

Honoring Women’s Achievements in Gyumri

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — “Trümmerfrauen” was the name given to those German women (“Frauen”) who, after World War II, rolled up their sleeves and helped remove rubble (“Trümmer”) from the streets of bombed out cities and towns. In Gyumri, Armenia, after a devastating earthquake in 1988 had left that city and others in the region in ruins, it was also mainly the women who took responsibility for starting the reconstruction process. On May 7, an exhibition opened in Gyumri, entitled “World of Women,” honoring their efforts in paintings by Armenian visual artist Lilit Bachach and works by German photographer Ralf Bäcker. As the flyer for the event reads, “Women in particular start small businesses, build, work, and so provide for the family as small entrepreneurs and skilled workers.” In the photos of Gyumri on display, it is above all women who are doing the work, in the past as in the present.



Shirak region Governor Nazeli Baghdasaryan and Alexan Ter-Minasyan

Joining efforts in the exhibition, Bachach and Bäcker pay tribute to these women for their important contribution to social development and rebuilding the community. They show them in various modes of being, in everyday life, their activities and their emotions, as well as inner feelings. The artists “invite the viewer to journey into these women’s worlds and discover something of how they see, experience and represent them.” Working closely together, the artists communicate their feeling of respect for their subjects, as if to say, “I see you. I perceive you. You are important to me. see WOMEN, page 5

EU’s Michel Reports ‘Tangible Progress’ Made at Armenian-Azeri Summit

BRUSSELS (Azatutyun) — Armenia and Azerbaijan’s leaders made progress towards negotiating a bilateral peace treaty, demarcating the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and opening transport links between the two countries, European Council President Charles Michel said early on May 23 after hosting fresh

and Azerbaijan,” Michel told reporters. “Teams led by the [Armenian and Azerbaijani] foreign ministers will take forward this process in the coming weeks.” “In addition to this track, I also stressed to both leaders that it was necessary that the rights and security of the ethnic Armenian population in Kara-



From left, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, President Charles Michel and President Ilham Aliyev

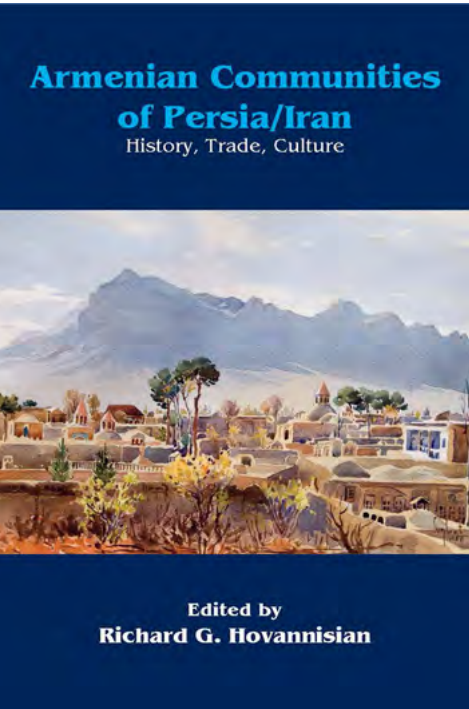
talks between them the previous day. Michel held a trilateral meeting with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Brussels for the second time in less than two months. “The leaders agreed to advance discussions on the future peace treaty governing inter-state relations between Armenia

bakh be addressed,” he said. Michel did not say whether Aliyev and Pashinyan agreed on the agenda of the planned negotiations on the Armenian-Azerbaijani treaty. Pashinyan’s office did not report any agreements to that effect in a statement on the Brussels summit. see SUMMIT, page 2

Armenian Church Warns Against ‘Humiliating’ Concessions to Baku

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The Armenian Apostolic Church on Friday, May 20, warned Armenia political leadership against compromising on Nagorno-Karabakh’s right to self-determination in peace talks with Azerbaijan. The church’s Supreme Spiritual Council headed by Catholicos Karekin II said it must not make such concessions “regardless of existing pressures and external threats.” “Peace cannot be established through the humiliation of national dignity, amid incessant encroachments on the territorial integrity of our state, the presence of prisoners of war, and Azerbaijan’s constant threats and propaganda of anti-Armenianism,” the council said after a three-day meeting held at the church’s Mother See in Echmiadzin. It said the Armenian authorities must make sure that the Karabakh Armenians right to self-determination does not become “a subject of bargaining” in the negotiating process. see WARNING, page 3

Latest Book Edited by Hovannisian Focuses on Iranian-Armenians’ History



By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BELMONT, Mass. — Prof. Richard Hovannisian on May 6 was the speaker at the first in-person evening lecture event since the beginning of the pandemic, at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), for a program co-sponsored by the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*. The program was also online. Hovannisian was there to speak about the book *Armenian Communities of Persia/Iran: History, Trade, Culture*, of which he is the editor. The book is a result of the proceeds from the last in the UCLA conference series, titled “Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces.” Hovannisian, 89, made few concessions to age; the only difference from previous years was that he was sitting. He still speaks without notes, deliberately and calmly. “I feel very fortunate I have been able to come back to the greater Boston area for the first time in several years since we all became home bound and worry bound,” he said, praising the “renewed and expanded facility” of NAASR, whose headquarters had undergone an extensive renovation which had been unveiled in the months before the pandemic. see IRAN, page 10



YEREVAN
MetaGait Helps Armenia’s Soldiers One Step at a Time



WORLDWIDE
Armenian Rituals Play Important Role on World Doll Day



BUENOS ARIES
Magda Tagtachian: In Search of Memory, Truth and Justice





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Freedom House Concerned About Armenia's Anti-Defamation Law

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Marc Behrendt, the director for Europe and Eurasia programs at Freedom House, has said that Armenia has made progress in democracy and human rights, but added that the organization is concerned about legislation criminalizing defamation, Factor TV reports.

Behrendt told a forum on Armenian democracy in Yerevan on Friday, May 20, that the new law could restrict freedom of expression in the country. He urged the government and the National Assembly to pay attention to criticism on the matter.

The expert also assured that Freedom House will do their best to achieve positive changes in the fight against disinformation in Armenia.

Earlier too the organization slammed the new legislation as “controversial,” which it said signifies a clear degradation of democratic norms in Armenia, including freedom of expression. Freedom House called on the Armenian authorities to immediately cease enforcement of the law.

Armenia MoD Confirms: Azerbaijani Armed Forces Advanced in Vardasar

YEREVAN (News.am) — The Armenian Defense Ministry in response to Sputnik Armenia's request on May 24 confirmed the fact of another advance of Azerbaijani troops in Syunik - in the area of Mount Vardasar.

“At the beginning of May, we reported that the Azerbaijani Armed Forces or border guards had infiltrated the Armenian territory much to the south - near the height south of the villages Tsav and Nerkin Khand - about a year ago.

The information about the locations of the positions coincides with the former ombudsman Arman Tatoyan's data. Tatoyan said so on 11 April, after Azerbaijani guards moved into the area of Nerkin Hand in March.

However, when Sputnik Armenia asked, the Defense Ministry said that “there are no Azerbaijani positions on the territories adjacent to the village of Tsav, and there never was any.”

When asked if there were other areas of Azerbaijani intrusion, except for the Vardenis community (Kut, Verin Shorzha and others) in Gegharkunik, Sev lich, Ishkhanasar and Nerkin Hand areas in Syunik, then the Defense Ministry said that “except for the incursions on Armenian territory in the past, no other cases were recorded.”

After examining the satellite maps, on May 10, the news outlet sent a request to the Defense Ministry again with a satellite picture and indication of the areas of engineering works near Vardasar.

When asked for clarification about whether Azerbaijani positions were visible in the photo and (if so, when the incursion took place), the reply was: “Enemy military positions at the points indicated by the arrows were deployed in May-June 2021.

EU's Michel Reports ‘Tangible Progress’ Made At Armenian-Azeri Summit

SUMMIT, from page 1

In March, Baku presented Yerevan with five elements which it wants to be at the heart of the treaty. They include a mutual recognition of each other's territorial integrity.

The Armenian government said they should be complemented by other issues relating to the future status of Karabakh and the security of its population. Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said last Wednesday that Baku has not yet agreed to discuss them as well.

The government revealed its counterproposals after Armenia's leading opposition groups launched on May 1 daily demonstrations in a bid to force Pashinyan to resign. Opposition leaders claim that he has agreed to restore Azerbaijani control over Karabakh. They cite the prime minister's statements made following his previous meeting with Aliyev held on April 6.

Michel announced following the latest summit that a newly formed Armenian-Azerbaijani commission on the border demarcation will hold its first meeting “in the coming days.” Also, he said, Aliyev and Pashinyan made significant progress towards opening the border to commerce and cargo shipments.

“Notably they agreed on principles of border administration, security, land fees but also customs in the context of international transport,” he said without elaborating. “The deputy prime ministers [of Armenia and Azerbaijan] will take this work forward in the coming days.”

Pashinyan's office said in this regard that the two leaders reached understandings on “the further course of work on the opening of regional communications.” It too did not give any details.

It was thus not clear whether the two sides ironed out their differences on the status of an Armenian road and railway that would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave. Aliyev has said that people and cargo passing through them must be exempt from Armenian border controls. Armenian leaders have until now rejected his demands for an extraterritorial land corridor.

Armenian-Azerbaijani transport links are envisaged by a Russian-brokered ceasefire

that stopped the 2020 war in Karabakh. Shortly after the truce, Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan set up a trilateral commission tasked with working out their practical modalities.

The commission has not met since December. Moscow moved to revive its activities last month after accusing the West of trying to hijack its efforts to make peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan.



From left, Foreign Ministers of Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan, Ararat Mirzoyan, Sergey Lavrov and Jeyhun Bayramov

Lavrov Talks with Foreign Ministers

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov spoke with his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts by phone on May 23, one day after the leaders of the two South Caucasus states met again in Brussels.

Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry reported that Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov discussed with Lavrov the results of the latest Armenian-Azerbaijani summit hosted by the European Union's top official. It said they also spoke about the implementation of Russian-brokered agreements to establish transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan and to demarcate their border.

The same issues were also on the agenda of Lavrov's call with Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan. According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, they discussed, in particular, the formation of an Armenian-Azer-

baijani commission on the border demarcation.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev set up on Monday two such commissions comprising senior Armenian and Azerbaijani officials respectively.

Russia brokered similar understandings between Armenia and Azerbaijan after helping to stop a six-week war in

Nagorno-Karabakh in November 2020. Moscow accused the EU and the United States of trying to hijack its peace efforts following the previous Aliyev-Pashinyan encounter hosted by Michel on April 6.

According to official Russian readouts of Lavrov's phone calls, Mirzoyan and Bayramov reaffirmed their governments' declared commitments to fully implement the Russian-brokered agreements. Lavrov had already received such assurances from them at a trilateral meeting in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe on May 12.

The top Russian diplomat was also reported to discuss with them “a number of further joint steps” on the border demarcation, the opening of Armenian-Azerbaijani transport links as well as planned negotiations on an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty.

It remains unclear whether the conflicting sides are planning to restart the work of a Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani task force dealing with economic and transport issues. Mirzoyan indicated in Dushanbe that it will meet in Moscow on May 16 after a nearly five-month hiatus. The meeting did not take place, however.

It also remains to be seen whether Russian officials will be involved in the demarcation process in an advisory capacity.

Azerbaijan Destroys Park of Teachers in Karabakh

STEPANAKERT (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A video posted recently by Telegram user @arathau shows the destruction of the Park of Teachers in the Nagorno-Karabakh village of Mets Tagher, occupied by Azerbaijan in the days following the Second Karabakh War in fall 2020.

An inscription about the construction of the park in memory of the teachers of Mets Tagher and Sokrat Aghabekyan is gone too.

The 4th article of the 1954 Hague Convention “On the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict” prohibits any act of vandalism, theft, robbery or misappropriation of cultural property in any form, and also imposes an absolute ban on any acts of revenge against cultural property.

During the recent military hostilities, Azerbaijani forces launched two targeted attacks on the Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi. Azerbaijan earlier “restored” a church by replacing its Armenian inscrip-

tion with glass art. Furthermore, President Ilham Aliyev visited the region of Hadrut in territories occupied by Azerbaijan and declared his intention to “renovate” a 12th century Armenian church, which he claimed to “an Albanian church.” Aliyev went so far as to accuse Armenians of leaving “fake inscriptions” in the Armenian language.

Concerns about the preservation of cultural sites in Nagorno-Karabakh are made all the more urgent by the Azerbaijani government's history of systemically destroying indigenous Armenian heritage — acts of both warfare and historical revisionism. The Azerbaijani government has secretly destroyed a striking number of cultural and religious artifacts in the late 20th century. Within Nakhichevan alone, a historically Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani forces destroyed at least 89 medieval churches, 5,840 khachkars (Armenian cross stones) and 22,000 historical tombstones between 1997 and 2006.

Clarification

The article by Christopher Atamian, “On the Importance of Curating,” in the May 14 issue of the *Mirror-Spectator* states: “By way of an example, the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown (AMA) does not typically show contemporary Armenian artists.” In fact, the Armenian Museum has showcased many contemporary Armenian artists in the past, such as Dahlia Elsayed (<https://dahliaelsayed.com/>) and John Berberian (<https://youtu.be/bMvji2zNGcQ>) and is planning exhibits with several others over the next year.



ARMENIA

MetaGait Helps Armenia's Soldiers One Step at a Time

By **Cristopher Patvakanian**
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Inspiration for innovation can come from anywhere. For the founder of Metagait, a virtual reality (VR) rehabilitation device, Dr. Davit Arsenyan got his inspiration from, of all areas, video games.

Armenia-based Arsenyan is a kinesiologist, or a doctor who specializes in the mechanics of body movements.

For his entire career, he has been working to assist patients to regain mobility and increase their strength after traumatic incidents. Arsenyan's idea to create a device which combined physical movement and virtual reality as a method of improving neuromuscular memory came after trying out his friend's VR game room back in 2016. The game entailed wearing a headset which displayed images of a "virtual reality" of some situation and the use of handheld joysticks/controllers to move around in the game, essentially fully immersive digital world.

At the time, he was working with veterans of the 2016, the 4-day war, specifically soldiers who had faced many traumatic issues affecting both their brains and physical movements. After playing in the game room, Arsenyan invited one of his patients who had limited mobility to join him the next time, thinking it might be a fun and stimulating experience. That patient was suffering from paralysis and could only move one arm, but what happened next when he began playing the video game was nothing short of unbelievable.

"The patient's damaged arm began to move... and his hand opened and closed," Arsenyan recalled. It was at that moment he began thinking of the potential to incorporate the virtual reality experience as a supplement to physical therapy. And the science behind this combination is something that has been investigated in applications beyond MetaGait.

According to Dr. Lusine Poghosyan, who works at the "Support for Wounded Soldiers and Disabled Military" NGO, the use of VR in neurohabilitation therapy is on the rise and is used in tandem with more traditional therapy for a variety of reasons. VR can be used to increase motivation and improve the emotional and psychological component of going through rehabilitation training. A patient can be transformed from their hospital or rehabilitation center to a whole new world through VR, and partaking in such an engaging form of therapy no

doubt makes a positive change in their recovery experience.

The physical component of the device simulates walking, by keeping the patient in an upright position, stabilizing their torso, with supports attaching to a patient's legs and arms. The movement on the device is similar to that of an elliptical machine at a gym.

Arsenyan emphasized that "even the experience of being able to stand and see the surroundings from that height makes such a big difference," as compared to the typical sedentary, wheelchair-bound perspective many patients with limited mobility have. The device is also used by children with cerebral palsy and brain or spinal cord injuries who have had difficulty walking.

Thus, through the synergy of walking and virtual reality, MetaGait claims to promote the regeneration of nerve centers in the central nervous system that were damaged by the patient's traumatic incident, "helping the formation of new centers and nerve connections," per their website.

As of right now, the options for someone using MetaGait range from virtual reality skiing where users can compete with other

virtual skiers to partaking in VR tourism to sites such as Tatev Monastery, St. Ghazanchetsots Cathedral, and Lake Sevan. There are plans to expand the selection of games and locations and create more interactive games to promote cyber tourism of Armenia and Artsakh.

Incredibly, almost all of MetaGait is produced in Armenia, and the games are also built by software engineers in the country.

The only exception is the VR headset, an Oculus Quest 2, which is imported. The device also has a patent and there are aspirations to eventually sell MetaGait on the international market, which will require further clearance for regulations, standards and other necessary documentation.

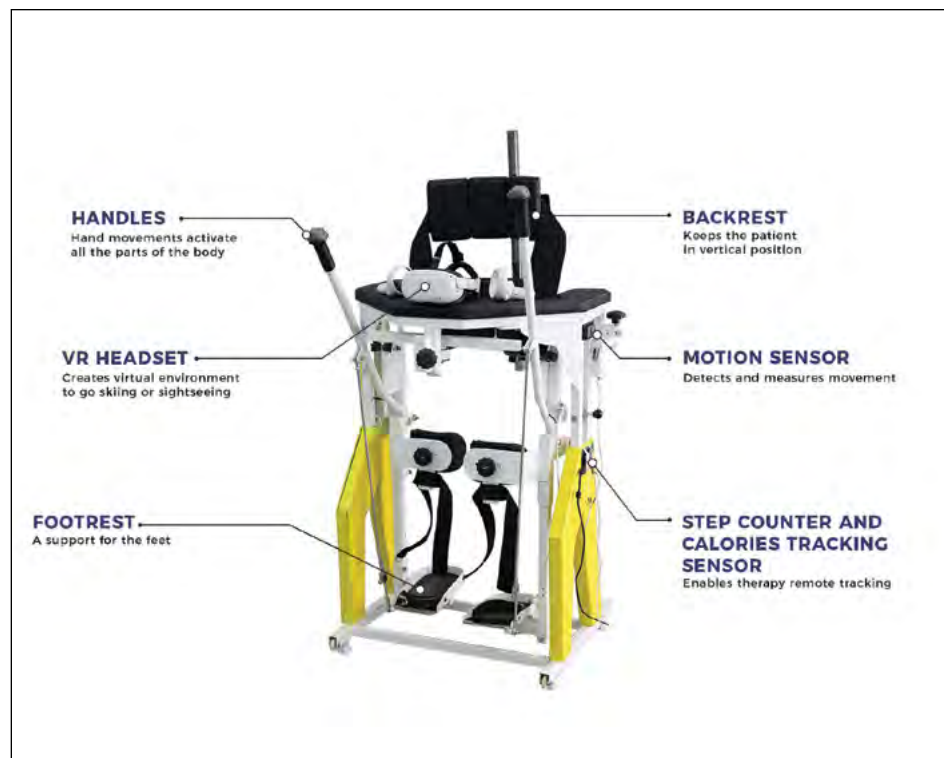
In Armenia, however, MetaGait refuses to sell or charge for use of the device. "I can't imagine selling our device to soldiers and veterans in the country... Perhaps we can sell it abroad to fund the creation of more devices in Armenia, but I don't see a market here," Arsenyan explained.

