

Armenian Opposition Rethinking Protest Tactics

By Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A leader of the Armenian opposition said on June 10 that it is rethinking the tactics of its “resistance movement” almost six weeks after starting regular demonstrations aimed at toppling Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Ishkhan Saghatelyan insisted that the protests are not dying down and that the opposition has no plans to suspend or end them.

“Yes, we need a new tactic,” Saghatelyan told reporters. “Therefore, there may be changes in our steps and actions.



US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Kara McDonald (center) at a meeting in Yerevan, June 9, 2022.

Right now we are engaged in active discussions and will change some steps and actions. “

He declined to say what those changes will be.

“The movement cannot die down because its collapse or suspension would mean a defeat for the Armenian people,” he said.

Armenia’s main opposition groups represented in the parliament have rallied thousands of supporters on a virtually daily basis since setting up a tent camp in a central Yerevan square on May 1. They accuse Pashinyan of renouncing Armenian control of Nagorno-Karabakh and making other concessions to Azerbaijan that will jeopardize the very existence of Armenia.

Pashinyan and his political allies dismiss the demands for his resignation. They say that the opposition has failed to attract popular support for its “civil disobedience” campaign.

“There is no political crisis in Armenia,” Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said on Thursday. Echoing statements by other Armenian officials, he said that Pashinyan’s political team won a popular mandate to run the country for the next five years in the 2021 general elections.

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Autism Awareness through Music and Art

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — April is World Autism Awareness Month, a time to learn about autism. Organizations offering help to people with autism use the opportunity to educate the public on their work and many, like the My Way center in Yerevan, invite the public to join them in celebrating their achievements. The My Way Socio-Rehabilitation and Vocational Training Day Care Center is a leading institution for helping children, youngsters and young adults with autism, not only in Armenia, but throughout the region. (See <https://mirrorspectator.com/2017/06/15/my-way-is-helping-children-with-autism-in-armenia/>)

Usually April 2 is the day designated as World Autism Awareness Day, but, since that date has coincided with commemorations of the Four-Day War over recent years, the organizers chose a later date. Hoping to avoid inclement weather in a month known for its instability, they chose April 12; as luck would have



Dancing in the corridors

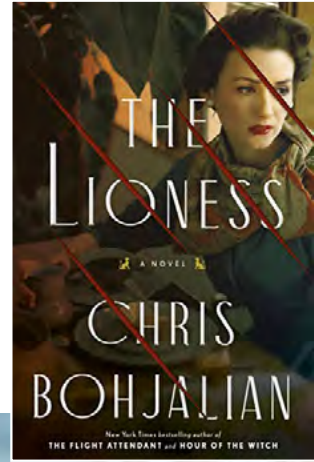
it, that very day turned out to be a day of unprecedented winds that even tore a roof off a five-story building in Masiv and caused moderate damage here and there. As a result, instead of holding their

Inclusive Concert and Exhibition-Sale outdoors, as they did last year, this time they had to convene indoors, in the new Multi-Functioning Performance Hall.

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Chris Bohjalian Is a Born Storyteller

By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff



DETROIT — If a reader finds it difficult to put a label on or pigeonhole novelist Chris Bohjalian, well, that’s intentional. As he said in a recent interview, “My goal is never to write the same book twice.”

His latest novel, *The Lioness*, about a group of Hollywood stars on vacation in Africa in the 1960s, was published in May by Penguin Random House.

The author, born in White Plains, NY, began writing novels while working for an ad agency in the 1980s. It was not an easy road. “I amassed 250 rejection slips before I sold a single word,” he says, “and wrote the single worst, first novel ever published, bar none.” That was in 1988. Ten years later, his 1997 novel *Midwives* was selected for Oprah’s Book Club. Bohjalian’s star has been meteoric ever since.

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Russia Backs Armenian Control Over Transit Routes For Azerbaijan

By Sargis Harutyunyan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia will control a road and a railway that will connect Azerbaijan with its Nakhichevan exclave through an Armenian region, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said during a visit to Yerevan on Thursday, June 9.

Lavrov revealed at the same time that the Armenian government has agreed to simplify border crossing procedures for Azerbaijani cargo and travelers that will use the planned transit routes.

Armenia and Azerbaijan are to reopen their border to commercial and passenger traffic under the terms of a Russian-brokered ceasefire that stopped their six-week war for Nagorno Karabakh in November 2020.

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Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov meet in Yerevan, June 9, 2022.

YEREVAN
Nobel Laureate
Patapoutian
Visits Armenia



TEXAS
ACYOA Members Gather
In Dallas for Assembly and
Sports Weekend



Mirror-Spectator Annual Vacation

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator will close for its annual two-week vacation in early July. The last issue of the Mirror before the vacation will be that of July 2. The first issue back will be that of July 23.

Enjoy a safe and healthy summer.



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenia's Civil Aviation Chief Resigns

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The head of the Armenian Civil Aviation Committee, Tatevik Revazyan, resigned on June 13 after four years in office.

Revazyan gave no clear reason for her resignation which she announced on her Facebook page just days after returning to work from maternity leave.

"I have decided to return to the world of business," she wrote without elaborating.

Revazyan, 34, was named to run the government agency in 2018 shortly after the "velvet revolution" that brought Nikol Pashinyan to power. She lived in Denmark until then where her family had migrated in the 1990s.

The government did not immediately appoint a new head of its Civil Aviation Committee. The agency was run by Revazyan's deputy Mihran Khachatrian during her parental leave.

Revazyan's four-year tenure was taken by the European Union's decision in June 2020 to ban airlines registered in Armenia from carrying out regular flights to EU member states. The EU's executive European Commission said that they do not meet international safety standards.

The ban sparked bitter recriminations between the Armenian government and its political opponents. The latter accused the government and Revazyan in particular of incompetence. Pashinyan put the blame on the country former leadership.

Revazyan actively encouraged Western budget airlines to start flying to Armenia. Two such carriers, Ryanair and Wizz Air, launched first-ever flights between Yerevan and several European cities in early 2020 only to end them weeks later due to the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.

Karabakh Reveals High Treason Case Involving Serviceman

STEPANAKERT (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The National Security Service (NSS) of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) revealed on June 11 that a serviceman of the Defense Army communicated with foreign agents online and delivered military information in return for \$1,550 in early 2021.

In January and February 2021, the man identified by his initials as L. G., spoke to a foreign agent pretending to be a young Armenian woman, received \$150 and provided "certain" military information, the NSS said.

The Armenian soldier continued his interaction with another foreign agent from February 2021 and provided coordinates of military positions located along the line of contact, details of the equipment and armament of those posts, number of servicemen involved in shifts, combat duty-related information, receiving \$1,400 in return.

After a criminal case was initiated, the man was arrested. He has given confessional testimony.

Nobel Laureate Patapoutian Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Nobel Laureate Prof. Ardem Patapoutian was in Armenia this week, receiving much attention, including an honorary degree and membership in the National Academy of Science.

On June 9, the General Assembly of the National Academy of Sciences elected the prominent American-Armenian molecular biologist-neurobiologist as an honorary member.

Patapoutian has made outstanding achievements in the field of molecular biology and neurophysiology. In 2021 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his discovery of receptors for temperature and touch.

Patapoutian was also named Honorary Doctor of the Yerevan State Medical University (YSMU).

In his opening remarks YSMU Rector Armen Muradyan emphasized that the day is special, as the only Nobel Prize laureate of Armenian descent will deliver a speech in the hall of the century-old university.

The scholar was also named into the Advisory Board of the COBRAIN Scientific-Educational Center for Fundamental Brain Research. Two of the seven Board members are now Nobel Prize laureates.

A descendent of Armenian Genocide survivors, Patapoutian revolutionized the field of neurobiology.

"What we have done is basic science just to discover how we sense touch, pain, blood pressure, etc. Everything has to do



Prof. Ardem Patapoutian in Armenia

with pressure. But these scientific discoveries will take ten0twenty years to translate into hopefully future medicine, whether it is to block chronic pain or regulate blood pressure, or other areas we didn't think about right now," he told reporters at the Yerevan State Medical University.

"The beauty of basic science is that the translation will come with time and in directions that we might not have thought

about early on," he added.

On June 14, one postage stamp dedicated to the theme "World famous Armenians: Ardem Patapoutian" was put into circulation.

The postage stamp with the nominal value of 350 drams depicts Patapoutian. The stamp was cancelled by the Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Arayik Harutyunyan, the Deputy Minister of High-Tech Industry of the Republic of Armenia David Sahakyan, the Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia Karen Trchunyan, the Deputy Minister of Economy of the Republic of Armenia Ani Ispiryan, the Chief Executive Officer of "HayPost" CJSC Hayk Karapetyan, the scientist of Armenian origin, the Noble Prize laureate Ardem Patapoutian, the President of the Philatelists' Armenian Association Hovik Musayelyan.

Patapoutian was born in 1967 in Beirut. In 1986 he moved to the United States. In 1990 he received a bachelor's degree in cell development biology from the University of California, and in 1996 he did his PhD in biology at the California Institute of Technology.

In 2000 he became a lecturer at the Scripps Research Institute. From 2000 to 2014 he worked as a researcher at the Novartis Research Foundation, and from 2014 at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Patapoutian heads the Scripps Research Endowed Chair in Neurobiology at Scripps Research.



Prof. Ardem Patapoutian receiving an honorary doctorate from Yerevan State University

Armenian Opposition Rethinking Protest Tactics

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Saghatelyan, who has been the main speaker at the protests, dismissed that argument. He said that Pashinyan does not have such a mandate anymore because he broke his election campaign pledge to help the people of Nagorno-Karabakh exercise their right to self-determination.

"They are now talking about 'lowering the bar' [on Karabakh's status] and leading the country to new concessions," he said.

A senior US State Department official, Kara McDonald, the deputy assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor, met with opposition leaders.

She had arrived on June 8 for talks with government officials, politicians and civil society members. The officials included Justice Minister Karen Andreasyan and

Deputy Foreign Minister Vahe Gevorgyan.

The US Embassy in Armenia said that during the two-day trip McDonald's "underscored the US commitment to continue helping the Armenian people build a future based on shared democratic values."

It emerged on Friday that she held a separate meeting with representatives of the two opposition alliances represented in the Armenian parliament.

Gegham Manukyan, an opposition parliamentarian, said they discussed a wide range of issues, including "shameful practices" in the Armenian judiciary and police actions against participants of continuing opposition rallies aimed at toppling Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. McDonald took note of concerns voiced by the oppositionists, he said.

The US Embassy did not comment on that meeting. The embassy posted on its Twitter page photographs of McDonald's meetings with other individuals, including leaders of four parties not represented in the Armenian parliament.

The parliament's two opposition factions criticized the US ambassador to Armenia, Lynne Tracy, last month after she seemed to hail the outcome of last year's parliamentary elections won by Pashinyan's party.

Saghatelyan accused the United States and other Western powers of turning a blind eye to government pressure on the judiciary, the existence of "dozens of political prisoners" and other human rights abuses. He also said Armenians did not give Pashinyan a mandate to "cede" Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan.



ARMENIA

Zartir Lao Finds New Life as Battle Cry of Opposition

By Brandon Balayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES — Armenia's new opposition movement is seeking a change of government in Armenia and is using a revolutionary folk song to unite nationals and the diaspora. Two words from this song have been used as the unifying element in all these protests: *Zartir Lao*, or Arise My Son.

The protests started in April when Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan gave a speech that expressed Armenia's willingness to open peace talks with Azerbaijan. Since then, the opposition has been holding protests within Armenia and the diaspora seeking his resignation.

In the past, the song served to create a sense of urgency, and as a call to arms for defense against the Turks. Today, the song has been used in pop culture and many Armenian opposition rallies, including current opposition protests. The Armenian opposition's usage of the song has become popular not only within Armenia but during protests in the diaspora as well.

Although the use of the song has become widespread during these protests, the evolution and use of the song have shown that the focal point has drifted away from its main hero, Arabo. To understand how and why the song is being used politically today, one must first understand the historical context.

Zartir Lao: A Brief Overview

According to the book *Armenian War and Soldier Folk Songs*, *Zartir Lao* was written in the late 19th century by Fahrmat, or Feyrat, an Armenian ashugh or minstrel from Diraklar village (Karnut), Shirak Province, Armenia. A profile on Fahrmat written by the Institute of Armenian Studies at Yerevan State University explains how he was born Khachatur Gevorkyan in 1867, and his parents later moved to Alexandrapol (Gyumri) in 1880. Just four years later, Khachatur was given the title of master, which won him the pen name Fahrmat. His status allowed him to travel to Constantinople and Western Armenia. Many of his songs addressed the themes of war, homeland, and freedom — including *Zartir Lao*.

Its hero is Arakel Avedisian, or Arabo, a bandit turned fedayi who was active in Mush and Sasun. In 1893, Arabo returned from the Caucasus with his group of fedayeen. He and his group were surrounded in the Gyalerash gorge of Bulanikh, a town in the Mush province, and were ultimately killed.

What many would consider his martyrdom sparked the inspiration for the song by Fahrmat and its many renditions. The song combines the lullaby format with a call to arms against the enemies of Armenians.



Tigran and his Wife Meri cooking khorovats at Tigran's uncle's house in Hadrut.

One version of the song displays the form of the lullaby just with its title: *Mshetsu Mor Ororayin Yerge*, or The Lullaby of a Mother from Mush.

The focus on Arabo as the song's main figure has faded with the development of new renditions. It is apparent when observing the song titles from different versions of the song: *The Song of Brave Arabo*, *The Song of Mush*, *The Lullaby of a Mother from Mush*, *The Song of the Mshetsi* and eventually *Zartir Lao*. One line that has stayed consistent across the song's evolution was the double "zartir lao, mernim kzi," or "arise, my son, I beseech you." The mother is particularly frustrated with her son's attitude, rebuking him for his vain hopes.

Today, the song is being covered with the title *Zartir Lao*. Some notable singers who have covered the song include Nune Yesayan, Hovhannes Badalian, and more

modern covers by Adana Project, and gorgeous beats.

What was formerly an apolitical song, has grown to be used in several contexts — including in popular culture and protests.

Present Day Context of Zartir Lao

Prior to the current protests, the song has been used in other instances. It has been used in pop culture, with a rendition by Ruben Matevosyan in the 1967 Soviet Armenian film "Triangle." The film takes place in Leninakan (Gyumri) and the song is used as a call to fight the Nazis.

Zartir Lao was also used in opposition protests led by Raffi Hovannisian in 2013, which were ironically against Serzh Sargsyan's regime. While the song is a call to arms for Armenians to face the enemy, today it pits one group of Armenians against another.

The opposition is essentially calling Armenians to join them and "wake up before it is too late."

Varak Ketsemanian, a historian who has tackled subjects such as nationalism and inter-communal stratifications, addressed how he believes the opposition is relating the lyrics of the song to the present-day realities of Armenia.

The song starts with "khuzhan askyar zork e zhoghver," which translates to "the barbarian soldiers have gathered." The song is referring to the Turks, and Ketsemanian believes the opposition is making connections to the Azerbaijani military having a presence on sovereign Armenian territory.

Another lyric says "merav Turki bardke (other versions use harke) dalov," which speaks to the oppression of Armenians due to the taxes levied by the Turks.

"This is especially and exactly the message that the opposition leadership is actu-

ally communicating to its followers saying, 'this Pashinyan regime is supported by the Turks, it's actually realizing the interests of the Turkish government or the Azerbaijani government,'" Ketsemanian said.

Ketsemanian believes there are three main groups within Armenian politics at the moment. Ardent supporters and sympathizers of Pashinyan, supporters of the opposition, and the third group that remains undecided for various reasons.

"People are very skeptical about how these two [former] presidents or their sympathizers, or the political groups that follow them, will actually resolve the issue now that Armenia is in a very vulnerable situation, diplomatically, militarily, and regionally," he noted.

Ketsemanian explained how the skepticism stems from the main argument which questions former Presidents Robert Kocharyan and Sargsyan's intentions, and whether they are just using Artsakh as a trump card for them to regain power because they have not clearly communicated a pragmatic agenda.

Among those who are on the fence, but lean towards the opposition is Tigran Balayan, a Los Angeles resident who hails from Hadrut, Artsakh. He can trace four generations in Qocbayli (Aygestan) village.

