportunity through projects in Armenia. Gail's commitment and dedication in helping advance and strengthen U.S.-Armenia relations is to be commended," said Assembly President Carolyn Mugar.

"The Assembly was fortunate to benefit from Gail's unique insights and her invaluable role and work during her tenure on the Assembly's Board. Gail never hesitated to reach out to people and explain to them the importance of the Assembly and listen to their recommendations," stated Assembly Co-Chairs Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian.

"We look forward to honoring Gail this May with the Assembly's distinguished humanitarian award," they added.

The daughter of Nevart and the late Charles Talanian, Gail has continued her parents' professional legacy in both real estate and property management, as well as through her commitment to Armenia and Artsakh. She is the founder of Made in Armenia Direct. The project, which is now owned and operated by Armenia-based entrepreneurs, employs Armenian artisans to create handmade crafts and preserve Armenia's indigenous artistry. Gail, a recipient of The Ellis Island Medal of Honor, was also an instrumental figure in the launch of the Armenia Tree Project.

She has served as a public school teacher, a Town Meeting Member, and is currently a volunteer for the Winchester League of Women Voters and Massachusetts League of Women Voters. Gail's commitment to promoting representative democracy, free and fair elections, and democratic values has been a lifelong undertaking.

Past recipients of the Assembly's Distinguished Humanitarian Award include Elizabeth Agbabian, Flora Dunaian, and Savey Tufenkian at the Assembly's 40th Gala Anniversary in Los Angeles, CA; Nevart Talanian, Ann Hintlian and Virginia Ohanian at a 2013 Assembly Tribute in Boston, MA; Annie Simonian Totah, during the Assembly's 2018 National Advocacy Conference in Washington, DC; Mrs. Rakel Dink, in memory of her late husband and human rights leader Hrant Dink; and Kathryn Cameron Porter, founder of the Human Rights Alliance, for her service to the people of Artsakh.



Honoree Gail Talanian O'Reilly with Assembly Board Member Lu Ann Ohanian

## OBITUARY

## Tarvis Harootunian Hintlian Advocate for Helping the Needy, Animals

MILLBURY, Mass. — Tarvis Harootunian Hintlian, born on November 3, 1922 in Millbury MA, died peacefully in her sleep on February 24, 2022.

She is survived by her four children and their spouses Andrea and Thomas Mendell, Varney Hintlian and Martha MacAuslan, Holly and Harold Knight and Frederick and Alicia Hintlian; six grandchildren, Lauren Mendell, Sara Hintlian, Andrew Hintlian, Julia Hintlian, Olivia Hintlian, and Tarvis Hintlian and her caregiver Doris Kotei.

Tarvis was predeceased by her husband Vahan Hintlian and a grandson, Alexander Mendell.

Coming from a humble farming family, Tarvis married into the Hintlian family that founded the Cambridge-based Deran Confectionery Inc. that grew to become one of the nation's largest general line confectionery companies before it was sold to Borden, Inc. in 1970.

Tarvis and Vahan raised four children in whom they instilled values and wisdom and that helped each to succeed personally and professionally.

In addition to her passions for oil painting, tennis and cooking, Tarvis high-



ly valued her Armenian heritage and was a strong advocate for the humane treatment of animals and helping the less fortunate.

A celebration of life was held on Tuesday, March 1 at the Holy Trinity Armenian Church 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA. Interment followed at Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge.

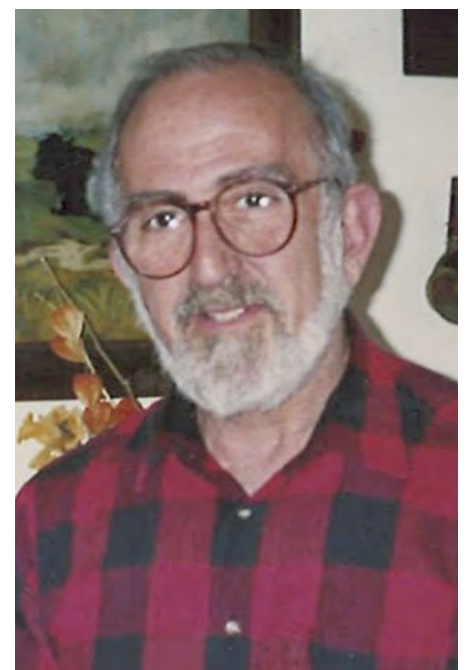
## Archie Harry Arpiarian Worked on NASA's Apollo Project

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Archie Harry Arpiarian, a lifelong resident of Cambridge passed away peacefully at home on January 30, 2022. He was 88 years old. Archie was born on August 21, 1933, in New York City to the late Nubar and Elize (Arnaghian) Arpiarian.

Archie grew up in New York City and was a 1955 graduate of New York University where he obtained his degree as a mechanical engineer.

In 1962 Archie took a job at MIT in Cambridge where he worked on the NASA Apollo project to the moon. After some time at MIT, he continued his career at Polaroid until his retirement in 1988.

Archie was very proud of his Armenian heritage and supported many Armenian causes including Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA). He was an avid collector of model trains throughout his life and enjoyed antiques, spending many years at the Cambridge antique market. He also kept ties to his childhood friends from the Bronx, organizing an annual luncheon for them all to keep in touch.



Archie is survived by his companion of 40 years Effie Shumaker of Cambridge and his sister Verjin Arpiarian of New York. In addition, he is survived by many loving cousins and friends stretching from Maine to New Jersey.





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Philadelphia Church Sets Example by Preserving Archives

ARCHIVES, from page 6  
librarian Pauline Babikian; the committee's historian, Elizabeth Barsamian, with her decades of service to the church and encyclopedic knowledge of who's who; and Sonia Garabedian, who serves as liaison to outside organizations. Haig Geovjian and Peter Paone joined as advisors. An oral history component was also created to record interviews with church elders in order to preserve first-hand accounts of the church's history, made up of interviewer Steven Barsamian, producer Raffi Berberian, and coordinator Carol Keosayan. Unfortunately the Covid pandemic prevented much progress in the latter endeavor.

The committee was able to intercept a cache of artifacts in the basement heading to the dumpster. Within it they were surprised to find documentation that some parishioners had put up their homes and businesses as collateral to secure a mortgage for the purchase of the current church property. This formerly lost piece of history really encapsulated the drive behind their mission, as Alabilikian described: "We have found it remarkable in reading all of the Parish Assembly Reports and Banquet Booklets – records of events going back to the establishment of the parish, all the time, dedication, effort, and the money that have been expended to keep this church, its Armenian identity and Christianity alive. It's easy seeing the church today to take for granted how much effort and struggle went into making it a reality, especially considering how many of those people were Genocide survivors escaping persecution, coming here without knowing the language and with no aid to get established." Babikian agreed: "Growing up, most of us knew these people, unaware of all they did to form the vibrant parish we have today. Their faith really resonates in our research, [and is] reflected in the risks taken to keep their people together."

It's always a joy for the members to make discoveries and learn new things from these materials. Some of their favorite finds include a 1928 banquet photo, where many of the attendees were Genocide survivors looking prosperous and well; beautifully handwritten minutes of the Ladies Aid Society and Women's Guild; and a compilation of church newsletters since 1960. Realizing that many of the photographs needed identification, the Archives Committee enlarged them to poster size for display at church functions hoping that parishioners could identify them. One photo was a silver gel studio photo of the Ladies Aid Society members. The group was stunned when one young man looked at it and said, "This is the best picture I have

ever seen of my grandmother!" Another is of an Armenian-American veterans banquet to celebrate the end of World War II, in which the young returned vets are seated alongside the survivor generation who gave their children to defend their adopted homeland.

One unearthed artifact remains a mystery to this day. A rolled-up painting on canvas of Christ taken off the cross which the Archives called "Pieta" had been left at the church office with a simple anonymous note reading: "This was in my mother-in-law's house." It included unusual Armenian calligraphy, which was later determined to have been a style used centuries ago. Archives member Sonia Garabedian contacted the Armenian Museum of America (AMA), which reviewed and eagerly accepted the canvas. The committee makes a habit of donating items it finds which are not directly connected to St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church to expand the collections of relevant organizations such as the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, the AMA, and Project SAVE. They educate the parish about their findings with articles in the

church's newsletter, *Mer Doon*, about various aspects of the parish's history, and just plain interesting facts like that their marble altar weighs an astonishing 20 tons.

The Archives Committee wants to share their story to encourage other parishes to do the same. Who knows what hidden treasures might exist within other Armenian churches, and what might be lost without this kind of intervention? Many might have their own unofficial archives already, which with some care and dedication can similarly be turned into an important resource for study. If they have one piece of advice, it's not to be intimidated or think one needs deep expertise to create a similar undertaking. They stress that they are "non-professionals doing their best as professionally as possible." And our proud Armenian-American legacy is better for it.