This is where MetaGait's latest partnership with reArmenia comes in. reArmenia, a collaboration and fundraising platform recently created to bring the diaspora with Armenia and Artsakh, is hosting a fundraiser to raise \$150,000 to create more MetaGaits in Armenia and expand access to a broader audience. As of today, there are very few devices in the country and they are in rehabilitation centers or placed in individual patient's homes, who after receiving treatment return the device such that other individuals in need can also benefit from it. "The device keeps on giving once a patient has recovered, and with the proper finances, we hope to build 35 new devices in an effort to expand access across the country."

For those interested in donating, the fundraiser page for MetaGait can be found on reArmenia's website at the following link: <https://rearmenia.com/en/fundraisers/5fa63fb2-1f17-429e-a3a2-f993ea456c36>.



Dr. Arsenyan, 6th from right, with the rest of the MetaGait team



The MetaGait walking and virtual reality physical therapy device

Armenian Church Warns Against 'Humiliating' Concessions to Baku

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Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and other senior officials have not publicly stated whether they will bring up the principle of self-determination of peoples, long championed by Armenia, in planned negotiations on a comprehensive peace treaty with Azerbaijan. They have said only that the talks should address the questions of Karabakh's status and the security of its population.

Speaking in the Armenian parliament on April 13, Pashinyan said that the international community is pressing Armenia to "lower a bit the bar on the question of Nagorno-Karabakh's status" and recognize Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. He hinted at his readiness to make such concessions, drawing strong criticism from his political opponents and Karabakh's leadership.

Armenian opposition leaders charged that Pashinyan has agreed to Azerbaijani control over the disputed territory. They went on launch on May 1 daily street pro-

tests in Yerevan aimed at forcing him to step down.

The church council, which also comprises prominent laymen, expressed concern at "internal political developments" in Armenia. It urged all sides to display mutual "tolerance" and avoid violence and "disproportionate use of force."

The ancient church, to which the vast majority of Armenians nominally belong, enjoyed strong government support until the 2018 "velvet revolution" that brought Pashinyan to power. The prime minister's frosty relationship with Karekin has increasingly deteriorated since then.

Pashinyan openly attacked the church when he campaigned for the June 2021 parliamentary elections. He said "corrupt clergymen" are part of Armenia's traditional political, intellectual and spiritual elites that "did everything" to prevent the 2018 regime change. Karekin's office rejected the accusations.



Opposition supporters march through Republic Square in Yerevan, May 17, 2022.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Pope Promotes Bassalé in Catholic Exarchy

VATICAN — Pope Francis has appointed Rev. Fr. Mikael Bassale as Apostolic Administrator of the Ordinariate of Armenian Catholics in Armenia and Eastern Europe.

Bassalé, of the Institute of the Patriarchal Clergy of Bzommar, is currently pastor of the Holy Cross in Belmont, Mass., as Apostolic Administrator of the Ordinariate for Armenian Catholics in Eastern Europe.

Britain Lifts All Restrictions On Arms Exports to Turkey

LONDON (Panorama.am) — The UK has lifted all restrictions on arms exports to Turkey, Middle East Monitor reported on Friday, May 20, citing the head of the Turkish Defense Industries Presidency.

“Important details on technical issues were discussed, and at the same time, steps were taken in principle to bring bilateral ties to a higher level in the field of defense,” Ismail Demir said during his visit to London.

Thus, all of the products have been removed from the list of export restrictions which was created by British authorities in December 2021.

The UK had previously halted arms exports to Turkey. In October 2019, the UK, Canada, and some other NATO members stopped exports and suspended the granting of arms export licenses for weapons which may be used to target Kurdish militias in Syria, while the Turkish military was conducting operations to clear the groups from areas near its border region.

Those licenses were essential to providing critical parts to Turkish defense projects, including jets and its famed armed combat drones.

Erdogan Says Turkey to Launch Military Operations On Southern Borders

ANKARA (Reuters) — Turkey’s President Tayyip Erdogan said on May 23 Ankara would soon launch new military operations along its southern borders to create 30-kilometers deep safe zones to combat terrorist threats from these regions.

“The main target of these operations will be areas which are centers of attacks to our country and safe zones,” Erdogan said, without elaborating.

Erdogan said the operations would be launched as soon as military, intelligence and security forces have completed their preparations.

The operation will likely target north of Syria, where Turkey has launched several military operations since 2016 to undermine the Kurdish People’s Defense Units (YPG), an armed Syrian offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

The YPG also helped form the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the Kurdish-led coalition that the United States has greatly relied on to fight the Islamic State since 2014.

Erdogan Blanks Greek PM over US Remarks

By Matt Murphy

ANKARA (BBC News) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said he no longer recognizes the leader of neighboring Greece and will refuse to meet him at a planned summit.

Erdogan on May 24 accused Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis of seeking to block the sale of American-made F-16 fighter jets to Turkey while visiting the US.

“There’s no longer anyone called Mitsotakis in my book,” Erdogan told reporters after a cabinet meeting.

Greece said it would not get into a “confrontation of statements.”

The row comes amid Turkey’s threats to block a proposed expansion of NATO.

Ankara has accused Finland and Sweden of harboring members of Kurdish militias that it says pose a risk to Turkey.

Mr Erdogan also accused Greece, a NATO ally, of harboring “terrorists” and said that allowing Athens’ readmission to the security bloc in 1980 had been a mis-

Yerevan Denies Agreeing to ‘Corridor’ For Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia denied on May 24 Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s claim that it has agreed to open a permanent land corridor that will connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave.

A senior Armenian official insisted that during their weekend meeting in Brussels Aliyev and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan reached understandings only on conventional transport links between their countries.

European Council President Charles Michel, who hosted the meeting, said early on Monday that the two leaders agreed on “principles of border administration, security, land fees but also customs in the context of international transport.” He did not elaborate.

Speaking with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan later in the day, Aliyev said the two sides agreed to open a “Zangezur corridor” that would consist of a road and railway connecting Nakhichevan to the rest of Azerbaijan.

Aliyev has repeatedly demanded such a corridor. He said late last year that people and cargo using it must be exempt from Armenian border controls. Armenian leaders rejected his demands.

“Armenia’s position has not undergone any changes,” the secretary of the country’s Security Council, Armen Grigoryan, told the Armenpress news agency, commenting on Aliyev’s statement. “In the territory of Armenia, no road or transport link can function by the logic of a corridor.”

“All understandings reached in Brussels fit into the frames of public statements previously made by Armenian officials,” said Grigoryan.

In written comments to the Armenian Service sent on April 18, Pashinyan’s office said the prime minister believes that the so-called “Zangezur corridor” demanded by Baku would jeopardize Armenia’s territorial integrity. His domestic political opponents are unconvinced by such assurances.

Aliyev and Pashinyan reportedly agreed on the practical modalities of Armenian-Azerbaijani rail links during their first trilateral meeting with Michel held in December. But they failed to patch up their differences on the status of the highway for Nakhichevan.



Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, left, with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at a previous meeting

take.

Tensions have been growing between the Mediterranean neighbors after Mitsotakis urged a joint session of the US Congress not to drop a ban on Turkey’s membership of a purchasing program for the next generation F-35 fighter jet last week.

The Biden administration has reportedly been considering dropping the ban, imposed after Ankara purchased an S-400 air defence system from Russia in 2019.

Erdogan said this amounted to lobbying US officials against Turkey and violated an agreement “not to involve third countries” in disputes between Ankara and Athens.

The Turkish President also announced a planned summit with Mitsotakis later this year had been cancelled, pledging to “never agree to have a meeting” with the Greek leader.

While Greece and Turkey are nominally NATO allies, the two have a tense relationship that has regularly threatened to break out into open conflict.

They have been at odds over the status of Cyprus since the 1974 conflict that divided the island in two and in 2020 Ankara deployed warships to explore for gas reserves in waters recognized internationally as Greek.

US Reaffirms Support For Prewar Peace Formula

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The United States continues to stand for a “comprehensive settlement” of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict based on internationally recognized principles such as self-determination of peoples, according to US Ambassador to Armenia Lynne Tracy.

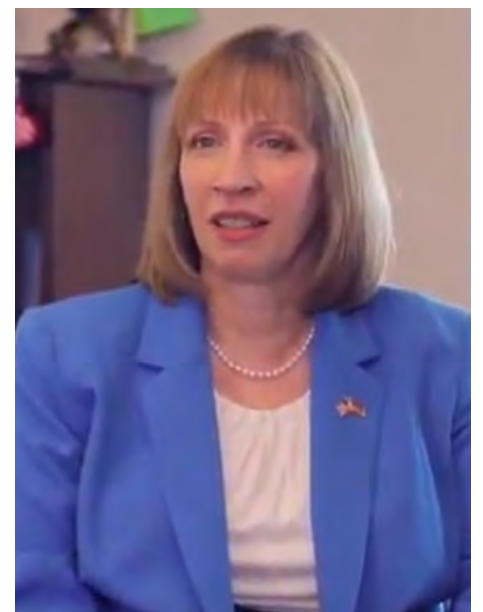
“As I said earlier, we continue to believe that the key to a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous future in the region is a negotiated, comprehensive, and sustainable settlement of all remaining issues related to or resulting from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict,” Tracy told Armenpress news agency in an interview published on Thursday, May 19.

“Self-determination of peoples is a key, though not the only, internationally recognized principle to achieve this goal, and, in the context of a comprehensive settlement of the conflict, the United States... recognizes the role of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh in deciding its future,” she said.

In her words, the other guiding principles for such a settlement are territorial integrity of states and non-use of force.

The three principles cited by Tracy were at the heart of a framework peace deal that was first put forward by the US, Russian and French co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group in 2007 and repeatedly amended by them in the following decade. The proposed deal, known as the Madrid Principles, reportedly stipulated, among other things, that Karabakh’s predominantly Armenian population would determine the territory’s status in a future referendum.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has



Ambassador Lynne Tracy

repeatedly said that Azerbaijan’s victory in the 2020 war in Karabakh put an end to the conflict. He has demanded that Armenia recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh through a bilateral peace treaty.

By contrast, US and French officials have said that the Karabakh dispute remains unresolved.

“Indeed, it is US policy that the status of Nagorno-Karabakh remains to be resolved,” Tracy told Armenpress, repeating her earlier statements criticized by Baku.

“We encourage further peace negotiations and stand ready to engage bilaterally and with like-minded partners, including through our role as an OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair,” she said.

The envoy also stressed that “there is no military solution to the conflict.”



Honoring Women's Achievements in Gyumri

WOMEN, from page 1

I guard your story.” Bachach’s portraits are emotional, and the viewer strives to discover the personality of these impressive figures, at once feminine and powerful, strong and graceful.

A Historic Venue

The festive opening took place at Gallery25 in the Berlin Art Hotel, itself a site with an important history. Moderator Lusine Pakhanyan introduced Alexan Ter-Minasyan, who is the founder of Gallery25, and artist Lilit Bachach, who welcomed the guests. Ter-Minasyan is also the founder of the Berlin Art Hotel, which began functioning as a social pilot project in 1996. Eight years earlier, following the earthquake, the German Red Cross and the humanitarian organization Caritas intervened in Gyumri. Ter-Minasyan, who functioned as the local representative of the Red Cross, helped set up an outpatient clinic, “Berlin Center for



Alexan Ter-Minasyan and Ambassador Andrea Wiktorin enjoy a glass of wine



Ambassador Wiktorin (3rd from left) and Governor Baghdasaryan (4th from left)

Mother and Child,” processing donations sent from Germany to finance the project. To guarantee continued funds for the facility that provides medical care for mothers and children, he launched the idea of converting part of the building to a non-profit hotel, and using its income to run the center. That support continues to the present.

Ter-Minasyan’s contribution to rebuilding Gyumri is also cultural, and the Gallery25 has become an important meeting place for artists, hosting exhibitions, concerts and lectures. In 2018 he became Honorary Consul of Germany, and has con-

tinued to mediate and facilitate exchange between the two countries, culturally and personally.

The European Union’s ambassador to Armenia, H.E. Mrs. Andrea Wiktorin, and the Governor of Shirak region, Mrs. Nazeli Baghdasaryan, then addressed words of welcome.

A special treat was offered by Hasmik Mkrtchyan, a harp soloist who is a first-year student at the Gyumri Branch of the Yerevan State Conservatory. She performed a work by a 17th-century unknown composer (Partita, Ballet, Pastoral), a Sonata by F.J. Naderman and a Prelude and Variation by

A. Glazunov. The instrument she played, a Venera Grand Concert Harp, is a recent gift from Ars Musica, a male chorus from Thuringia, the Rotary Club from Halle, which is Gyumri’s German sister city, and the Mirak-Weissbach Foundation.

The event concluded with an informal wine break, during which participants took time to visit the exhibition and socialize. It was a gathering that embodied the spirit of German-Armenian cooperation, from the venue to the exhibiting artists, from the diplomatic and political representatives to the beautiful new musical instrument.

Turkey’s NATO Obstinance Threatens More than Nordic Membership

By Cengiz Candar

ISTANBUL (Al-Monitor) — US President Joe Biden’s announcement of his country’s unequivocal support of Finland and Sweden’s NATO membership bids came as a veiled rebuke of Ankara.

Flanked by Finland’s President Sauli Niinisto and Sweden’s Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson, Biden declared both nations have the “full, total, complete backing” of his country after a trilateral meeting at the White House on May 19.

Biden said both countries were “highly capable partners to join the strongest, most powerful defensive alliance in the history of the world,” adding, “The bottom line is simple, quite straightforward: Finland and Sweden make NATO stronger. Not just because of their capacity but because of their strong, strong democracies.”

Describing Finland and Sweden’s decision to abandon their decades-old neutrality as “historic,” Biden’s strongly worded statement also obliquely rebuked Turkey.

Ankara is the only capital among the 29 NATO members to block Finland and Sweden’s admittance to the transatlantic alliance. Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has persistently lashed out at both countries for being “guesthouses” for groups that Ankara considers terrorist organizations.

Only hours before the summit at the White House, Erdogan reiterated his objections. “We told them that we could not accept them in NATO because NATO is a security organization where terrorist networks cannot have any place,” he told a

group of young people in video released on May 19.

Making matters worse for Erdogan was Biden’s response to a May 18 question on how Washington was planning to convince Turkey. “I’m not going to Turkey, but I think we’re going to be okay,” he told journalists.

Erdogan remains defiant, reiterating the same sentiment on every occasion. Most recently, he said Sweden and Finland “had to pick their sides” between “terrorist organizations” and Ankara’s concerns, speaking after a cabinet meeting on May 23.

The apparent recipients of Erdogan’s messages are not confined to Sweden and Finland. He has also dialed up his discourse against the United States and European Union for their support to the Syrian Kurdish group the People’s Protection Units (YPG), the backbone of the Syrian Democratic Forces, the major ally of the US-led coalition against the Islamic State.

Sweden and Finland’s bid to join NATO came in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The historically neutral nations’ applications to join the Euro-Atlantic security system marks the most dramatic evolution in European geopolitics in the post-Cold War period.

Turkey’s resistance to such a historic move has given it an image as Russia’s Trojan Horse in NATO and as a villain in the eyes of much of the Western world.

Erdogan’s position may spark a debate over Turkey’s own NATO membership.

“For reasons that are political, parochial and irrelevant in the decision, President

Recep Tayyip Erdogan has taken a hard line in his efforts to derail the prospective members. This should raise the question of whether Turkey under Mr. Erdogan’s leadership belongs in the alliance,” read a May 18 op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*.

The article concluded with a novel suggestion. “Turkey is a member of NATO, but under Mr. Erdogan it no longer subscribes to the values that underpin this great alliance. Article 13 of NATO charter provides a mechanism for members to withdraw. Perhaps it is time to amend Article 13 to establish a procedure for the expulsion of a member nation.”

Finland and Sweden are highly respected countries with excellent records of democracy and human rights in the West. Finland ranks first in the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index and Sweden ranks fourth. Sweden is the fourth and Finland is the sixth country in the 2021 Global Democracy Index, which ranks Turkey 103rd.

Erdogan’s depiction of both countries as a “guesthouses” of terrorism and terrorists hardly align with these rankings.

Thus, Ankara’s preventing both nations from taking their place in the new, post-post-Cold War security architecture cannot be considered a mere procedural matter over political disagreements.

From the vantage point of the West, giving in to Ankara’s demands amounts to letting an autocrat design the security architecture of Europe and shape the future of the Western system. The code of conduct of Turkey’s current authorities runs against the traditional problem-resolving mecha-

nisms between friends and allies.

The drama that unfolded at a May 16 NATO meeting in Berlin last week is a case in point. Citing a source with close knowledge of the discussions, Al-Monitor’s Amberin Zaman reported Turkey’s Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu lashed out his Swedish counterpart Anna Linde and what he called her “so-called feminist policy.” Three NATO diplomats speaking to Reuters described the moment as an “embarrassing” break in protocol. “For us, it was a historic moment and yet Cavusoglu said he was irritated at Linde’s ‘feminist policy,’ bringing so much drama,” another NATO diplomat told Reuters.

The Turkish officials’ discourse over the matter frames the conflict as a zero-sum game. Even if Turkey’s Western counterparts were willing to appease and satisfy Erdogan’s demands, Ankara’s ultimatum-like approach would remain problematic because of its inconsistency.

Turkey demands that Sweden and Finland lift the arms embargoes against Ankara over its military operations against the Kurdish-led SDF in northeastern Syria in October 2019. Turkey equates the YPG to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), an armed outfit that has been waging an armed conflict against Ankara for some four decades, and asks Sweden and Finland to adopt a similar position. Sweden, along with several Western countries, has considered the PKK a terrorist organization since 1984. Ankara also wants extradition of the Turkish and Kurdish dissidents living in the two Nordic countries.



Community News

Hovannisian, Papazian and Hachigian to Be Honored By Armenian Assembly

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian Assembly of America will honor Professors Richard Hovannisian and Dennis Papazian, two prominent leaders of the Assembly, with its Distinguished Humanitarian Award, while Los Angeles Deputy Mayor of International Affairs, Ambassador Nina Hachigian, will be the recipient of the Assembly's George Deukmejian Public Service Award, during the Assembly's 50th Anniversary Gala on Sunday, June 5, at the Los Angeles Jonathan Club's outdoor "Great Lawn."