The war caused devastation within his family, not only because they could not return to their ancestral lands, but also because a video surfaced on Telegram of his uncle's home being ransacked by Azerbaijani soldiers.

"There's not a day I don't see Hadrut in my dreams," Balayan said.

Balayan made it clear that he is not a fan of Pashinyan because of the aftermath of the 2020 Artsakh war.

He also has his problems with the opposition. He lived in Armenia until 2013, served in the army from 2003 to 2005 in Khojali, and says he experienced the corruption of the old regimes firsthand.

The goal of the opposition would be to convince people like Balayan to join their movement — to essentially "wake up." Balayan is not fully convinced.

"I'm already awake, but I don't see anything," Balayan said.

Martin Adamian, a UCLA PhD candidate in Armenian history, expressed that he is a fan of the song, but had mixed feelings about its use. He interpreted it as the use of the term "Turk" in internal politics.

"It's bringing it to a new level of enmity between the opposition and the government," Adamian said. "It's little by little justifying violence."

Adamian explained how the song is directly connected to the idea of the Turkification of Armenia, and there are two present-day interpretations of this. The first, which in Adamian's opinion is the real risk, is opening borders with Turkey and then using their capital to gain economic influence in Armenia. The second interpretation is literally calling Pashinyan and his supporters Turks. Both of these interpretations of the song have been used in the opposition's messaging.

The opposition's messaging is hardline and circles back to their song of choice — arise, overthrow what they believe to be a Turkish-supported regime, or be seen as vain — just as the mother saw her son in *Zartir Lao*.

(The author tried to contact the supporters of the opposition movement, including Saro Paparian, the Creative Director of 301 AD, for interviews. The author also contacted the Armenian Youth Federation of Armenia and did not receive a response. Tigran Balayan is not related to Brandon Balayan, the author of the article.)



Tigran's children gather mulberries from Tigran's uncle's trees in Hadrut.



ARMENIA

Autism Awareness through Music and Art

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According to Sona Petrosyan, co-founder and ANF board member, it turned out to be a huge success. “It was crowded of course, but the spirit was so high, the joy and mood so festive, that we immediately stopped worrying about the lost opportunity to be outdoors, and were happy and pleased as hosts with everything that took place,” she said.

Seats in the hall were reserved for students and official guests, and the overflow crowd enjoyed the performances from the spacious corridors and hallway areas in a large, renovated second building of the facility. The musicians and students performed, played and sang on the stage while staff members, with remaining students, parents and other, easygoing guests, were dancing to the music and having the time of our lives in the corridors. It was, as Petrosyan described it, “Total flexibility, no protocol, spontaneity, and, thus, joy! Joy and pride for our students, who, thanks to years and years of persistent ongoing socialization work, smooth and gentle behavior correction and development therapies, due to the unconditional love they receive from their families and their second family, My Way, are now able, not only to tolerate an unexpected change, but to welcome one, even to take joy in what is unusual, different from their daily routine, an outstanding situation, and to get the most out of it, to have fun, to party, together and even with strangers!” There was, she added, “no need to explain how contagious this mood can be! The atmosphere was absolutely festive!”

Shifting Attitudes

Through years of work at the center, Petrosyan has had the opportunity to observe the way first-time visitors react and how their initial reactions may change very quickly. If at first they are tense, uncomfortable, perhaps harboring prejudices or reservations, expecting to witness scenes of suffering and sorrow, when they see the youngsters engaging in musical activities and presenting their art work, they relax, smile and enjoy the process. “They have fun,” Petrosyan commented, “they themselves find it hard to explain what has just happened to them, they all leave happy, touched, inspired, kind and open. And, this effect is a long lasting, life changing phenomenon. So,” she summed it up, “it’s sometimes a big question of who is getting therapy from whom.”

Not everyone realizes just how much hard work over time goes into the results achieved by My Way. This underlines the importance of holding such events, to educate the public, and contribute to altering attitudes towards a condition that is not



Arthur Miraqyan

widely understood. For example, on hand was a professional photographer who had taken pictures of My Way students together with local celebrities and displayed them in a personal exhibition timed to open on April 2. Seeing the overflow crowd on April 12, he suggested (as many visitors would) that the My Way center “needs a bigger hall” — an observation reflecting changing attitudes. As Petrosyan commented, just a few years earlier, they could not have dreamed of having such facilities that they now have; indeed, she said she could still remember a time “when society thought even a small rented apartment was wasted on hopeless kids with autism....”

The exhibition itself represented a breakthrough, since the photographer personally had previously had nothing to do with autism. He had approached My Way with the idea, then arranged for several dozen tasteful black and white photos, each with a child or teenager with autism together with a public figure, such as a TV anchor, or musician, or actress or even a chess master. Most of them were My Way students, but there were also other children with autism living in Armenia. The show opened on April 2 at the Contemporary Art Museum, and two talented My Way students provided music for the guests and media.

Music and Art for Honored Guests



The rock band Nemra and Gagik Galustov



Arbes Health Care Center Director Manushak Yeritsyan, My Way Board member

In addition to family members and friends, a number of local and national officials attended the My Way Inclusive Concert and Sale-Exhibition. They included guests from the Education, Science, Culture and Sport Ministry and the Labor and Social Affairs Ministry, all people who work with My Way as a Board of the Autism National Foundation. There were also people from the Human Rights Defender Office who were visiting for the second time, media, the photographer who had organized his exhibition and a video operator. Students, parents, staff, colleagues from other development centers, from Autism and other disabilities community, and even their students, were in attendance.

On stage two bands offered music, The Band Armenia, and the Nemra alternative rock/folk rock band. Both have already become precious partners, ready to rehearse with the students, to perform with them and for them. Solo, mixed amateur/professional and ensembles appeared with My Way students (Arthur Miraqjan, Gagik Galustov, David Ghazaryan, Eric Petrosyan, Hamlet Stepanyan, Raphael Martirosyan, Vardan Ayvazyan, Vanik Grigoryan, Tigran Ispiryan, Nare Ter-Grigoryan, Maria Marabyan, Suren Abgaryan, Aghavni Karapetyan, Lusine Sahakyan, Gevorg Haroyan, Felix Arushanyan and Edwin Hovsepyan). In addition to piano music,

students presented vocal music; the center now even has a chorus, with both boys and girls.

In addition to the concert, visitors enjoyed a display of the arts and crafts that students have produced: paintings on new easels, and, on shelves, scarves, bags, pottery, decorative items, stuffed toys, aromatic soaps and candles, greeting cards, bracelets, necklaces, Easter items such as fabric bunnies and chickens, clay figures, decorative painted Easter eggs, and, a novelty, knitted decorated multi-functioning boxes.

In keeping with what has become a tradition, My Way dedicated this annual event to a good cause. All proceeds from sales, as announced beforehand, were directed to the grandmother of one student. Arthur is an orphan, living with his brother, also with special needs, together with his grandparents in a rented apartment. The amount collected will cover Arthur’s transportation expenses for reaching the My Way center, to continue his therapy. The youngster performed himself, singing an Armenian love song, Tarm Tsaghikner (“Fresh Flowers”), and was happy all day, fully enjoying the special attention.

The event was sponsored by the Armenian Allied Arts Association, in the framework of a project that supports My Way undertakings and activities in the sphere associated with art, music, exhibitions and



INTERNAYIONAL

Archbishop Travels to Turkey for Black Sea Conference, St. Nerses Shnorhali Anniversary

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Pontifical Legate of the Armenian Church in Western Europe, and Representative of the Armenian Church to the Holy See, traveled to Turkey to participate in an event commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) and the 20th anniversary of Armenia's participation in this body on June 9. He took advantage of the trip to also meet with the Turkish foreign minister to plan the commemoration of the 850th anniversary of St. Nerses Shnorhali ["the Graceful"] in Hromgla.

Archbishop Barsamian related that he was invited by Ambassador Sahak Sargsyan, Armenia's permanent representative to the BSEC, to attend the event, held on a large scale at the Cemal Resit Rey Concert Hall of Istanbul. He said that approximately 1,000 people attended, including ambassadors, consuls-general and other representatives of consulates as well as Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul Sahak II Mashalian and other high-ranking clergy. Sargsyan spoke, as did the Secretary General of the BSEC, Ambassador Lazar Comanescu of Romania. The Komitas String Quartet came from Armenia to perform and included some pieces from the eponymous composer Komitas Vartabed.

Apparently, this was one of the first occasions for the Armenian community in Istanbul to come together on this scale since the start of the Covid pandemic, so people were happy, the archbishop related. Barsamian also participated in a dinner the night before, on June 8, at the St. Vartanants Church in Feriköy (a neighborhood of Shishli in Istanbul) in honor of the Komitas Quartet members who had just arrived, along with the organizing committee of the event, Patriarch Mashalian and Archbishop Aram Ateshian.

Earlier on June 9, he went to Ankara with Patriarch Mashalian to meet with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu to discuss celebrating the 850th anniversary of St. Nerses IV Shnorhali next year in historic Hromgla, Cilicia (today called Rumkale in Turkish), located on a promontory overlooking the Euphrates River. St. Nerses served as catholicos there.

Archbishop Barsamian explained that some months ago he learned that UNESCO will be honoring St. Nerses along with other prominent people worldwide. He reached out to the Vatican after receiving the blessing of the Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II in order to see whether a celebration of St. Nerses' 850th anniversary could be held in the Vatican with the Pope and the Catholicos of All Armenians presiding. They both agreed, so this event will most probably take place in the fall of 2023, with an ecumenical service at St. Peter's Basilica. Barsamian requested that St. Nerses be accepted in the Roman calendar, and this is being worked on. There also may be a concert in the Sistine Chapel presenting the hymns of St. Nerses Shnorhali, an exhibition in the Vatican Museum, and a two-day conference held by the Pontifical Oriental Institute. Another conference will take place in Armenia. "All these events, especially at the Vatican," said Barsamian, "will give the possibility of presenting St. Nerses Shnorhali to the world."

In this context, Barsamian said that someone suggested that a pilgrimage be organized to Hromgla, where a celebration could take place and even the divine liturgy might



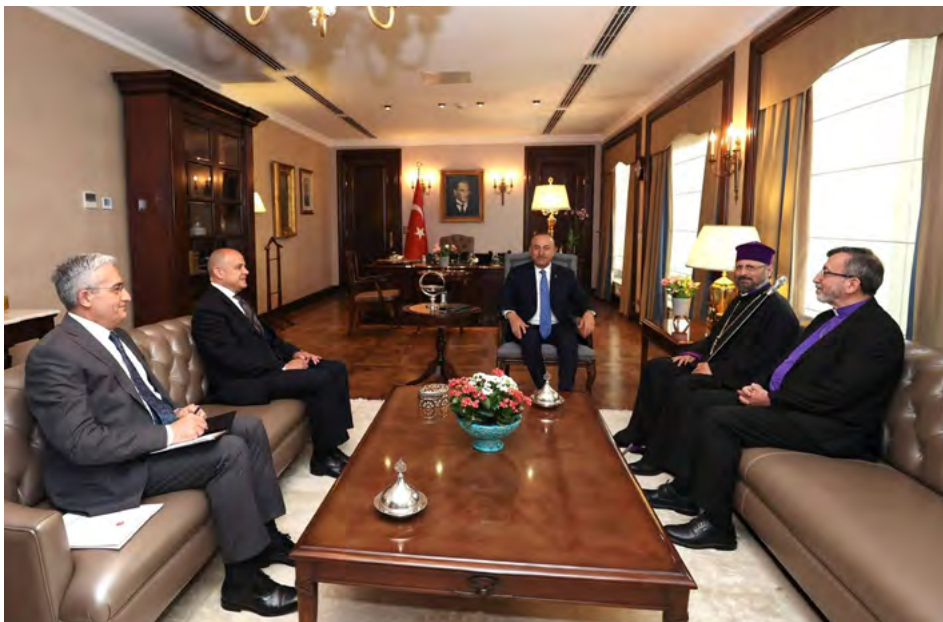
he Komitas String Quartet performing in Istanbul

be performed. After consulting with Patriarch Sahag II, who was in agreement with the idea, the two decided to meet with the Turkish foreign minister in Ankara to see whether this would be acceptable also with the Turkish government. Foreign Minister Çavusoglu was very welcoming and supportive of the idea, Barsamian said.

While this was the main purpose of the roughly 20-minute meeting, Çavusoglu also spoke about Turkish-Armenian relations in general, to which the Armenian clergymen listened. The clergymen had the opportunity to observe that the Armenian community has some issues, especially concerning the election of parish council members and of Armenian organizations and institutions like Sourp Prgich Armenian Hospital in Istanbul. For many years permission for these elections has not been given. The foreign minister indicated that he would meet with the Interior Minister and other officials to ensure that permission would be given, Barsamian said.



Ambassador Lazar Comanescu



From left, Nevzat Uyanik, General Director of Research and Security Affairs of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, Murat Salim Esenli, member of the Foreign Policy Advisory Board of the Foreign Ministry, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, Patriarch Sahak II Mashalian, and Archbishop Khajag Barsamian

INTERNATIONAL

Armenian-French Defense Cooperation Discussed

PARIS (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia's Deputy Defense Minister Karen Brutyan and French Minister of the Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu discussed defense cooperation between the two countries on Monday, June 13.

Brutyan's delegation is currently in France to participate in Eurosatory international weaponry industry trade fair.

Mirzoyan Raises Azeri Anti-Armenian Rhetoric

SOFIA (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan expressed concern over the continuous anti-Armenian and warmongering rhetoric of the Azerbaijani authorities during a meeting with his Bulgarian counterpart, Teodora Genchovska, on June 14.

He also raised Azerbaijan's provocative actions against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh and drew his colleague's attention to the fact that in gross violation of the norms of international humanitarian law, Azerbaijan continues to hold Armenian prisoners of war and civilian hostages.

According to a statement from Yerevan, special emphasis was given to the prevention of Azerbaijan's policy of distortion and destruction of the identity of Armenian monuments that are part of the universal cultural heritage in the territories fallen under Azerbaijani control due to the 44-day war. In this context, Mirzoyan stressed the urgency of a clear and targeted response of the international community, as well as the imperative of the involvement of relevant international organizations in Nagorno-Karabakh, especially the unimpeded implementation of UNESCO fact-finding mission.

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.

Wrestlers Win Four Medals At Iran Tournament

TEHRAN (Panorama) — The Armenian freestyle wrestling team won one gold, one silver and two bronze medals at the Takhti Cup international tournament in Iran, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports reported on June 14.

Vazgen Tevanyan (65 kg) captured the gold medal after beating his Iranian rival 4-3 in the final.

Arman Andreasyan (70 kg) won silver for the Armenian team, while Arsen Harutyunyan (61 kg) and Khachatour Papikyan (74 kg) took bronze medals.

Head coach Habetnak Kurghinyan is pleased with the results of his team. "This tournament brings together pretty strong teams. It is not easy to win a medal here. After the intense trainings in Tsaghkadzor, I think we have achieved good results," he said.

The Armenian freestyle wrestling team finished second in the team competition, lagging behind Iran's team.



INTERNAYIONAL

Armenian Medical Association of Quebec Helps Launch Post-Traumatic Therapy Program in Armenia

MONTREAL — On May 5, at the Centre Armenie of Laval, in Quebec, a fundraising event took place, where 200 Montrealers, in the presence of Anahid Harutyunyan, Ambassador of Armenia in Canada, Honorary council of Armenia in Quebec, Levon Afeyan, and Sen. Leo Housakos of Canada, and representatives of Montreal Armenian organizations.

Abaka weekly of Montreal met with Drs. Rita Soulahian Kuyumjian and Belinda Gosdanian Yacoubian for a discussion of the event and the project.

Q: Could you introduce us to AMAQ and its sphere of activities?