From the archives: the architect's final rendering of the proposed design for the Holy Altar which was imported from Italy

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The Archives Committee devised its own cataloguing system to properly organize each item and make them easily accessible





COMMUNITY NEWS

Jerair Nishanian Foundation (JNF) Mourns Loss of Scholarship Recipient

GAITHERSBURG, Md. — In the past, the Jerair Nishanian Foundation (JNF) has celebrated the great accomplishments of its scholarship recipients. Unfortunately, in the aftermath of the 44-day war launched by Azerbaijan with the full support of Turkey, JNF scholarship awardees and their families suffered, too.

The Artsakh War changed how 21-year-old Davit Ghulyan views his reality. “Life is not the same as it was before the war; my life is divided into two segments — before and after,” he said.

A few month ago, Davit completed his three years of military service with honors for his brave conduct during the war. He is



Meet David, FAR Scholar and War Hero

now back at school, focused on his studies in architecture at the National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia thanks to assistance from the Fund for Armenian Relief’s (FAR) .

“I have become more considerate of my parents, my friends, and my surroundings,” said Davit. “I now put more thought into things.”

Davit was born and raised in Talish, Artsakh, which is now under control of Azerbaijan. He was in the fifth grade when the family moved to Yerevan so that he could get a better education.

“Talish was my brightest childhood memory,” said Davit, who has been painting since an early age. Prior to starting his military service in 2019, Davit created a couple of paintings depicting the horrors of war. “I don’t know why I made those, but when I look at these works now the war comes right back.”

Together with 25 soldiers, Davit was first sent to Martakert, then to Mataghis and Shushi as chief of his field artillery unit.



Narek Varzhapetyan, scholarship student and fallen soldier

“Giving up was not an option so I had to constantly encourage my soldiers,” he said. “I have lost many friends to the war, which, to me, is the most tragic part of it all. But I have learned to value my life and will now do my best to become a professional.”

Satik Varzhapetyan can hardly hold back her tears while recollecting her last conversations with her son Narek. “The word ‘hero’ has forever lost its meaning for me,” she said.

Narek, 19, was killed while fighting in the 2020 Artsakh War. Six months after starting his military service, when Narek was on his first home leave, he asked his mother if she wanted her son to be a martyr.

“Satik was astonished for a minute, then her eyes filled with tears and she asked him to never ever again say something like that. ‘I don’t want my son to be a fallen hero,’ she said. ‘I want him to be back home after

the army safe and sound,” recalled Narek’s grandmother Mihranush.

Narek was fatally wounded on October 19. He was due to finish his service three months later.

Back during the Four Day War of 2016, Narek, just 15 at the time, wanted to go to Artsakh and fight. “He was rushing to get into the army,” said Satik.

Eventually, Narek wanted to become an architect. Prior to starting his military service, Narek was immersed in his studies at the National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia, which he attended with help from FAR’s Jerair Nishanian Foundation Scholarship Program. And while a relative had invited him to move to Frankfurt so that he could pursue his studies there, Narek rejected the offer. He preferred to stay in Armenia.

On October 15, 2020, Narek’s battalion of 33 soldiers, and of which he was the leader, was transferred to Ishkhanadzor in Artsakh.

October 18 was the last time Satik heard Narek’s voice when she spoke with him over the phone. The entire battalion was killed when their tanks were shelled. Their bodies were found 52 days later after the Armenians received permission to cross the border following the ceasefire.

To support the family, FAR recently distributed financial assistance provided by the Nishanian family and Nishanian Foundation Board Members. The money will be used to support Narek’s sister’s studies. Her long-term goal is the same as her deceased brother’s: to excel in architecture.

JNF evolved through Jirair Nishanian’s profound sense of duty inherited from his parents, who were both survivors of the Armenian Genocide, and a deep desire to assist underprivileged young Armenians, in particular talented ones, to help them achieve their potentials so that they can contribute to the advancement of their Motherland.

Since its creation, JNF has accomplished several special projects in addition to the ongoing scholarship program: JNF was one of the six major donors for the Armenian Genocide Centennial, which took place in Washington, DC; Remodeling and construction of the main altar of St. Mary Armenian Church in Washington, DC; Remodeling and construction of buildings in Gavar State University; Sponsored and funded the translation and publication of *The Young Turks’ Crime Against Humanity*, by Prof. Taner Akçam; published the children’s book *Yes Hye Em* by Anoush Nakashian; translation and publication of a history textbook *History of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*, in Eastern Armenian, authored by several Armenian scholars and to be used as a textbook by universities in Armenia; the publication of a second textbook *Contemporary History of Literature*, a book summarizing the Turkish literature as it pertains to the Armenian Genocide and Akçam’s book, *Forced Islamization of the Armenians*, translated into English and Armenian from Turkish.

The JNF board is honored and privileged to have as member Abp. Vicken Aykazian, who is celebrating the 50th anniversary of his ordination. Bishop Daniel Findikian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church, wrote the following of Abp. Aykazian, “Through his intelligence, spirituality, and warm personality, Vicken Aykazian has been a servant of incalculable value to our Diocese, Church, and the Armenian people in general. A true soldier of our Lord, he provides an edifying example of leadership for us all.” We congratulate him and wish him many more years in the service of the Church.

Jirair Nishanian values education very highly. Since the creation of the JNF, he has provided scholarships for students at Gavar University in the Gegharkunik region and students in Yerevan University of Architecture. The scholarship programs are managed by FAR (Fund for Armenian Relief) in Yerevan, an organization affiliated with the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church.

— Yeretzing Anahid Kalaydjian



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Board of the JNF, Front row, from left, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Jirair Nishanian, Founder and CEO, Tagvor Nishanian, PhD, Back row: Anahid Nishanian, Diramayr Anahid Kalayjian, RN, MA, Vazerick Nishanian, Esq., Alineh Templin, and Zaven Kalayjian, PhD



# Arts & Culture

A CONVERSATION WITH...

## Stephen L. Lamson

**Ararat's Shadow Hopes To Teach a Lesson in a Musical Manner**

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / MERCER ISLAND, Wash. — My subject is American composer Stephen L. Lamson. Born in 1951 in Seattle, he grew up on Mercer Island, where he resides now. Throughout his childhood, music played a major role in his life. From the age 6 to 9, Lamson played drums, then began teaching himself piano.



**Stephen, how would you describe how you compose?**

I compose in a natural, more simplistic way, from the heart. My passion and emotions are the driving force.

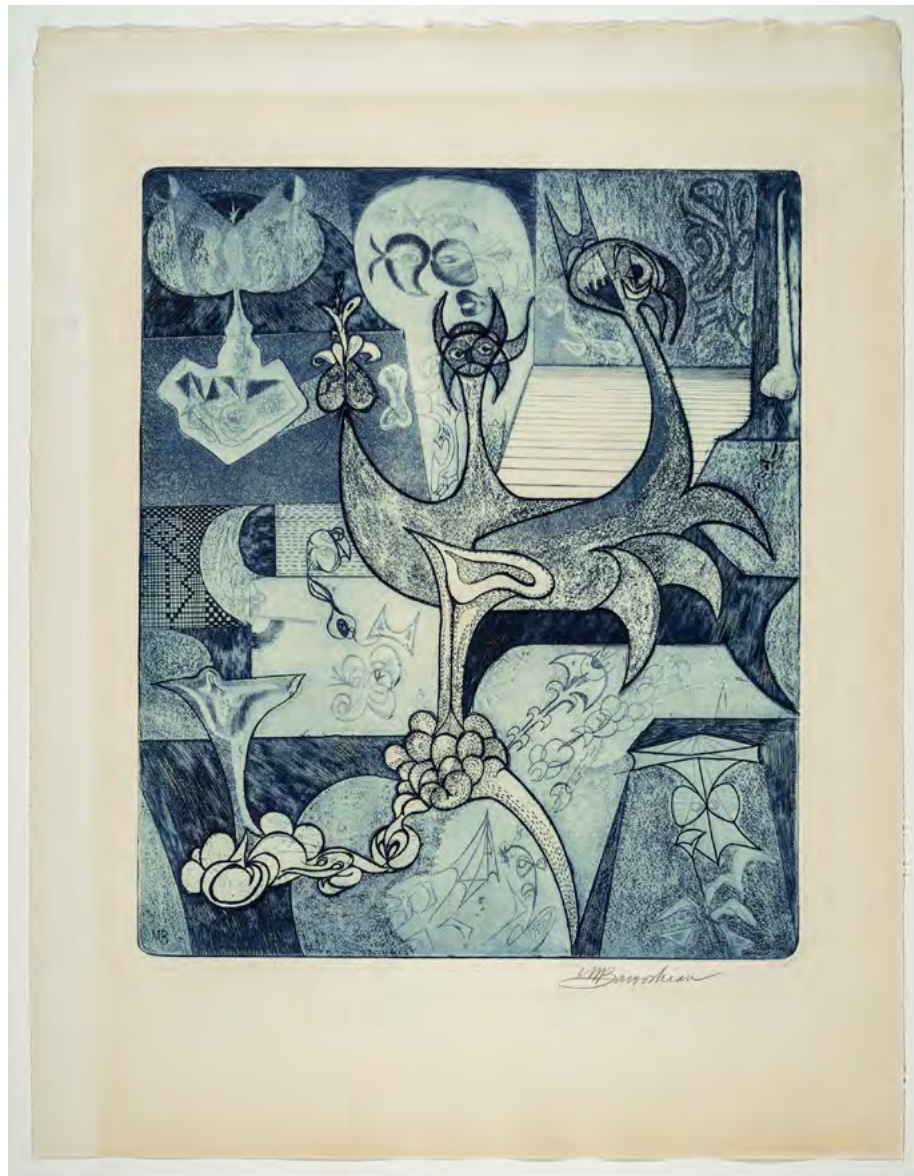
**When I read in January 3 issue of Mercer Island Reporter about yours being a composer with Armenian roots, I immediately guessed you may be the grandson of Armenian-American physician and author Armenuhi Tashjian Lamson. Am I right?**

Yes, that is correct. Armenuhi or Armenouhie, or Armani as we called her, was a well-known medical artist or medical illustrator (the first in the world, we heard) and would spend hours in the actual operating rooms doing incredibly detailed medical drawings (they looked like photographs) of organs and detailed medical procedures. She was also involved with many civic activities, charities and any Armenian cause. Her husband, Dr. Otis Lamson, was a surgeon and also one of the original founders of the Swedish Hospital in Seattle.