As the first holder of the Armenian Educational Foundation Endowed Chair in Modern Armenian History at UCLA and Presidential Fellow at Chapman University, Dr. Richard Hovannisian elevated the quality and breadth of scholarship on modern Armenian history to new heights over a 60-year tenure of teaching, research, and publishing.

A member of the UCLA faculty since the 1960s, he organized both undergraduate and graduate programs in Armenian History. Selected as a prestigious Guggenheim Fellow, he has published more than 30 books, including *Armenia on the Road to Independence* and *The Republic of Armenia* (in 4 volumes and in Armenian, Russian, and Farsi translations); 6 volumes on the Armenian Genocide; and 15 volumes on Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces in the Ottoman Empire.

Hovannisian was a member of the initial steering committee of the Armenian Assembly of America, six-time president of the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS), Chairman of the Board of the Armenian Monument Council in Montebello, and Associate Director of the UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies. He has received many honors for his scholarship, civic activities, and support of individual and collective human rights.

As the founding director of the Armenian Research Center (ARC) at the University of Michigan, Dearborn in 1985, Dr. Dennis Papazian has done a tremendous service to academia by facilitating research and publications on all aspects of Armenian history, literature, and culture. ARC's rich depository of documentation, publications, periodicals, audio-visual collections, and oral histories of Armenian Genocide survivors is first-rate, and serves as an international center for scholars and students focused on the research, dissemination, and publication of all things Armenian.

In addition to his role as an educator and scholar, Dr. Papazian served as Co-Chairman of the Armenian Assembly of America and directed the Washington office in the late 1970s

see HONORS, page 2



Armenian Studies Program Director Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian and Fresno State alumnus James L. Melikian "The Popcorn Man" in 2019

The Popcorn Man's' Success Story Continues at CSUF

PALOS VERDES, Calif. — In 2019, the Armenian Studies Program Director at Fresno State (CSUF) announced that the James L. Melikian L.A. Brothers Scholarship fund had been established. The effort to create the Fresno State scholarship was led by alumnus Melikian ("The Popcorn Man"), who established his company in 1977. A donation of \$5,100 established the scholarship that will be awarded to deserving students studying in the Armenian Studies Program. Since 2019, James L. Melikian L.A. Brothers has donated a total of \$8,695 in scholarship funding at Fresno State.

Each year, Melikian, a former Fresno State Top Dog award winner, and Armenian Studies Program donor invites friends to his Palos Verdes home (with beautiful Pacific Ocean views and Los Angeles vistas) to enjoy cognac and cigars for a private fundraiser. Melikian's company provides school districts in California and other states with healthy, nutritious items for the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program, the Child Care Program as well as the After School Snack Program.

"We've made sure that every dollar we raise goes to the scholarship," says Melikian. "There was only one problem. There were some members of the brotherhood who felt this scholarship should go to Cal State Northridge, USC, UCLA, et cetera. And I said, 'That's not going to happen. This is going to Fresno State.'" Melikian supports other programs within the College of Arts and Humanities at Fresno State, and said his love of the university drives his philanthropy. He looks forward to supporting students in the years to come with the James L. Melikian and L.A. Brothers Scholarship. This scholarship, and the 33 other named scholarships, create a lasting and life-changing impact on students' lives.

The Armenian Studies Program was established in 1977 and the Center for Armenian Studies was founded in 1988. The Center provides an opportunity for students and faculty to interact and currently houses the Armenian Studies Program, the Sahatdjian Armenian Studies Library, the Avedian Armenian Studies Archives, the newspaper *Hye Sharzhoom*/Armenian Action, the Armenian Students Organization, and the Index of Armenian Art. The program engages students in the interdisciplinary study of one of the world's oldest civilizations, by exploring the language, art, literature, and history of the Armenian people and connecting this knowledge to the world today.

The program has a distinguished history and Armenian and Armenian Studies courses have been taught at Fresno State for over fifty years. It is the largest undergraduate program in the United States, and was the first such program in the California State University (CSU) system. The Haig & Isabel Berberian Endowed Chair in Armenian Studies was the first Endowed Chair in the CSU system. The program administers 34 scholarship funds that provide financial assistance for students enrolled in Armenian and Armenian studies courses. Tuition has continued to increase and so the need for scholarships has also increased to assist deserving students.

"Last year academic year, 2021-2022, the Armenian Studies Program awarded \$88,000 in scholarships to 50 students. The program offers a Minor in Armenian Studies, which provides in-depth experience into the field," says Armenian Studies Program Director Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian.

"The Armenian Studies Program sponsors an annual lecture series that brings speakers, films, and programs to the general public. This series has been an

continued on next page

Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston To host Wine Soiree In Celebration of 35th Anniversary

WATERTOWN — The Sayat Nova Dance Company (SNDC) of Boston is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year. This is a major milestone for a volunteer dance group that began in 1986 and continues to thrive in the community with the support of community members, family and friends. The group has found continued success by simply doing what the founders thought so important many years ago, "to preserve and promote the Armenian culture through the art of dance."

Through many lasting friendships, marriages, children (who now dance in the group as their parents once did), and lifelong memories, this group has been the cultural pride and joy of the Boston community to many. With performances in Canada, Armenia, and the United States, you could truly say SNDC and its dancers are committed to their mission. Performances at Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, Jacob's Pillow Festival, Berklee Performance Center, and the "My Armenia" Pan-Armenian Festival are just a few noteworthy shows that have allowed SNDC to not only preserve their culture in communities worldwide, but promote it to non-Armenian audiences that otherwise may never see the beauty of ethnic Armenian dances.

"I have been involved in many community organizations over the years, and one I am very proud to say I remain active in and continue to be very proud of is the Sayat Nova Dance Company. The cross-section of the community it brings together, political views and Church aside, is amazing. We are there to show our community and more importantly those outside our community, the beauty and strength of Armenia," said Josh Tevekian, a longtime dancer and former general manager. "It truly is an organization whose importance is understated, yet has found wide ranging support in all of our communities worldwide."

SNDC will host a wine soiree on Friday, June 24, at the Gore Place Estate in Waltham. There will be 9 varieties of Armenian wine to be sampled. Included in these will be Malahi, Tus, and Voskeni, none of which are available for purchase in the East Coast market. Along with these brands will be Shofer, Van Ardi and Aran Wines. Special guest Anush Gharibyan O'Connor, sommelier from Los Angeles, will present on Armenian wines and their history. Wine expert Simon Baatian from Storica Wines and the founders of Aran Wines, Alex and Talar Sarafian, will also be present.

In October 2022, Sayat Nova Dance Company will host their 35th anniversary weekend celebration with a performance at Regis College Fine Arts Center followed by a gala banquet at the Framingham Sheraton.

"Still here, Still strong" is the theme of this milestone anniversary.

For more information on the Wine Soiree and other events hosted by SNDC, visit www.sayatnova.com



COMMUNITY NEWS

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important means for community engagement with Fresno State. The program's goal for this year's Annual Fund Drive is \$50,000," he adds. "Since the beginning of the Armenian Studies Program, over 12,000 students have taken courses in the program, and 144 students have graduated with minor degrees." See: <https://fresnostatecah.com/2022/04/21/community-celebrates-student-scholarship-recipients-at-armenian-studies-banquet/>

Melikian graduated from Fresno State in 1969 with a degree in mass communication and journalism, and was president of the Hye Society organization. He fondly reflects on the support and guidance he received from the late journalism and public relations professor Bernard A. "Bernie" Shepard, PhD and Dr. Arthur H. Margosian. (Shepard established the Public Relations program at Fresno State. He was a member of the Fresno State Department of Journalism for almost 30 years, joining the staff in 1943. He brought vision and a wide-range of experience to the department.) "My public relations aptitude and people orientation was nurtured by my education at Fresno State and my relationships with Professor Shepard and Dr. Margosian," says Melikian. One of Melikian's efforts has been to provide funding for three scholarships for journalism department students specializing in public relations.

At Fresno State, Jim served as the manager for the legendary Bulldog baseball coach Pete Beiden the last two years of the Coach's tenure. Melikian was one of the donors for the "Pete Beiden Statue" that sits in the shadows of the aptly named Beiden Field. As an up and coming journalist, he wrote political articles and his column, "In the Dog House," which was a must read in the University's "Daily Collegian." As President of the Hye Society, he was responsible for bringing Fresno's celebrated Pulitzer prize-winning author, playwright and novelist William Saroyan to speak at one of the Society's meetings. Melikian was the keynote speaker for the mass communication and journalism department's convocation prior to the 100th commencement at Fresno State in 2011.

In 2014, he was a recipient of the Fresno



Fresno State President Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval posing with college officials and winners at the recent Armenian Studies Banquet

State "Top Dog" award, recognizing outstanding alumni, and he has been an active supporter of both the Armenian Studies Program and the Department of Media, Communications, and Journalism at Fresno State. He is an Alumni Association Life Member and a Bulldog Foundation supporter. He was one of 13 honored by Fresno State and the Alumni Association. Honorees came from Fresno State's various Schools and Departments. Melikian was nominated from the School of Arts and Humanities.

"I have tried to build my life on the foundation based on faith, family, friends, fun and education. All of this has given me an entrepreneurial spirit to allow me to succeed in business," he says. "It has been a wonderful ride." Melikian has owned and operated his business for over 45 years. As such, he has been a mainstay for advocating on behalf of healthy student nutrition at both the state and national levels. He has attended almost all of the School Nutrition Association legislative conferences in Sacramento and 32 such events in Washington, D.C., educating legislators on child nutrition and various Armenian issues.

Melikian has three times received the distinguished "Donald F. Flahiff Industry Appreciation Award" from the California School Nutrition Association (SNA). In

2021, he received the prestigious Moscone Commitment to Child Nutrition Award for his long standing support of student nutrition. His "Popcorn Diplomacy" has been honored by the California State Senate and Assembly, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Los Angeles City Council and the United States Congressional Record. Melikian is a member of the SNA, California SNA and the Southern California, Northern California, Central California and Mother Lode School Nutrition Associations.

Melikian and his wife Connie are residents of Southern California's Rancho Palos Verdes and have long supported and participated in a number of organizations including the Alumni Association, Bulldog Foundation, Los Angeles World Affairs Council, Knights of Vartan, Palos Verdes Chamber of Commerce, the California Triple X Fraternity and the Town Hall of Los Angeles. They are members of the St. James Apostolic Church in Los Angeles.

His ethnic up-bringing in Fresno has encouraged Melikian's involvement in several groups including serving on the Board of the Southern Region of the Armenian Assembly of America, and he is a Godfather of the Armenia Apostolic Cathedral of the Western Diocese. Since 1972, the Armenian Assembly promotes public awareness

of Armenian issues, encourages Armenian-American participation in the American democratic process, and assists in humanitarian and development programs in Armenia and Artsakh, while strengthening the U.S.-Armenia and U.S.-Artsakh relationships. Melikian and his wife have endowed a summer internship for college students through the Armenian Assembly.

The Melikians support the Ararat Eski-jian Museum located in Mission Hills, and commissioned a mother and child bronze statue at the museum entrance commemorating the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Through his enthusiastic "Popcorn Diplomacy," Melikian admits that he has probably given away more popcorn than he sells. In being honored at Fresno State, it was noted that "his business truly represents the true spirit of the free enterprise system."



Mother Arising Out of The Ashes (memorial statue to the Armenian Genocide) at the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial in Yerevan, Armenia. This statue is a memorial to those who perished, survived and escaped the 1915 Genocide. It is a reminder of the indignities perpetrated on the Armenian people who stood resolute.

"I've been very blessed in my life," Melikian says.

For information and to contribute, go to: <https://cah.fresnostate.edu/armenian-studies/support.html>

The Armenian Studies Program appreciates the establishment of the new scholarship that will benefit students at Fresno State. To apply, go to: <https://cah.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies/students/scholarships-offered.html>



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Reflections Upon Reading Tamar Asadourian

By Lilit Keheyan

Tamar Asadourian (1980-2020) was diversely talented as an accomplished pianist, author and fine artist. At the age of 16 she had a debut recital at Carnegie/Weill Hall and was received by the New York Concert Review in glowing terms. A selection of her poetry (1992-1994) was published in a small edition in Beirut, Lebanon and her paintings and drawings are represented in collections throughout the United States. Soon, a collection of her writings, poetry and prayers, together with some of her fine art, will be published in a volume entitled I Remember You... by the Naregatsi Art Institute of Yerevan, Armenia. Tamar was the granddaughter of author Hagop H. Asadourian.

She was all too young, barely a few months past her 40th birthday, when she hastened to return to her starting point, to mother nature, from which she had borrowed her entire being, her talents as a poet, painter, and musician. She was as connected to nature as the fruit is to its creator, as the infinitesimal is to the infinite. Deeply, from head to toe, she was immersed in the sacred pool of the Muses. It seems that it was precisely in this self-effacing, almost ascetic devotion that her artistic truth rested.

Tamar's whole life — her childhood memories, teenage dreams, and the enthrallments she found in nature; her relentless suffering; her profoundly tender relationship with her mother, their mutual love and dedication; and her true faith — all this, everything, she had so thoroughly dissolved into her writings that destiny had become one with the lyre.

Tamar could rightfully say that her biography is found in her works, in her music and paintings, and, particularly, her writings, in which she is completely and utterly present, and outside which, it would seem, she does not hold a single personal secret. Indeed, Tamar is synonymous with her writings, which are complemented by her own drawings.

Nature's rays have gleamed in the souls of many a poet, but not all have felt nature as deeply, as sensitively, as Tamar has — since not everyone knows that nature is very much alive; that flowers, too, can weep when they're in pain and bleeding as you pluck them from the soil; that the many-colored rainbow can sometimes speak of not joy but gloom; and that a storm can in fact be a celebration unleashed by the rain.

In a poem titled "Envision," Tamar writes:

*I now hear the crying of flowers
That bleed when taken from the ground.
...
Rainbows have sometimes told me
The grayness of their experience.*

In another poem, titled "Rain Song," she writes:

*When thunder goes on,
The rain is yet in its party.*

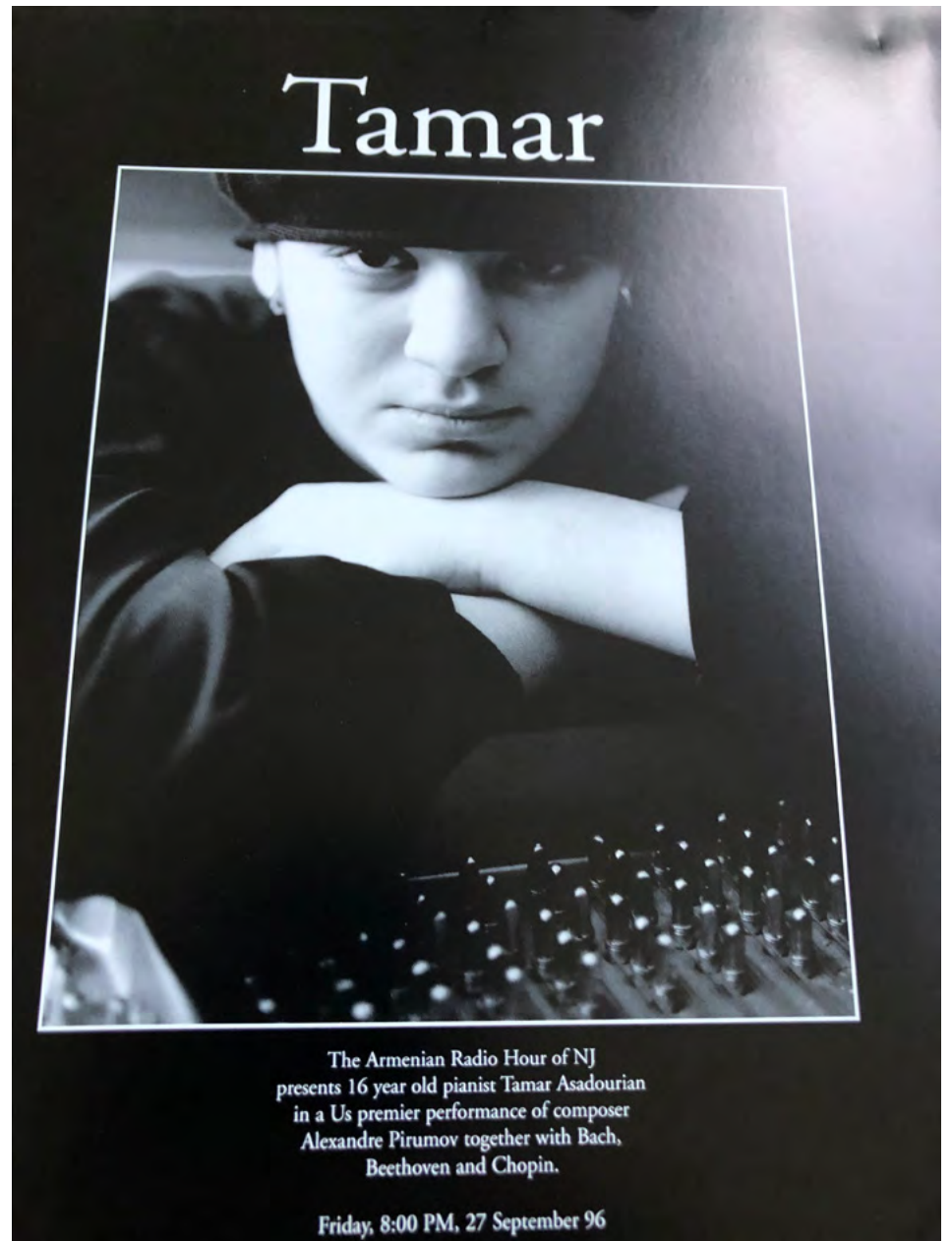
Only the poet in whose soul and essence unfold the mysterious workings of nature — which would seem to have been born of human emotional impulses — can be engaged with nature though living exchanges of thoughts and feelings. We might say, therefore, that Tamar was born of nature and assimilated into it. She is a living expression of nature, carrying within her soul the commonality of humankind and the universe. And if we were to underscore the fundamental significance of Tamar's poetic natural philosophy, we must assert that it concerns the deification of nature, as a perfect manifestation of the unity of the emotional and the intellectual. As for achieving that state of perfection, one must cultivate an intimate understanding of mother nature's charm and powers of enchantment, its multifarious manifestations and the secrets of their eternity.