A: AMAQ celebrates its 45th anniversary this year. AMAQ is a member of Armenian Medical International committee AMIC. Today in the audience with us are 2 founding members, Drs. Arto Demirjian and Antranik Benohanian. Over the years AMAQ had several projects to help Armenia and Artsakh, among them a dental clinic in Artsakh, medical supplies during the 1988 earthquake and later on during 44-day Karabakh war. AMAQ also provided our community with medical lectures, job fairs for the high school



The speakers and organizers

graduates and our members gave guidance to our Montreal youth. Dr. Raffi Vartazarmian, an emergentologist, also a member of AMAQ went to Armenia during the war, for a month, and worked alongside Armenian doctors to save the life of the wounded soldiers. Actually, our project is the continuation of Dr. Vartazarmian's work. If he helped to keep the soldiers alive our project aims at psychological rehabilitation of the soldiers.

Dr. R. Vartazarmian presented a sensitive, informative and uplifting account of his work in Goris region of Armenia during the war. His power point presenta-

tion received standing ovation and gratitude of the audience.

The PTG project started in September 2021.

The idea was conceived and initiated by Dr. Rita Kuyumjian. Dr. B. Gosdanian a PhD psychologist a member of AMAQ executive committee, and also its vice president, joined the project and since then project took wings. The remuneration of the 2 psychologists in Armenia, is supported by AMAQ members. The rest of the project is done on volunteer bases. The raised funds will pay for the psychologists who after being trained in PTG by our joint team Armenia and Montreal will start to treat soldiers under supervision.

Q: Could you explain the PTG project bit more

A: Our project has 4 arms

To treat Armenian soldiers who suffer from psychological consequence of the 44-day war with PTG workbook, which has been translated to Eastern Armenian by a volunteer.

To treat all those, doctors, medics, ambulance drivers, widow's, grieving mothers who were exposed to the immediate effects of the war with PTG trained volunteers

To start a public awareness campaign and promote the idea that trauma cannot

define our nation. To change the victim mentality of our public and to help to deal with shame and guilt caused by the war activities. To do this via public lectures, radio and TV programs. Also to introduce PTG based education in schools via the ministry of education, Health and social affairs.

To publish our before and after treatment data for the benefit of international community on the psychological consequences of the war and treatment outcome with PTG.

Q: What does Posttraumatic Growth Therapy stands for?

A: 60 % of traumatized people will experience some kind of growth after trauma. The therapy facilitates people to take this direction after the trauma rather than PTSD, or Post traumatic stress disorder. The latter at times is chronic and difficult to treat. With PTG we help the person to live with what they have rather than with what they lost. PTG helps the traumatized person to appreciate life differently and become more resilient.

PTG helps people to improve and appreciate the interpersonal relationships on a deeper level. PTG helps people to find meaning in their loss, and rewrite the narrative of their life, from victim to a healthy survivor PTG helps people to become more spiritual. PTG guides people to help others and grow from it. Hence the name of Post Traumatic Growth.

Q: Do you have a last message to Armenian community of Quebec?

A: We hope that the Armenian community of Quebec will continue to support this sacred project. Krikor Nareghatsi, our 10th century mystic philosopher, pleads with god "God only you can grow sweet fruits in the desert" We are hoping that with PTG we can give hope and future of sweet life to our war heroes and all those who suffered due to war44. We believe in the motto of "Healthy soldier, strong army and secure motherland."



Belinda Gosdanian Yacoubian



Dr. Rita Soulahian Kuyumjian

Russia Backs Armenian Control Over Transit Routes For Azerbaijan

TRANSIT, from page 1

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has repeatedly claimed that the deal calls for a permanent land corridor for Nakhichevan passing through Armenia Syunik province that also borders Iran. Aliyev said in December that passage through the corridor must be exempt from Armenian border controls. Yerevan rejected his demands.

The disagreements effectively suspended the work of a Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani commission dealing with practical modalities of the transport links.

The commission met in Moscow late last week for the first time in five months. The Russian government said its Armenian and Azerbaijani members "brought closer their positions on border issues, customs and other types of control."

Speaking after talks with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, Lavrov said that Baku, Moscow and Yerevan are now finalizing a deal on a "simplified" border control regime for the road to Nakhichevan.

"It will be simplified but it will be precisely based on the recognition of the sovereignty of Armenian territory," Lavrov told a joint news conference with Mirzoyan. "There can be no ambiguities here."

"We have a sense that our Armenian and

Azerbaijani colleagues proceed from this," he said.

Lavrov did not specify whether people and cargo using the Syunik roads will be checked by Armenian customs and immigration officers. It is also unclear if the same simplified regime will be put in place for the transit of Armenian goods through Azerbaijan.

Mirzoyan stressed that "all roads that will be opened or reopened will remain under the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the country through which they pass." He said Baku and Yerevan have yet to work out "many details" of the transport links.

"But discussions are continuing and I think that we will have mutually acceptable solutions," added the Armenian minister.

Neighboring Iran has repeatedly voiced support for full Armenian control over all roads passing through Armenia. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi reaffirmed Tehran's stance in a June 1 phone call with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The issue was high on the agenda of Pashinyan's last meeting with Aliyev held in Brussels on May 22.

Armenia Backs Alliance With Russia, Other Ex-Soviet States

Armenia on Friday expressed readiness to help strengthen the Collective Security

Treaty Organization (CSTO) while again chiding other members of the Russian-led military alliance for not openly supporting Yerevan in its border dispute with Azerbaijan.

The Armenian government appealed to the CSTO for help shortly after Azerbaijani troops reportedly crossed several sections of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and advanced a few kilometers into Armenian territory in May 2021. It asked the alliance of six ex-Soviet states to invoke Article 2 of its founding treaty which requires a collective response to grave security threats facing one of them.

Russia and other CSTO member states expressed concern over the border tensions but did not issue joint statements in support of Armenia. Armenian leaders have repeatedly criticized that stance.

Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan reiterated the criticism after hosting a meeting in Yerevan with the fellow top diplomats of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

"While the organization responded in a timely manner to the events in Kazakhstan in January the issue still remains open in connection with the invasion of Azerbaijani troops into the sovereign territory of Armenia, which began in May 2021," he

told the press.

Mirzoyan made clear at the same time that Yerevan is intent on "stepping up co-operation between member states" of the bloc. That includes ensuring a closer coordination of their foreign policies and "enhancing the CSTO's role in the international arena," he said.

In a joint statement issued after the meeting, the CSTO foreign ministers did not explicitly mention Russia's war with Ukraine. They voiced concern at the "continuing degradation of the system of international security." They said all countries must respect "the principle of equal and indivisible security."

From Moscow's perspective, "indivisible security" means that NATO must pledge not to admit Ukraine and to scale back its military presence near Russian borders. The US and its NATO allies rejected these demands in the run-up to the Russian invasion of Ukraine which began on February 24.

Belarus is the only non-Russian CSTO country to have publicly backed the invasion. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko chided the other member states for their more cautious stance when he spoke at a CSTO summit in Moscow last month.



Community News

Astronomers in Armenia Get ANSEF's Support

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — “Of all the endeavors in Armenia, ANSEF is the top shining star,” stated Dr. Tavit Najarian, with obvious pride. This program, ANSEF, short for the Armenian National Science and Education Fund, started 22 years ago with the support from FAR, the Fund for Armenian Relief. A group of ultra-dedicated and forward-looking individuals saw the huge benefits of this project for Armenia and its future.

This unique and innovative project was initiated by some of the most brilliant minds in the Armenian diaspora including Drs. Gregory Adamian, Mihran Agbabian, Aram Chobanian, Garabed Eknoyan, Vartan Gregorian, Anahid Kazanjian-Longobardo, Edgar Housepian, Tavit Najarian, Yervant Terzian, Yervant Zorian, and others.

“ANSEF has played an important role in maintaining Armenia’s tradition of excellence in the sciences by encouraging researchers to continue their groundbreaking work in Armenia,” Dr. Yervant Terzian had stated. “Since its beginning in 2000, ANSEF has yielded impressive results. These world class scientists and scholars need our support. A strong research environment attracts the global attention that leads to investments, economic growth and independence.”

“Of course, Professor Yervant Terzian, the world renowned astrophysicist, was the driving force behind it,” said Garnik Nanagoulian, the executive director of Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR). “And interestingly, the visionary initiative of these luminaries is still advancing today, 22 years after it was founded, providing tremendous support to Armenia’s fundamental science,” he added. Since then, the project has accomplished incredible advances in helping to stop the “brain drain” of top scientific researchers and instructors from Armenia, and bringing international recognition to Armenia, its extraordinary science and research programs, and its talented individuals. Today, “ANSEF is a top supporter of the tradition of excellence in the sciences in Armenia,” Nanagoulian emphasized.

Dr. Artur Ishkanyan, a prominent physicist and the Academician-Secretary of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, related that ANSEF is “one of the unique cultural structures created by the Diaspora. It first introduced a new rhythm and way of thinking into our scientific reality that was in line with the highest standards of international scientific practice such as the Blind Peer Review, the standards for online submission and application. The level of highly qualified scientists-reviewers was assured.” All these, Ishkanyan continued, “were essential for the scientific community of Armenia. Moreover, ANSEF’s special attention given to young scientists contributed to the influx of young people into science, and alleviated the gap created by the lack of middle-aged scientists in science.”

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Young athletes representing Diocesan parishes participated in rousing Sports Weekend competitions, held at the new St. Sarkis Church Athletic Center.

ACYOA Members Gather In Dallas for Assembly and Sports Weekend

By Andrew Yenigag

DALLAS — The Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) Seniors of St. Sarkis Church in Carrollton, TX, hosted the 2022 ACYOA General Assembly and Sports Weekend in Dallas over Memorial Day weekend, welcoming more than 325 ACYOA Seniors and clergy from across the Eastern Diocese from May 27 through 30.

The weekend was a joyous reunion for many, as it was the first in-person ACYOA General Assembly and Sports Weekend since 2019. Its activities encompassed the ACYOA’s Five Circles of the Cross: Worship, Witness, Service, Education, and Fellowship.

The weekend commenced with the 2022 ACYOA General Assembly, which hosted 65 delegates, observers, and clergy for a day of discussions and elections for the ACYOA Central Council, Auditing Committee, and Nominating Committee. Newly elected to the 2022-2023 ACYOA Central Council are Mardig Klachian (Secretary), Michael Sarafian (Treasurer), Yn. Lucine Sabounjian (Ministries and Outreach),



The assembled listen to comedian Arman Margarian, a.k.a. Antic

Madeline Ovassapian (Ministries and Outreach), and alternate Michael Kashian.

Returning to the Council for 2022-23 are Ani Misirliyan (Chair), Christine Beylerian (Vice Chair), and Andrew Yenigag (Communications). The ACYOA Central Council sends its heartfelt gratitude to outgoing members Sona Dagley, Alina Grigorian, Rafael Grigoryan, and Melissa Fanizza for their years of service to the ACYOA and Armenian Church.

In addition to the elections, the ACYOA General Assembly approved a series of revisions to the ACYOA Bylaws; a vote to confirm the newly proposed ACYOA Bylaws will take place at the 2023 General Assembly. Highlighting the proposed

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SAS Awards Graduate Research And Conference Grants to Students In the Field of Armenian Studies

FRESNO — The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) recently announced the recipients of its Spring 2022 Graduate Research and Conference Grants. The three recipients were Atineh Movsesian, for her research exploring the role of women as patrons at the Gandzasar monastery, Ani Ohanian for her research on the collaboration between Bolsheviks and Kemalists in the South Caucasus region between 1917 to 1923 and Arev Papazian for her research examining the conflictual relationship between environmentalism and the labor and livelihoods of communities around Lake Sevan. Each of the winning recipients received a \$1,000 grant awarded by the Society.

Movsesian’s research focuses on the immediate social context of the Gandzasar monastery, an important religious and cultural center in the Republic of Artsakh, by examining its construction and the impact made by women. She explores the role of Khorishah, patron and mother of Prince Hasan-Jalal Dawla, by studying her “literary depiction in the foundation inscription of the church” and “her depiction within the sculptural program on the church drum.” In considering female patronage of the thirteenth century, Movsesian’s research follows and builds upon that of Antony Eastmond and Zaroui Pogossian, who have explored the role of noblewomen in shaping the visual culture of the medieval Caucasus.

Movsesian is a current second-year graduate student in the department of History of Art and Architecture at Tufts University. Movsesian commented on the grant’s impact on her research, “This generous support will enable me to travel and present my research at the Beyond Exceptionalism II conference at the John Rylands Library in Manchester, United Kingdom.”

“In these uncertain times, it is important to advocate for the endangered Armenian monuments. Therefore, I am thankful to the Society for Armenian Studies for granting me the opportunity to speak at this conference, which will also culminate in an edited volume,” added Movsesian.

Ohanian’s research looks to address the collaboration between Bolsheviks and Kemalists in the South Caucasus region between 1917 to 1923. She argues, “Bolshevik ambivalence towards the Armenian people and Bolshevik ideology itself as inherently violent, led not only to cooperation with Turkish revolutionaries, but also to support of atrocities against Armenians.” Ohanian examines the separation of Artsakh from Armenian territory came due to Turkish pressure after the Bolshevik conquest of the South Caucasus. A

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Regina Anne Najarian

Devoted Mother, Volunteer

WELLESLEY, Mass. — Regina Anne (Vartanian) Najarian passed away on June 11, 2022 after a courageous battle with cancer. While her untimely death has left a hole in the hearts of her family and many friends, it should provide solace to know that she departed peacefully with her family by her side.

She is survived by her husband, Berj Najarian, and her two sons, Sebu and Avi. She was, and always will be, immensely loved.

Regina was born July 2, 1972, to Walter Vartanian and the late Anne Vartanian in Boston, and grew up in Belmont. She spent many summers at Camp Haiastan in Franklin, forming lifelong friendships.

In 1994, Regina graduated cum laude from Tufts University. Proud of her Armenian roots, she was president of the Tufts Armenian Club and a member of the Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston.

After graduating, Regina worked as a Data Analyst at Bain & Company and Strategy Consultant at Putnam Associates, where she advised senior executives in the life sciences industry.

Regina and Berj were married in Cambridge, on June 10, 2000. They settled in Norfolk, MA and then Wellesley, MA, where they found a wonderful community of friends who soon became their extended family. When her son Sebu was born, Regina dedicated her life to raising her boys.

Regina was the family's glue. She ran the household and taught her boys the importance of always striving to achieve their best. She instilled morals and values so they would grow to become positive contributors to society. Regina emphasized the importance of their cultural heritage and giving back to the community. She led by example, regularly volunteering to support many charities in her community and through the New England Patriots

Foundation, such as Cradles to Crayons, the Women's Lunch Place, and the Patriots' Children's Holiday Party. Over the years, Regina spearheaded many successful fundraisers for St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School in Watertown, MA and Schofield Elementary School in Wellesley, and dedicated many hours to the auction committee at St. Sebastian's School in Needham. Most recently, Regina helped Berj establish Who We Are, a charitable organization focused on cultural preservation and understanding.

Above all, Regina loved being with her family. Among her favorites were the summers they shared on Cape Cod, in Rockport, and at Woodland Golf Club.

Regina's ability to form deep relationships at every point of her life is legendary. She was the daughter, sister, wife, mother, and friend we all strive to be - compassionate, loyal, kind and smart, with the perfect dose of humor.

A life ended too soon, but her everlasting spirit will be carried forth in our memories. Regina Najarian will be forever missed, but never forgotten.

Regina is predeceased by her mother Anne Vartanian. She is survived by her husband Berj, and her children, Sebu and Avi. She is also survived by her father, Walter Vartanian of Belmont; her brother Gregory and his wife Sonia of Arlington, MA; her sister Carol and her husband Alex of Watertown; Elenne and Louis Najarian of Manhasset, NY; Haig and Taline Najarian of Wyckoff, NJ, Aram and Meg Najarian of Westfield, NJ and many nieces, nephews, and friends.

Funeral services were held June 15 at Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Following the funeral, family only will proceed to the cemetery. A Celebration of Life followed at Gillette Stadium, Foxboro, MA.



Doris Artemis (Kouyoumjian) Hazerjian

Dedicated to Family, Community

DEDHAM, Mass. — Doris Artemis (Kouyoumjian) Hazerjian of Dedham passed away peacefully on June 1, 2022, at the age of 90. Doris was born on January 3, 1932, in Boston, to the late Karneg and Lousazin Kouyoumjian.