**In 2020 I wrote a small article in Armenian introducing our readers to your amazing grandmother on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death. What memories do you have from Armenuhi Lamson?**

Armani was a very strong and usually a serious person. I was only a young boy as I got to know her. She thought I should study medicine, but at 6 years old I was far more interested in fishing (*laughing*). Armani was a very caring and compassionate person, and spent much of her time helping Armenians and Armenian causes all over the world. She authored two books, *My Birth: The Autobiography of an Unborn Infant* (1916) and *How I Came to Be* (1926).

When we would have large family dinners with our cousins and grandparents, when the talk became “adult see LAMSON, page 15



“Creatures of Prometheus,” 1957, Martin Barooshian (American, 1929–2022), etching, engraving, and aquatint, printed in blue, gift of Martin and Mary Barooshian in honor of Michael J. Russo (photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

## Boston's Museum of Fine Arts Adds 35 Barooshian Works to Its Collection

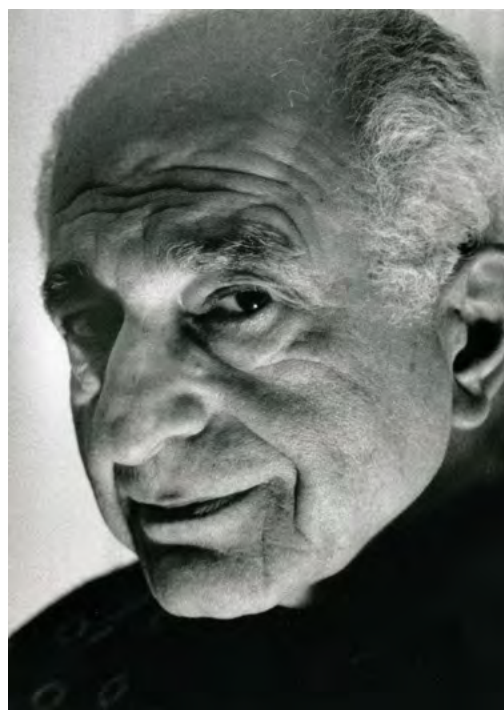
BOSTON — The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), and the Martin Barooshian Art Trust announced this week that the MFA has added 35 additional pieces by Martin Barooshian (1929-2022), to its collection. The acquisition includes important woodcuts and etchings as well as one monotype and three preparatory drawings. The MFA acquired its first work by Barooshian in 1950.

Barooshian, a Boston native, was an American surrealist painter and an exceptionally accomplished printmaker. Barooshian rose to prominence during the 1950s and 60s, but his fame waned over time. There has been resurgent interest in his artistic contributions, including the publication of a biography and catalogue in 2020, and the MFA's acquisition represents a substantial step in his rediscovery.

In a New York City art world insistent on non-figurative conformity, Barooshian struck out on his own path. The resulting abstract surrealist prints and paintings, which fuse art historical, modern, and contemporary influences, are unique, singular, and increasingly considered by many to be ahead of their time. With a printmaking output spanning 60 years, Barooshian's oeuvre incorporates a broad variety of media: woodcuts, lithographs, etchings, and monotypes. His colleague and friend Willem de Kooning called Barooshian “a printing magician.”

Barooshian garnered his earliest national recognition when “discovered” by John

see MFA, page 13



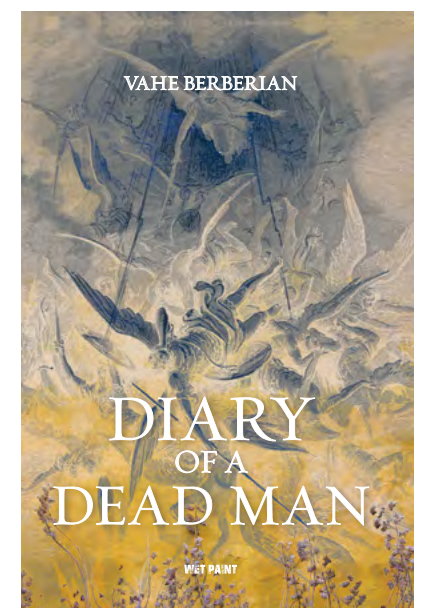
Martin Barooshian, 1998 (photograph by John Goody)

## Books

### Diary of a Dead Man Is Captivating New Novel By Vahé Berberian

LOS ANGELES — Vahe Berberian's latest novel, *Diary of a Dead Man*, is a gripping page-turner packed with uncanny twists and hair-raising turns, which tells the story of Armen, a young Armenian grappling with his suffocating present and the demons of his harrowing past.

The 260-page novel takes the reader on a haunting odyssey from the picture-perfect veneers of Los Angeles to the rubble and chaos of war-



torn Aleppo and the musty catacombs of Romania, delivering a heart-rending tale prescient to our current times.

“Every writer ultimately wants to write the book that they want to read. *Diary of a Dead Man* is the book I have always wanted to read,” says Berberian, about his third novel, which he wrote in English. “It’s a labor of love and I have put my heart and soul into it.”

Playwright, painter, comedian and director, Berberian tells the story of a suicidal attorney from Los Angeles who, while in Aleppo, is entrusted with a mysterious war diary. The tattered diary, written in the 1870s, unearths a Pandora's Box of family secrets and legacies that threatens to further upend the attorney's life and identity.

*Diary of a Dead Man* is a breathtaking odyssey into the dark heart of a man's forgotten and buried past, unearthing family secrets and devastating histories with an explosive climax.

The book can be purchased on line, by visiting Berberian's website [www.vaheberberian.com/store](http://www.vaheberberian.com/store) or from Abril Bookstore in Glendale. For all inquiries contact [vaheberberianlive@gmail.com](mailto:vaheberberianlive@gmail.com)





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

## Museum of Fine Arts Adds Barooshian Works

MFA, from page 12

Taylor Arms for his woodcuts, which fused traditional techniques and content with modern form and color to convey the paranoia and loss of innocence of the Atomic Age — perhaps tinged with hopefulness. Soon thereafter in 1952, the Library of Congress acquired his first major woodcut portfolio. Perhaps Barooshian's greatest contribution to printmaking was with a method known as color viscosity printing, which dominated his output starting about 1956. During his stay at Atelier 17 in Paris, Barooshian evolved the technique, pushing its limits in order to reach his artistic vision of imagined realities and dreamscapes. By incorporating various methods including hard ground, soft ground, mezzotint, and aquatint on a single zinc plate, Barooshian created complex, polychromatic images solidifying his reputation as one of viscosity printmaking's most important masters.

Patrick Murphy, Lia and William Poorvu Associate Curator of Prints and Drawings at the MFA, called Barooshian "a consummate printmaker, whose intriguing and oddly overlooked body of work deserves to be celebrated alongside that of mid-century contemporaries like Hayter, Helen Phillips, Fred Becker, and Gabor Peterdi."

"This extraordinary gift includes a number of compositions in multiple impressions — state proofs showing the evolution of work on the plate, or variant inkings demonstrating the artist's characteristic experimentation with color, as well as preparatory drawings, and will make the MFA a destination for the study of Barooshian's prints," said Murphy.

"The recent rediscovery of Martin's work has been very exciting, and this honor solidifies his legacy," said Michael Russo, curator of the Martin Barooshian Art Trust. "Martin saw this acquisition as a full-circle homecoming. When he was a boy and student, the MFA represented all of his dreams, and he fantasized that someday the MFA would have a large collection of his art. He lived to see it happen."