No matter how mystical this may sound, the fact remains that the kinship between nature and humankind, and, especially, the spiritual flights born of that kinship, are indivisible. Tamar's natural philosophy is not limited to her inner vision as a poet, but rather carries within it a living portrait of nature, equally eliciting lushest vistas of esthetic pleasure. It is difficult to determine which is the more pronounced in her works: the thinker? The artistic innovator? Or the author forging poetry of extraordinary beauty and resonance?

Yet, as it often happens with creative individuals, moments of happiness soar like meteors, only to come down and bring back with them ever-newer bouts of pain. As a rule, Tamar's inner world opens before the reader without any masks, no matter how fraught it might be and what factors might lie behind its anguish. What aching frankness Tamar demonstrates, in reproducing the ever-mutable states of that inner world! Troubled by woes, in the grips of psychic nightmares, Tamar casts her gaze toward the heavens, toward God, because once the stanchion of hope is lost, the person snarled in the contradictions of life extends her hand toward God, yet keeps her door open... before death — a testament to the fact that Tamar was not afraid of it.

Tamar's talent as an author, and, specifically, a poet, has also found expression in her spiritual writings, in which she does not seek to prove the existence of God or to try to understand his essence, whether by reason, feeling, or creed. For Tamar, God is an indisputable truth and that's that, and she does not require any proof for it. Her spiritual writings encompass her ideas about life and death, fall and salvation, and despair and self-motivation, all of which are parsed through the clash of emotions. Standing at the center of it all is Tamar, who asks the Almighty first and foremost to help those who are worse off, those who are more in need, and only then herself.

The devotional love which was born in Tamar through her deep reverence for God



is also reflected in her writings dedicated to her mother. Indeed, to Tamar, her mother is a supreme symbol of virtue and kindness.

In a poem titled "A Gift of Love," Tamar writes:

*Your love keeps me warm,
When the sun is at its rest.*

Tamar Asadourian was a musical prodigy who kept reaching exceptionally-high levels of achievement throughout her life. Anyone who has heard her piano performances will no doubt agree that music is a language which she mastered completely, and through which she fully expressed herself and captivated her audiences. Whenever Tamar played the piano, she seemed to make the instrument sing. And given her prodigious talent and passion for her art, she has had many successes, performing works by Armenian composers as well as a great diversity of pieces from the global treasury of classical music.

In its review of Tamar's debut concert at Carnegie Hall, in 1996, when she was only 16 years old, Jed Distler of the *New York Concert Review* writes, "From the moment this calm, assured pianist entered the stage and unhurriedly took her position at the keyboard, it was perfectly clear who was

in charge. Her diction and her harmonic pointing in the Partita's famous opening bars literally shocked me out of my seat. The rest of the movement was played with a sense of concentration and genuine affinity for both Bach's dramatic and contrapuntal genius." In the closing lines of the review, Distler writes, "Tamar Asadourian is more than just a young woman who plays extremely well for her age. She is already an absorbing artist of uncommon sensitivity and intelligence, who is capable of stimulating, original, and often moving performances."

In our age of incessant technological revolution, including quantum leaps in space exploration, the more the horizons of nature part before us, the more the human imagination faces the mysteries of newly-discovered phenomena. And because the secrets of nature stretch into the boundlessness of the cosmos, the idea of endlessness becomes more and more probable. Ultimately, it is extraordinarily-talented individuals such as Tamar Asadourian — individuals embodying the very spirit of mother nature — who will affirm that probability.

(Translated from Armenian to English
by Ishkhan Jinbashian)

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Diocesan Assembly Honors a Half-Century Milestone

The roll call of delegates of the 120th Diocesan Assembly was an occasion to honor a stalwart, beloved figure at Diocesan Assemblies over the past decades: Nubar Kupelian, longtime member of the Diocesan staff.

In a special tribute during the opening assembly session on Friday morning, Bishop Daniel introduced “Baron Nubar” with the announcement that the summer of 2020 had marked his 50th anniversary of service to the Eastern Diocese. While the pandemic had caused a delay, he said, the Diocese wanted to recognize the milestone at this time. The delegates stood and burst into loud applause as Mr. Kupelian and his wife Anahid approached the dais.

There, Diocesan Vicar Fr. Simeon Odabashian read a congratulatory letter from Bishop Daniel in honor of the occasion. “Throughout his time here,” he read, “Nubar has been the heart and soul of this organization: an inspiration to all who devote their time and creativity to God and His church; a mentor to his co-workers; and an example of the fine, humane, patriotic qualities that have been the most noble expression of Armenian civilization.”

The letter continued: “Nubar’s 50-year presence at the Diocesan headquarters has been an enduring grace upon the entire Armenian Church. He is a devout Christian, an Armenian patriot, a man of quality to whom all of his colleagues look up. We

have become better Christians, and better Armenians, for having shared our days with him.”

After some gracious remarks of thanks, Nubar Kupelian read the roll of delegates in the familiar voice that has endeared him to the community. The occasion was recorded for posterity on the online Zoom platform.

Read Bishop Daniel’s congratulatory letter below.

A Letter of Congratulations & Appreciation to Nubar Kupelian

In many ways, our institutions define us as a people: embodying the long, proud history behind us, and the untapped future ahead.

But institutions draw their vitality from the people who serve, develop, and defend them in their respective eras. For a few rare individuals, the duration and devotion of their service becomes virtually inseparable from the greater mission of the institution itself.

On July 1, 2020, one such individual reached a milestone in his service to the Armenian Church of America. On that date, Nubar Kupelian—lovingly known as Baron Nubar to several generations of Diocesan Assemblies—marked his remarkable 50th year of service to the Diocesan Center in New York.

Alas, because of the circumstances afflicting us all in 2020, we could not pay



Nubar and Anahid Kupelian, at the 120th Diocesan Assembly in New York.

proper tribute to that milestone, in person. But this occasion today gave us a welcome opportunity to rectify that omission. And so here we are.

Nubar’s roots in our church go very deep. A native of Cairo, he was educated at the seminary of the See of Cilicia, where he was a student of the great Catholicos Karekin Hovsepian—among other historic intellectual figures of our church. He was also a classmate of many worthy clergymen-in-training, including the future Archbishop Yeghishhe Gizirian and Catholicos Karekin I Sarkissian—not to mention the young Der Mampre Kouzouian, Der Carnig Hallajian, and others.

Settling in America, he joined the staff of the fledgling Diocesan Center in 1970, becoming a trusted advisor and friend to Archbishop (later Patriarch) Torkom Manogian, and a disciple of Jack Antreasian, the center’s unparalleled first director. Together, they were all men of quality and talent, who saw in our newborn Mayr Dajar a call to duty, to realize its promise for our entire community. What a blessed era that was!

In the five decades since then, Nubar became the ever-reliable administrative assistant to three Primates, including Torkom Srpazan, Khajag Srpazan, and myself—as well as a confidant and inspiration to his fellow staffers.

Throughout his time here, Nubar has

been the heart and soul of this organization: an inspiration to all who devote their time and creativity to God and His church; a mentor to his co-workers; and an example of the fine, humane, patriotic qualities that have been the most noble expression of Armenian civilization.

By the order of Catholicos Vasken I, Nubar was awarded the St. Nersess Shnorhali medal in 1991. It was one of the first medal presentations made by Khajag Srpazan, early in his primacy. Nubar himself remains a model of the kind of virtues these distinctions are meant to honor.

Nubar’s 50-year presence at the Diocesan headquarters has been an enduring grace upon the entire Armenian Church. He is a devout Christian, an Armenian patriot, a man of quality to whom all of his colleagues look up. We have become better Christians, and better Armenians, for having shared our days with him.

Today, we join in expressing our thanks, admiration, and love to Baron Nubar Kupelian, and also to his wife, DeeginAnahid. Such figures give life to our institutions, shape our history, and project our finest qualities as a people to the surrounding world.

Asdvadz kez meechd bahaban, Baron Nubar.

With my prayers,

Bishop DANIEL
Primate

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932

Paid Internship through ASA

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is seeking an intern for a six-week program this summer (mid-July through August, though it is possible to start earlier). The intern will receive a \$150 weekly stipend provided through the Armenian Students’ Association of America’s Internship Program.

The intern should be in college or graduate school and does not necessarily have to be studying journalism. Internet skills are a plus. The internship may be done in person or long distance, via electronic communications. Native speaker knowledge of English is important. If interested, please email tcadirector@aol.com or mirror-spectator1975@gmail.com with your resume.

Hovannisian, Papazian and Hachigian to Be Honored by Armenian Assembly

HONORS, from page 6

He has traveled extensively, presenting papers and delivering lectures in several countries. He conducted research on the USSR and personally worked with the U.S. Department of State to coordinate an exchange between the University of Michigan and Moscow State University. In 1976, he received an award from the State Department honoring his work as a scholar and diplomat, which was followed by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1977, and an award from the U.S. Agency for International Development in 1978.

The Assembly will also recognize the distinguished service of former U.S. Ambassador to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and current City of Los Angeles Deputy Mayor of International Affairs, the Honorable Nina L. Hachigian, with the Assembly’s Deukmejian Award for Public Service, named in honor of the late California Governor George Deukmejian.

Hachigian’s decades of experience and expertise in diplomacy and national security led to her recent appointment by the Biden Administration to the prestigious Defense Policy Board, a federal advisory committee to the U.S. Department of Defense. The Assembly is thankful to Hachigian for assisting in the advancement of U.S.-Armenia and U.S.-Artsakh relations to qualitatively higher levels.

The Assembly’s 50th Anniversary Gala will highlight five decades of the Assembly’s influential achievements in advocacy, education, and awareness on Armenian issues. By representing Armenian American interests in the U.S. and advancing the U.S.-Armenia and U.S.-Artsakh relationships, the Assembly has created a lasting and positive impact.

The Gala will also feature special guest speaker Arturo Sarukhán, the former Ambassador of Mexico to the United States. Anita Vogel, a national news correspondent, will serve as Mistress of Ceremonies.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Latest Book Edited by Hovannisian Focuses on Iranian Armenians' History

IRAN, from page 1

"I didn't think I would ever do this volume. All my other volumes in this series dealt with Armenian communities of the Ottoman Empire that are now in Turkey," he said, adding that he had organized two conference on Iran and one on Jerusalem. "When I was urged to do so by the publisher, I said there are many others far more capable than I, but there were no takers," he joked.

He has dedicated the book to his late wife, Dr. Vartiter Kotcholosian Hovannisian, "who for over 60 years was a beloved physician but also my academic partner as we traveled the together, into archives around the world, and her fluency in German, Russian and Armenian made it so much easier for me to be able to work and put together the volumes that we have over the years," he said. She had passed away in November 2021.

Before speaking about the new volume, he spoke about the collaboration with his wife.

Their initial work was to present "the first Armenian Republic, as much as possible, on an objective basis," he noted.

"We know that our community was torn apart for many years. Part of the reason was the question of the First Republic. Was it the fulfillment of a long struggle for self-determination and independence, a struggle to regain Armenian sovereignty after centuries of foreign domination or was it a land of death and destruction and failure until the Soviet Russians came to save it?"

A symbol of the division about the issue was the division regarding the tricolor flag in the community.

"As time went on, I realized that no one was correct and everyone was correct," he said. To be able to understand under what conditions that republic was born and how the challenges were addressed, "required a great deal of study."

He and his wife, he noted, went to many archives "loaded with information that was never touched. We were sort of pioneers in uncovering that information without trying to disguise the fact that we were sympathetic to the concept of an independent Armenian state," he said, referring to the 30-year effort to study the short-lived republic.

In addition to the First Republic, he has studied many of the provinces of Western Armenia, as well as the Armenian Genocide. While he said he "never claimed to be a genocide scholar," he was driven to study the issue because of the extensive denial and ignorance, "including in my own university," UCLA, in previous decades. Thus, he said, he organized a number of conferences on the Armenian Genocide.

"When I began in this field, there were perhaps no more than five or six books that dealt with the Armenian Genocide in a Western language and today if you go to the NAASR library, you will find scores of very serious studies on the Armenian Genocide," he said.

Hovannisian has covered all the lost provinces of Western Armenia in conferences, including in Van, Vaspurakan, Bitlis, Kessab, and published the proceedings.

The US-born Hovannisian, who is a descendant of Armenian Genocide survivors, visited Iran when he finished studying in Lebanon.

"I kept on going eastward through Iraq, Iran and India, all the way to Hong Kong, Manila, Japan and ended up in Hawaii and finally San Francisco."

"I was fortunate as a young man to spend my first visit in Tehran and Isfahan and was really impressed by a lot of things. The wonderful Persian cuisine is among the best in the world." His visit to New Julfa yield-

ed a big surprise, because he could only see what looked like plain mosques in the Armenian quarter, which were indeed churches, very different from what was inside. "I was awed because there were frescos from the ceiling to the floor that were commissioned by the very wealthy Armenian merchants of that community," he said.

"I was enthralled by Iran," he added.

History of Armenia and Iran

The ties between the Armenian and Iranian peoples go very deep, he noted. Hovannisian went over the history of the region, noting that the Achaemenid Empire, started in the sixth century BC, incorporated Armenia and "most of the population of the world at the time." It was at this time that Armenia is mentioned for the first time, Hovannisian said.

"Even then when there were Armenian rebellions against the Persians, the generals in the Persian army were of Armenian origin, which meant the Armenians were already there," he said.

The central rulers let the Armenian princes rule their regions under the aegis of the Persian rulers.

"Armenians were allowed a great deal of autonomy" during the Sassanian empire, he said. "We may forget that even then there were many Armenians in the series of the Iranian state," while referring to Vartan

menian villages," he noted. "They have a very, very rich history."

"The city of Maku, across the Arax River from Nakhichevan, had a principality known as Ardaz, from the 13th to the 15th centuries," he said.

He paid tribute to historian Armen Hakhnazarian, who at a conference on Iranian-Armenians, presented a study of the churches and monasteries of Northern Iran.

Hovannisian paid special attention at the lecture to Sourp Tadeh (Saint Thaddeus) Vank, where during the summer there are pilgrimages during Vartavar. "Both the Shah's government ... and [later] the Islamic Republic, are taking special care to see that these monasteries are kept in good shape," he said.

There were many notable personages hailing from the region. One was the writer Raffi (Hakop Melik Hakpian), who called for Armenians to strive for enlightenment and use self-help and resistance for survival. Raffi was born in Salmast in 1835 and later moved to Tiflis (Tbilisi) but he traveled through Turkey and Iran and looked at the oppressed lives of the Armenians. He encouraged them to take up arms when needed.

Hovannisian said that women were active in the social scene in Tabriz. The women were "not only intellectuals but also participated in Armenian revolutionary

World War I, it was not only a genocide of the Armenians in the Turkish empire, but the Turkish armies invaded Iran twice, in 1915, when the Genocide was taking place, and when they withdrew they came back again in 1918 after the Russia revolution of 1917 and a second massacre took place in the northern areas of Khoy, Uremia and Salmast. It was at this time that the Armenians had to flee," he explained.

Aside from the Armenians, the Assyrian population in the region was also massacred.

Salmast and Khoy, he said, are now devoid of Armenians. They have all left for Soviet Armenia, the US or the capital in Iran. "There are scores and scores of abandoned Armenian villages with remnants of their chapels," he said. "In Khoy, the mother church is being maintained of the southern churches."

Julfa/Jugha

Next, he focused on the Armenians further south, near Isfahan, who made their mark not just in the region, but around the world.

"The Persians had a new dynasty, the Safavid, and they were in a 200-year-war with their neighbors in the west, the Ottoman Turks," he said, much of it on the Armenian Highlands.

"During the time, Shah Abbas took the initiative and won back a significant part of that territory. A part of that territory was near the Arax River, what was Soviet Armenia, and Nakhijevan or Vasporuakan, Van. One of the policies that followed, no matter how cruel it may seem, was a scorched-earth policy," he explained. "If there are no people, no animals and no wheat, they can't go very far."

Thus, he said, "hundreds of thousands of Armenians were moved south of the Arax River."

"There was a particular village or town on the Arax River, known as Julfa. The Armenians know it as Jugha. It was a fabulous city with very wealthy merchants. It had become part of the Silk Road and the international trade network," he said. "Shah Abbas brought these people to his new capital, Isfahan, in the south of Iran, and gave them an area across the river from his capital. He said, 'Here you make your town and I will see to it that you will live according to your Christian laws. I will not allow any Muslims to live in that area. And you will have your local self-government.' And the Armenians thrived."

Hovannisian said the success of those forced transplanted Iranians continues to inspire him. "I continue to be amazed that however wealthy they already were and however well-established their trade, how was it that the Jugha merchants, who were displaced by several hundred miles ... are on the international trade routes within one generation?"

During his travels to Calcutta, Rangoon and Manila, Hovannisian said, he met many Armenians. "They all had originated from New Julfa," he said. "And when they were talking about a pilgrimage to their homeland, it was to Jugha, to the mother church of Jugha."

The breadth of the travels of the Jugha traders, especially considering the technology and means of transportation then, is simply incredible; they went all the way east to Mongolia, and all the way west to Sweden.

"Armenian merchants were very, very resourceful," Hovannisian said. "They didn't even need to have contracts because they had an honor system among themselves."

Through various systems, including what might be construed as bribes by today's



Armenians of Iran

Mamigonian.

Hovannisian then delved into the history of the province of Azerbaijan (Aterpetakan) in Northern Iran, with the capital city of Tabriz. "They [the other Azerbaijan now fighting Armenia and Karabakh] adopted that name only in 1918. That was not known as Azerbaijan before," he noted.

"It [that region of Iran] plays a critically important role in Armenian history because if you look just to the west, beyond the border, lie Van and Vaspurakan. The connection between Vaspurakan and Azerbaijan [Iranian Aterpetakan] were very intimate," he said.

"It was in [Iranian] Azerbaijan that Armenian organized their *fedayi* groups that they sent weapons across the border into Van and Sassoon," he said.

"Azerbaijan in the north of Iran has a very different history than southern Iran, where Armenians created a whole trading network," he explained.

He named Salmast, Khoy, Gilan and Mazandaran and Gharadagh in the north with rich Armenian tapestries woven into Iranian life. "There were hundreds of Ar-

menians by doing such things as putting arms under their skirts and go across borders and boundaries, carrying concealed weapons for the fighters on the other side," he explained.

The most famous of the Armenian revolutionary figures in Iran was Yeprem Khan (1868-1912), who took part in not only Armenian revolutionary movements, but also against the Persian oppressors fighting the Qajar dynasty, which ruled Iran from 1789 to 1925, to try to bring about a constitution in Iran.