Doris grew up in Watertown and was a graduate of Watertown High School. After high school, Doris attended Chelsea Memorial Nursing School, graduated, and became a Registered Nurse. After graduation, Doris worked as an Operating Room Nurse at Chelsea Memorial Hospital for many years. In 1954, she married Minas Hazerjian and the couple was blessed with three children, Stephen, David, and LuAnn. Doris went back to work while still raising her children and worked as an Oncology Nurse at the Faulkner Hospital in Boston prior to her eventual retirement from nursing in 1970.

After her nursing career, Doris continued to work with her husband, Minas, at the family business, Sturdy Lantern Manufacturing Company in North Attleboro. Later, she opened and co-managed a gift-shop business, Exquisites Personally Yours in Lexington. Doris and Minas together were members of St. James Armenian Church in Watertown and active members of the Mr. and Mrs. Group. They enjoyed over 30 years of marriage until Minas' passing in 1985 at the young age of 57.

Aside from raising a family and her career, Doris led an active life and could be found spending her free time volunteering at the following charitable organizations: Armenian Nursing & Rehabilitation Center in Jamaica Plain, Beth Israel Hospital gift-shop in Needham (managing and buying), at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in West Roxbury, and spent the last several years as a member of the Armenian Church of the Holy Translators in Framingham. She always gave her time and talents to the Armenian community including volunteering as a camp nurse at St. Gregory Camp in Falmouth, and taking in and caring for a young boy for several months, who traveled from Armenia to Boston for medical care and treatment.

She loved preparing for holidays and the parties she hosted, had a passion for doing arts and crafts; loved traveling around the world, the Boston Red Sox, and New England Patriots, and most importantly, her family and friends. She also cherished her dog, Coco.



Doris is survived by her three children; Stephen Hazerjian of Dedham, David Hazerjian and his wife Carol of East Walpole, and Yn. LuAnn Sabounjian and her husband Fr. Krikor of Holliston. She was the loving grandmother of David, Andrew, Brian, and the late Lauren Michelle Hazerjian, Arthur Sabounjian and his fiancée Gabrielle Keegan, Jennifer Sabounjian, and Fr. Haroutiun Sabounjian and his wife Yn. Lucine. She was the sister of the late Karneg Kouyoumjian Jr. Additionally, she is survived by her step-mother Marie Kouyoumjian and sisters Sonia Garabedian, Karen Dattoli Kouyoumjian and Diane Ferrigno as well as three generations of nieces and nephews.

Funeral Services were held at the Armenian Church of the Holy Translators, Framingham, on June 14. Interment followed at Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge.

Azadouhi 'Sally' Kulegian

Dedicated to Family, Avid Gardener

WATERTOWN — Azadouhi "Sally" Kulegian of Watertown, passed away peacefully at home at age 99 with her family at her side. She was the wife of the late Kourken "Jimmy" Kulegian, mother of Janet Graffeo and her husband Paul, Linda DiComandrea and her husband Robert and John Kulegian, grandmother of Dean, Daniel and Nicole Graffeo, Robert and Melissa DiComandrea and Johnny and Michael Kulegian. She also leaves great-grandchildren Courtney, Stephanie, Derek, Ryan, Robbie and Thomas as well as many loving nieces and nephews.

Sally's love of family was her greatest joy especially during the holidays when everyone could be together. She was also an avid gardener, there wasn't a flower or plant that she didn't like.

Funeral services were held at Saint Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, 38 Elton Avenue, Watertown, on June 14. In-



terment followed at Ridgeland Cemetery, Watertown.

Arrangements were by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.

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.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Kirkor Karachorlu

Tokat-Born Doctor, Mentor

CHICAGO — Kirkor Vahe Karachorlu, M.D., was born on May 11, 1930, in Tokat, Turkey of Armenian parents. He died on March 26, 2022.

His father was a highly skilled carpenter and manufacturer of specialty wooden structures of carriages and his mother a homemaker, who were both survivors of the Armenian Genocide. Upon his graduation as an exemplary student from elementary and junior high school in Tokat, and in the face of many obstacles and challenges being an Armenian, he made a decision to continue his higher education in Istanbul. Thereafter, at the age of 15, he moved to Istanbul and lived with his maternal uncle, Hagop.

Not knowing the Armenian language fluently, his first year was spent in a Turkish high school in Istanbul. Making many new Armenian friends while in Istanbul, he is told about the Armenian Getronagan School. There he made the acquaintance of the dean of the academy and requested that he be admitted. He was admitted but not without a little confusion on his part. Being excited, the dean yelled out “Getzeh



du-ghas, Getzeh,” and not being familiar with the expression, he thought surely he was denied his request. But later he learned that she was expressing with great enthusiasm her endorsement of him and about his choice to attend the Getronagan school, and to be with his fellow Armenian students. And at the end of his 4th year at the Getronagan High School he graduated with the highest honors, being the salutatorian of his class.

He was trying to decide if he wanted to become an architect or physician and finally opted for the latter. He attended medical school at the University of Istanbul and graduated in June 1955. He served in the Turkish Army with an officer commission rank of captain in the medical corps from 1955 to 1957.

Around the time he entered the army, he met his bride-to-be, Silva Evran, in Istanbul and they married on her birthday in November 1957. After serving his tour in the army, Vahe and Silva returned to his hometown of Tokat where he opened a medical office as a family practitioner. In Tokat they had their first son Arden. After 5 years in

practice, he decided to immigrate to the US with his wife and son Arden.

With the help of well-known Chicago orthopedic surgeon Dr. Hampar Kelikian, he obtained sponsorship as an extern at St. Bernard Hospital and received a permanent visa status in December 1962. He later did an internship at West Suburban Hospital in 1964.

The year 1965 was an exciting year where his second son Berj was born, and he also began his residency program at the University of Illinois Hospital in Anatomical and Clinical Pathology. He earned the title of chief resident and after completing his residency in 1968, his boss, Dr. Cecil Krakower, asked him to stay at the university as an assistant professor. He accepted this position and served the hospital in various capacities which included clinical research, Director of Autopsy Services and Surgical Pathology. He also taught pathology to medical students and residents. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1975.

Shortly after his promotion at the University of Illinois, he was approached by the Executive Board President, James Thomas of St. Bernard Hospital in Chicago, the very same hospital where he began his medical career in Chicago back in 1962, to apply as department chairman and head of pathology. He was finally chosen among 10 other pathologist candidates by the Board to head their Pathology and Laboratory Department in 1975.

He brought his expertise in Clinical and Anatomical Pathology and implemented numerous state-of-the-art medical and laboratory testing technologies available only to larger institutions at the time to help the Englewood Community of Chicago. He also served on numerous committees as a Board Member of the hospital, including Continuing Medical Education to the Medical Staff, and other various medical committees. He remained at St. Bernard for 44 years and finally retired at the age of 88.

During his life, he was able to go to Armenia 5 times. Through the Shriners Organization he sponsored a teenage girl named Zhenya from Gyumri, Armenia to come to Shriner's hospital in Chicago for spine surgery. He, along with his wife and family, opened their arms and house for six months until her recovery from surgery. Maintaining a close relationship with her after the surgery, he served as her mentor. As a result, Zhenya went on to be a pharmacist. Zhenya named her second born “Vahe” after him. Dr. Vahe also helped Zhenya's sister Armine to attend medical school in Armenia and she too is now an ear, nose and throat specialist.

Vahe is survived by his wife of 64 years, Silva; sons Arden and Berj; brother-in-law Garo; daughter-in-law Tammy; grandchildren Kayla, Lenna, Mason, Julianna, Jill, Bill, Rhiannon Greg; great-grandchildren Lexi, Adisyn, Sophia, Madilyn, Lylah, and Kane; nieces Ani, Araxi, Guyanne; cousins Ani, Taner, Delilah, Bianca, Taline and Dirdad; his parents were Imastuhi and Khachig and brother Yervant.

Zaven Khatchik Tachdjian

Lebanese Immigrant, Dedicated to Diocese

RYE BROOK, N.Y. — Beloved husband, father and grandfather, Zaven Khat-chik Tachdjian, 74, passed away unexpectedly on Friday, May 27, after a brief hospital stay.

He was the husband of Gladys Karioty Tachdjian.

Born in Palestine, he was the son of Khat-chik Tachdjian, Armenian Genocide survivor, and Alice Malikian Tachdjian. Zaven immigrated to Beirut, Lebanon as an infant with his sisters Adrine Malikian (deceased), Ankine Dadian, Arpine Bathiche and Yeran Tachdjian. Growing up in Beirut, Zaven was fluent in Arabic, French, English and Armenian. He graduated from the American University of Beirut (AUB) with honors, earning both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering.

Following his graduation, Zaven worked his way up to associate engineer for Dar-Al-Handassah in Lebanon, where he was instrumental in building hospitals, airports, hotels, schools and other properties across the Middle East and North Africa.

Upon immigrating to the United States, he took on various engineering roles in New York City and Westchester, NY. He then went on to found and run his own business, Stone & Powers, building luxury homes in Westchester, NY and Connecticut until he retired.

For 40 years, Zaven was a devoted parishioner of St. James Armenian Church and later, St. Gregory the Enlightener Armenian Church in White Plains, NY, serving the church and community faithfully. He held multiple leadership positions within the church, including a decade long service as Parish Council chair and chairing the committee to construct a new church.

Zaven served as the design and construction coordinator for the St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, also holding a position on the board.

Additionally, his services to the Eastern Diocese were many and varied, including positions on the Diocesan Council and Board of Trustees. He represented the Eastern Diocese during the Ecclesiastical Representative Assembly at Holy Echmiadzin in Armenia. Recently, he utilized his professional expertise as an engineer to play a leading role in the Diocesan Center Needs Assessment.

For a time, Zaven served in a voluntary capacity overseeing the facilities management of the St. Vartan Cathedral and Di-



ocesan Center in New York. Zaven was generous with his time and knowledge, and was a friend and advisor to many in the community. He received numerous awards and recognition for his service, and he was particularly honored to be awarded the St. Nersess the Graceful Medal by the Catholics in 2008.

As a proud Lebanese-Armenian, Zaven was passionate about maintaining a connection with both countries and improving the lives of Armenians in the Middle East. Zaven was on the board of the Armenia Fund, a non-profit dedicated to humanitarian efforts in Armenia.

Additionally, he was elected President of the Board of Directors of the Karagheusian Foundation, which serves socially and economically vulnerable Armenian communities in the Middle East, Armenia, and Karabagh through many channels, such as the construction of hospitals, healthcare clinics, orphanages and other critical institutions. As President of the Foundation, Zaven was integral in the construction of multiple healthcare clinics throughout Lebanon and Armenia.

Zaven is survived by his loving wife of 49 years, Gladys, his daughters Karol, Peggy, and Kelly and sons-in-law Laurence London, Christopher Batty and David Smith. He was also a devoted grandfather (“Baba”) to Laila and Levi London and Owen and Lucas Batty. He was looking forward to welcoming his fifth grandchild this summer.

His funeral service was held on June 3 at St. Gregory the Enlightener Church, White Plains. The burial was private. Arrangements were by the Ballard-Durand Funeral & Cremation Services in White Plains.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

ACYOA Gathers in Dallas for Assembly, Sports Weekend

ACYOA, from page 7

revisions made by the ACYOA Bylaws Committee were the implementation of the ACYOA Stewardship Program (in lieu of Chapter Membership) as well as the introduction of regional ACYOA chapters and campus groups to provide additional opportunities for young adults to connect with the ACYOA.

Awards and Honors

Presiding over the entire weekend was the newly elected Primate of the Eastern Diocese, Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan. Bishop Daniel Findikyan was also in attendance, as were host parish pastor Fr. Ghevond Ajamian (St. Sarkis, Carrollton, TX), Fr. Aren Jebejian (St. John, Southfield, Mich.), Fr. Andreas Garabedian (St. Gregory, Chicago), Fr. Avedis Kalayjian (St. Mesrob, Racine, Wis.), and Fr. Krikor Sabounjian (Holy Translators, Framingham, Mass.).

During the General Assembly's Primate's Luncheon, ACYOA Central Council presented its annual awards to individuals and chapters for their service and dedication to the organization and Armenian Church.

•ACYOA Seniors "Chapter A" Award—St. Leon ACYOA (St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ)

•Sam Nersesian Service Award—Lucine Bolyan (St. James, Watertown, MA)

•Gregory Arpajian Leadership Award—Sevag Koulian (St. Sarkis, Carrollton, TX)

•Fr. Haigazoun Melkonian Award—Fr. Avedis Kalayjian (St. Mesrob, Racine, WI)

•Fr. Haroutiun and Yn. Patricia Dagley Award—Yn. Tirouhe Boyajian (Sts. Joachim and Anne, Palos Heights, Ill.)

ACYOA Juniors awards will be presented in their home parishes and the award winners will be shared at a later time.

Friday evening celebrations kicked off at the new St. Sarkis Church campus with A Taste of Texas, a fiesta of Texas flavors served up by a convoy of food trucks and an evening of entertainment and laughter by comedian Arman Margarian, a.k.a. Antic.



The new St. Sarkis Church in Carrollton, TX, hosted the 2022 ACYOA General Assembly and Sports Weekend in Dallas over Memorial Day weekend, welcoming more than 325 ACYOA Seniors and clergy from across the Eastern Diocese.

Saturday was a very active day for Eastern Diocese parishes to compete in basketball, volleyball, soccer, e-sports, backgammon, and chess. A Diocesan "Insights" program was presented Parsamyan, as well as the hosting parish's Yn. Hasmik Ajamian and Dn. Daron Bolat. The young adults also participated in a service project collecting children's clothing donated to Haitian children in need.

Sunday, May 29 started with ACYOA members attending the Divine Liturgy at the newly consecrated St. Sarkis Church. Badarak was celebrated by Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, and worshippers were blessed to witness Fr. Mesrop and Bishop Daniel consecrate St. Sarkis' new khatchkar, crafted in Armenia, on the 104th anniversary of the Battle of Sardarabad.

'Amazing Energy'

Following badarak, the 2022-23 ACYOA Central Council members were officially installed with the blessing of the Primate. Following an afternoon lunch prepared by the St. Sarkis Women's Guild, athletes participated in a rousing series of Sports Weekend championships held at the new St. Sarkis Athletic Center, with the following individuals and chapters bringing first place trophies back to their home chapters:

- Co-Ed Volleyball: St. Sarkis (Carrollton, TX)
- Women's Basketball: St. Leon (Fair Lawn, NJ)
- Men's Basketball: St. John "Detroit Orange" (Southfield, MI)
- Co-Ed Futsal: St. Leon (Fair Lawn, NJ)
- Backgammon: Edgar Movsisyan (St. Sarkis, Carrollton, TX)
- Chess: Arman Avetisyan (St. Sarkis, Carrollton, TX)
- FIFA (Esports): Shahe Der Torossian (St. James, Watertown, MA)
- Super Smash Brothers (Esports): Andre Balian (St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ)
- Mario Kart (Esports): Andre Balian (St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ)

The weekend was capped off with a gala banquet at the Hilton Dallas Lincoln Centre, presenting the sports and game winners with their trophies, and closing with the ACYOA and the St. Sarkis community joyously dancing to the live entertainment of the Kevork Artinian Band.

"This was one of my favorite weekends ever," said Jennifer Morris of the Eastern Diocese's

Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries. "The energy was amazing, and the ACYOA members were great. I really loved seeing the joy in their faces as they were all reunited."

The ACYOA congratulated



Current and former Primates of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan and Bishop Daniel Findikyan, with Jennifer Morris

lates the Dallas General Assembly and Sports Weekend Committee, St. Sarkis ACYOA Seniors, and the entire St. Sarkis parish community for an incredibly successful weekend.

To view photos from the weekend, click the following links for a gallery from the host parish, and a gallery on the ACYOA's photo platform.

(With reporting by Joan Stuckmann)



Primate Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan offers sacrament at the Divine Liturgy on Sunday.



COMMUNITY NEWS

SAS Awards Graduate Research and Conference Grants To Students in the Field of Armenian Studies

AWARDS, from page 7

Additionally, her research looks towards proving how these relations and collaboration led to such decisions, created the grounds for future conflict and its relation to the recent developments in Artsakh.