Barooshian was trained at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Boston University, Tufts University and Atelier



"Love Scene from Faust," 1956, Martin Barooshian (American, 1929–2022), Engraving, aquatint, and soft ground, color variant (red), gift of Martin and Mary Barooshian in honor of Michael J. Russo (photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

17 in Paris. He has been called "Pablo Picasso meets Stan Lee...who has always defined his own style" by *Boston Globe* critic Cate McQuaid. Addison Gallery curator Susan Faxon described Barooshian as "an artist whose sweep was wide...and whose exuberance, inventiveness, imagination, and artistic commitment were boundless." Barooshian was at the center of several critical art movements: innovating color viscosity printmaking at Atelier 17, overseeing the seminal Pratt printing workshop in NYC for over a decade, and serving as the president of the Society of American Graphic Artists. He was taught painting by Karl Zerbe, lithography by Gaston Dorfinant, and intaglio etching by Stanley Hayter; he was friends with Armin



Martin Barooshian in studio, 2000 (photograph by John Goody)



TygerTyger," 1954, Martin Barooshian (American, 1929–2022), woodcut, gift of Martin and Mary Barooshian in honor of Michael J. Russo (photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)



Martin and Mary Barooshian in MA home, 2011 (photograph by Michael Russo)

Landeck and Gerald Geerlings, de Kooning and Paul Jenkins; he taught Barnett Newman to make lithographs. His story is the story of mid-20th-century American art. More information is available in *Martin Barooshian: A Catalogue Raisonné of the Prints, 1948-1970* by Michael Russo, and at [www.martinbarooshian.org](http://www.martinbarooshian.org).

The MFA is located at 465 Huntington Ave., Boston. For more information, visit [mfa.org](http://mfa.org) or follow the MFA on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.





ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Faye and Yakir Levy's Cauliflower Baba Ghanoush

(Photos and recipe are courtesy of Faye and Yakir Levy)

Faye Levy is the author of cookbooks in three languages (English, Hebrew and FrFaye Levy is the author of cookbooks in three languages (English, Hebrew and French) — 23 so far, including the award-winning *Faye Levy's International Vegetable Cookbook*. Some of her cookbooks are in Hebrew and French, plus many articles for other publications. And this is only a small part of her achievements. Her most recent titles are *Healthy Cooking for the Jewish Home*, *Feast*



Faye and her husband, writing and photography partner, Yakir Levy – Photo courtesy of: Melissa's Produce

from the Mideast and 1,000 Jewish Recipes. Some of her other books are the award-winning *Classic Cooking Techniques*, *Chocolate Sensations*, and the three-volume *Fresh from France* series. Faye is like a culinary detective, analyzing food from many cultures and putting her creative spin on them.

The Levys have written articles for the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Jerusalem Post*. Faye has written for other major newspapers throughout the United States, and for *Gourmet Magazine*, *Bon Appetit*, *Chocolatier* and *Vegetarian Times*. Faye studied cooking in Paris at Ecole de Cuisine La

Varenne. Initially she signed up for six weeks, but being in Paris was so much fun, the Levys figured they would stay a little longer so that Faye could continue studying. Six years later, after Faye had earned the position of La Varenne's cookbook editor, they finally left this stopover on their trip from Israel to the United States.

Baba ghanoush is similar to hummus, but it calls for grilled or roasted eggplant instead of chickpeas, and tahini, garlic and fresh lemon juice. It is healthy, gluten-free, vegan, all natural and delicious. Popular in Arab countries throughout the Middle East, baba ghanoush is also a common appetizer on the Sephardic Jewish table. In Israel, it is known as eggplant salad, or Salat Hatzilim. It is sometimes made with roasted bell peppers, and often mayonnaise is added for richness. Middle Eastern dips and salads like baba ghanoush and hummus are subject to taste. Some families prefer "a little more of this" or "a little less of that." When in doubt, taste and adjust seasonings according to your palate.

The Levys' variation of baba ghanoush is made with roasted cauliflower, which goes well with the same flavors, and can be used as a dip or a spread. "Our Cauliflower Baba Ghanoush is a unique twist on the Eastern-Mediterranean classic eggplant dish that will delight your guests and family. Serve it with fresh pita bread or other flatbread and, if you like, with sliced Persian cucumbers and tomatoes. Like natural peanut butter, tahini paste separates on standing and should be stirred until smooth before you use it," adds Faye.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 medium-large cauliflower (about 2 1/4pounds/1 kilo)
- 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- Salt to taste
- 5 tablespoons tahini (sesame paste), stirred until blended
- 5 tablespoons strained freshly squeezed lemon juice, or to taste
- About 7 tablespoons water
- 2 medium garlic cloves, minced (about 2 teaspoons)
- Freshly ground pepper (optional)
- Chopped Italian parsley (for garnish)
- Aleppo pepper, Turkish pepper flakes or other coarsely ground semi-hot red pepper (for sprinkling)
- Pita bread or other flatbread
- Yield: Makes 2 generous cups, about 4 to 6 appetizer servings.

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 375F. Cut off cauliflower ribs and leaves. Turn cauliflower upside down and cut florets off from center stem. (You can use ribs, leaves and stem for soup.) Divide cauliflower in medium florets. You should have about 1 3/4 pounds or about 10 cups florets.

Line a roasting pan with foil, if desired. Put cauliflower florets in roasting pan. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon olive oil and sprinkle lightly with salt. Roast for 20 minutes. Turn florets over using tongs, drizzle with 2 teaspoons olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Roast until just tender, about 15 more minutes. Remove 4 florets and reserve for garnish. Cover pan (or fold foil over remaining florets to cover them), and roast florets until very tender, about 10 more minutes. Remove cauliflower from pan and cool to room temperature.

Meanwhile, make tahini sauce: Spoon tahini paste into a small bowl. Gradually stir in lemon juice and 4 tablespoons water. Add garlic and mix well. Add 1/4 teaspoon salt or to taste. Mixture should have consistency of thick mayonnaise.

Transfer cauliflower to a food processor and blend to a puree. Add tahini sauce, 1 tablespoon olive oil and 2 tablespoons water and process mixture until well blended. Add 1 more tablespoon water, if necessary, so spread will not be dry. Transfer to a bowl.

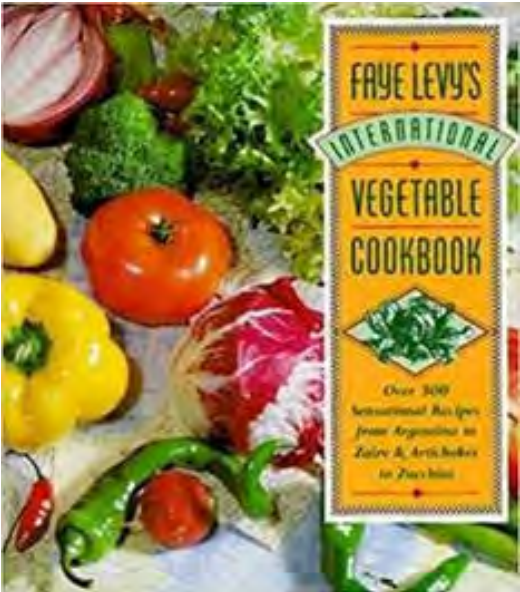
Taste and add more salt, more lemon juice and pepper, if desired. Cover and refrigerate for 2 or 3 hours to blend flavors. Break reserved cauliflower florets into smaller pieces and reserve for garnish.

At serving time, spread cauliflower mixture in a thick layer on a serving plate. With the back of a spoon, make a cavity in the center. Garnish with parsley and with reserved small cauliflower florets and drizzle center with olive oil. Sprinkle cauliflower mixture lightly with Aleppo pepper. Serve with fresh pita bread or other flatbread.

\*The Levys love learning about culinary cultures by traveling, by visiting festivals, and by shopping at ethnic markets. Follow them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/faye.levy.9> and on Twitter @Foodfaye. Their author page is <http://www.jpost.com/Author/Faye-Levy>. Also see Faye's recipe for Cauliflower Latkes: <https://www.razzledazzlerecipes.com/cooking/cauliflower-latkes.htm>

For this recipe, go to:  
<https://vegparadise.com/otherbirds1709.html>  
<https://www.shepaused4thought.com/cauliflower-baba-ghanoush/>

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ARTS & CULTURE

Ararat’s Shadow Hopes to Teach a Lesson in Musical Manner

LAMSON, from page 13  
time,” we kids would go play or have our own less serious and far more enjoyable conversations.

Her brother Souren Tashjian (Tashian) was also a physician (proctologist). He kept a diary about the period of the Armenian Genocide. He escaped from the Germans and the Turks twice in World War I. My brother, Dr. Robert D. Lamson, wrote a book based on this diary called *The Monster on My Back*, which is still available on Amazon I believe.

Nouvar Tashjian, was Souren’s and Armani’s sister, and quite an amazing person herself. She was a fine watercolor artist, and graduated from Columbia University with a degree in library sciences. She headed up the New York University Library for many years. She also wrote and published a book on Armenian lace making that is still being printed today.

By the way, my dear cousin Christine Lamson Gordon, has been doing a great deal of research on our Armenian family history.

Are there some tradition in your family which you would describe as “Armenian?”

We are very proud of our Armenian heritage, and aware of the atrocities, even those happening today. We still make *dolma*, some of us like my grandfather and father grew grapes for wine and used the leaves to make *sarma* and *dolma*. We also make the Armenian flat bread and various yogurts for dipping.

How much are you acquainted with Armenian music?