"In 1910-11 they [the population at large] engaged in revolutionary warfare, which forced the Shahs to make compromises and give into them a certain degree. Yeprem Khan was a part of the Iranian revolutionary movement," he explained.

Hovannisian also spoke about the Armenian religious leaders in Iran's north, including Nerses Melik-Tangian, who he said, "is probably the most loved and member of the Primates in Tabriz."

The continued Turkish killings of Armenians on their lands spilled over into northern Iran and Armenian villages there. "In



COMMUNITY NEWS

standards, they were able to get monopolies in various countries for certain goods.

In Cadiz, Spain, for example, he said 12 Armenian merchants had built a Catholic church, the Church of Santa Maria, which is still standing.

New Julfa, in Isfahan, is still populated by Armenians, with their unusual churches and buildings.

“Over the generations and years, it has become a sleepy town, still very, very charming,” Hovannisian said.

There are many churches in Julfa, but all look like plain mosques from the outside, but the interiors might shock visitors.

“Look what’s inside. The mosaics, murals and tiles. Opulence. What money it took and how much they had to invest in it and how much foreign specialists and craftsmen,” Hovannisian said with awe, as he showed a picture of a church with intricate murals covering practically every square inch of the interior.

At the program, art historian Ani Babayan of NAASR, who herself hails from New Julfa, spoke about the art and architecture of the region, including the Monastery of Sourp Amenaprkich (New Julfa Vank).

Babayan thanked Hovannisian for in-

cluding her essay on the art of Julfa, as well as her colleagues at NAASR and the members of the Armenian Society of Boston, who allowed the publication of the photographs in the book in color.

“From 1606 to 1695, 24 Armenian Apostolic churches were built in Julfa. Today 13 churches are standing. Each church reflected the financial capacity of the parish,” she explained.

Many who had gone to the diaspora, often sent money for the construction and the decoration of the churches, she said.

“During the restoration of the Sourp Amenaprkich Church dome in 2008, an inscription was found at the center of the dome. It contained the names of the previously unknown floral decorator artists, dated 1667,” she said. “It proves the opulent dome was done by Armenian artists.”

The churches, she said, are part of the historical buildings protected by the Isfahan province’s government. In addition, there are efforts to get the Surp Amenaprkich Church declared a UNESCO protected site, which has already recognized the churches of Dzordzor, Surp Tadeh Vank there.

Hovannisian also spoke about the art of Julfa, including paintings and theater, sin-

gling out painter Sumbat Der Kiureghian and actress Siranoush, who had been born in Constantinople, performing widely in the Caucasus before coming to Iran and becoming “the darling” of Persian society.

The former often painted village scenes in Julfa. However, many villages are now empty.

“The basis of the Armenian society has always been the farmer,” Hovannisian said, before delving into the villages, including Peria and Boloran.

From 1946 to 1947, the highly patriotic Armenians of the country repatriated to Armenia, leaving many of the villages empty, he noted.

“When I was taking a train from Yerevan to Tabriz in the 1960s, still in the 1960s, there were large number of Armenians migrating out of Iran, coming to Soviet Armenia, many of them of course later disillusioned, but they had come there with great optimism, thinking they were going to develop the county,” Hovannisian said.

He dedicated the last part of the talk to the capital, Tehran. There are still 25 Armenian schools in the city, he said.

David Yaghoubian’s chapter in the book, titled “Armenians and the Development of

Nationalism in Iran,” he said shows how “flexible the Armenians are in Iran. They adjust to the local situations and that is one of their ways. That’s part of Armenian history, isn’t it? For Armenians to survive they have had to adjust.”

Then he gave a specific example. He showed a picture of the huge Armenian demonstration on April 24 in 2006, but he recalled that they were very circumspection 2005, when he was in Iran to speak at the commemoration. They asked him not to take part in the march, though he was going to speak at the program. The idea of him, an American citizen, criticizing turkey there, they suggested, might take on a different meaning.

“They are diminished by perhaps 2/3 but they are still there, still active and I hope they will have a very long, long life,” he noted.

From Iran to California

The Armenians from Iran constitute a very large segment of the population in Glendale, he said. “The most prosperous segment of the community who live up in the hills of Glendale which is a status symbol.”

“They continue to thrive while at the same time acculturating and adjusting and changing but being proud of their heritage and maintaining it even though they had been in Iran for more than 400 years, and in some cases for more than 1,000 years, still able to maintain their language as their primary means of communication,” he said. “It’s a rich history.”

Hovannisian has written the first chapter of the book, an overview of and introduction to the community. The 23 chapters of the book cover a range of topics. Authors include the late Leonardo Alishan, Rubina Peroomian, Ani Babayan and Vartan Matiossian, among others.

In 1986, Hovannisian was appointed as the first holder of the Armenian Educational Foundation Endowed Chair in Modern Armenian History at UCLA. Hovannisian is a Guggenheim Fellow who has received numerous honors for his scholarship, civic activities, and advancement of Armenian Studies. His biographical entries are included in Who’s Who in America and Who’s Who in the World among other scholarly and literary reference works.

In 2014, he became adjunct professor at USC “with the intention of advising on the Shoah Foundation’s integration of the Armenian Film Foundation’s collection of genocide survivor interviews.” He then in 2018 donated his own interviews to USC Shoah Foundation’s Visual History Archive. The 1000 interviews are titled the Richard G. Hovannisian Armenian Genocide Oral History Collection, and is “the largest existing collection about the Armenian Genocide” according to the foundation.

In his introduction at the start of the program, NAASR’s Marc Mamigonian brought attention to the changes since the last time the building had hosted an in-person lecture, in February 2020. “We would be remiss not to remember that many people dear to us have been lost whether because of the pandemic or other causes. A terrible war has been fought in 2020 that brought great suffering to Artsakh and Armenia,” and thus, he suggested a moment of silence.

The program was also sponsored by the Armenian Society of Boston and the Society for Armenian Studies.

Armenian Communities of Persia/Iran is available from NAASR, Abril Bookstore and Mazda.



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Arts & Culture

Magda Tagtachian

In Search of Memory, Truth and Justice

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / BUENOS AIRES — Magda Tagtachian is a writer and journalist. Born in Buenos Aires, she studied meteorology at University of Buenos Aires. She then worked at *Clarín* newspaper for twenty years and at *Gente y Para Ti* magazine. In 2016 she published the first edition of *Nomeolvides Armenuhi* (Forget me not, Armenuhi, by Penguin Random House), and in 2020 she launched *Alma Armenia*, published in Argentina and in several Latin American countries (VR Editoras). In her third novel, *Rojava* (P&J, 2021), she continues with fiction to show the current conflicts in the Middle East, this time in northern Syria. Magda Tagtachian has an active participation in the Armenian community of Argentina and the world and collaborates in different journalistic media and literary fields.



Dear Magda, in the history of the Armenian Diaspora we have many cases when an Armenian author writes in local languages, yet does not become a part of local literature. With your books are you already a part of contemporary Argentinean literature?

Yes, my books have been integrated into Argentine literature. There are in all the bookstores of the country and luckily they sell very well among both Armenian and non-Armenian readers. They also buy them from abroad by shipments or in digital stores. I know because they write me and comment on me. Many readers confess me they dare to investigate their origins after reading my books, whether they are Armenian or not. And non-Armenians and in general thank me because they do not know the complex problems of the Middle East and the South Caucasus. Novels are a way of entertainment. And that is also a way of traveling and learning. That is what I seek with my work. To leave a legacy. Like my grandmothers did with me, even if they did not speak about the Genocide. On those Saturdays and Sundays I spent with them cooking, knitting or see TRUTH, page 14



Susan Lind-Sinianian Armenian Museum of America Doll expert, Textile Curator

Beloved Armenian Rituals Play Important Role on World Doll Day

By Victoria Atamian Waterman

Well-known doll collector and entrepreneur, Mildred Seeley founded World Doll Day on June 11, 1986, to spread a message that a common doll could be an instrument of world understanding. Since then, the tradition has been celebrated on the second Saturday of every June and encourages participants to give someone a doll, especially to a child that does not have one. There are many ways to observe #WorldDollDay from sharing a picture of your favorite doll on social media to learning about the history of dolls and the different kinds of dolls throughout the world. This coming World Doll Day, June 11, 2022, let's celebrate Armenian dolls and figurines that have played an important role in educating and preserving the rich traditions and rituals of the Armenian culture and history.

Armenian Dolls Date Back to Ancient Times

Marina Khachmanukyan believes that a doll is not just a toy, but an informative cultural and historical object and a symbol of time and era. Marina is an expert doll curator at the Museum of History of Yerevan and the initiator and founder of the first gallery of dolls in Armenia. According to Marina, there is interest of dolls all over the world, yet Armenian dolls are not well represented. As an archeologist and art historian, this troubled Marina and inspired her to launch a Life of Dolls virtual museum. Marina states "Dolls are unique guides that can tell us about some of the most fascinating fragments of our history."

Armenian dolls can be traced back to archaeological excavations in Armenia where anthropomorphic figures were discovered. These figures, which have a cultural significance and a direct relation to rituals, can at the same time be considered as "ancestors" of Armenian dolls. The widespread findings of female origin in ancient times are explained by the fact that fertility and reproduction of life is of spiritual divinity, as in many ancient cultures.

Human-like figures and dolls, that are well known in Armenian ethnography, can be categorized by ceremonial purposes, according to "The Popular Armenian Feasts, Rites/Ceremonies with Dolls/Dances" by Jenia Khatchaderyan. "Dolls are associated with a wide range of rituals, remedies, and superstitions. There are rituals and dolls that ward off the evil eye; warrant the good intentions of mothers-in-law, fertility, and protection of brides; dolls who are left or buried in cemeteries for the purposes of see DOLLS, page 13



Armenian archaeological figures

Dreams On Fire

PTSD Meets the Armenian Genocide in Jan Balakian's Stirring New Play

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK — "Dreams on Fire" starts off from a controversial scientific hypothesis that has gained momentum in recent years. According to the emerging field of epigenetics, trauma can not only be passed down intergenerationally; it can also be transmitted at the somatic, molecular level in our DNA. The first idea explains why certain cultures that have faced repeated persecution — Jews and Armenians for example — can sometimes appear overly anxious or neurotic to the society at large. Understandably if your parents lived through the Shoah or the *Aghet*, you may worry about the future more, fret over and even smother your own children with attention. But I'm less convinced that this form of anxiety can be transmitted at the mitochondrial or cellular level. Pushed to the extreme, this line of thinking could also be used to exonerate the perpetrator as well as the victim of trauma if the former's family also has a history of excessive trauma.

Be that as it may, "Dreams on Fire" is an important play for bringing issues of mental health to the theatrical fore. The main character, Aram Sarkisian (Sam Arthur), attends an unnamed college where he has amassed four incompletes as his exam period rolls around. Aram has a close relationship with Gran (Constance Cooper) who recounts their family history during the Armenian Genocide. Arthur displays all the signs of classic PTSD: depression, passive aggressiveness as well as dark spells when he either does not remember his behavior or chooses to forget it. At one point he abandons his love interest Emily (Emma Giorgio) — who just happens to be Turkish-American — mid-date. Gran realizes that something is up and takes him to see a doctor who diagnoses him with severe ADHD: she prescribes both medication and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

To her credit, Balakian gleaned much of her information from actual doctors in the field: "I heard Rachel Yehuda, a neuroscientist at Mount Sinai speak on NPR. Dr. Eric Hollander, a leading neuroscientist, confirmed that it was a mature field."

This may be the case, but on a literary level, using epigenetics as the basis for one's narrative can be tricky. In her 2021 *New Yorker* piece, "The Claim Against the Trauma Plot," Parul Sehgal problematizes the issue at hand: "Unlike the marriage plot, the trauma plot does not direct our curiosity toward the future (Will they or won't they?) but back into the past (What happened to her?)."

Sehgal goes on to argue that trauma see DREAMS, page 13



ARTS & CULTURE

Armenian Rituals Play Important Role on World Doll Day

DOLLS, from page 12

healing through divination, ceremonial dolls associated with spiritual devotion; and goddesses of mother nature.”

The Nuri doll represents the last two of these categories and is considered a salvation to the villagers to provide rain to the thirsty fields and gardens. According to the belief, when people and animals suffer from water scarcity, Nuri cries and her tears soak the soil and the fields come back to life. Early Palm Sunday morning, groups of girls danced and sang with their Nuri dolls, going from house to house. People sprayed water on the dolls through the windows and doors and gave them eggs, bread, or cheese



Marina Khachmanukyan Museum of History of Yerevan Doll Curator

for the children to have a celebration. If by chance, it rained, the children rejoiced that Nuri heard their prayers and gave them rain.

Another beautiful ritual doll is celebrated on Ascension Day. On the Wednesday prior, girls used to go to the mountains and valleys and collected seven handfuls of water from seven springs, seven petals from seven flowers, and seven stones from seven running waters. They put these items in a special flowerpot with the Vichaki Arus doll on top. They were left outside overnight and brought to the fortune-telling square the next morning. During the Ascension ceremony, girls anxiously awaited their fortunes and gave out wreaths the flowers they collected.

For generations, girls have been enamored with dressing dolls in beautiful clothes. Many family photos captured from the old days illustrate girls holding their precious dolls who also dressed up for the occasion. Dolls can pose as models to preserve history when dressed in traditional Armenian

costumes.

The Armenian Museum of America in Watertown preserves and holds special dolls including this collection that was do-



Nuri Dolls with their favorite donkey

nated by the family of Socie Kradjian. Her mother, Lucine Szentendrey, created 47 handmade regional dolls by replicating the “Armenian National Costumes Map, 19th –

1st Quarter of 20th Century” compiled by Arakel Patrik.

Doll expert and Textile Curator at the Armenian Museum of America, Susan Lind-Sinianian, plays an important role in the preservation of Armenian culture through dolls. She has created intricate costumes including a bride from Akhalzikha, and a Cher doll modeling a traditional Armenian dress from Zankezur.

Like many of the most beautiful values of our culture, Armenian ritual dolls, are on the verge of being forgotten. Because many of the rituals are no longer alive, many of the accompanying events are also forgotten: songs, dances, food. If the ritual is not performed, dolls are not created. We must save their existence in the form of knowledge and honor customs such as World Doll Day that remind us of the rich and varied ways to educate and preserve our culture.

For more information, visit <https://www.ufdc.org/world-doll-day/>, www.kukliarm.com, www.armgeo.am, www.projectsare.org or www.armenianmuseum.org.

(Victoria Waterman has made a life-long career of advancing women and empowering girls. Her TED.com Talk “Today’s Girls are Tomorrow’s Leaders” and related news articles have been seen by thousands of viewers. Growing up in an immigrant, bilingual, multi-generational home

with survivors of the Armenian Genocide has shaped the storyteller she has become. Her debut novel about her family’s history will be released in 2022.)



Armenian girls with dolls courtesy Project Save

PTSD Meets the Armenian Genocide in Jan Balakian’s Stirring New Play

DREAMS, from page 12

has become the default mechanism for many writers, creating an altogether poorer narrative than in the past — when everyone from Shakespeare to Virginia Woolf merely suggested or alluded to details from their characters’ lives, using their descriptive and linguistic talents to suggest character development. Sehgal explains

“In the 1924 essay ‘Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,’ (Woolf writes) that ‘all novels begin with...a character who awakens the imagination. And here Woolf, almost helplessly, began to spin a story herself — the cottage that the old lady kept, decorated with sea urchins, her way of picking her meals off a saucer — alighting on details of odd, dark density to convey something of this woman’s essence...Those details: the sea urchins, that saucer, that slant of personality. To conjure them, Woolf said, a writer draws from her temperament, her time, her country.”

Sehgal concludes her essay by appealing for a richer array of subtler narrative options: “The trauma plot flattens, distorts, reduces character to symptom, and in turn instructs and insists upon its moral authority. The solace of its simplicity comes at no little cost. It disregards what we know and asks that we forget it, too — forget about the pleasures of not knowing, about the unscripted dimensions of suffering, about the odd angularities of personality, and, above all, about the allure and necessity of a well-placed sea urchin.”

“Dreams on Fire’s” specificity and strength is to place the trauma narrative within the context of the Armenian Genocide. We have few plays that discuss the Genocide at all — Richard Kalinoswki’s



Jan Balakian

“Beast on the Moon” stands out among them. Due to COVID-19, Dreams on Fire was presented as a Zoom reading by Kean University and still awaits a full production, so it will be interesting to see which direction it takes. Balakian’s writing is fluid and her dialogue enticing, especially when Aram finds himself alone with either Emily or Gran. The sections of the script spent with the doctor/psychiatrist (both energetically well-acted by Dalita Getzoyan) and the ending could be shortened.

The Kean reading was more than ably directed by Nora Armani, who coaxes strong performances from her cast despite the difficulties inherent in the form: “It’s very difficult to show an audience what a play will really look like from a reading like this,” Armani commented: “You need twice as

much directorial ingenuity.”

Indeed on several occasions the performances jolt the placid viewer sitting at home to attention, especially in scenes where Aram suffers a breakdown or traumatic attack. In a Zoom reading, casting can paradoxically play a more important role than in a staged production since actors must rely solely on their delivery to get across the playwright’s intentions. They have no sets or costumes or clever contrivances to aid their performance: it’s just them, their scripts, and the camera. Dreams on Fire was also masterfully narrated by assistant director Donna Heffernan.

Balakian teaches English Literature at Kean, so she knows better than most people about university life and its many stress points: “Aram was a depressed, anxious college student,” Balakian explains: “I started writing a play about a college student’s struggle with mental health. That’s what I wanted to write.” Yet Balakian, the granddaughter of Genocide survivors, found that her own family trauma played repeated literary interference with her writing process: “Somehow images from the Armenian Genocide kept appearing... which made for a more interesting story than a straight up mental health play.”

The playwright’s brother, Peter Balakian, documented this trauma in his best-selling 1998 memoir *Black Dog of Fate*: “The fact that my grandmother saw her family murdered in 1915 during the Genocide was pivotal. She escaped with her two daughters — my aunts Lu and Glad — and fled to the US. That kind of trauma registers deeply in the nervous system. My mother was a teenager when Pearl Harbor happened and had a complete breakdown. That must have

impacted her.”

Balakian’s mom was classically over-protective: “She’s like the father in Philip Roth’s *Indignation*,” the playwright added: “He constantly worries that something will happen to his son. In my family, wherever you go, mom’s phone call follows you. So the Gran in the play is really a representation of my hypervigilant mother.”