Ani Ohanian is a doctoral candidate in the department of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University. The grant will allow her to travel to Istanbul, Turkey and carry out her research project at the Social History Research Foundation of Turkey, where she will access Turkish Communist Party archives. “Despite my extensive time abroad, I have never had the opportunity to travel to Turkey and I thank SAS for assisting me, not only to access documents crucial for my dissertation project, but also to connect with Armenian history in a more profound way,” said Ohanian.

Papazian carries out her ethnographic research on the conflictual relationship between environmentalism and the labor and livelihoods of communities, who contribute to and are negatively impacted by environmental change. She utilizes participant observation, informal conversations, interviews, archival research in media and legal documents, and discourse analysis to understand the relationship between Armenia’s Lake Sevan and local communities by looking into “the dialectical relationship between the ecological change of the lake, the labor and livelihood of the fishing communities, the impact of environmentalism and capitalist relations, and the cultural production of environmentalism.”

Arev Papazian is a doctoral candidate in the department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the Central European University. “The fellowship will be a great support to me and an important motivation



Ani Ohanian



Arev Papazian

to move forward with my research and contribute to the efforts of expanding the field of Armenian studies by incorporating into it pressing themes in contemporary Armenia, such as environmentalism and labor,” said Papazian.



Atineh Movsesian

SAS President Bedross Der Matossian congratulated all three awardees: “We are proud to fund such excellent graduate students. The nature and the depth of their work demonstrates the multi-disciplinary aspect of Armenian Studies as a field of inquiry. I would like to encourage all those who are interested in the activities of SAS to help us financially so we can support such promising young scholars to achieve their goal.”

The Society of Armenian Studies is an international body, composed of scholars and students, whose aims are to promote the study of Armenian culture and society, including history, language, literature, and social, political, and economic questions; to facilitate the exchange of scholarly information pertaining to Armenian studies around the world; and to sponsor panels and conferences on Armenian studies.

The SAS Graduate Research and Conference Grants were made possible through the generous institutional support of the Armenian Studies Program, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; the Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies, University of California, Irvine; the Hovannisian Chair of Modern Armenian History, University of California, Los Angeles; the Arthur H. Dadian and Ara Oz-

temel Chair of Armenian Art & Architecture, Tufts University; the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR); the Armenian Communities Department, Gulbenkian Foundation; the Armenian Studies Program, California State University, Fresno; the Institute of Armenian Studies, University of Southern California; AGBU Nubar Library, Paris, the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center, and the UCLA Promise Armenian Institute.

If you are interested in contributing to support the SAS Graduate Research and Conference Grant fund, please contact Prof. Bedross Der Matossian at bdermatossian2@unl.edu.

Provision Glendale City Election Results for Armenian Candidates

WATERTOWN (LAVote.gov) — In the Glendale, California general municipal election of June 7 for three seats on the city council, the provisional election results indicate that the three incumbents were the winners. Vrej Agajanian received 8,219 votes, or 17.84 percent of the vote; Dan Brotman received 7,885 votes, or 17.11 percent; and Ara Najarian received 7,470 votes, or 16.21 percent. In fourth place was Elen Asatryan, with 6,842 votes or 14.85 percent.

In other Glendale results, Greg Krikorian provisionally beat Suzie Abajian to become the city clerk, while Rafi Manoukian ran unopposed with 100 percent of the votes (13,994) to become the new city treasurer.

Three Armenians were elected to the Glendale Unified School District Board of Education: Lerna Amiryans, Armina Gharpetian, and Shant Shahakian.

These provisional results will be updated as necessary until the final results are in, which may take several weeks.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Astronomers in Armenia Get ANSEF's Support

ANSEF, from page 7

The story of one of the ANSEF grant beneficiaries revealed the extraordinary benefits that have resulted. Dr. Victor Vardanyan wanted to understand the intrinsic causes of childhood epilepsy. This had interested him since he had received his PhD in molecular neuroscience at the University of Hamburg, Germany in the early 2000's. Now, a 2022 ANSEF grant recipient, he and his research team are hard at work to find an answer. "Our research focuses on the terrible neuro-developmental disorders that cause devastating illnesses which affect the cognitive and motor functions of patients, especially children who suffer from epilepsy, developmental delays, intellectual disabilities, as well as behavioral and language problems," said Vardanyan. Through the team's genetic research, he believes progress can be achieved.

Extraordinary Leaders

Dr. Aram Chobanian, one of the founders of ANSEF, was President Emeritus of Boston University from 2003-2005, and is a world-renowned cardiologist and formerly dean of Boston University's School of Medicine. He was the first recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award in Hypertension by the American Heart Association, and served as Director of the Hypertension Specialized Center of Research funded by the National Institute of Health from 1975 to 1995. He went to Armenia in 1991 and 1992 to see the clinical condition of the hospitals. "There were a lot of medical casualties from the first Karabakh war. We needed to help the scientists, but there were no graduate students, and there was no money, so the critical issue became the raising of funds. Also other groups needed money due to the 1988 catastrophic earthquake, and the devastation in Artsakh."

The ANSEF pioneers created the program in 2000 with five research grants. "We wanted the grant proposals peer reviewed, an important step," said Chobanian. "Committee members reviewed the grant proposals, judging on the basis of quality. This system was accepted by prominent scientists. We gradually became known, and the grants increased. We were just giving seed money for these first grant recipients to get on their feet, and to also get money from other sources. During the early years of ANSEF, the grants increased, reaching 100 to 150."



From left, Yervant Terzian, Victor Hambartsumyan and Edward Khachikyan at Byurakan Astronomical Observatory in Armenia

Medical and scientific research "has not been a priority of independent Armenia," declared Chobanian who was elected as a Foreign Member of the European Academy of Sciences, and the National Academy of Sciences in Armenia. ANSEF has to be broadened by planting and germinating seeds. We need a long-term concept in science and education in Armenia. And we need more funding," he declared.

Dr. Vatche Sahakyan, a who received his doctorate in theoretical physics, including cosmology and the fundamental laws of nature, from the University of Chicago, was born in Beirut, Lebanon and now lives in Los Angeles, where he has taught at Harvey Mudd College for 19 years.

In the last 22 years, ANSEF has received

pursue their work. It was a transformation," he declared with pride. "The level of research increased. It was unique in that it brought in a mindset based on objectivity and merit, especially in the last 10 to 15 years."

Sahakyan said he would divide ANSEF's impact in Armenia into two parts. First,

Armenia, as a Fulbright scholar in 2021. She reviews ANSEF proposals in the humanities and social sciences, which, she said, were not paid as much attention to, compared to the natural sciences in the USSR. The proposals, mostly from Armenia in the social sciences — about 20 a year — were mainly in ancient manuscripts, linguistics,



The 2022 ANSEF proposal recipients.

200 to 300 research proposals annually, he related. "We have reviewed them, and this has produced an amazing set of progressive data in Armenia. This data included trends where there was a dramatic decline of R&D funding for Armenian scholars right after the collapse of the USSR leading to a brain drain. Accomplished people left Armenia. This was scary for me. ANSEF addressed this catastrophe. It controlled the bleeding and salvaged the excellent legacy of science, education and the arts that were part of the Soviet era. This is even more so in Armenia which was on the outskirts of the USSR and slightly more free, and func-

"government officials became involved. I was told that ANSEF emphasized that the mindset was more important than the money. Proposals were evaluated objectively. A scientific committee was established inspired by the ANSEF operation. It's one thing to send money, but in a country emerging from the USSR, it must function in other ways to connect with the world. ANSEF introduced a professional way of functioning." Secondly, even with the ANSEF's "not so big funding, it is associated with prestige."

He said the ANSEF funding is approximately \$150,000 per year. The day-to-day operations are conducted by the FAR staff in New York and Yerevan. Eduard Karapetyan, the FAR deputy director who runs the ANSEF program in Armenia has called ANSEF "a unique foundation created by the best minds in the American-Armenian diaspora. It is possibly modest but has had a very powerful impact on the development of science in Armenia. Most importantly, it supports and ensures the continuation of fundamental scientific research, earning much trust among Armenian scientists by applying an impartial evaluation system of scientific works in accordance with international standards."

Sahakyan who is one of six professionals on the Executive Board of ANSEF, as well as its co-chair, revealed that the ANSEF funding is "less scarce" than ten years ago, when the state of the educational system in Armenia and its area of development was "mostly neglected". Also, a lot of research is not networked, and Armenia is somewhat isolated. Adjustments must be made," he declared. "Education must be a priority."

ANSEF Executive Board member Dr. Anna Ohanyan, born in Armenia, and now a professor of international relations at Stonehill College in Massachusetts, organized an international conference in Ar-

culture, history, the Armenian Genocide, and the Karabagh conflict. "ANSEF, she continued, is a dynamic organization, but "it must promote mid-level researchers in social sciences, and coordinate it with the Ministry of Education," said Ohanyan who was raised in a family of educators. "ANSEF is now an institutionalized mechanism of diaspora- Armenia relations, and is a model to be replicated."

Najarian who chaired the ANSEF executive committee for its first 10 years, related that ANSEF has been "the only bright spot in stopping the brain drain of outstanding specialists in Armenia, but also bringing

Armenian and international experts from the U.S., Europe and Russia to submit such high caliber proposals. Much of this research has been published in prestigious international journals, bringing worldwide recognition to our scientists." Dr. Najarian again gave praised Dr. Yervant Terzian who had the "highest recognition among scientists in NASA, and to the world famous astronomer Victor Hambartsumyan who has been the only awardee of the legendary Isaac Newton Cloak by the British Empire.

Said Najarian, "ANSEF for the past 20 years has been at the breadth and depth of scientific research in Armenia. And this has been done in 22 years with only three and a half million dollars," he stated with pride. We have been able to generate about \$150,000 a year. This only funds 30 projects. There are more than 60 proposals that are worthy."

He added, the future of Armenia "depends on stopping the Brain Drain from Armenia, getting more international recognition, and many of the researchers getting into the universities and becoming teachers of the young generation," he declared stressing each word. "And funding is crucial."

For more information, visit <http://ansef.org/>



Arts & Culture

Aram Khachaturian Museum in Yerevan Combines Innovation With Tradition

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

YEREVAN — Armine Grigorian, the director of the Aram Khachaturian Home Museum in Yerevan, holds her smartphone over Khachaturian's image on a notebook, and the image livens up. Using the Arloopa application, created by Armenian IT specialists, the museum features a variety of hi-tech solutions that make the display interactive and contemporary. Using his/her phone, the visitor turns from a passive viewer to a participant, somewhat similar to what is happening at the Smithsonian museums of the United States.

"The home museums are a specific type of a museum, where the authentic atmosphere needs to be preserved. Having said that, we need to keep abreast with the time. Therefore, it is important to bring in innovations like smartphones, applications, or QR codes, without which it is hard to imagine our life now," says Armine while we walked through what used to be Khachaturian's home, looking at QR codes that were placed next to the acclaimed composer's black-and-white or colored images, clothes, and other items on display.

Perhaps the most known music of Khachaturian is the Sabre Dance from the "Gayaneh Ballet," on account of which the Armenian composer was sometimes nicknamed Mr. Sabre Dance in the West.

"According to UNESCO's statistics, the Sabre Dance is one of the most performed classical music pieces in the entire world. Khachaturian wasn't very happy about it. He remarked, 'If I knew that this naughty kid of mine was going to cast a shadow over my other musical works and push them aside, I might not have even composed it,'" said Armine, placing her Samsung over an image that activated a YouTube link with a clip of the Sabre Dance.

The high-resolution photos on the walls feature Khachaturian's international travels ranging from the United States to Argentina, Cuba, the Vatican, and elsewhere. "He visited nearly 50 countries; he was the first Soviet citizen to meet the Pope. It happened before the USSR and Vatican established diplomatic relations," continued Armine.

Opening the Magical Music Catalogue with notes initiates the playing of Khachaturian's Violin Concerto in the hall. The innovations will not stop here. "We know that before this house was built for Khachaturian in the 1940s, he would stay at what is now Grand Hotel Yerevan. The museum has reached an agreement with the hotel, and soon, on June 15, we are planning a surprise event at this 5-star hotel," noted the director.

The museum holds the copyright of a rare recording of the notable composer singing in the Armenian language. The curator played this unique recording for us while the director continued her story regarding

see MUSEUM, from page 17



Miqayel Simonyan, Men's Runway, 2020

Inspired by the House of Chanel, Young Paris Designer Takes on the World

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PARIS — Young Parisian clothing designer Miqayel Simonyan only knows one speed: overdrive. Born in the picturesque town of Ijevan in Tavush Province, Armenia — population 15,000 — Simonyan displays unusual talent and determination at a young age. Still a teenager at the time and ever the artistic polymath, Simonyan earned a finalist spot at the Junior Armenian Eurovision Final, won several national vocal competitions and then was awarded a full scholarship to the United World College in Dilijan, where he passed the coveted International Baccalaureate degree.

He was off again, this time to Luther College in Decorah, Iowa — all expenses paid.

Simonyan launched his first collection, "Aphrodisiac," at age 20 and successfully started selling his designs online. In 2021 he earned a place at Parson's Paris — considered by many the top fashion school in the world. The \$55,000-price tag for tuition was bit steep, so Simonyan decided to remain in the French capital and learn as best he could. He recently put together his third collection, titled "Omission," and plans to send young Parisian models down the runway in his creations later this summer before attending the state-run French fashion university.

Inspired by Chanel, with a hint of Versace added to the mix, Simonyan's designs are both wearable and pleasing to the eye.

"I love what Chanel did. She liberated women and made beautiful, elegant clothing that everyone admires. Karl Lagerfeld added street fashion to the mix, appropriating the best of what he saw around him in New York and Paris." But more than anything, it's Chanel, the woman, that he admires most: "I know that some unflattering things have come out recently about Chanel's personal life. But as a designer she was second to none. She came from a poor family like me, and she let nothing stand in her way. I have the exact same drive."

Did we mention that Simonyan is disabled? The Armenian designer was born with a rare but benign neurological disorder that makes it challenging for him to walk. He gets around that by showing uncommon sang froid in public and by resorting to an electric wheelchair when he needs to go long distances.

see DESIGNER, page 16



Miqayel Simonyan, Fashion Designer Miqayel Simonyan on Runway in Wheelchair

Estonian Writer Armin Kõomägi Explores His Armenian Roots

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / TALLINN — Estonian writer Armin Kõomägi was born in 1969, in Moldova. He started writing in 2003 when he was 34. His first book, published in 2005, was a collection of short stories titled *Amateur*. A short story from this collection, "Logisticians Anonymous," received the Friedebert Tuglas Short Story Award in 2006. One of the short stories of this collection, called "Amateurs," has been made into a movie in 2008. In 2006 he published another collection of short stories titled *The Face That Was Left Over*. This was followed in 2009 by his first novel, *Runaways*, and in 2011 by his second novel, *The Good Firm*. In 2012, Kõomägi contributed to the Dalkey Archive Press published Best European Fiction 2012, which contains a collection of new fiction from European writers. In 2015, Kõomägi won the Estonian Writers' Union's novel competition with *Lui Vutoon*, presented as a diary of a young man in the world, in which there are no people, but everything is complete and safe.



Armin, I have read *Lui Vutoon* in Russian translation. It is very multi-layered, there is almost everything: vivid imagination, philosophy, eroticism, naturalism, remarkable observations about life and society. Many questions remain unanswered: why did all mankind disappear and only two survived? And the open ending left me more confused. Nevertheless, I am glad I read your novel. The impatience with which you look forward to the next chapters speaks to your literary skills.

Thank you very much for your comments, Artsvi! To be honest, when I was writing it, I did not follow any certain concept. I allowed myself to write in the same way jazz musicians improvise. It could last for hundreds and hundreds of pages, but I just had to finish it off in some way. So, my goal was not to be clear what happened to the people, why they vanished. And the very same goes with the ending.

How would you describe its genre?

Unfortunately, I don't have an answer to this question. When I start writing I don't think of genre. Writing for me is a game, where there are no boundaries. The only instance I set restrictions for myself was when

see ROOTS, page 15



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Clara Yenovkian's Piróg, an Armenian family favorite

FRESNO — Clarice Krikorian contributes this Russian-Armenian version of piróg that her beloved 91-year-old mother, Clara Yenovkian, has made for many years. “Piróg (perok) comes from the Armenian diaspora in Iran and bears similarities to the piróg pastry popular in many Eastern European countries. It’s a staple in most Russian households. Many bakeries boast their ability in producing the finest piróg usually made with apricot jam, cherry or fruit preserves. However, nothing compares to the one you bake right in your own home,” says Clarice.