I have listened to a few great Armenian composers, like Aram Khachaturian and Alan Hovhaness, although I really pull

from my own natural instincts and have developed a unique style by introducing a new or different style of music. My music is more of a conglomeration of styles set off by great feeling and emotion.

Last year you finished composing your second symphony, *Ararat’s Shadow*. Could you please tell us about it?

I poured my heart out composing *Ararat’s Shadow*. It is a musical journey into the history of genocides, allowing people a musical experience that tries to describe



Armenuhi Tashjian Lamson

man’s inhumanity to man. At over 96 minutes in length, it is hardly a short work, but its four movements try and paint the picture of the condition of man, past and present. Beginning with the rumble of the bass drum and tympani opening the 1st movement, you know you are in for an adven-

ture. Daunting, haunting and mysterious, *Ararat’s Shadow* hopes to teach a lesson in a musical manner. Hardly easy. It took me over a year to compose the piece, which encompasses 25 different original melodies, that aim to take the listener all over the world, as “genocides” occur anywhere, still today. Some not even reported, as for so long the Armenian Genocide was denied by many nations for over 100 years.

As one listens to the work they hopefully will be drawn into its sensitivities and heart-felt melodic episodes. Although there is much tension, sorrow and despair, the work also offers rests or plateaus of calming and peace. This is especially so in the 3rd and 4th Movements, where the “Promise of Forgiveness” (featuring the Armenian Church Choir), and the “Awakening” carry us all to a better place, one of peaceful resolve, greater understanding and joy.

My hope is that people all over will enjoy the work, find insight and comfort in its timely message and enjoy the work for years to come. Al Cisneros, who recorded and edited the entire work is to be commended for his incredible sensitivity and dedication. This work would not have been completed without him. Al also played bass and electric guitar in the work.

Finally, I believe that if people listen to the work several times and take it in, they will receive something special from the soulful language of musical notes.

I wish your symphony would be performed both in Armenia and worldwide! Thanks a lot for interview, Stephen!

Thank you so much for the opportunity to discuss this heart-drawn work. My dream is that the work could one day be performed in Armenia, perhaps outside near the Eternal Flame monument in Ye-

revan, and as you say, perhaps worldwide.

NOTE: Armenuhi Tashjian (1882, Karin [Erzurum] – 1970, Seattle). After the family moved to Smyrna, she had the opportunity for schooling in Germany. She attended a private girls’ boarding school in Dusseldorf and then obtained a teaching degree at Kaiserworth Teachers College in Dusseldorf. She immigrated to the U.S. in 1908 and joined her older brother, Armen in Cleveland, Ohio. Her first job was teaching German at a private school in Cleveland. She was artistic and jumped at the opportunity to study anatomy and medical illustration at Johns Hopkins Medical School under Max Brödel, who is often referred to as “the Father of Medical Illustration”. Under Brödel, she mastered the meticulous carbon dust technique of medical illustration and became the first women medical illustrator. During her early years as a medical illustrator she worked closely with Dr. George W. Crile, founder of the Cleveland Clinic. After her marriage to Dr. Otis F. Lamson, she continued to do illustrations for journal articles and surgeries, but soon broadened her activities to include more writing and lecturing. She wrote and illustrated two books about pregnancy and the developing fetus. Armenuhi and Otis raised three children: Robert, Otis and Armene. Over the years she campaigned and assumed leadership roles on behalf of many philanthropic causes related to the cataclysmic events of World War I and World War II, often focusing on youngest victims of war and often inspired by her parents’ work of caring for Armenian children orphaned by the genocide. (I am thankful to Armenuhi Tashjian’s granddaughter, Christine Lamson, for providing information).

75<sup>TH</sup>

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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

MARCH 7 — St. James Men’s Club presents speaker Elsa Ronningstam, PhD, who will discuss diagnosis and treatment of narcissistic personality. Dr. Ronningstam, a St. James parishioner, is a clinical psychologist in the Gunderson Outpatient Program and the Adult Outpatient Services at McLean Hospital and is an associate professor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School. Social hour starts at 6.15 p.m., followed by dinner at 7 p.m. Losh kebab and Kheyra dinner, 20 per person. St. James Armenian Church, Watertown.

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



## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

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SINCE 1932



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## PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

## VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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## EDITORIAL

# War in Ukraine Is at Armenia's Backdoor



By Edmond Y.  
Azadian

Russia's war rhetoric has been overtaken by the explosion of bombs as the country unleashes a full-scale war in Ukraine, although Moscow defines it as "special military operations." The terminology makes little difference to the refugees flooding the countries neighboring Ukraine.

The only difference it makes is in abstract form, in legal terms, for Turkey to close the straits of Dardanelles, since by the Montreux

Convention of 1936, Turkey is entitled to ban the military naval movements through the straits, if it can define it as war.

President Joe Biden, based on the intelligence gathered, had been warning that Russia was ready for a full-scale war, while pundits in the media believed the operation would be a limited one, based on the pattern previously established, particularly in Georgia where Abkhazia and South Ossetia were occupied and cleaved, or, from the Russian perspective, declared independent and recognized by Russia and some rogue states. It was believed that Russia, after recognizing their independence, would take over Luhansk and Donetsk, and trigger a perpetual war on Ukraine's territory rather than this outright war.

But these predictions were proven wrong and what we have now is a full-scale war. At this point, anyone's predictions may turn out to be empty conjecture as there are so many moving parts.

Along with the military operations, a parallel media war is being conducted and, for a change, the opinions on news channels are getting narrower with little distinguishing them apart. This time around, even the West is recognizing the power of the word and thus the European Union has banned the Russian Sputnik and Russia Today networks, which are often the mouthpieces of the Kremlin.

In a useful 2014 article published in the *Washington Post*, former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger provided an overview of Ukraine and its historic relations with Russia. He concluded: "But if Ukraine is to survive and thrive, it must not be either side's outpost against the other. It should function as a bridge between them."

Today, Russia's brazen attack against Ukraine does not allow any space for that kind of rationale and the flow of desperate and despondent refugees makes it even harder to separate emotions from hard facts and political realities. President Vladimir Putin is caught in a frenzy similar to the one that had afflicted President John F. Kennedy when he discovered in 1962 that the Soviet Union, under Nikita Khrushchev, had deployed nuclear missiles on Cuba, 90 miles from the US mainland. That is how the Cuban Missile Crisis evolved, which brought the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation. That event has not been lost on Vladimir Putin, who has become more and more belligerent as the West pushed NATO closer to the Russian border, by placing nuclear arsenals in Romania and Poland. Ukraine and its interest in joining NATO, or at least not ruling it out, it seems, was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.

After the Maidan Revolution of 2014, Ukraine took the path of joining the European Union and NATO's alliance. Putin's antics, over time, were not able to dissuade the leadership in Kyiv to take Russia's apprehensions seriously, particularly when the West also found an opportunity to face off to contain Russia.

Now all nations will be forced to take sides; for many that are already in the Western fold, that choice will not pose a problem. But countries on Russia's periphery and the ones which depend heavily on Moscow, will face a deadly dilemma.

At the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Armenian delegate abstained in a vote against Russia, but at the European Council decided to be in minority with Russia. Yerevan has yet to reveal its position on recognizing the independence of breakaway regions of Ukraine but how long it can walk on a tight rope? It cannot antagonize the West either when the European Union has pledged 2.6 billion euros for reconstruction projects which may fall victim to political decisions.

Turkey criticized Russia's aggression against Ukraine and

earlier it had publicly pledged that it would abide by its NATO obligations if and when Russia attacks Ukraine. Since the war, however, its only position statement has been that Turkey cannot afford to lose the friendship of either Ukraine or Russia. On the other hand, Turkey has given equivocal responses to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's request to close the Dardanelles Straits to Russian warships. Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu has stated that Turkey has to find out whether this is a war or a special military operation to be able to determine if the Montreux Convention applies to this situation. (Even Georgia has been scared into pledging not to participate in sanctions against Russia.)

Thus far, the end game of the war is not visible; however, during a phone conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron, President Putin stated that a settlement could be reached if Ukraine decides to become a neutral country and recognize Russia's sovereignty over Crimea. But that statement seems to be disingenuous, as Moscow's intent is to turn Ukraine into a "union state" along with Belarus. Should that happen, next in line would be Armenia, perhaps also Georgia and some of the Central Asian Turkic republics.

To become a "union state" member means for that country to lose its sovereignty and become one of the units of a new Soviet-style federation, like Chechnya or Tatarstan.

Such an invitation has already been extended indirectly



through Robert Kocharyan. Armenia certainly will shun integration into a crumbling empire.

At this time, Armenia is not asked to offer units to the Russian forces in their Ukrainian campaign, as was the case in Kazakhstan when an Armenian contingent was dragged into the conflict zone as a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). That prospect still remains a possibility, depending on the future conduct of the war.

As a result of Western sanctions, Russia's economy is imploding, even if some relief is provided by China. But that will be little consolation for Armenia, whose largest market is Russia. In the year 2021, Armenia's exports to Russia amounted to \$847 million, an increase of 24.5 percent over the previous year. In addition, 40 percent of family transfers to Armenia come from Russia. Moscow has already placed a ban on foreign transfers, which will affect Armenia immediately.