Balakian also used her own literary scholarship and research in writing “Dreams on Fire”: “My study of Arthur Miller’s use of Expressionism in ‘Death of a Salesman’ helped me construct the flashbacks.”

Equally important perhaps in “Dreams” is what is left incomplete. Surprisingly this is perhaps the most universal theme in the play. In America we live in a very bizarre society that wants us to be afforded every personal liberty yet remains surprisingly puritanical. We base a person’s worth almost entirely on their ability to reach sometimes unreachable goals (marriage, child-bearing, financial success), and on a certain timeline. Balakian explains: “In one way or another, we all have incompletes — something we have not finished or quite figured out. Academics happen to work in a profession where they get paid to fill out forms every semester, but for most people there is no form. But there is the frustration of the incomplete task, which we can always finish, as Aram does. Sometimes, though, it takes more than a summer.”

As Balakian noted, we do indeed all have incompletes. “Dreams on Fire” brings many important issues to the stage. If the playwright and director can just streamline scenes to emphasize the play’s main themes, they should have a real winner on their hands. Now about those sea urchins....



ARTS & CULTURE

Magda Tagtachian: *In Search of Memory, Truth and Justice*

TRUTH, from page 12

helping to sell shoes in my grandmother Maria Balian's "Cotté" shoe store in the Buenos Aires neighborhood of Villa Urquiza, the DNA that our history brings was impregnated in me. The seed that led me to investigate, write and transform our pain and injustice in the active search for Memory, Truth and Justice.

Last year your novel *Rojava* was considered one of the 50 best books of the week. The main heroine of the novel is a young Armenian woman who is looking for her father and finds herself among Kurdish women freedom fighters. Is there a prototype for your heroine?

Yes, Nané Parsehyan is the protagonist of *Rojava*. She is an Armenian woman raised in Soviet Armenia, who discovers when she grows up that her real father is a Kurdish revolutionary. The history of the Kurds and Armenians has always been linked, in one way or another. The Kurds were used in the Ottoman Empire to exterminate the Armenians. They were the front line. As a minority Turks considered them "worthless." The Armenians were a significant minority in the Ottoman Empire, so the Young Turk party, led by Talaat Pasha, masterminded the Genocide. Today the Kurds suffer like the Armenians from the same threat from Turkey. Nané Parsehyan, the main character of *Rojava*, is my heroine because she dares to look within herself, to dive into her most contradictory emotions, to know the truth as much as it hurts. She is encouraged to fight and she is not resigned to look for true love, despite having been raised under the strict rules of patriarchy that significantly affected her position in society. Nané's path is that of liberation and transformation, like Kurdish and Yazidi women now are refunding the Women Revolution in Rojava, to live in an equal new society, far from patriarchal rules. In my novel, Nané Parsehyan is accompanied by Alma Parsehyan, her Armenian cousin and a journalist, raised in Boston. I identify with both of them. Like the struggle of Armenian women in the Middle East and the West. Both fights, perhaps in different ways, for women liberation, anti-patriarchal society and to find the true love for their lives.

Being a third-generation Argentinian-Armenian, you are active in Armenian affairs. In what extent and how your generation maintains the national memory and identity alive?

My grandparents suffered the horrors of the Genocide. They hardly spoke of what they had been through. They tried to forget, although they never forgot, but they had to move on. It is the trauma of the victims that is being worsened when the facts are not recognized, as happened with the Armenian Genocide. My parents did not talk about what my grandparents had been through either. They only said that the grandparents had escaped from the Turks and the Genocide. This is pretty much the only thing I heard as a kid. I did not go to Armenian school. I lived as Armenian at my grandparents' house on weekends, where we ate lehmehjun, shish kebab, kefté and baklava, kadaif, gurabia. My grandmother Armenuhi Demirjian Tagtachian was an expert cook. My grandfather, Yervant Tagtachian, was a shoemaker and he made me "guillermina" model shoes to go to school. He died when I was 13. If I heard him say more than five sentences in his life, that was a lot. He was always working in his workshop and drying pumpkin seeds in the sun that we all ate later. His green eyes were always veiled by a film of water. What I now understand was that that was sadness. My grandmother Armenuhi was more active. If only I had

known her story when I was little! But they did not tell me, and they say that the third generation is the one that talks, the one that investigates and is encouraged to ask about those that parents and grandparents kept quiet about. My parents had all the Genocide books at home. Also books on Armenian art and architecture. Today, all deceased, I treasure them at home, as a valuable legacy and message. Today I understand their silences, and their silences speak to me all the time. It is what led me to write, and the flame that drives me to continue fighting for the Memory of the Armenian people and to continue creating and writing. In my generation, as in all, everyone does what they can. I believe that the journey of Memory and Identity is a very intimate and personal journey. Different in each case. In mine it was strongly awakened in 2015, with the centenary of the Genocide. I had a kind of revelation. I suddenly felt that I should know in detail what had happened to my whole family. I gathered them together, explained them, and for a year we got together to eat like when I had lunch at Armenuhi's house as a child, but this time with the recorder on the table, among the delicacies prepared by



my great-aunt Zarman Demirjian Daghljan, Armenuhi's younger sister. Between her and Hasmig Demirjian Kabakian and my Grandma Armenuhi's brother Wahe Demirjian, we recreated the history. My aunt Alicia Tagtachian and my cousins Elizabeth, Rosig, Cecilia, Manuel, Amelia, Cristina, all participated in this new construction of Memory. All of this was reflected in my first book *Forget-me-not Armenuhi: The Story of my Armenian Grandmother*. The story lives on as long as we work to make that flame last. That is why I am excited when schools call me to talk with students and teachers. Many are not of Armenian descent and, through my work, they investigate, they find out, they want to know more. I also developed a very good exchange with my readers, Armenians and non-Armenians. We are all on the same journey of Identity and Memory. I take the time to answer each of the messages. I am aware that in each act and in each word we continue to found Memory. It is a key, even more, as 107 years after the Genocide, the Armenian people continues to be victims of threats from the Erdogan and Aliyev regimes in Turkey and Azerbaijan, those denier and genocidal states. It is a shame that after the 107 years only about 30 countries have recognized the Armenian Genocide. And that also explains what we see now in Ukraine. The "Poem of Indifference," attributed to the German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller, illustrates this very well:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not

speak out—

Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

It would be necessary to add a verse for the Armenians and so many other forgotten minorities. Like the Kurds today who are also being persecuted by the Erdogan regime.

Many third- and fourth-generation Armenian already don't know what part of the old country their ancestors were from. I am sure you do know!

I know the history of both Tagtachian and Demirjian families. My paternal grandparents, Armenuhi Demirjian and Yervant Tagtachian were born in Aintab, today Gaziantep in Turkey. My maternal grandparents, Maria Yelanguedian and Simon Balian, were from Marash, Cilicia region, also in the Ottoman Empire, today Turkey. The greatest amount of data I gathered was around the history of the Demirjians: of the rest I know is less, because, unfortunately, they have not remembered or there was no one to ask. My grandmother Maria Yelanguedian Balian's story is even sadder than Armenuhi's. Her mother and brothers were killed in the Genocide. Her father left her in an orphan-

age in Beirut when she was one and half year old and they never saw each other again. She grew up alone and at the age of 14 they shipped her to Argentina so that she could marry my grandfather Simon Balian, whom she of course did not know. They had three children: Rosa, Jorge and Beatriz, my mother. My grandfather, Simon Balian, died when my mother was seven years old. My mother passed away on

May 28, 2020 and she did not want to talk about or remember her past, her childhood. It hurts. She did not even know the name of her grandparents, as my grandmother Maria barely remembered the name of her father. So, one understands very well the reason for her pain, her resistance to emotion, the importance of maintaining traditions and everything that is not said in words, but says a lot.

You have published three books and they all are about Armenians. Are you going to continue write on Armenian subjects?

Yes, in the second half of 2022, my fourth novel will be published. It is my third work of fiction; the genre is "romantic geopolitical." And it will complete the trilogy with *Alma Armenia* and *Rojava*. It will be published by Penguin Random House. At the moment I cannot anticipate anything more.

Writing about the Middle East and Armenia, have you ever visited these parts of the world?

I traveled to Armenia twice. In 2016 I flew on a military helicopter to Artsakh. We departed from the Erebuni military airport towards Stepanakert. We flew two hundred meters high because above that level we could be shot down. This warning was the first germ of inspiration for *Armenian Soul*, but at that time I did not realize it. In 2018, I returned to Armenia and Artsakh. Both times I was in Shushi. In the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral, which today is bombed, and in the areas today handed over to Azerbaijan, my inspiration to write "Armenian Soul" was consolidated. When I came back five months later, I was already writing, transforming reality into fiction, but with journalistic investigation. The characters are fictional. Facts are based on reality. I

have not visited Syria or Rojava, although I would love to. I have not been to Turkey either, and I find it difficult. And I would never go to Azerbaijan; it is just impossible, because of my Armenian origin and my struggle and denunciation, which is public through my work.

In 2018, you received the Hrant Dink award from by the Armenian National Council of South America for your work on Human Rights. Could you please tell us what in particular you do in this field?

Having received the Hrant Dink award is an honor and responsibility. My commitment is to continue disseminating our history and continue fighting for the construction of Memory. Regardless of receiving it, I would have done it, as I do it today. I consider it a moral duty and an ethical and historical debt to my ancestors. In any case, I greatly appreciate this distinction: it makes me proud and gives me even more strength to keep fighting.

You have written: "May the lyrics, our struggle and history continue to meet us in the construction of the Memory." Yet, what else should the diaspora do for surviving except of constructing the Memory?

The role of the diaspora is fundamental, even more today, when Armenia and Artsakh are threatened. And, although the struggle is collective, it is essential that each one can give testimony about our history individually. This happens in small daily acts, in the routines, in conversations with a neighbor or colleagues from college or work, interested in our history. I believe in the duty to pass on the legacy. It is like passing a relay in an Olympics. I have non-Armenian readers who, after reading my works, have begun to investigate and have committed themselves and carried out works and exhibitions to spread the Armenian cause in non-Armenian circles. The Turkish-Azerbaijani lobby is getting stronger every day. And the ignorance of the people in general is very great. Many do not even know where Armenia is. They are not even talking about our history. Others do not even know what Azerbaijan is. You have to start at the beginning. And do not get tired of explaining. As if we were lower first grade students, we have to tell and provide the sources. Because the story has not been told or, even worse, has been silenced. Giving voice is an individual and collective act. A possibility and a life decision. A commitment. Condemning atrocities against press freedom is also a fundamental fact. Today there is a journalist imprisoned in Poland — Pablo González who is of Russian origin with Spanish nationality. He was covering the war in Ukraine and was arrested on charges of being a spy for Russia. Those were unfounded charges. He cannot communicate with external world, and the Spanish government has not taken sufficient steps for his immediate release and guarantee that his fundamental rights are not violated. Pablo González is a journalist and political scientist, an expert war correspondent. He covered the Artsakh war in 2020. Shame on the international silence! If there is no visibility or condemnation, there is carte blanche for impunity. The lack of commitment of the community, of some media and some international human rights organizations, and of each individual person, should call our attention and is a call to continue fighting. It can always be done. And if it is not done, it is a problem. Today we have communication in every sense: web, social media, newspapers. In 1915 the news did not travel. It was difficult to know what was going on. Today we see the wars live. Silence will weigh on the morale of whoever exercises it.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Royal Oak Daily Tribune Newspaper, Royal Oak, MI, October 16, 1964

A Michigan Mother and Daughter Create Family Legacy That Continues Today

TROY, Mich. — As someone once said, “Legacy is not leaving something for people. It’s leaving something in people.” Lisa Sarkisian Derderian and her mother Nina have been cooking and baking together for over 50 years. Lisa began at age 4 1/2, and is still cooking with her mother who is 95 now. Lisa, who is one of five children, contributed the following story, recipe and family photos. She is past Chairwoman of the Women’s Guild at St. John Armenian Church in Southfield, MI.

Here’s Lisa’s tribute to her mother:

Our mother, Nina Doctorian Sarkisian, was born on the south side of Chicago in 1926. She was a first generation Armenian-American, the daughter of Krikor (George) and Armenouhie Doctorian. She was baptized at St. Gregory Armenian Church, and was active in the church choir and ACYOA. She was a member at St. James Armenian Church in Evanston, Illinois. She attended Von Steuben High School in Chicago where she graduated in 1944, and graduated from Wright Junior College in 1946.

As a young girl, mom and her girlfriends attended ACYOA dances and conventions where she met her future husband (my late father), Albert N. Sarkisian. My father was a trained tool and die maker who graduated from Highland Park High School. His specialty was lathe and experimental prototype. He attended the Ford Trade School; Tool and Die Maker and Engineering in Dearborn. (During his career, he told us he had worked on the early experimental prototypes for the modern day air bags.)

In 1951, our parents were married at St. John Armenian Church in Detroit.

Our mom’s mother, my grandmother, Armenouhie Doctorian, was an extraordinary cook, baker and seamstress. My grandfather George was a candy maker and shoemaker.

As a child, I remember going to Armenouhie’s flat in Detroit for lunch on Sundays after we attended church. The menu included a huge spread of baked chicken, pilaf, kufta, lahmajoon, katah and bourma. My grandmother had a very small kitchen, so I was always amazed at how she managed to prepare so many tempting Armenian foods and desserts each week.

Our wonderful parents had five children: Dr. Edward Sarkisian, Linda Houhanisin, Barbara Rupas, Lisa Derderian and Allan Sarkisian. We remember everything in our mom’s kitchen was made from scratch (and a lot of love). Our favorite dinners included dolma, grape leaves, green beans with meat and pilaf, along with meat and cheese bouregs made with madzoon (yogurt) dough; desserts were Armenian coffee cake, bourma, or kourabia.

For 45 years, mom kept active and bowled with the Hye Bowlers at Plum Hollow Bowling in Southfield. At 90, she quit bowling when her team was in first place and she was still surefooted. She’s been a member of St. John Armenian

Church and active in the Women’s Guild for over 60 years. In 1981, she served as the Chairwoman. Two of her daughters have followed in her footsteps as chairwomen.

Mom is an Honorary Member of the Daughters of Vartan (Zabelle Otayg) and served as a “Dirouhee.” She attended Daughters of Vartan conventions with our father who belonged to the Knights of Vartan (Nareg Lodge). She raves about “Buttons and Bows,” a memorable fashion show presented by the Women’s Guild years ago. She even remembers a church dinner dance 50 years ago, and how three talented Guild members served over 200 cheese bouregs after “making the dough from scratch.”

At 95, Nina still enjoys working in her kitchen and baking with her daughters, granddaughter and great granddaughters.

In 1964, Nina received her first “American” cookbook from her sister-in-law, the late Priscilla Sarkisian. It was *Cooking Favorites of Royal Oak* where the GiGi Nina’s Bread Roll recipe originates.* In fact, these are Armenian bread rolls from an American cookbook, and they’re worth the time and effort to make for your family and friends:

GiGi Nina’s Bread Rolls

INGREDIENTS:

3/4 cups of milk, scalded
1/4 cup sugar
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
1 teaspoon salt
1 package yeast = 2 1/2 teaspoons yeast dissolved in 1/4 cup warm water with 1 teaspoon of sugar; cover with plastic wrap
1 egg
3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
Egg wash (1 large egg, slightly beaten)
Sesame or caraway seeds, as desired

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 400F.

Proof yeast: in 1 cup measuring cup with 1/4 cup of warm water (110 to 115 degrees) add 2 1/2 teaspoons yeast and 1 teaspoon sugar, stir to combine. In 5 minutes, the mixture will double (if it doesn’t, replace with fresh yeast). Let this sit while preparing the dough. If the water is too hot, the yeast will not proof.

Note from Lisa: If you do not have a microwave, this can all be done on the stove; melting the butter as well as scalding the milk. My mother’s trick is kneading it by hand. If you are more comfortable using your KitchenAid, use the dough hook attachment.

Use an 8-cup glass measuring cup to melt 3 tablespoons of butter in the microwave. Remove from microwave and add 1/4 cup sugar and 1 teaspoon of salt until well blended. Then add 3/4 cup of milk to the butter mixture.

Place back in the microwave to scald the milk. The large measuring cup should be hot to the touch. Add 1 1/2 to 2 cups of flour to the bowl. The dough will be sticky. Let it cool down a bit before adding your raised yeast and slightly beaten egg. Start adding the remaining flour. You may not always use all of the flour. It may be easier to move dough to a larger oiled bowl. (“Oiled means spraying it with Pam cooking spray.”)

Knead the dough in a large bowl for approximately 4 to 5 minutes. Gradually add flour until dough is smooth and elastic. The dough should not stick to your hands. If you chose to use your KitchenAid, take dough out of machine while it is sticky. Place in an oiled bowl and knead the dough until it is smooth and elastic. Add a little flour at a time. Once the dough is smooth, place it in an oiled bowl larger than your dough because dough will double in size.

Note from Lisa: Make the sign of the cross in your dough. Cover with plastic wrap and a towel. Put it in a warm area, away from a window, or draft. Dough may be placed in a proofing oven. Allow 1 to 1 1/2 hours for dough to rise.

After the dough has risen, punch down and start measuring dough with a food scale for a uniform look. Each piece can weigh approximately 1 to 1.8 ounces, larger ones can weigh 2 ounces. Roll them out to 5 or 6 inches, and then tie them in a knot. To create a rosette, pull the tail of the dough into the center until it looks like a flower.

Place individual bread rolls on parchment or Silpat lined trays about 1 inch apart. You should get 3 across and 4 down on one tray. Let rolls rise another 30 to 40 minutes until doubled in size, and then gently brush with egg wash around the roll and the side/top. (Sprinkle rolls with seeds, if desired, and again lightly brush with egg wash so the seeds do not come off after baking.)

Bake for 10 to 15 minutes or until golden brown. The bottom of the rolls should be slightly brown. Trays can be turned after 5 minutes.

*This recipe is from *Cooking Favorites of Royal Oak, with Recipes Provided by Members of the Royal Oak Women’s Club in Michigan* (1964). This is a photo of Nina Sarkisian’s original cookbook. Go to: <https://www.ebay.com/itm/294653208639>





ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR
OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

JUNE 5 — Save the date. The Armenian Assembly of America will mark its 50th anniversary with a program on Sunday, at 5.30 p.m., at the Jonathan Club. This special event will highlight five decades of the Assembly’s influential achievements in advocacy, education, and awareness on Armenian issues. For more information visit <https://www.armenian-assembly.org/assemblyevents>

MASSACHUSETTS

JUNE 4 — The Daughters Of Vartan Santoukht Otyag No.5 is presenting **HYELIGHTS 2022**, an Armenian Cultural Show Highlighting the Performing Arts on Saturday, First Baptist Church Gordon Hall, 111 Park Avenue, Worcester. An Armenian Buffet following the show is included. Call 978-537-2752 for Reservations: \$15 per Adult, \$8 per Child ages 5-12, Children under are Free. The event is open to the public.