“Piróg is often a buttery jam-filled snack cake, tart or slab pie that seems to have traveled all the way to Iran and Armenia where it reigns supreme to this day,” says Clarice. “It is made from yeast dough, short crust, or puff pastry that is filled with either sweet or savory ingredients. Popular fillings include meat, fish, mushrooms, cheese, cabbage, potatoes, fried onions, and fruits including plums, apples, apricots, peaches, or berries.”

“This is one of our family’s favorite desserts. My mother often made this during the summer apricot season, and would use her homemade apricot jam made from the fresh apricots that grew on our backyard apricot tree. Other fruit preserves and jellies work with this recipe, too, depending on whatever you have on hand. This is a special dessert -- the recipe was

given to my mother by some of her Russian-Armenian friends. On occasion, she would substitute plum jam in place of her apricot jam or preserves, and both versions are absolutely delicious and easy to make.

This is an ideal dessert for entertaining guests or bringing to a potluck luncheon or dinner. We serve this dessert with hot coffee or tea, and it is exceptionally good alongside Armenian coffee.”

“Piróg is made in different shapes: often oblong with tapering ends (like my mother would make it), circular or rectangular. The pastry can be open faced with no crust on top, or completely covered with a crust as well as a lattice shaped top crust. Most commonly made from a yeast dough, the addition of yeast distinguishes piróg from pies and other similar pastries,” adds Clarice.

“I remember standing alongside my mother at our old Formica kitchen table as she would roll out the dough then cut it into strips to form the beautiful lattice design for the top of the pastry. The yeast dough would fill up the house with such a delectable, comforting aroma. My sister and I would wait, impatiently, for this delicious treat to be baked and ready to devour. Needless to say, leftovers never lasted long in our house.”



INGREDIENTS:

1 yeast cake
1/4 cup warm water
1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar
1 cup milk
1/2 cube (4 tablespoons) butter
1/2 cube (4 tablespoons) margarine
3 eggs, beaten
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking powder
4 cups flour (approximately)
1/4 cube (2 tablespoons) butter to spread between layers of dough
1/4 cube (2 tablespoons) margarine to spread between layers of dough
1 (8 oz.) jar apricot jam or jelly, apricot/pineapple or plum jam or jelly

PREPARATION:

Soften yeast in 1/4 cup warm water along with 1 tablespoon sugar. In saucepan, over medium heat, stir in milk and remaining sugar, stirring until dissolved.

In another saucepan, melt 1/2 cube each butter and margarine. Pour into measuring cup to equal 1/2 cup after melting; set aside to cool slightly.

In a large bowl, beat eggs, salt, milk mixture and yeast. Gradually add baking powder, flour and melted butter/margarine and mix until all ingredients are incorporated. Knead mixture with buttered hands. (Dough should be soft but not sticky). Cover and let rise 1 hour.

Melt together the remaining butter and margarine and set aside. Take 3/4 of risen dough and roll out very thin; brush with melted butter/margarine. Fold in sides of dough toward center and brush again with melted butter/margarine. Repeat this procedure twice again until dough is about a 5' square.

Prepare a “10 1/2 x 15 1/2” baking pan with some of the melted butter/margarine. Roll out dough to fit pan.

In a saucepan, warm jam or jelly of your choice. Place dough in prepared pan and spread with warm jam or jelly.

Take the remaining 1/4 dough and roll out to make strips for top of piróg. On a large piece of parchment paper or waxed paper, assemble the strips into a basket-weave pattern to fit the pan. Invert onto the jam/jelly layer and pinch together all edges to seal. Cover and let rise for 1 hour. Brush top of the pastry with a beaten egg. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes.

If the top of pastry has browned after 20 minutes, cover with a sheet of parchment paper and continue to bake for an additional 10-15 minutes until top and bottom of pastry is golden brown. Cut into squares and serve with hot coffee or tea.

Armenian Coffee (Soorj) From Clarice Krikorian

Armenian coffee (*soorj*) is an acquired taste that when properly made, takes time and all of your attention. The result is definitely worthwhile. It is a thick, delicious coffee that is certainly not for the faint-hearted. This coffee is also how many Armenians start their day. Like Arabic coffees, the flavor is very strong, and it is a normally unfiltered coffee with a small serving size. In Armenia, they call it haygagan soorj. In Greece, you order an elliniko. And if you were in Lebanon you would say gahwey arabi (<https://henryshouseof-coffee.com/soorj/>).

Armenian coffee is the most popular hot beverage served after dinner in many households; it is made from pulverized coffee that is found in most Middle Eastern specialty markets. Traditionally, once you have finished your coffee, you are to turn your cup upside down on the saucer. You must then rotate your cup clockwise three times which allows the coffee grounds to form your “fortune.” The cup is then given to the family “expert” at reading the coffee grounds. If your coffee cup sticks to the saucer, the seal is not to be broken signifying good luck is sure to come your way.

“Many of us have heard, and will remember.” The wise words of many seasoned Armenian “fortune tellers” who would almost always begin with the phrase, “Hehroo deghen nahmahg muh beedee kah.” Translated: “From far away, a letter is going to come.” Basically, this would mean that good news is coming your way. My beloved mother-in-law, Rose (Aznive) Krikorian, was our family’s Armenian coffee cup expert. Family members would line up with their cups (pen and paper in their hands), waiting for the news their cups held. Needless to say, my mother-in-law Rose was amazing and, many times, very accurate.

INGREDIENTS

Water
Pulverized coffee (found in Middle Eastern markets)
Sugar (if desired)

PREPARATION

Measure one demitasse cup of cold water for each cup of coffee desired, and pour into a “jazva” or “jazvee” (a long-handled, narrow necked brass or enamel pot), also known as a “sourjaman” or coffee pan. A small saucepan will work just as well.

Heat water until lukewarm, just before it comes to a boil. Add one slightly heaping teaspoon of pulverized coffee and one level teaspoon of sugar (if desired) for each cup of coffee being made. Note: These amounts can be varied according to taste. Stir to dissolve and bring mixture to a boil over high heat then lower heat until foam is formed on top. Place a spoonful of foam in each demitasse cup. Pour in coffee, dividing among the cups and serve.





ARTS & CULTURE

Estonian Writer Armin Kõomägi Explores His Armenian Roots

roots, from page 13

I wrote my last collection of short stories called *The Heroes of Periphery* in 2020. It is a collection of the mini short stories, where each text consisted of 1,000 words. The average length of a story was three and a half pages. It was quite a challenge. There are stories telling someone's life from the start until the end, or even sagas reaching over centuries. It demanded a cruel decision of what to take and what to leave out. What was left, became thick as syrup. Despite its shortness, I advise reading only one story at a time; it's impossible to relieve the thirst with syrup.

You have published *Lui Vutoon* in 2015, when the nightmare of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine did not yet exist. Why did you adopt such apocalyptic and eschatological moods back at the time?

I started writing the novel in 2013 because of my son, who was then 12. For some time already, I had noticed how he sank into the world of internet, to come out only for a brief visit to the fridge. I then asked, what would he do when he realized that we were no longer there. I spoke of his mother, sister and myself. He replied "no problem, I have everything necessary at home." I then asked that while we gone, the fridge will be empty one day eventually; what then? He replied that he would then take a bike and ride to the nearest shopping center, since everything is available there. The young person's opinion of what is essential in life amazed me.

The subject of a lone person left in the world is not new, but I thought that it might be interesting to write it from the perspective of a very "green" member of society. We lived in a very different world in 2013, in retrospect. Even the climate change and the environmental concerns caused due to human activity hadn't reached the majority of people. If we add the global pandemic, that lasts for several years already, the ongoing war in Europe with its tens of thousands of victims, all energy and migration crisis.

If I would write *Lui Vutoon* today, it would hardly have turned out a light adventure story of a young marketing man lone in the world throwing witty slogans. There is probably no more place for that kind of flabbiness in the world.

In your novel it is said: "Three things you cannot trust for anything in the world: advertising, music, history." I can agree with the first and the third one, but music?

It is the main character's opinion, that everything poetic, including music, is really a flamboyant nonsense to influence a human being emotionally. He sees the effect mainly as manipulation. He, as a marketing person knows very well, how music has been used in ads, films, shopping centers etc. Although, he is also capable of enjoying music and distance himself from rationality and throw himself into its deceptive waves, in the same time, however, his brain is still calculating the real purpose of this music.

But I totally agree with your stating that "Man is the most dangerous creature in the whole world. You cannot rely on him, his moods are changeable, his desires are unpredictable, stupidity is not inferior to the mind." Are you sceptic about humans in general?

It would be too easy to answer yes or no and be done with it. I think that the unreasonably big burden has been laid on the shoulders of humans. I don't know why we presume of one species of mammals, on one small planet in the remote edge of the vast galaxy, that so much is depending on him and therefore expect humans at least

to take a good care of his home planet. In thousands of years, humans have inhabited nearly all possible places on land, they still take the first steps in recognizing the whole planet as their home. The United Nations which is supposed to be the sum of all nations in the world, is really a marketplace of local national interests. We still wage bloody wars for territory and culture. For a while, there was a hope that the international economy and trade has a potential to unite people globally, but it is gone now. Mistrust and hostility are very present. Tribal mentality is in our genetic code. We are too egoistic and small morally. And although we have planes and rockets to take us to cosmic heights, we still ponder our toes. And even if we look up, we expect guidelines from the God. But the God is like music... everyone has its own favorite. Time will tell, if we are able to grow bigger. And at what price.

Another remarkable quotation from *Lui Vutoon*: "A natural woman cannot be perfect from the very beginning, because nature itself is imperfect." I love nature and sometimes I think that human beings do not deserve to have such a treasure. Yet sometimes I also think that the nature is imperfect taking into account natural cataclysms and the irreversibility of processes, especially aging and death.

Again, it is the main character's understanding of perfect beauty. The view is distorted, originating from mangas and Photoshop, where all things disturbing and irregular have been cleansed. Even the monsters there are tuned up to the perfection. But nature is always something more than purity. For example, take the pure water H₂O, there is no such thing in the reality. There is always something more. Pure H₂O is the photoshopped version of water. That's the idea possible only in laboratories. The basis of life is imperfection, the possibility of flaws, a step towards change. The cataclysms, aging and death are the necessary components of life. Without them there would have never been life. We must be grateful to death, but it is a different subject.

You wrote: "Digesting fiction is unhealthy."

Lui had several bottles of good cognac with his books, if I remember correctly. He acknowledged bitterly, that excluding children's literature, authors tend to act quite sadistically with their heroes. *Lui*, on the brink of despair, sympathizes with these invented characters. Maybe deep inside he considers himself as one of them, an invention of some crazy author. At that moment, fiction for *Lui* represents patronized malefaction, where the author plays a role of the cruel God. This makes him sick.

I assume you are erotomaniac, with the Kinky Kim sex doll in the form of Kim Kardashian! However, your description of the hero on the roof of the trading center under the rain is one of greatest erotic scenes I have ever read. I found it wild and provocative in a good way. After independence many Armenian writers begun to use eroticism and non-normative lexicon in their writings. I assume the same applies to Estonian literature.

Some Estonian literary scholar would have an answer to this question. In 1990s, after the liberation of our region, literature was also liberated and sex, as a part of life, burst out, too. No shame in this anymore. Female and male authors both, write about it boldly and interestingly. And truly, sexual energy plays an important role in actions of all mankind. I agree that *Lui Vutoon* is very sexually charged. There was a poll of young people's consumption of pornography in

Estonia. It came out that a lot of boys and girls get their answers to the questions of intimacy from pornography. If their parents and the school have no influence on the matter, we might have a generation, who see no difference between porn and love.

I assume you are also a big gourmand — in your novel so many delicacies are being enumerated!

On the contrary. I prefer a canteen to restaurant. I like simple, pure tastes and foods. The insane variety of goods in the supermarket that *Lui* faces while cleaning the counters, must make an honest person blush. Every few days, we step in the door of paradise, where there are tens of thousands different foods. Tens of thousands!

Last week, Estonia got two Michelin star restaurants for the first time. As a result, the waits to these places stretch for several months now. Prices increase. And prestige, of course. Hotels can advise their guests to go there. It's all a part of the consumer culture of the welfare society. I've been to the Michelin star restaurants three of four times in my life and none of them have particularly delighted me — too much unnecessary playing with food and complacency.

"All the novelties that once made humanity shine with happiness every morning are now petrified in eternity." However, what continues to shine with happiness every time?

Maybe it is the morning. Fortunately, life has been set so, that in every 24 hour a new chance has been given to us. You can get rid of the flaws of yesterday and start anew.

You also say: "Our task is to fill the universe with feelings." And what is the task of the writer?

The writer's task is to point out the matters that the reader might not notice. It might be something pleasant or unpleasant, big or small, serious or entertaining. And he or she should do it in fascinating manner for the reader. And give the reader something to think about even after reading the book.

Please speak about the current state of Estonian literature.

In Estonian literature at the moment, there is a sort of boom of short story writing, partly thanks to the book series of Estonian Short Story (Eesti Novell) that each year publishes the collection of the best of the short stories of the previous year. The fifth collection was issued this spring and the promise is to go on publishing it for at least a hundred years. The genre of the short stories is increasingly popular among the writers and readers. Various competitions have been held and collections of short stories have been published. There is a remarkable growth in the number of female authors. This enriches and adds different shades to the Estonian literature, broadens the view. There are good times at the moment.

Your biography says you were born to an Armenian mother and an Estonian father. Famous Russian writer Nina Berberova (of Armenian-Russian extraction) wrote she felt being a half-caste very early. What about you?

I was born in 1969 in Moldova, where my mother, borne Anna Papazyan, now Anna Kõomägi, used to live before she moved to Estonia. When I was two months old, I was brought to Estonia. That was the deal with my parents. I also realized my mixed blood at very early age. I often spent my summers in Chisinau with my relatives. They were quite diverse ethnically. My grandfather was Armenian, my grandmother Polish-Jewish origin, my cousin had Greek roots. All of them, however, spoke Russian. I remember that for a short period, I was even ashamed of it. In 1980s, when there was a sense of liberation

from the Soviet occupation among the Estonians, being a "real" Estonian became very important. I felt as if I'm not a pure Estonian. But the feeling passed soon as in personal as well as social aspect. Today, I think that mixed blood has its advantages. In general, people here are tolerant for outlanders, especially when they speak Estonian. But the Russian invasion to Ukraine in February this year changed everything. Even the Ukrainian taxi driver in Estonia, who speaks to me in Russian, apologizes and says that he is an Ukrainian and dooms the Russian army.

Your name Armin — is it the German name or Armenian?

It is a German name that has been used in Estonia. But it seems that my parents somehow wanted to highlight their different nationalities, for my sister's name is Esta.

Where are your ancestors from?

My mother has told me that our Armenian family is from the port town called Trabzon, this is nowadays Turkish area. In 18th century, they migrated to Abkhazia, where my mother was born. They have never lived in Armenia. My grandfather Mkhitar Papazyan was a highly valued specialist of the tobacco industry and therefore he worked in many countries — Georgia, Russia, Bul-



Armin Kõomägi with his mother

garia, Moldova. And of course, his family travelled with him to these countries.

My mother said that her first language was the Armenian Hamshen dialect. In the course of time, she learned the Russian, Estonian and English languages. It is very difficult to discover in myself something of Armenian, or Polish, etc. I've been to Armenia only once in 2013 on a trip of the public cultural diplomacy. I've been to Georgia twice. I have to admit that I felt more home in Georgia. Maybe because of the sea. Even my ancestors have been living by the sea in Trabzon and Gudauta.

From Armenia I remember that it was very hot, the air stood still as a wall, and it also affected the people. I sensed a sort of stillness and stasis. People were not enthusiastic or optimistic. The driver, who with the great hospitality was taking us around for several days, asked with tears in his eyes that we invite him to Estonia, where he could find a better job and better life. I also remember in a museum, our guide, an elderly lady, said with the pride that in her opinion most all of the things in the world have been invented by the Armenians, even the skis*. That made me laugh.