Armenia's economy is heavily dependent on the tourist industry and the majority of its hundreds of thousands of tourists come from Russia and Iran. Even if trade and transfers resume with Russia, the 35-percent devaluation of the Russian ruble will have a strong negative impact on that sector.

The political implications will be as severe as the economic ones. Caucasus Institute Director Alexander Iskandaryan believes that the countries of the South Caucasus will feel the consequences of a stronger Russian influence and he adds, "However, the impact will be different, because all three states see EDITORIAL, page 19





## COMMENTARY

# Double Standards? Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh Crises and Western Orientalism

By Karolina Pawłowska

Following the recent outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis, even though being highly sympathetic towards the tragic circumstances of the Ukrainian people, I cannot help the overwhelming feeling of bitterness which also seems to be one of the leading common moods in Yerevan. Talking to friends and relatives in Poland and abroad, I witness their extreme empathy and highly emotional responses to news from the frontline. This comes also from my closest relatives and significant others with whom I talked regularly during the Second Karabakh War and who were highly informed about everything happening in Artsakh. They have seen the images of Stepanakert under constant shelling, families with children leaving their belongings behind and weeping mothers grieving their adolescent sons.

Yet, the response seems somewhat different and while confronting that, I was immediately told that these situations cannot be compared. Sadly, I cannot disagree, though not in the way it may seem. Suddenly the West has no difficulty with clearly seeing the difference between an invasion and military operation, between democracy and autocracy, truth, and state propaganda and finally, between who is attacking and who is defending itself. While being, as always, somehow varied in political and military responses, there is almost full moral clarity regarding the moral aspect of these events.

At the same time, Russian money has penetrated European politics to the same extent (or more) as Azerbaijani and harsh and long-lasting sanctions on Russia may soon bring some discomfort to Western citizens. Yet, the public and most of the leading politicians are intensely advocating for Ukraine without any doubt that this is the right thing to do.

Volodymyr Zelensky has risen to the status of a superhuman while Nikol Pashinyan was treated by Western journalists with an obvious degree of paternalism and blamed for the escalation. It took four days to ban Russia from major sport competitions while many Western leaders have joyfully attended the Union of European Football Association (UEFA) Championship in Baku when hundreds of Armenians POWs were still illegally detained. I have not seen Western public opinion empa-

thising with the people of Artsakh, who were given only a few days to leave all their lives behind. Similarly, Yemen, Syria and Palestine have somehow expired in the news cycle. The suffering of these people is well known and somehow ignored as a price for being born on the wrong side of geopolitics.

These double standards cannot be merely explained by economic or political circumstances, nor by the fact that Ukraine is somehow close and Armenia seems distant and unknown...not even by the fact that Vladimir Putin always held the title of the main villain of Europe. They reflect the deeply biased cultural view of geography since both the notions of East and Orient have been established in common perception of lands beyond what we perceive as the Western hemisphere. The deep Orientalism of European and American thinking, significantly pointed out by Edward Said, still dominates Western narratives.

It is fully understandable that political and economic



Armenian Ambassador to Poland Samvel Mkrtchyan at the Medyka border crossing (photo Artem Petrosyan)

support were not easy to provide. The problematic in global responses to the Second Nagorno Karabakh War was the significant failure to recognise Armenians as victims of the aggression. At its deepest core, such perception stems from the fundamental assumption that conflict is an inevitable part of the Caucasus and Middle East, as it lies in the nature of its people. Violent territorial disputes are subsequently blamed on both sides as people in the

region are not (yet) civilised enough to use clean, political measures. Alternatively, they are explained through the lens of a post-Soviet conflict legacy even though adequate measures such as recognition of Nagorno Karabakh independence could have been taken by leading world powers thirty years ago. The East, as the Russian sphere of influence and domain of oligarchic ambitions, is by default messy, dirty, brutal, and chaotic. The politicians lack proper manners, the people cannot be reasoned with nor think for themselves.

We cannot forget that during the Nagorno Karabakh war volunteering at the frontline was perceived in the international media not as an act of patriotism but as naively falling for a raging nationalist narrative. Border clashes which preceded the war were labelled as Armenian provocations as it was somehow widely accepted that the country of 3 million inhabitants and nominal GDP similar to Madagascar would attack the one of the leading oil suppliers to Europe. The asymmetry of that conflict was painfully ignored partly due to ignorance and mainly due to Western arrogance and conformism. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan keeps issuing international warrants for diaspora Armenians who supported the Armenian and Artsakh military, and recently for two Armenian ex-presidents. In the same vein, Ukraine creates foreign legions for volunteers from abroad and this move has been applauded worldwide.

Empathy requires the ability to recognize ourselves in the other. Ukrainian people fleeing the conflict are perceived as just like us: they come from a sovereign, civilized country. The ones who fight back are heroes defending the homeland. They did not deserve the fate of being the victims of one man's ambitions nor regional politics. Refugees were forced to leave their lives behind, and we easily put ourselves in their shoes as their lives are as valuable as ours. Indeed, the situation is different. As I am writing this, the Armenian Ambassador to Poland Samvel Mkrtchyan is standing alone in the cold at the Medyka border crossing trying to provide assistance to Ukrainian Armenians who may not be granted refugee status in Poland due to lack of Ukrainian citizenship.

Karolina Pawłowska is a cultural anthropologist finalizing her Ph.D. thesis on the repatriation of the Armenian diaspora, affiliated with the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań (Poland). She used to work at the American University of Central Asia and the American University in Armenia, teaching mainly academic writing, anthropology, and culture studies. Living in Armenia for more than six years within the span of the last decade, she has witnessed various social and political processes and developed a deep interest in multiple aspects of Armenian culture and society. During the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, she was engaged in initiatives aimed at fighting disinformation and raising awareness of Karabakh issues.



## As Ukraine Crisis Unfolds, Azerbaijan Pivots Closer To Russia

By Michael Rubin

Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden famously said, "When people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature, they will like the strong horse."

To bin Laden, President Ronald Reagan's withdrawal from Lebanon in the wake of Iran's early 1980s terror and kidnapping campaign, and then the Clinton withdrawal from Somalia after the "Black Hawk Down" episode, showed the United States to be a paper tiger. Terrorism, in bin Laden's mind, worked before and would work again.

Today, Russia is on the warpath.

Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks like a strongman, but Russia is not a particularly strong country. Its economy is smaller than Italy's and not much larger than Spain's. The US economy is more than 13 times that of Russia, even though our population is only slightly more than twice that of Russia. In essence, Putin is like a poker player who wins with a pair of two by outbluffing an opponent who has a royal flush.

Under such circumstances, it is no surprise that Putin is now collecting a pot far larger than Ukraine. Apologists for Azerbaijan's dictatorship have long argued that

U.S. support for Azeri dictator Ilham Aliyev is crucial because he represents a hedge against both Russia and Iran.

This has long been more myth than reality. In recent years, both Azerbaijan's trade and the favors it offers Iran have been on the upswing. The same has been true with Russia. Azerbaijan's lavish caviar diplomacy might obscure both facts in the US and Europe, but Baku's agreements with Tehran and Moscow speak for themselves.

Now, all pretenses are off.

As Russian forces rolled into Ukraine, the Kremlin's press agency TASS reported that Putin and Aliyev would soon agree to "a declaration on allied cooperation that will bring the ties between Russia and Azerbaijan to the level of allied relations." It did not take long. Early on Tuesday, February 22, Aliyev became the first foreign leader to pay homage to Putin after the Russian leader's rambling Ukraine speech in which he announced the start of hostilities and denounced the basis of Ukrainian sovereignty. The two subsequently formalized their agreement in Moscow.

Former Treasury Department Assistant Secretary Marshall Billingslea is right. The Biden administration could have already imposed sanctions but does not appear to have had the executive orders prepared. In essence, as the White House hand-wrings, backtracks, and prevaricates, Russia projects strength and collects chits of influence far more than what it otherwise might.

Azerbaijan is now firmly in the Kremlin's camp. To accept its largesse is to be indirectly on Moscow's payroll. It is time the US both recognize the cost of inaction and understand that the battle for influence is not limited to Ukraine but extends to the South Caucasus and regions of what Putin considers his "near abroad" as the aging Russian leader seeks to reconstitute the Soviet Union.

Michael Rubin (@mrubin1971) is a contributor to the Washington Examiner's Beltway Confidential. He is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.





## COMMENTARY

# A Historian Corrects Misunderstandings about Ukrainian And Russian History: A Conversation with Ron Suny

ANN ARBOR, Mich. (theconversation.com) — *The first casualty of war, says historian Ronald Suny, is not just the truth. Often, he says, “it is what is left out.”*

Russian President Vladimir Putin began a full-scale attack on Ukraine on February 24, 2022 and many in the world are now getting a crash course in the complex and intertwined history of those two nations and their peoples. Much of what the public is hearing, though, is jarring to historian Suny’s ears. That’s because some of it is incomplete, some of it is wrong, and some of it is obscured or refracted by the self-interest or the limited perspective of who is telling it. We asked Suny, a professor at the University of Michigan, to respond to a number of popular historical assertions he’s heard recently.