JUNE 8 — Armenian Night at the Pops will feature violinist Diana Adamyan as the featured soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra, Keith Lockhart conducting. Wednesday, 8 p.m. Symphony Hall, Boston. Presented by the Friends of Armenian Culture Society. Details to follow.

JUNE 16 — Opening of “On the Edge: Los Angeles Art 1970s – 1990s from the Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection” and “Discovering Takouhi: Portraits of Joan Agajanian Quinn.” 75+ artists including John Altoon, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Frank Gehry, Helmut Newton, Ed Ruscha, and Aram Saroyan. Members Reception 5:00, Non-Members Preview 7:00. Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown, MA.

JUNE 24 — Sayat Nova Dance Company will celebrate its 35th anniversary with a Wine Soiree. Experience a summer’s night under the stars in the company of friends, indulging in an array of Armenian wines. Friday, Gore Place, Waltham. Donation \$100. Purchase deadline June 25. Purchase tickets at Sayatnova.com/35th-anniversary.

SEPTEMBER 9 — Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter invites everyone to a cultural event honoring author, editor, philologist, educator and public figure, Jirair Tanielian from Beirut, Lebanon, for his 60 years of service and dedication to Armenian culture and the community. Friday, 7 p.m., Baikar Building, 755 Mt. Auburn, Watertown. Details to follow. For more information, please contact us at bostontca@gmail.com

SEPTEMBER 21 — Gala Benefit Celebrating Contributions of Our Nation’s Immigrants. InterContinental Hotel, Boston.6pm 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

NEW JERSEY

JUNE 17 — Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group in association with Huyser Music Ensemble presents “Huyser and Friends Project: Harmony,” an open-air concert dedicated to the 75th Anniversary of Tekeyan Cultural Association. Featuring Gohar Hovhannisyan & Band from Armenia. Friday, 7:30 p.m. at St. Thomas Armenian Church, 174 Essex Dr. Tenafly, NJ. Donation \$60, includes Aran Wines from Artsakh. Seating is on a first-come, first-served basis. For tickets call Marie: 201-745-8850 or Talar: 201-240-8541 or visit: www.itsmyseat.com/harmony

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.

WISCONSIN

JUNE 26 — St. Hagop Armenian Church Annual Madagh 2022 Picnic, Racine, Sunday. On the Johnson Park grounds. Open to the community/public with free admission, offering traditional Armenian food for purchase. For infor-

Gala to Mark 55th Anniversary of Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School

By Jennifer Chelebi

MANHASSET, N.Y. — In celebration of the 55th anniversary of Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School (HMADS), the Friends HMADS committee, and this year’s Honorary Booklet Chairperson, Karnig Alajajian

A commitment to education and a bold entrepreneurial energy has led Alajajian to live a life filled with hard work, successful business endeavors and dedicated service to Armenian organizations. Since his arrival in the United States from Egypt, where he was raised alongside his sisters

in a proud Armenian family, Alajajian has not only emerged himself in the Armenian community but done the even more difficult task of spreading the message about the thriving Armenian culture to others.

Alajajian pursued his bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering at Farleigh Dickenson University in 1955. Upon graduation, he began working at Bell Systems while pursuing a master’s degree. He ventured

out on his own and began working in real estate, opening real estate brokerage and mortgage brokerage firms in Queens, New York. He also served on the Board of Directors of ALMA Bank from 2015 to 2019.

For seven years, Alajajian was president of the Armenian Students’ Association at New York University. He has represented St. Sarkis Church in Douglaston, N.Y. as a delegate to the Prelacy Representatives Meeting, and has also been a member of the Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society for 50 years, where he engages in their theatre group. Karnig,

along with his wife Alice, has established the Alajajian Family Scholarship Fund with the Armenian Relief Society, a scholarship that will support students of Armenian descent who are pursuing their higher education in the U.S.

The gala will feature joyous Armenian music from the multi-talented songwriter, singer, and producer Harout Bedrossian.

The festivities will begin at 7:30 p.m. with a cocktail hour.

The Gala Dinner Dance contribution of \$175 will greatly support the efforts of the Friends committee and HMADS, benefiting future generations of Armenians. For further information about this event, or to find out how to become a part of the Friends of HMADS, contact the school office.



Karnig and Alice Alajajian

an, invite the community to join them for a gala on June 4, at the North Hills Country Club in Manhasset.

We have all struggled over the last few years to maintain a sense of connectivity both physically and emotionally to our Armenian heritage, family, and community, making this year’s gala perhaps the most important one yet. As the son of Armenian Genocide survivors, Vahan and Agnes Alajajian, Karnig has devoted his life to celebrating and preserving the Armenian spirit, making him the ideal Honorary Booklet Chairperson for this very special occasion.

GALAS Queernissage Pop-Up Market to Celebrate the Creativity and Artistry of LGBTQ+ Armenians and Allies

LOS ANGELES — GALAS LGBTQ+ Armenian Society (GALAS) will host its second annual Queernissage: an open air market featuring LGBTQ+ creatives from South West Asia & North Africa (SWANA).. The market will take place on Saturday, June 4, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Studio City Pop-Up: 4354 Tujunga Avenue, Studio City.

Queernissage is an homage to “Vernissage,” the open air market in Armenia that has been a gathering place for artists and merchants for decades. Through Queernissage, GALAS aims to create a space for their community members to express and share their creativity with each other and with the public. With an eclectic array of vendors, attendees can expect to find artwork, freshly made baked goods, interactive booths, jewelry, and much more.

Our first ever Queernissage took place in July 2021. We showcased over 30 LGBTQ+ Armenian artists and allies and hosted over 400 people during the day. It was a wildly successful event and we cannot wait for the next one!

Queernissage is only one of the many programs GALAS has planned for this year. In its 24th year, GALAS is committed to expanding and further developing robust outreach and community programming to bring visibility to LGBTQ+ Armenian voices and create resources and safe spaces for LGBTQ+ Armenians, their families and allies. Some of GALAS’ programs include therapeutic support groups, Soorj Sessions for families, friends, and allies of LGBTQ+ Armenians, as well as a scholarship fund for college students of Armenian descent who have demonstrated LGBTQ+ activism.

GALAS encourages all community members to attend Queernissage to support and enjoy the creative work of LGBTQ+ Armenians and allies. For additional information on Queernissage, taking place on Saturday, June 4, 2022, email galas-board@gmail.com or visit GALAS’ Facebook page at @GALASLosAngeles or GALAS’ Instagram page at @galas_la .



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EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST

Edmond Y. Azadian

STAFF WRITER

Harry Kezelian III

CONTRIBUTORS

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

REGIONAL

CORRESPONDENTS

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepiyan, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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EDITORIAL

Pashinyan's Shuttle Diplomacy and the Dwindling Hope for Karabakh Armenians



By Edmond Y. Azadian

There has always been a latent sense among some quarters of Armenia's population that in order to be able to live in peace in Armenia, that country has to jettison the cause of Karabakh (Artsakh).

That sense is becoming more prevalent and is taking the shape of a policy, to the chagrin of the people of the enclave and against the political logic of the Caucasus.

It is apparent that after overrunning Karabakh in 2020, the Azerbaijani forces have encroached upon Armenia itself, occupying 45 square kilometers of Armenia proper and they are pushing for a corridor within Armenia's sovereign territory.

Armenians lost their last historic kingdom in the year 1375 and they have no hope of recovering the lands lost then. The lost Karabakh lands may also end up joining forever the long-lost homeland. The impact of the 44-Day War will be felt for centuries to come and our generation will be held accountable before history and future generations of Armenians.

Losing Karabakh does not necessarily ensure living in Armenia peacefully; instead, it exacerbates the fears for a loss of the remaining homeland in the near future.

Whatever politics are conducted today will shape the destiny of future generations. We are not sure if people engaged in that politics fully are cognizant of that fact, in these days of political expediency.

We can only review and analyze today's developments in light of the above logic. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has just completed his third Brussels summit with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, through the mediation of European Council President Charles Michel. The ensuing post-meeting statement assures everyone that the discussions were "frank and productive," which in diplomatic parlance does not amount to much. The opaque statement issued by Mr. Michel renders the situation even murkier.

Those meetings held in Brussels, the capital of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), have been taking place over the background of the greater powers' rivalry, certainly influencing the process and the outcome of those negotiations.

Earlier Pashinyan had met President Putin, just to remind him that nothing behind his back may happen.

The November 9, 2020 declaration with its nine points, which brought about the ceasefire of the 44-Day War, was drawn up and forced upon the parties by President Vladimir Putin, who was at that time controlling the situation and implementing the above declaration. But the Russian war in Ukraine also changed the atmosphere in the Caucasus, where politics turned more fluid for the regional countries. It is true that change allowed Armenia more flexibility and opportunities, thus allowing Yerevan to launch a new diplomatic initiative.

As a result of the new maneuverability, Armenia tried to find alternatives to its foreign policy options, with some encouraging results. No previous Armenian administration had been accorded a welcome comparable to the warmth that Ararat Mirzoyan found in Foggy Bottom. The same treatment was reserved for Pashinyan in European capitals.

But Azerbaijan was ahead of the game and enjoyed the same opportunities to consolidate its gains from the war and, directed by Ankara, it began playing a more prominent role in the region. All these because of the major power rivalry. Indeed, the Kremlin complained that the West was hijacking the negotiation process.

Just one day before Russia invaded Ukraine, President Aliyev was in Moscow to sign a strategic treaty with President Putin and the crux of the treaty was that the parties will not conduct economic activities that would contradict or compromise the interests of the other party. But, thumbing his nose at the Kremlin, Mr. Aliyev took his next trip to Brussels and assured the Europeans that Azerbaijan would be able to fill the

void of Russian gas if and when the latter decided to retaliate and cut the flow of gas to Europe as a result of sanctions.

Moscow did not react to this transgression for two reasons. First, Aliyev had agreed with Putin not to open a second front in the Caucasus with Russia, which it could ill afford. The second cause is suspected to be a political charade whereby Russian gas can be mixed with the Azerbaijani supplies, since the latter could not meet the demand level. That arrangement would bypass sanctions in the watchful eyes of the Europeans.

Returning to the negotiating process, Russia has been following it with watchful eyes and with a certain degree of jealousy. Russia's concern is revealed in the fact that the very next day after the recent summit, when Pashinyan and Aliyev returned to their respective capitals, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers, Ararat Mirzoyan and Jeyhun Bayramov, respectively, to get a full account of the negotiations.

Moscow insists that the process of delimitation and demarcation will be conducted trilaterally, since Moscow is in possession of all the relevant historical maps, but Mr. Michel's statement indicated that the two sides will meet on their mutual border and work out the details of the process themselves.



Analysts in Armenia believe that delimitation and demarcation on Russia's watch may lead to political compromise suiting Moscow, while under the supervision of the West, it could progress on a sounder legal basis.

The statement by Charles Michel is visibly lopsided in favor of Azerbaijan, with good reason that Azerbaijan has become a more important political asset for the West. Armenia has long pinned its hopes on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, because that was the only and last international entity that had maintained the principle to settle the status of Karabakh without the use of force. Under the auspices of Minsk Group Armenia could hold Azerbaijan accountable for violating one of the principles of the Helsinki Declaration of the OSCE, which says that resorting to force or using violence to settle a political issue are unacceptable. Because of the controversies between Russia and the other co-chairs of the Minsk Group — the US and France — the group has been inactive and that is why the EU has become more aggressive in replacing it.

Mr. Michel's statement also reveals that the parties have dealt with border issues, meaning delimitation and demarcation.

The next topic referred to is "connectivity," unblocking transport links. Whereas Azerbaijan has blockaded Armenia and that issue could be resolved if Baku reversed that action, Turkey and Aliyev have more ambitious plans to configure the region to their economic and strategic advantage. That is why the parties have "agreed on principles governing transit between western Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan and between different parts of Armenia via Azerbaijan, as well as international transport through communications infrastructure of both countries."

It is very difficult to deduce if the issue of the Zangezur Corridor is hidden behind this terminology.

see DIPLOMACY, page 20



COMMENTARY

Fate or Future: Time to Save Istanbul's *Jamanak* Newspaper

By Naneh Hovhannisyan

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

Ever since the 2020 Karabakh War, there has been a pervasive stench of doom, defeat and despondency threatening to envelope us Armenians. A piece of news from Istanbul exacerbates it. Last year, a number of Armenian media outlets, as well as the Union of Journalists of Armenia, expressed concern over news that Istanbul's *Jamanak* (Ճամանակ, pronounced 'zhamanak', i.e. 'time') is facing closure. For over a year, the newspaper's editor-in-chief Ara Kochunian [Gochunian, Koçunyan] had been warning in a large number of diasporan and Republic-based media outlets that without wider support, it will only survive another year. The reasons are several: the current drastic fall of the Turkish lira, the decline of the number of Turkish Armenians who can read Armenian, and the general trend of shrinking print journalism.

That print journalism is in peril everywhere, being subsumed by the digital is no secret, though mainstream outlets are able to extract subscriptions and attract online ads. That the years of official Turkification and discrimination have resulted in fewer and fewer Armenians able to read or write (Western) Armenian is widely known too. Finally, Turkey is indeed in bad economic shape with high inflation, a rising cost of living and depressed wages. Be that as it may, *Jamanak*, a victim to all the above factors, I argue, needs to be saved.

Let me declare my personal interest at the outset: a friend of mine writes for *Jamanak*, and a report of mine was once re-printed in it. Otherwise, I have no affiliation with or profit from *Jamanak*. Nevertheless, staying neutral as Armenians seems wrong. I feel compelled to highlight the story because after the past years' loss upon loss of lives and land, of cultural heritage and international standing, of unity and stability, of dignity and autonomy, we all wish to see this ugly gush of nasty news turn around.

Jamanak should not be allowed to die, if only because, as the well-known writer and documentary-maker Tigran Paskevichyan wrote, more than a mere paper, "it is vivid proof of [our] intellectual heritage... a symbol of Armenian presence in Turkey." Throwing his weight behind Kochunian's plea, he argued that, though scant, assimilated, and estranged from its mother tongue, that community still matters. Allowing the closure of a paper here today, and a school there tomorrow, Paskevichyan cautions, we are paving the way for the community's retreat to the extent that the [Turkish] state could one day say, "you haven't been here, haven't been seen round here."

Paskevichyan, who made a film about the paper ("The Time of *Jamanak*," directed by Ara Shirinian), has a point. Surveying the history of Armenian-language press, one is bound to see a pattern of interrupted beginnings. Armenian printed press began in 1794 in Madras when priest Harutyun Shmavonyan published the short-lived magazine *Azdarar*. The oldest existing Armenian-language periodical today is *Bazmavep*, published on the island of St Lazzaro in Venice since 1843. As for the first Armenian periodical in Turkey, *Lro Gire* [«Լրոյ գիրքը»], started in 1832, it has disappeared without a trace.

By contrast and almost as a lone exception, *Jamanak* has been going for exactly half of the 228-year-old history of the Armenian printed press. Founded by brothers Misak and Sarkis Kochunian in October 1908 on the wave of optimism about the Second Constitutional Era in the Ottoman Empire, it is the oldest existing daily in Armenian (for the last few decades, it has been published six days a week, rather than seven). Furthermore, it is the oldest daily newspaper in Turkey in any language, with an uninterrupted print run even during the Genocide. Consistency seems to have been *Jamanak*'s credo, as it has covered the last one hundred and fourteen years of Turkey: seen off sultan Abdul Hamid II, the Young Turk takeover and constitutional monarchy, World War I, Ottoman dissolution and the birth of the Republic, while also covering all three incarnations of the Armenian republic (first, Soviet, and independent) without significant change since inception.

The paper strikes one as an Armenian institution to be cherished, especially given the country where it is published. Being in print in Turkey for over a century without interruption is an otherwise impossible feat. The country is known for government control and censorship of the press, frequently exercised during and in-between military takeovers through martial law and constitutional changes that followed. The government has frequently closed papers, including mainstream Turkish ones like *Hürriyet*, on a whim.

Still in the hands of descendants of the founding family, whose members have also worked as staffers, it has been under Kochunian's editorial leadership since 1992. At its peak,

before 1915, the paper had reached a circulation of fifteen thousand (compared to the current one thousand) and was distributed from Anatolia to the Caucasus, from the Balkans to Egypt — the perimeter where the majority of the Armenian nation lived. The Kochunian brothers — one with a business head and the other a literary one — were well-known in Istanbul. Misak (1863-1913), known as Kasim, was the author of the first complete translation of Gregory of Narek's *Book of Lamentations* into modern Western Armenian. The list of illustrious names who contributed journalistic articles, poems and short stories to, or worked at this four-page black-and-white paper, makes a dazzling display of fireworks: Krikor Zohrab, Daniel Varoujan, Gomidas, Tumanyan, Rupen Sevak, Zabel Yesayan, Sibil, Zareh Vorpuni, Hagop Mndzuri, Zaven Biberyan, and Zahrad.

Ara Güler, who immortalised the likes of Alfred Hitchcock, Salvador Dalí and Winston Churchill, started here, with some of his first photographs of Istanbul's fishermen published in 1952. His stints at *Hayat*, then at *Time-Life*'s Istanbul offices, followed by commissions from *Paris Match*, the *Sunday Times*, a meeting with Henri Cartier-Bresson, and inclusion in Magnum Photos all came later. And with them his fame as "the eye" or "the memory of Istanbul."

As well as covering important events of the day, *Jamanak* has serialized literary works on its pages. In later years, the paper published books, such as Vahan Tekeyan's *Gesaria* and *Two Heavens*, Rupen Zartaryan's *Articles*, and *In Asia Minor* by Yerukhan (Yervant Srmakeshkanlian).

Yet today, *Jamanak* is "at the edge of the precipice," as its editor-in-chief Ara Kochunian tells me in our recent WhatsApp interview. "Our hope is that by informing the worldwide Armenian community, we generate enough good will for offers of support," he says. After his initial interviews, some people helped, and "we actually survived last year at the expense of 'artificial respiration,'" said Kochunian.