And one more thing. One day we were having a lunch somewhere in the mountains. The scenery around was really breathtaking, especially for us, the ones coming from almost the flat land. We were bathing in ice cold rocky river and had the sturgeon soup. That was the best I ever had!

* Actually one of first mentioning of skis has been done by Armenian historiographer Tovma Artsruni (9th-10th century), who in his History of the House of Artsrunik, mentioned that the inhabitants of Sasun mountains used to tide wooden boards on their toes while walking on the snow.



ARTS & CULTURE

Young Paris Designer Takes on the World

DESIGNER, from page 13

Tall, handsome, and warm in demeanor, he eschews fashion world attitude: “At the end of the day, we are just making clothes, not curing cancer. There is no need to have an attitude about it. To me fashion is the most important thing in my life, but I know how to place it in context.”

In several conversations, Simonyan has emphasized to me that he wants to continue his work as a spokesperson for the disabled and become the first famous fashion designer with a disability: “In the past, I struggled with self-acceptance. However, I was able to find the strength I needed by designing and making things for others. I design clothes with the wish that they can help make people become more of themselves.”

I find Simonyan’s creations beguiling: classic black tee shirts rendered in chenille/velvet; asymmetrically-cut tops with simple geometric designs reminiscent of early modernist art; plain tapered slacks with an edgy cut; pins and hats inspired by traditional Armenian arts and crafts—all painstakingly and lovingly sewn together by hand and on a Singer machine, like in the old days.

And as his eye develops the designer is shying away from crafty motifs: “In the future, I want to update classic Armenian themes and designs. I want to create something bold and stunning with just a hint of folk to it, not something kitschy or derivative.”

For his new collection, “Omission,” Simonyan draws inspiration from early 20th-century Russian Suprematists such as Kazimir Malevich and Lyubov Popova: “As a designer,” Simonyan notes, “I have come up with my own formula; creativity over ostentation and simplicity over exaggeration.” The results are modern and streamlined, artistic yet wearable. They let the body roam free to do whatever it wants, within the context of a busy 21st century day — or go out at night to dinner and dance, displaying just the right mix between wearable and trendy: “I consider my designs complete only when they are worn, not when they hang on a mannequin. Hence, I always try to create a balance between my clothing being original, yet still wearable.” Remember the name Miqayel Simonyan. Bets are that you will likely hear it more than once in your fashion future.



Miqayel Simonyan, Men’s Top, 2022

Chris Bohjalian Is a Born Storyteller

STORYTELLER, from page 1

From accused witches in colonial New England (*Hour of the Witch*, 2021) to modern-day midwives (*Midwives*, 1997) and flight attendants (*The Flight Attendant*, 2018), to victims of the Armenian Genocide (*Sandcastle Girls*, 2012), a missing mother (*The Sleepwalker*, 2017) and most recently, Golden Age Hollywood stars on safari in East Africa, Bohjalian’s ability to spin a tale about almost anything has made him an incredible success. His books regularly make the *New York Times* bestseller list.

As broadly appealing and as “American” as Bohjalian’s works are, the genius that underlies this ability is in a way, very Armenian. Christopher Morley, a well-known American literary critic of the 1930s and ’40s, commented of William Saroyan during the height of his fame that he “has the Asia-Minor gift for telling a tale perfectly.” Bohjalian has the gift too, clearly. When asked about this comparison, he states: “I come from a long line of storytellers. There is no tale, no matter how pedestrian, my family could not embellish and make interesting. Good Lord, he could make my Little League baseball games sound epic. Likewise, my brother is one of the funniest humans on the planet and has the two things that make for a great raconteur: an astonishing memory and knowing exactly when to drop the mic. That is the gift of storytelling.”

In fact, Bohjalian discovered later in life that his great-grandfather, Nazaret Bohjalian of Kayseri (Caesarea), known to the family to have been a tailor, was also a poet and troubadour known as Ashugh Nadiri. Arshag Alboyajian devoted several pages in his monumental and long out-of-print *History of Armenian Caesarea* to Nadiri, who wrote, among other things, a 70-quatrain epic poem on the Hamidian massacres of 1895 in his native city.

“When I discovered as an adult that my great-grandfather was a poet who had chronicled the Hamidian massacres, I was deeply moved,” the author says. “I had supposed with *The Sandcastle Girls* that I was the first Bohjalian to try and make sense of the cataclysmic crime of the Armenian Genocide through art. No, I was the sec-

ond. And that left me both very, very proud of my ancestor and very, very sad that I hadn’t known that until I was fifty.”

Lioness Is Roaring Success

Bohjalian’s novels touch on myriad issues while remaining enthralling yarns. Perhaps in the anxiety of the current moment, readers are looking for the escapism of a page-turner, but one, that like *The Lioness*, doesn’t ignore the existence of pressing social issues.

This latest book is, like much of his work, a gripping page-turner. Set during a 1964 safari in the Serengeti, the novel’s narration shifts from chapter to chapter through the perspectives of ten main characters. Hollywood starlet Katie Barstow is on her honeymoon and has brought seven friends along, in addition to her “struggling gallerist” husband, David. Their guide, Charlie Patton, a sort of “last of the great white hunters” figure who keeps name-dropping Hemingway, leads a crew of Tanzanians in entertaining the mostly white American guests on this trip. Mostly white American, because the character of Terrance Dutton (a co-star of the main character Katie, who has controversially appeared as her love interest, and is sort of a Sidney Poitier type, the reader surmises) is Black, a fact that serves as a point of pride for the Tanzanians and a jumping-off point for a lot of discussion about race in 1960s America and decolonization in 1960s Africa.

“I wouldn’t say Katie is based on one particular actor,” Bohjalian says, “But I often thought of Natalie Wood when I was writing her character and scenes.”

“I’ve written 24 books, and each one has its own origin story,” the author says.

He’s covered a multitude of historical periods and settings. Why Hollywood this time? “I had this idea after leaving a movie matinee in August 2019. I emerged into the cobalt skies after having been transported in the dark of the cinema, and thought to myself, ‘My gosh, I love movies. Why have I never written a Hollywood novel?’ So, I did.”

The book is as much a suspense thriller as it is a snapshot and discussion of mid-century society and culture. The reader learns almost immediately that most of the characters are going to die, and it then becomes clear that there is a double catastrophe in-

volved; a kidnapping by Russian mercenaries and a vicious attack by wild animals.

“I wanted this book to be a thriller,” he says “I wanted readers to really understand and care about each character, and be turning the pages frantically, wondering who is going to live and who is going to die.

Bohjalian spends a lot of time discussing the backstories of his characters and fleshing out their ambitions, hopes, and anxieties against the backdrop of Golden Age Hollywood, American race relations, Cold War politics, and the struggles of everyday life in the 1960s, particularly among the type of people whose colorful upbringing seems to destine them for the film industry.

“There are lot of reasons why I chose 1964 and East Africa, but the big ones were that I grew up in the 1960s and 1970s and thought it was time to set a book in a period when I was a child; the 1960s was one of Hollywood’s golden ages; and I wanted to place my Hollywood entourage in the midst of the Cold War and on unfamiliar turf. That’s why we have the kidnapping by Russian mercenaries.”

Race plays a major role in the novel, something Bohjalian felt important given the very Eurocentric depictions of Africa in the 19th and 20th century in works by Hemingway and others, to whose work *The Lioness* is already being compared. “[Hemingway is] the elephant in the room in any ‘safari’ novel of a certain era,” Bohjalian says. “I wanted to be sure that my novel wasn’t ‘Hemingway’s Africa.’ Early into the novel, one of the Tanzanian guides suggests to a guest that in addition to Hemingway, she read Chinua Achebe. It was very important that the novel conveyed that East Africa at the time was breaking free of colonialism. The book is very much about race and social injustice, and the Black characters from both continents experience horrific discrimination in the novel.” The character of Terrance Dutton offers the perspective of a Black American and his backstory delves deep into the racial issues and struggles of 1960s America and Hollywood.

Television Comes Calling

Since the premiere of the television series, “The Flight Attendant,” on HBO Max in 2020, based on the book of the same name, which stars Kaley Cuoco, there

has been an increased interest in adapting Bohjalian’s page-turners for the modern long format TV series. (The fact that his first big success, *Midwives*, was turned into a made-for-TV movie in 2001 starring Sissy Spacek now seems like something from a bygone era.) *The Lioness* is already in development for a TV series to be produced via Marsh Entertainment and eOne.

Another book, *The Red Lotus*, is also in development with Marsh Entertainment.

The *Lioness* has been met with wide acclaim by the press. “The reviews have left me a little overwhelmed,” Bohjalian says. He embarked on a book tour, his first since Covid started. “Readers were thrilled to be gathered together again to celebrate what words and reading and books can mean to the soul. Some were literally weeping with joy because, once again, they were with their friends at an event all about books.”

The tour stopped in Watertown on May 18, at the Armenian Museum of America, where Bohjalian appeared in conversation with prizewinning journalist Stephen Kurkjian. “Watertown was fantastic for a lot of reasons. First of all, I was sharing the stage with three-time Pulitzer Prize winner Stephen Kurkjian. It doesn’t get better than a conversation with Steve. He’s smart and funny, and he’s seen it all. But it was also a joy because the Armenian Museum of America is a treasure and I love that space. Finally, it was a treat because our community was there and I am always so lifted up and empowered by our community.”

Bohjalian is an absolute success story after years of hard work at his craft, now having published his 23rd novel. He has a new novel projected for next year as well as a play, and the aforementioned TV adaptations in the works. Does he have any advice for aspiring writers?

“Write in the genre you love to read. Read all the time. Write every day. (I wrote my first three novels between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m. in the morning, while working fulltime at ad agencies.) Write because you love it, not because you ever hope to get rich.”

As for Bohjalian? “I just keep writing every day and doing the work.”

Reviews of *The Lioness* and links to purchase this book and his many previous works can be found at Bohjalian’s official website: (<https://chrisbohjalian.com>).

The book is also available nationwide.



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR
OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

JUNE 20 — Holy Trinity Greg Hintlian Memorial Golf Tournament. Marlboro Country Club, 11 a.m. shot gun, Scramble Format or Best Ball. Men and Women's Division Prize Prizes for Longest Drive and Closest to the Pin - Men and Women Morning Coffee, BBQ Lunch at the 9th Hole and Dinner. REGISTER NOW on line at: <https://htaac.org>

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](https://sayatnova.com/35th-anniversary).

JUNE 26 - Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Join us for LABYRINTH WALKING WELLNESS Sunday at 2 p.m. Introduction to the health benefits Kristin Asadourian and Katrina Piehler, co-facilitators

JULY 6 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Join us for TEA & TRANQUILITY. Wednesday at 4 p.m. Meet & Greet

JULY 14 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Join us for UNDER THE RASPBERRY MOON. Thursday at 8pm. Featuring the Hye Guys Ensemble

AUGUST 3 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Join us for TEA & TRANQUILITY. Wednesday at 4 p.m. Meet & Greet

AUGUST 14 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Join us for UNDER THE RASPBERRY MOON. Sunday at 7:30 p.m. Featuring the Black Sea Salsa Combo

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 18 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. LET'S CELEBRATE THE PARK'S 10th ANNIVERSARY SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT THE PARK! Sunday at 3 p.m. Featuring the Leon Janikian Ensemble.

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

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 information, contact Zohrab Khaligian @ (262) 818-6437 or khaligian@netzero.net or https://www.facebook.com/Armenian-Madagh-Picnic-St-Hagop-Church-Racine-Wisconsin-250610052493495/?tn-str=k*F

Khachaturian Museum Combines Innovation with Tradition

MUSEUM, from page 13

upcoming plans. The translation and publication of Aram Khachaturian's letters in English is one of many projects.

June 6 marked the 119th birthday of the best-known Armenian composer. After a visit to his grave at Komitas Park in Yerevan, the museum's officials hosted a gala concert of young Armenian musicians organized jointly by the museum and Yerevan's mayoral office. "Fifteen school-children from eight musical schools of the capital participated. This was the 43rd annual traditional concert of young musicians," noted the municipality's press offi-

Among the participants was Samuel Dave Abraham Budhy, a Yerevan-based Indonesian. "I love music, and I love chess; that's why I resettled from Indonesia to Armenia two years ago," said Samuel, in decent Armenian. His mother Anna added that they were looking for a friendly country with good traditions in both music and chess and eventually chose to come to Armenia, where Samuel attends both chess classes and the Alexander Spendiaryan Musical School.

An international competition of cellists named after Aram Khachaturian kicked off on the same day. With 19 participants from



A T-shirt with a QR code and an image from Khachaturian's Gayane ballet

cer on phone. The traditional galas started the following year after composer's death in 1978.

At the event, Serop Goroyan dedicated his "Memory" musical work to the memory of his teacher and Artsakh Defense Army officer Menua Hovhannisian, killed in combat during the 44-day war of 2020.

Armenia, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Russia, Switzerland, and other countries, it lasted for about a week. The winners were announced on June 13: Ettore Pagano (Italy) took the first prize, followed by Yo Kitamura (Japan) and Ivan Sendetckii (Russia).

A video report accompanies this article at mirrorspectator.com.



The gala concert of young musicians



Khachaturian Museum director Armine Grigorian standing next to a bust of the great composer



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EDITORIAL

Armenia Explores Diplomatic and Economic Prospects in the Arab World



By Edmond Y. Azadian

Despite all the internal and external challenges plaguing the country now, Armenia is flexing its nascent diplomatic muscles around the world. In some cases, other countries are approaching Armenia because they have interests in the Caucasus. It remains to be seen how Armenia's inexperienced leaders will take advantage of the developing relations, balancing one country's interests against the others and pursuing its own agenda through the trials and tribulations of international politics.

One of the untapped fields for Armenia in terms of international relations has been the Arab world, where large diasporan communities have existed since the Genocide a century ago.

During the Soviet period, the central government made sure to assign ethnic Armenians to its embassies in Arab countries. However, since Soviet foreign policy was guided more ideologically, Moscow's interests were different than Armenia's today. Since independence, Armenian leaders have viewed and treated Arab countries through the prospective of the Soviet rulers as backward and part of the third world. It took some time to awaken to the fact that business opportunities were shifting to the Arab world despite turbulence in the region. First world countries like France and the US are making overtures there; branches of the Louvres and the Guggenheim are opening in Abu Dhabi.

Also neglected by Armenia's leadership was the high standing of the Armenian communities in Arab countries. Unlike the Turks, Muslim Arabs appreciated and respected the creative and hardworking Armenians living with them.

Despite the distorted views presented by the Western media, countries like Iraq and Syria were dynamic, viable and self-sufficient nations, if not paragons of democracy in Western eyes. The governments and peoples of those countries held in high regard the Armenians and their contributions to their respective societies.

Egypt has played a pivotal role in the Middle East, always wielding great influence throughout the Arab world. Although few in numbers in a large country with a population of 102 million currently, Armenians there have played an important role in politics, the economy and education since Nubar Pasha served as prime minister in the 19th century.

With the booming of the oil industry, the focus of economic activity has shifted to the Gulf region. Armenians from other Arab countries have gravitated to that region to play the same role as they had in other Arab countries.

Turkey recognized before Armenia did where the action was and developed its business in the region, while influencing those countries culturally through its media. Because of those activities, Egypt, for example, had become a hub of anti-Armenian propaganda, through its news media and academic publications. Fortunately, that trend was reversed when Turkey had a standoff with Egypt over Libya and hydrocarbon reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey and Azerbaijan had their way in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (formerly Islamic Conference), where the Nagorno Karabakh conflict was presented as a religious war between Christians and Muslims. Through such a misrepresentation of the truth, they won over fanatical countries like Pakistan, which sent its pilots to Azerbaijan during the 44-Day War. The organization was founded in 1969 in Saudi Arabia and it has 57 members. Incidentally, Armenia's former foreign minister, Eduard Nalbandyan, while serving as ambassador to Egypt, was able to allow Armenia to become an observer member to the Islamic Conference.

In a belated reaction, Armenia's new government is awakening to the importance of the Arab world and, in particular, to the value of the affluent countries of the Gulf region. It was its former president, Armen Sarkissian, who had the vision to open up connections with those countries. He first visited the Gulf countries and then became the first Armenian statesman to set foot in Saudi Arabia on December 26, 2021.