**Putin’s view of Russo-Ukrainian history has been widely criticized in the West. What do you think motivates his version of the history?**

Putin believes that Ukrainians, Belarusians and Russians are one people, bound by shared history and culture. But he also is aware that they have become separate states recognized in international law and by Russian governments as well. At the same time, he questions the historical formation of the modern Ukrainian state, which he says was the tragic product of decisions by former Russian leaders Vladimir Lenin, Josef Stalin and Nikita Khrushchev. He also questions the sovereignty and distinctive nation-ness of Ukraine. While he promotes national identity in Russia, he denigrates the growing sense of nation-ness in Ukraine.

Putin indicates that Ukraine by its very nature ought to be friendly, not hostile, to Russia. But he sees its current government as illegitimate, aggressively nationalist and even fascist. The condition for peaceful relations between states, he repeatedly says, is that they do not threaten the security of other states. Yet, as is clear from the invasion, he presents the greatest threat to Ukraine.

Putin sees Ukraine as an existential threat to Russia, believing that if it enters NATO, offensive weaponry will be placed closer to the Russian border, as already is being done in Romania and Poland.

It’s possible to interpret Putin’s statements about the historical genesis of the Ukrainian state as self-serving history and a way of saying, “We created them, we can take them back.” But I believe he may instead have been making a forceful appeal to Ukraine and the West to recognize the security interests of Russia and provide guarantees that there will be no further moves by NATO toward Russia and into Ukraine. Ironically, his recent actions have driven Ukrainians more tightly into the arms of the West.

**The Western position is that the breakaway regions Putin recognized, Donetsk and Luhansk, are integral parts of Ukraine. Russia claims that the Donbass region, which includes these two provinces, is historically and rightfully part of Russia. What does history tell us?**

During the Soviet period, these two provinces were officially part of Ukraine. When the USSR disintegrated, the former Soviet republic boundaries became, under

The Donbass has historically been inhabited by Russians, Ukrainians, Jews and others. In Soviet and post-Soviet times, the cities were largely Russian ethnically and linguistically, while the villages were Ukrainian. When in 2014 the Maidan revolution in Kyiv moved the country

gerous preventive war – a war based on the anxiety that sometime in the future his country will be attacked – the outcome of which is unpredictable.

**A New York Times story on Putin’s histories of Ukraine says “The newly created Soviet government under Lenin that drew so much of Mr. Putin’s scorn on Monday would eventually crush the nascent independent Ukrainian state. During the Soviet era, the Ukrainian language was banished from schools and its culture was permitted to exist only as a cartoonish caricature of dancing Cossacks in puffy pants.” Is this history of Soviet repression accurate?**

Lenin’s government won the 1918-1921 civil war in



Donetsk residents celebrate recognition of independence of the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics by Russia on February 21, 2022 (Alexander RyuAlexander Ryumin\TASS via Getty Images)

toward the West and Ukrainian nationalists threatened to limit the use of the Russian language in parts of Ukraine, rebels in the Donbas violently resisted the central government of Ukraine.

After months of fighting between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian rebel forces in the Donbas in 2014, regular Russian forces moved in from Russia, and a war began that has lasted for the last eight years, with thousands killed and wounded.

Historical claims to land are always contested – think of Israelis and Palestinians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis – and they are countered by claims that the majority living on the land in the present takes precedence over historical claims from the past. Russia can claim Donbass with its own arguments based on ethnicity, but so can Ukrainians with arguments based on historical possession. Such arguments go nowhere and often lead, as can be seen today, to bloody conflict.

**Why was Russia’s recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics as independent such a pivotal event in the conflict?**

When Putin recognized the Donbass republics as independent states, he seriously escalated the conflict, which turned out to be the

prelude to a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. That invasion is a hard, harsh signal to the West that Russia will not back down and accept the further arming of and placing of weaponry in Ukraine, Poland and Romania. The Russian president has now led his country into a dan-

Ukraine and drove out foreign interventionists, thus consolidating and recognizing the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. But Putin is essentially correct that it was Lenin’s policies that promoted Ukrainian statehood within the USSR, within a Soviet empire, officially granting it and other Soviet republics the constitutional right to secede from the Union without conditions. This right, Putin angrily asserts, was a landmine that eventually blew up the Soviet Union.

The Ukrainian language was never banned in the USSR and was taught in schools. In the 1920s, Ukrainian culture was actively promoted by the Leninist nationality policy.

But under Stalin, Ukrainian language and culture began to be powerfully undermined. This started in the early 1930s, when Ukrainian nationalists were repressed, the horrific “Death Famine” killed millions of Ukrainian peasants, and Russification, which is the process of promoting Russian language and culture, accelerated in the republic.

Within the strict bounds of the Soviet system, Ukraine, like many other nationalities in the USSR, became a modern nation, conscious of its history, literate in its language, and even in puffy pants permitted to celebrate its ethnic culture. But the contradictory policies of the Soviets in Ukraine both promoted a Ukrainian cultural nation while restricting its freedoms, sovereignty and expressions of nationalism.

History is both a contested and a subversive social science. It is used and misused by governments and pundits and propagandists. But for historians it is also a way to find out what happened in the past and why. As a search for truth, it becomes subversive of convenient and comfortable but inaccurate views of where we came from and where we might be going.

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The War in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine has caused at least 14,000 deaths (Photo by Martin Trbalik/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images)

international law, the legal boundaries of the post-Soviet states. Russia repeatedly recognized those borders, though reluctantly in the case of Crimea.

But when one raises the fraught question of what lands belong to what people, a whole can of worms is opened.





## COMMENTARY

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## Russia-Ukraine War: This is What Happens When Compromise Is Not Achieved

What is happening right now in Ukraine is the worst possible scenario for both sides, in fact all sides.

First of all, this is an enormous tragedy for the people of Ukraine who have fallen victim to the Russian invasion which should have been avoided at all costs. No one can justify the destruction of a country and the killing of innocent people. We should support peace, common sense and safety of all human beings.

Let us ignore the unrelenting propaganda, misinformation disinformation, and hypocrisy which have inundated the media before and during the war. No need to play politics or partisanship with people's lives.

Let us now move from emotional statements to the real world which can only be ignored at our own peril. Since the beginning of the world, the powerful has always imposed his will on the weak. There is no escape from this. It has always been this way and will continue to be this way. All those who believe in truth and justice are sadly mistaken. They live in a make-believe world.

Russia, as a powerful country, felt that it was being threatened by Western powers encroaching on its sphere of influence and wanted to protect its national interests. Whether we agree or disagree with the Russian view is immaterial. This is how the Russians perceive the situation. And when you are a powerful country, right or wrong, you try to impose your will on others, one way or another. The precedent for this situation is the Russian invasion of the Republic of Georgia in 2008 when the latter flirted with the idea of joining NATO. Russia occupies large parts of Georgia to this day.

Those in the West who have been making sanctimonious statements about big bad Russia attacking an innocent country are conveniently forgetting how the western countries themselves behaved for decades, even centuries. The imperial powers of the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Germany, and Italy went around the world conquering dozens of smaller, poorer and weaker countries, subjugated them, plundered their natural resources, killed and wounded hundreds of thousands of natives, until they rose up and tossed the aggressors out.

The United States, the self-declared paragon of democracy and human rights, has attacked and occupied several countries in the past imposing its will around the world. The U.S. government has overthrown many leaders who have refused to toe its line and submit to America's wishes. There are dozens of such examples, the latest of which is Iraq. Who can forget the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, when the Soviet Union deployed nuclear missiles in Cuba, just 90 miles away from the United States? The two countries came to the brink of nuclear war on that occasion. There is also the long-standing U.S. policy of the Monroe Doctrine which states that any intervention in the political affairs of the Americas by foreign powers is considered a hostile act against the United States. How is this different from Putin's interpretation of Russia's sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, including Ukraine? Finally, President Biden's actions against Russia are partially prompted by his intent to raise his record low rating of 37 percent. The latest Washington Post/ABC News poll showed that only 33 percent of Americans approve Biden's handling of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, while 47 percent disapprove.

It would have been preferable to engage in direct negotiations between Russia and Ukraine to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. As it is often said, "war is diplomacy by other means." The more outside powers such as the United States, France and the United Kingdom meddled in this dispute, the worst it got, since each of these countries, pretending to defend Ukraine, were in fact pursuing their own interests. The crux of the issue is the disagreement between Russia and the West about an alleged pledge made by the West after the collapse of the Soviet Union that NATO will not expand to Eastern Europe, threatening Russia's security. Nevertheless, NATO did expand to several Eastern European countries, which Russia viewed as a hostile act.

Russia decided to impose its will on Ukraine, fearing that if it did not act promptly, Ukraine would join NATO, after which it would be impossible to neutralize the perceived danger, due to the NATO policy of "attack on one member country is deemed an attack on all."

There should have been a compromise found on both sides to avoid war.