His plan, however, involves more than enough funds to stay afloat, but rather as he phrased it, "to prepare to overcome the next phase of challenges." Since the restricting factors, such as the low numbers of Armenian-readers, the insufficient number of buyers of a physical paper, as well as Turkey's economic woes, are only getting worse, the team is aiming to make radical steps. "How much money are we talking about and what do you intend to do with it?" I ask. "One hundred and fifty thousand dollars, which is not a huge sum [for the industry]," says Kochunian. And he plans to retain complete editorial control.

Istanbul is home to nearly all of Turkey's remaining Armenians, roughly 60,000. (There are also economic migrants from Armenia.) For comparison, there are 230,000 left in Georgia and 100,000 in Iran. Their newspaper loyalties are split, with some preferring *Marmara*, another Armenian-language paper (now known as *Nor Marmara*, with a print run of 2,500, published six times a week), begun in 1940. But the real story of success and main rival has been *Agos* weekly. Starting in 1996 with a circulation of 2,000, at the time of its co-founder and editor-in-chief Hrant Dink's death in 2007, it had reached a circulation of around 6,000. It is the only newspaper in Turkey published in Armenian and Turkish, and has been credited with greatly increasing the participation of Armenians in the political and cultural life in Turkey. Hence, Kochunyan and the team are planning to go bilingual.

His other plan is, together with his team of ten-or-so staff in Istanbul, plus around five reporters outside Turkey, to take the paper online, as an addition to the printed version. "[W]e understand that our print format hasn't exhausted itself... It is solving the problem of convening with a group of people in their mother tongue. On the other hand, we see that around the world many authoritative newspapers have stopped publishing physical copies but are a presence in reporting news. So we also want to prepare for that eventuality — so that this paper's activity doesn't completely halt with the depletion of the paper version. We do have a presence on social networks, a modest, minimal one, but the results show that we can do better if we do more," says Kochunian.

Lastly, Kochunian's ambition seems to be to somewhat revive former Constantinople's place as one of Armenian intellectual centers by opening up to audiences outside Turkey. "We can both solve the problem of preserving Western Armenian and contribute to the collective thought of the widely dispersed Armenians. Because *Bolis*, or Istanbul, historically was a cradle, a brilliant center where the intellectual production always had a crucial influence on the formation of the collective Armenian thought. It's true it is not that *Bolis* today but ... all of the diaspora's core centers have weakened and shrank," he said.

Have they had any offers of money recently? "Sadly, no," is his reply. "At this moment, we do not have what

I expected... we haven't gotten anything." He graciously tries to explain this no doubt disappointing fact by the current fatigue and multiple major challenges for Armenians around the world: the Second Karabakh War and the plight of the Lebanese Armenians, for example. "Right now is an extremely difficult time for the Armenians. [and] in the atmosphere of competing priorities, it is extremely optimistic to hold out hopes [of help]."

I ask if he has thought of a self-organized online crowdfunding drive. "Sadly, we do not have the necessary infrastructure, but would gratefully accept help from such an initiative on our behalf, organized by friends and well-wishers outside Turkey. ... But we have one advantage," Kochunian continues, "which I keep stressing, which is that such alarms are rung normally when a given institution has a lot of debt, whereas [what] inspires confidence is the fact that we are not indebted to any individual or organisation. This is important in two ways: firstly, ... there is no question of failure of management, of accounting, of short-sightedness, or of waste, and secondly, we hope that people will appreciate this and will realize that whatever they invest or transfer, will start to directly benefit our goals. So, it might have looked suspicious if we were asking for money to get up to point zero, but it isn't the case at all... People may appreciate this [as well as the fact that] we are the world's oldest Armenian daily ... [and should not be allowed] to fall into the abyss due to ... temporary circumstances, because being in existence for 114 years in the diaspora — in Istanbul — for a paper means, as far as the Armenian nation is concerned (excuse the immodesty), that this is a timeless value."

However, having navigated the turbulent last century in Turkey and steering clear of conflict earned *Jamanak* accusations of being conformist and pro-government from certain quarters of the Turkish-Armenian community. Yet Kochunian is unequivocal: a minor newspaper by Turkish standards, *Jamanak* realises it cannot make or change the political atmosphere, so "why be controversial for the sake of it?" I ask how the paper refers to "the events of 1915." "Genocide. We make use of our right to openly state what happened, without being deliberately confrontational," he says.

In the English-speaking world, where I am based, as far as mainstream media in trouble is concerned, market forces would be obeyed, and the enterprise would either exhaust itself naturally, or a new buyer would step in and revive it, keeping the brand. *Jamanak*, however, as a minority paper, is to a large extent the responsibility of a given community. My suggestion is to define that community in the widest possible sense. In the absence of continuous and clear geographic boundaries, owing to our perilous history, aside from our Church, if a language can foster a home, then Armenian has been it — in books printed since 1512 in Venice, Amsterdam, and Lviv — and periodicals published in India, Iran and America. Especially that "many papers in the diaspora are published in foreign languages; the press is in very bad shape," as Hakob Asatryan of *Orer*, published in Czech Republic, once summarized.

There is a joke about a foreign visitor to England who marvels at the manicured lawns. "How do you do it?" he asks a local. "We've been doing it for hundreds of years," he hears back. The importance of building on something already in existence, of following an established tradition can be ignored in this raving anti-expert century of ours, but often at our own peril. Where there is no system, no infrastructure, no environment, no players to look up to, or even to look across at, we are forever condemned to re-inventing the wheel. It is possible to see our story, the Armenian story, as a constant string of being nipped in the bud, an unceasing row of false starts. Our writers got censored or killed before they matured, and our artists exiled even before they succeeded.

As Turkish essayist Enis Batur noted in Paskevichyan's documentary, "When we look at the history of the media, we see that the newspaper is a medium of internal communication in a way to comprehend the outside world by people speaking the same language. Just as archaeologists excavate layer upon layer of ancient cities, so does the media over time, whether daily or weekly in format, involuntarily represent the layers of culture produced in that language and making whole its system of values. Looking from this angle, the newspaper represents one of the most important rights of a given minority." Hence, bringing *Jamanak* back from the edge of the precipice is surely the right thing to do.

And if "Journalism is the first rough draft of history," as former President and Publisher of the *Washington Post* Philip L. Graham said, are we going to let others — again — write the draft of our history one newspaper at a time, one school and community organisation at a time?

To support *Jamanak*, visit jamanak.com.

(Naneh Hovhannisyan is a writer of book reviews, essays and memoir. Originally from Armenia, she now lives in the UK.)



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Founder of Azerbaijan Republic of 1918 Collaborated With Nazi Germany

President Ilham Aliyev and the Azerbaijani media frequently disparage Armenian national hero Karekin Njtech for having associated with Nazi Germany during World War II.

However, Azerbaijanis never mention the affiliation of Mammad Rasulzade, the founding father of the independent Republic of Azerbaijan in 1918, with the Azerbaijani Legion which fought for Nazi Germany. President Aliyev made no reference to Rasulzade in his 2017 speech, while naming the key figures of the first Republic of Azerbaijan.

In 2020, when President Aliyev accused Njtech of being a Nazi, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan shot back saying that Rasulzade "worked closely with Nazi Germany and the Nazi Party." Pashinyan criticized President Aliyev for glorifying Rasulzade. The Vice-Speaker of Azerbaijan's Parliament Fezail Ibrahimli retorted at the plenary meeting of the parliament in May 2020, saying that Pashinyan's accusation was "a delusion."

While President Aliyev keeps making critical comments about the statue of Karekin Njtech in Yerevan, he avoids recognizing that in Azerbaijan there are several Rasulzade streets and avenues, his statues are throughout the country, and his image is on postal stamps and banknotes. Rasulzade also has a municipality in Baku named after him. There is even the "Rasulzade Anatolian high school" in Ankara, Turkey.

Most people would not have been aware of Rasulzade's concealed connection to Nazi Germany, if it were not for the mysterious last-minute cancelation of a documentary about his life which was to be aired on Azerbaijan State Television on January 31, 2022, the 138th anniversary of his birth. However, just one day before the air date, the documentary was cancelled without any explanation. As a result, Fakhraddin Hasanzade, a producer of the Azerbaijani TV program, announced his resignation.

If aired, Rasulzade's biographical documentary could have revived talk of his support for Hitler's Azerbaijani Legion which was composed of 70,000 soldiers during World War II. The Armenian Legion had 11,600-33,000 soldiers, while the Georgian Legion had 30,000 soldiers, according to Wikipedia. The soldiers in all three Legions were prisoners of war who were captured by the Germans.

They all hoped that a victory by Germany would liberate their homelands from Soviet occupation.

David Davidian, a lecturer at the American University of Armenia, wrote in *World Geostrategic Insights*: "Rasulzade established relations with the Nazis in the 1930's while residing in Romania. At the outbreak of WWII, the German representatives notified Romanian authorities that Rasulzade was their political ally and asked that Rasulzade be issued documents permitting ease of diplomatic passage to Berlin. Rasulzade's goal was to help Nazi Germany conquer the Caucasus or have Turkey as an ally of Germany do so, clearing the way for an independent Azerbaijan and probably destroying what remained of Armenia."

Davidian added: "In May 1942, Rasulzade participated in meetings between Nazis and representatives of Caucasian Muslim emigres and actively recruited legionnaires for the German Wehrmacht [armed forces of Nazi Germany] from among Azerbaijani POWs.... Interestingly, Rasulzade remained in Germany until 1947. He eventually resided in Turkey until he died in 1955."

Rasulzade's grandson, Rais Rasulzade, wrote in the autumn 1999 issue of *Azerbaijan International* magazine: "It wasn't long until Hitler started looking for someone to represent him in the Transcaucasian region. He couldn't find anyone suitable among the Armenians or Georgians but had heard that Rasulzade was highly educated and cultured." According to his grandson, when Hitler met Rasulzade in Berlin, he asked him to give a speech to the Azerbaijani soldiers in the Nazi German army.

In a document (WO 208/4367) located in the United Kingdom War Office archives, Hitler was quoted as saying on December 12, 1942: "The Georgians are not a Turkish people, rather a typical Caucasian tribe, probably even with some Nordic blood in them. Despite all explanations — either from [Alfred] Rosenberg [ideologist of Nazism] or from the military side — I don't trust the Armenians, either. I consider the Armenian units to be just as unreliable and dangerous. The only ones I consider to be reliable are the pure Muslims, which means the real Turkish nations."

In his article, Davidian reported that the Azerbaijani Field Battalion I/111 "participated in suppressing the August 1944 Warsaw Uprising that killed an estimated 40,000 [Polish] civilians."

In conclusion, Davidian reminded the Azerbaijanis of the proverb: "Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones at others." I would like to add the biblical admonition: "You hypocrite! First remove the beam out of your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye."

Armenians Must Mobilize Against Dr. Oz

By Aram Arkun

Let us put aside the matter of whether cardiovascular surgeon Dr. Mehmet Cengiz Oz promoted questionable medical products and information on his television show, or his ideology in the context of American politics for a moment. For Armenian Americans, his potential ascent to the US Senate in Pennsylvania may set back the effects of US recognition of the Armenian Genocide and even US policy towards Armenia. He is in a very tight race in the Republican primary, which appears set for a recount. If he wins the primary, he may again face a close race against his Democratic rival John Fetterman, giving Armenians a chance to have a significant impact on this race.

Oz has never acknowledged the facts of the Armenian Genocide and till the present has avoided using the word genocide in reference to this tragedy. His campaign officials follow his lead. Most recently, when asked about his position on this topic in April, his spokesperson Brittany Yanick merely declared that he opposed genocide and the murder of innocent people in general, and concluded: "The evils of World War I should be commemorated. Dr. Oz looks forward to those important discussions, as well as helping the three million people of Armenia today."

The *Mirror-Spectator* contacted the Oz campaign via email for further clarification but received no answer.

In addition to his evasion of a clear position on the Armenian Genocide, Dr. Oz's ties with the Republic of Turkey provide additional grounds for concern. Former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, admittedly campaigning in favor of David McCormick, Oz's opponent in the Pennsylvania Republican primary, declared that Oz's candidacy presents "national security concerns."

At the most basic level, although born in the United States, Oz retains Turkish citizenship as well as American. He carried out military service in the Turkish army for two months in the early 1980s while in medical school — the same army that has supported Azerbaijan in attacking Armenia and Artsakh and has engaged in countless campaigns against Kurds both in and outside Turkey. No

US senator has ever kept dual citizenship, which can raise questions about political allegiances.

Oz even voted in a 2018 Turkish election. In early May, former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo observed that Oz had "time and energy to vote in a Turkish election but not in an American election" [a June 2018 Republican primary].

In response to public pressure, Oz initially declared to the press that he would forego certain security clearances if elected senator in order to keep his Turkish citizenship, which he claimed was necessary to care for his ill mother. As the controversy continued, Oz finally agreed to relinquish Turkish citizenship if elected before being sworn into office, but questions remain about his connections with the current Turkish government, both political and personal.

Personal and Political Connections

Oz has had many interactions with organizations and individuals close to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. One that is worrisome for Armenians is his appearance as a "special guest" at a fundraiser in 2019 for the Turkish American National Steering Committee (TASC). This committee is co-chaired by a registered agent of the Turkish government, Gunay Evinch, who also held positions in the Assembly of Turkish American Associations. Evinch has termed the Armenian Genocide the "Armenian revolt" in a 2005 article where he repeated the Turkish government's line that deaths occurred on both "sides" and that more study is needed through a legal inquiry. In 2021, he criticized President Joe Biden's characterization of the events as genocide, and was quoted on "politically motivated genocide claims," noting only that the measures taken by the Ottoman government against Armenian rebels led to deportations and a tragic loss of lives.

Oz declared however to Josh Rogin, a *Washington Post* columnist, in February that he did not know Evinch and their only contact was to appear together on stage at the aforementioned fundraiser.

Oz has been photographed with Erdogan at least on two occasions, but the extent of their relationship remains unclear. His campaign spokesperson claimed that he voted against Erdogan for a more secularist rival in the 2018 election mentioned above, and at a January 2022 campaign event, Oz purportedly said he "would be the harshest critic of Erdogan." He added at that occasion: "The country that I respected when I was growing up — Turkey, the country my father left — was a secular country where there was no significant Islamic rule elements, period. And it was not a dictatorship."

After his connection with Erdogan and the ruling party in Turkey was repeatedly questioned during his Senate race, Oz told *Washington Post* columnist Rogin in February that he was not concerned whether Erdogan liked his political positions. National Basketball Association player Enes Kanter Freedom, a supporter of Turkish religious leader-in-exile Fethullah Gülen, told Rogin: "People need to understand that Dr. Oz is in Erdogan's pocket. And whatever Erdogan wants, that's what Dr. Oz is going to do."

Perhaps to counter such statements and prove his political independence, Oz declared to Rogin about Gülen, whom Erdogan's government sees as an archenemy and wants to extradite to Turkey from his home in the Pennsylvania Poconos: "Gülen cannot be touched. There are no credible allegations that he was involved in the coup. He will stay in Pennsylvania."

Business and Religion Are Politics Too

What is clear is that Oz has business connections at a high level with the Turkish state. In 2011, he was elected to the High Advisory Council of the World Turkish Business Council (DTİK), the international business arm of Turkey's Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK). In 2014, DEİK was taken over by the Turkish government and placed under the control of the Ministry of the Economy, but Oz continued to participate in DEİK functions as late as September 2019 (the aforementioned TASC event).

Oz has done advertising campaigns for Turkish Airlines, a little less than 50 percent of which is owned by the Turkish government. The Armenian National Committee of America argues that this qualifies Oz as a foreign agent and urged the US Justice Department to open an investigation into this.

According to his financial disclosures from this April, Oz owns several hundred thousand dollars' worth of real estate property in Turkey, including a building he has leased to the Turkish Ministry of Education for free.

Furthermore, even the mosque Oz attends in New Jersey is connected with the Turkish government, as it is under the control of the latter's Directorate of Religious Affairs.

Questions Remain, But One Thing Is Clear

Much appears unclear about Oz's connections with the current Turkish government and businesses which are connected to the latter. What is clear is that Oz has not and will not use the term Armenian Genocide. The combination of these questions plus the latter should be enough to mobilize Armenian Americans against Oz's attempt to attain a powerful political position.



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Shuttle Diplomacy and the Dwindling Hope for Karabakh Armenians

DIPLOMACY, from page 17

Sure enough, the following day after the meeting, President Aliyev reported on the “good news” of the corridor to Erdogan, only to be refuted by Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of the Armenian Security Council.

Under the heading of “peace agreement,” the fundamental topic which seems to have been discussed is the peace treaty to be signed under the five-point terms proposed by Azerbaijan.

The parties do not seem to have discussed the issue of Karabakh or if they have, no conclusions have been reached. That is why Mr. Michel has taken personal responsibility to include the Karabakh reference in his statement: “I also stressed to both leaders that it was necessary that the rights and security of the ethnic Armenian population in Karabakh be addressed.”

The above statement indicates that the issue of Karabakh’s status has been watered down to an impossibly low level.

The last topic regards the European Union’s readiness to help the parties economically. Whereas the Aliyev dynasty, after looting its country, has enough wealth to buy sophisticated weaponry and keep its restive population quiet, the only party which needs economic help is Armenia.

This is a very dangerous political document, where words unsaid have more explosive significance than those expressed. Some pro-regime pundits in Armenia, who help the administration to formulate its political doctrine, are after quick fixes that may endanger Armenia’s future. Thus, one of those “practical” politicians, Areg Kochinyan, does not consider the departure of Russian peacekeepers who ensure the security of the population of Karabakh to be something unrealistic. Therefore, he believes that Armenia needs to discuss a peace agreement with Azerbaijan and normalize relations with Turkey.

A peace treaty of the kind of Armenia has been offered is not a substitute for peacekeeping forces. Karabakh, left to the tender mercies of Azerbaijan, will suffer the fate of 500,000 Armenians in Azerbaijan who were expelled through pogroms organized by the government and army.

When Pashinyan states that international community is asking Armenia to lower the bar on demands for Karabakh, he means that the world wants Karabakh’s people to be left defenseless.

Karabakh was formerly an autonomous region (oblast) in the Soviet Union. It had its state apparatus, parliament and freedom to develop its language and culture.

In this case, the international community is colluding with Azerbaijan to dismantle a state structure already in place. That same international community bombed former Yugoslavia during that country’s civil war in which one group was destroying another, just like in the Armenian case, and helped create a state in the heart of Europe, Kosovo, where it installed a government of former criminals, gunrunners and drug lords. It is a state which still cannot survive without Western crutches.

The only lesson Armenia can derive from these negotiations and the priorities of major powers is to build its armed forces and develop its economy. The goal certainly isn’t reconquering the lost territories but to prevent future wars and humiliations.



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