Riyadh had not established diplomatic relations with Armenia since the latter's independence. During a meeting with the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, also known by the acronym MBS, the de facto ruler of the kingdom, he lay the groundwork for establishing diplomatic relations with that oil-rich country. Sarkissian had a large circle of friends amongst the ruling classes of many countries in Europe and the Middle East. The current administration in Armenia failed to capitalize on that resource to promote the interests of their country, for the short-sighted reason that Armen Sarkissian was appointed during the Serzh Sargsyan administration. Following that same logic, they refused to consult consummate diplomats like Eduard Nalbandyan and Vartan Oskanian, despite the paucity of



seasoned ambassadors in the country.

Instead, they rely on their own cronies, notwithstanding their inexperience in statecraft.

However, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan took a positive initiative by traveling to Qatar on June 13, along with a large delegation. Pashinyan was received by Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in the latter's office at the Amiri Diwan. The Armenian delegation signed a number of memorandums of understanding in the fields of health, education, science investments and media.

Simultaneously, Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan has held phone conversations with his counterpart in Saudi Arabia, Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir, to follow up Sarkissian's diplomatic initiatives.

Such rapprochements were made possible mostly because of Turkey's waning influence in the region; Saudi Arabia has been the top contender to be the leader of the Sunni world, a position coveted by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who had a fallout with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia. In the meantime, a controversy developed between the Gulf countries, headed by Riyadh and Qatar. Mr. Erdogan threw his support on the side of Qatar, further exacerbating relations with Riyadh. Through Washington's good offices, a crisis was averted and now, Mr. Erdogan is kowtowing to the Saudi prince to entice him to invest in Turkey and maybe salvage that country's collapsing economy.

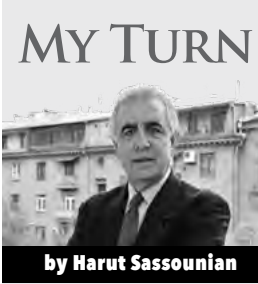
Along with plans to develop relations with Qatar and Saudi Arabia, Armenia cut an aviation deal with Sharjah to launch its own national airline through a joint venture with Air Arabia, based in Sharjah.

The Arab world presents a variety of opportunities as well as serious risks. Armenia's government must exercise caution

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ARMENIA



Azerbaijan Donated to Queen Of England A ‘Karabakh’ Horse: An Obvious Bribe!

by Harut Sassounian

A delegation led by President of the Equestrian Federation of Azerbaijan, Elchin Guliyev, presented on May 16 “a rare Karabakh horse” named “Shohrat” (glory) to the Queen of England as “a gift” from President Ilham Aliyev.

Azerbaijan was invited to perform at Her Majesty’s Platinum Jubilee celebrations. Among the participants in the May 12-15 Windsor Royal Horse Show were Azerbaijan’s cavalry detachment and in national costume the Border Guard Service’s dance ensemble who performed a program called “Land of Fire.” Azerbaijan has been participating in this Show since 2012.

Queen Elizabeth II, 96, holding a walking cane due to her mobility issues, waited in the courtyard of Windsor Castle to personally receive Azerbaijan’s “gift.” The Monarch, who has a lifelong love of horses, said it was a “very kind, very generous” gesture. A similar horse was recently sold at an auction for \$17,000. The Queen was also gifted two sculptures of horses, made by Azerbaijani sculptor Faiq Hajiye. Interestingly, Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, during his visit to the UK in 1956, had also presented to Queen Elizabeth II “a Karabakh horse” named “Zaman.”

Making no secret of the propaganda value of the Azeri “gift” to the Queen, the press center of Azerbaijan’s State Border Service explicitly stated, with an obvious distortion of the historical facts, that the UK Horse Show “has become an extremely important platform for promoting the ancient and unique Azerbaijani culture.”

However, the Azerbaijani propaganda backfired when Phil Miller, chief reporter of “Declassified UK” wrote a highly critical article titled: “Anger as Queen Bags ‘Generous’ Gift from Dictator.” The article started with: “As the Queen celebrates her Platinum Jubilee, she is facing calls to return a horse she recently received from a repressive regime — the third autocracy from which she has accepted such a gift.”

Miller reported: “Republic, a group that wants to abolish the monarchy and replace it with an elected head of state, slammed the Queen for having a ‘cozy relationship where she receives horses from dictatorships.’ Republic spokesman Graham Smith told Declassified: ‘It doesn’t look good for a British head of state to be having these kinds of relationships with people who have very questionable records in office and who are repressing their own people. I think it is distasteful and something that a different head of state might have chosen not to do. I’m surprised the government hasn’t advised her to refuse these sorts of gifts but I assume that it’s something she’s very invested in — horse racing. I think the best thing she could do is return the gifts and ask them not to offer

her any more in the future.”

Miller added: “The Aliyev family network is widely accused of embezzling state funds and acquiring more than \$500 million worth of property in London, one of which was sold to the Queen’s crown estate in an \$82 million deal.”

Miller quoted dissident Azerbaijani journalist in exile Arzu Geybullayeva: “President Ilham Aliyev is not only notorious for his authoritarian leadership, but he has also successfully managed to corrupt the whole governing system -- [putting] cronies, oligarchs, and family members in high government positions.”

On June 2, the Armenian National Committees of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and United Kingdom, all four British Commonwealth countries, issued a joint statement titled: “Your Majesty, Beware of Dictators Bearing Gifts!” The ANCs stated that Azerbaijan was attempting to “gift their way to whitewashing an appalling human rights record.” The ANCs called the gift “the latest in a series of cynical attempts by the authoritarian regime of Azerbaijan to color their shortcomings in a positive light.” The joint statement also highlighted that “human rights organizations have consistently exposed Azerbaijan’s use of Caviar Diplomacy in several corruption scandals, where they were found to pay their way to enhancing the country’s image amongst the international community.”

The four ANCs reminded that “in 2012, President Aliyev became the inaugural winner of the Organized Crime and Corruption Person of the Year award bestowed by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP).” The ANCs alerted the Queen that “Freedom House has summarized Azerbaijan’s human rights record as follows: ‘Power in Azerbaijan’s authoritarian regime remains heavily concentrated in the hands of Ilham Aliyev, who has served as president since 2003, and his extended family. Corruption is rampant, and the formal political opposition has been weakened by years of persecution. The authorities have carried out an extensive crackdown on civil liberties in recent years, leaving little room for independent expression or activism.’”

ANC-UK Chairperson Annette Moskofian stated: “There is no doubt in our minds that the gift is a deliberate and targeted act by the Azerbaijani regime to glorify its war crimes and cause psychological harm to Armenians in the Commonwealth countries, as well as in their ancestral homeland of Artsakh, who are facing an existential threat and who have witnessed parts of their ancestral homeland be occupied and ethnically cleansed by a foreign dictatorship.”

Sevag Belian, Armenian National Committee’s Executive Director in Canada, added: “We are confident that, upon being fully apprised of the above, Her Majesty should rightly reconsider acceptance of this ‘gift’ and reject Azerbaijan’s blatant and nefarious caviar diplomacy.”

There is little chance that the Queen will return the Azeri horse, unless the British public pressure their government that this ‘gift’ is nothing more than a crude bribe to whitewash the Aliyev regime’s crimes against the people of Azerbaijan as well as Artsakh and Armenia.

ARAB WORLD from previous page

and circumnavigate those pitfalls. One such risk was how to balance relations between the Arab countries and Israel. But that risk has already been abated, because Washington was able to twist the arms of the Arab side to sign the Abraham Accord between Israel and the Gulf countries.

Just recently, Israel’s Prime Minister Naphtali Bennett paid an official visit to the Gulf region. Although Israel and Saudi Arabia do not have formal diplomatic relations, they are cooperating with each other unofficially.

Since the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Arab countries had been supporting their Palestinian brethren through funds and arms. But since these potentates survive at Washington’s pleasure, they had to abandon the Palestinian cause to save their own seats of power.

For a long time, Armenia hesitated to establish formal diplomatic relations with Israel so as not to alienate the Arab countries, which hosted many large Armenian diaspora communities. Since relations between Israel and the Gulf countries have thawed, one major risk has been eliminated. But as soon as Armenia had sent its ambassador to Israel, the 44-Day War broke out and Yerevan recalled its ambassador as the former was selling drones to Azerbaijan. Now that issue is also resolved, not because Israel made any amends but because any hostility or disrespect toward Israel costs a reprisal from Washington.

Armenia needs the Arab countries more than the latter need Armenia. Armenia particularly needs their investment potential.

With the improvement of relations between Israel and oil-rich Arab countries and with Turkey’s waning influence in the region, it is time for the country to take solid steps to win friends and breathe some life into its economy.

Residents of a Karabakh Village In Limbo Brace for Handover

By Lilit Shahverdyan

After the war, signs of life have come back to Aghavno. Plants are sprouting in gardens, and children’s voices ring from the schoolyard.

But also visible from the village is a new road, now under construction by Azerbaijani workers. Once that road is finished – likely within a matter of months – Azerbaijan says it will take control of the village. And when that happens the current residents, all Armenians, will have to decide whether to stay or go.

Aghavno occupies a uniquely strategic place in the complex geopolitics of post-war Karabakh. Before the first war between the two sides in the 1990s, it was populated by Azerbaijanis and known as Zabukh. During that war it was destroyed, and ended up under Armenian control, along with the entire surrounding Lachin district.

It was rebuilt with heavy financial backing by Armenian diaspora organizations, renamed Aghavno, and settled by Armenians, some from Armenia itself and others from Armenian communities in Syria and Lebanon.

It lies along the road known as the Lachin Corridor, the narrow tether connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh. According to the ceasefire agreement that ended the more recent war, the entire district of Lachin was supposed to be handed over to Azerbaijan on December

1, 2020, except for a five-kilometer buffer along the corridor road. That ribbon of land was to be patrolled by Russian peacekeepers so that Armenians could continue to travel safely between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

Ahead of the December 2020 handover the de facto Armenian authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh told residents of the villages along the road to leave, but a handful in Aghavno defied the orders and stayed.

Now that handful has grown: Of the village’s pre-war population of 270, 185 have come back. The village has become a symbol to many Armenians for its defiance and its people’s determination to hold their ground.

Living here now requires navigating “constant obstacles,” the mayor, Andranik Chavushyan, told Eurasianet.

“We never had gas, so we use gas cylinders. We had power outages, so we brought generators. Water shortages? Fortunately, we have a river in the village,” Chavushyan said. “We believed in ourselves, not in the government, and refused to leave the village. We are living here today because we relied on ourselves.”

The village’s story has inspired various patriotic Armenian organizations to help support the residents who have stayed. “Mshakutamet,” an initiative in which young teachers from Armenia volunteer to hold weekly classes like sewing, piano, traditional dances in rural areas, has set up a program in Aghavno. Teach for Armenia, an organization placing teachers in villages in Armenia and Karabakh, sent an English teacher to Aghavno’s school for the most recent academic year, a relatively rare opportunity for Karabakh village schoolchildren.

The school, which had 48 students before the war, now has even more, headmaster Poghos Aghabekyan told Eurasianet. About half of the current 55 students now come from the district capital of Lachin (which Armenians call Berdzor) and other neighboring

see HANDOVER, page 20



Residents of a Karabakh Village in Limbo Brace for Handover

HANDOVER, from page 19

communities, where the schools remained closed following the war.

But Aghavno’s fate over the next few months is not clear. Azerbaijan has said that when it finishes the new road it is constructing, which will bypass Aghavno, it will take control of the territory along the current road. The Russian peacekeeping forces protecting the road – including a detachment just outside Aghavno – will relocate to the new road.

“We [Azerbaijan] will be able to rebuild the villages in the Lachin region and in this corridor,” military analyst Adalat Verdiyev told the pro-government Azerbaijani news site Yeni Sabah. “The Azerbaijani flag will be raised in the center of the Lachin region.”

In April, Azerbaijani media published the first images of the construction of the new route. It will start from the Armenian border near the village of Kornidzor, then pass through the settlements of Gaygi in the Lachin region, Kirov (Hin Shen in Armenian) and Metskaladeresi (Mets Shen in Armenian) in the Shusha region before reaching Stepanakert.

The construction of the new Lachin Cor-

ridor was stipulated in the ceasefire agreement that ended the 2020 war. According to that agreement, a new route connecting Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh will be outlined “within the next three years” and that when it is completed, “the Russian peacemaking forces shall be subsequently relocated to protect the route.”

But Azerbaijan appears to be working well ahead of schedule. The head of the Azerbaijan state road agency, Saleh Mamedov, told reporters in April that the new road would be ready to use by July.

Armenian, Russian, and Nagorno-Karabakh officials have had little to say on the construction of the new road. But the ombudsman in the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, Gegham Stepanyan, in May urged the residents of the villages along the border to stay.

“According to my information, it [the new road] will bypass Berdzor and Aghavno,” he said. “There is no final decision on the Armenian population of these settlements yet. We insist that the Armenian population lives there.”

In Aghavno, as rumors swirl about the potential impending handover, there are mixed feelings.

Anna Arakelyan, the history teacher at the school, said that the mood among her students darkened during the war, but that things have been gradually returning to their pre-war rhythm. Still, they know that the situation is precarious. “Sometimes I hear things like, ‘If we happen to come to school in September...’ or, ‘If we are still here this summer...’,” she told Eurasianet. “But I am sure we will not leave until the very last minute.”

Arakelyan’s parents were among the first Armenians to settle here in 1992, after fleeing their home in Maragha, a village in far eastern Nagorno-Karabakh that remained under Azerbaijani control. She was the first child to be born in Aghavno after the war, in 1994.

When the 2020 war broke out, she was pregnant, and fled to Armenia. She gave birth there, but moved back to Aghavno as soon as the war ended. “We decided that we would stay regardless of what the authorities decided,” she told Eurasianet.

But there are plenty of signs of people who are less determined. Some houses in the village remain empty, their previous inhabitants apparently deciding to make new lives elsewhere.

And the mayor, Chavushyan, criticizes what he calls the “suitcase mood” of some current residents thinking of leaving. But he insists that a strong core will remain. “The quantity does not matter. What matters is being strong,” he said. “I have only dozens of people around, but I trust and rely on them. If some are surrendering, then they are free to go, we will still do our job.”

Chavushyan, who is himself from Qamishli in Syria, moved to Lachin in 2014 and then to Aghavno in 2016. During the 2020 war, he organized a volunteer detachment of soldiers and got weapons from the government, he said. The village itself, far from the front lines, saw little fighting and only two houses and the school were partially damaged by Azerbaijani shells. But Chavushyan’s unit did have to defend the village from looters who came from Armenia to take advantage of the emptied-out villages.

Now, residents are ready to defend the village again, Chavushyan said. “We are responsible for our future generation. We defended ourselves in the ‘90s, we did it in 2020, and we are ready to fight again. We only need will and faith in ourselves,” he said.

(Lilit Shahverdyan is a journalist based in Stepanakert. This article originally appeared in Eurasianet.org on June 10)



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Ayb School Students in Yerevan Design Device To Be Sent into Space

YEREVAN — A device designed by Ayb School students in Yerevan will be sent into space. This became possible thanks to the victory of the school’s Ad Astra Project-Based Learning Engineering Club in the Kemurdzhian Youth Space Challenge 2022, a nationwide student competition that brought together young engineers aged 12-21.

In all, 4 teams made it to the finals. Ayb School’s Ad Astra team includes 12th-grade students Andre Vardanyan, Elina Melkonyan, Hayk Piliposyan, and 11th-grader Davit Vanyan. The mentors are Engineering Club head Vazgen Gabrielyan and Ayb School alumnus Ruben Kerobyan who is currently a robotics laboratory employee.

The launch is scheduled for this June from an international booster site. The device with a 197gm payload will be placed on a suborbital rocket and sent to the height of over 100km in open space to cross the Karman Line, a presumed boundary between Earth’s atmosphere and outer space. The device will stay in space for 2-3 minutes. It will collect data on the rocket’s flight path, temperature, pressure change, speed, acceleration, and the intensity of ultraviolet radiation and ozone concentration. Afterward, it will get back to earth along with the rocket.