Most people thought that there would be no war and that Russia was amassing troops on Ukraine's border to pressure it to reach a compromise solution. Regrettably, the Russian attempt to influence Ukraine ended in a full scale invasion destroying large parts of the country's infrastructure and causing untold casualties. It could be that Ukraine refused to compromise relying on Western assurances that it would come to its aid militarily and economically, if it resisted Russian demands not to join NATO. In addition to providing military hardware and economic assistance, Western countries tried to block Russia's actions by issuing a series of draconian sanctions, which failed to alter its decision. The hopeful news is that Russian and Ukrainian delegations held their first direct talks on Monday and agreed to meet again.

Turning to the effects on Armenia of the war and sanctions on Russia, Armenia is caught in the middle of its alliance with and reliance on Russia and its standing with the rest of the world. As they say, when two elephants jostle, the ant gets stomped on, regardless of which elephant wins.

The biggest problem that Armenia has is the absence of a competent leader who would be able to come up with a skillful solution to extricate itself from this extremely complicated situation. Since the start of the war, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has not made an official declaration. Nevertheless, on three separate occasions, Armenia has taken sides and made statements regarding this conflict.

The most problematic action Armenia took was last Friday when the Council of Europe voted to suspend Russia's membership in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Committee of Ministers. Armenia was the only country that voted with Russia against the measure. Forty two countries voted yes. Turkey shrewdly abstained and Azerbaijan did not vote at all. Western countries will not look too kindly at Armenia's support for Russia. Likewise, Russia will not look too kindly at Azerbaijan's and Turkey's votes. The war in Ukraine is sure to limit Turkey's ability to walk on a tightrope between NATO and Russia. Azerbaijan's similar tightrope walk will also be curtailed by not voting with Russia in the Council of Europe, thus undermining the declaration of "allied cooperation" signed on Feb. 22 by Russia and Azerbaijan.

Secondly, when Armenia's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Vahan Hunanyan, was asked if Armenia will join Russia in recognizing the "independence" of the Ukrainian regions of Donesk and Lugansk, he replied: "There is no such issue on [Armenia's] agenda." Putin will not be pleased with that answer. He has many ways to pressure Pashinyan to toe the Russian line in this crisis.

Finally, speaking at a meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council in Kazakhstan on February 25, Pashinyan suggested that prompt measures be taken "to minimize or circumvent" the anti-Russia sanctions approved by the West following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The anti-Russia sanctions are sure to have a major impact on Armenia's frail economy as Russia is Armenia's largest trading partner. As they say, when Russia sneezes, Armenia catches a cold. The \$861 million remitted in 2021 by Armenian workers in Russia to their families in Armenia will be sharply curtailed due to the collapsing ruble and increased unemployment.

There is also a long-standing controversy between Armenia and Ukraine. Both sides accuse each other of betraying their trust and siding with their enemies. In 2014, Armenia, along with nine other countries, voted with Russia against a UN General Assembly resolution which declared the pro-Russian Crimean referendum invalid. Armenians respond by recalling that Ukraine voted in the General Assembly in 2008, for a resolution demanding the withdrawal of "Armenian forces" from Nagorno Karabagh. President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine announced during the 2020 Artsakh war: "We support Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and sovereignty just as Azerbaijan always supports our territorial integrity and sovereignty." Furthermore, Ukraine sold lethal weapons to Azerbaijan prior to the 2020 war.

One should not forget that there are around 500,000 Armenians who live in Ukraine. When other countries shut down their embassies in Ukraine and withdrew their nationals, the Armenian Embassy continued functioning and Armenian nationals remained in Ukraine risking their lives.

With each passing day, more innocent civilians are being killed in Ukraine, more sanctions are being imposed on Russia and more ominous threats are being issued. Common sense should prevail before the world reaches a doomsday scenario.

The only solution is reaching a compromise through peaceful negotiations. Eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth will leave everyone blind and toothless.

## War in Ukraine Is at Armenia's Backdoor

EDITORIAL, from page 16

are at different levels of relations with Russia and NATO and have different potentials to uphold sovereignty. Armenia is in the geopolitical orbit of Russia; Georgia follows the course of NATO and EU accession and Azerbaijan is an ally of Turkey, the country with the second most powerful army in NATO."

With the war in Ukraine raging, the political equations have shifted in the region. Armenia had pinned its hopes on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), whose Minsk Group co-

chairs continue to pursue the status issue of Karabakh. Now that the OSCE is heavily involved in the Ukraine crisis, the Karabakh issue will be sidelined, a situation very much to Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev's liking.

And Russia's co-chair was always drifting away from his colleagues by avoiding dealing with the status issue and was proposing to confine the OSCE's activities to humanitarian issues. Now, Moscow will have a free hand to shape the Caucasus policies with Turkey, away from the prying eyes of Western governments.

Just two days before the war, Putin signed an alliance treaty with Aliyev, one of whose articles deals with gas exports. Azerbaijan agrees to sell its gas to Europe

only with Russia's permission. President Putin has invited Nikol Pashinyan to sign another treaty; most probably Russia will pay Azerbaijan through concessions from Armenia. Thus far, there have been two formulas to solve the conflicts in the Caucasus: the OSCE and the 3+3. It looks like the first format will be eliminated and only the second, featuring Turkey, Russia, Iran will remain to deal with the remaining two, Armenia and Azerbaijan, as Georgia has refused to take part in the deal.

As the war continues, many countries have opened their borders to receive the desperate refugees. Even Armenia invited Ukrainian refugees of Armenian and non-Armenian origin.

As survivors of a genocide and as refu-

gees themselves many times over, Armenians fully empathize with the plight of Ukrainian refugees and offer compassion for their fates.

However, we have to be mindful that Ukraine's current regime provided arms to Azerbaijan during the 4-Day War in 2016. Zelenskyy was even more zealous to support Azerbaijan militarily during the 44-Day War in 2020, even possibly providing phosphorus bombs that killed civilians as well as soldiers. On top of his collusion he publicly congratulated Aliyev on his "victory."

Despite our great empathy towards the plight of the Ukrainian people, our sympathy for Mr. Zelenskyy has to match his deeds in Karabakh.



# Ukrainians Organize Yerevan Rally

UKRAINE, from page 1

Their family and friends have been stuck in Ukraine, spending three nights in a row in shelters, he continued. Georgii said that although their families are relatively safe in the shelters, they do not know what next steps to take. Yelyzaveta's parents must take care of her 80-year-old grandparents, and cannot abandon them.

"They plan to stay in Ukraine because it's their land. They do not need to go anywhere from home," Yelyzaveta said.

Armenians and other nationals such as Lithuanians and Georgians came to support Ukraine. Many of the Armenians at the rally were from the National Democratic Axis political bloc. Board member Garegin Chugaszyan was among the speakers of the rally.

Chugaszyan believes Russia's invasion of Ukraine is "the last convulsion of a dying empire." He thinks Putin wants to restore the Russian Empire in its previous form without any autonomy granted.

"For Armenians, this is a program for the final deprivation of the homeland and



Yelyzaveta and Georgii Shatilova, Ukrainian nationals at the rally in Yerevan (photo Brandon Balayan)

national extinction," Chugaszyan said. "Russia has chosen Ukraine as the target of destruction and absorption. After this, it will be the turn of other countries, including Armenia."

The former Soviet republics of Georgia

and Azerbaijan have had different responses to the conflict. Georgia's Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili stated that Tbilisi will not join the sanctions against Russia.

Azerbaijan recently sent humanitarian aid to Ukraine, but also signed an agreement of alliance with Russia, which would deepen political, economic, and military relations.

The Shatilovas said they were not informed about the alliance agreement and did not want to comment because they did not know what the intentions of Azerbaijan were.

Armenia has not decided to recognize or condemn Russia's recognition of Donetsk and Lugansk, but was the only country in the Council of Europe to vote against the decision to suspend Russia from the organization. President of the Artsakh Republic Arayik Harutyunyan welcomed Russia's decision of recognition and congratulated the people of Donbass in a statement.

"The right of nations to self-determination and building one's own state is inalienable for every people and is a fundamental principle of international law," Harutyunyan said.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan held a phone conversation yesterday with Putin. According to the Prime Minister's website, the two discussed issues re-



Ukrainian children holding up posters of the Ukrainian flag (photo Brandon Balayan)

lated to the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, or the CSTO. The two also discussed the implementation of the trilateral agreements signed with Azerbaijan.

Some Armenians online have been hesitant to show support for Ukraine because they have funded the Azerbaijani military in the past. There was also a conspiracy spreading about Ukraine selling white phosphorus to Azerbaijan, but this has not been proven to be true.

Both Georgii and Yelyzaveta hope Armenia does not send troops to fight in Russia.

Under the CSTO, in January Armenia sent a peacekeeping force to Kazakhstan due to protests caused by a rise in fuel prices.

"We just ask Armenia to not interfere and not support Russia in their war crimes," Georgii said.

The Shatilovas both expressed their wishes for peace and belief in their military. In the end they emphasized their desire for Armenia not to support Russia.

"Please do not let Armenian people die on Ukrainian land," Yelyzaveta pleaded.

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