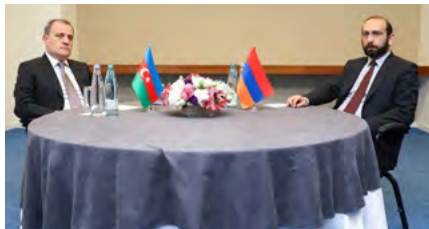


Armenian, Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers Meet In Georgia Over Nagorno-Karabakh

TBILISI (RFE/RL) — The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan held their first bilateral talks since the 2020 war over the status of the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The three-hour talks were held in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, officials said on July 16, although few details of specific issues were released.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and his Azerbaijani counterpart, Ceyhun Bayramov, “discussed a wide range of issues relat-



Foreign Ministers Ararat Mirzoyan, right, and Ceyhun Bayramov

ed to normalizing relations between the two countries.”

“In this regard, the parties have discussed the progress of fulfilling previous commitments and have exchanged views on possible future steps.”

The statement said that Mirzoyan reiterated the position of the Armenian side that a political solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was important to bringing about a stable and sustainable peace in the region.

see MEETING, page 4

CIA Director, Russian Intelligence Chief Visit Armenia in the Same Week

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on July 15 received U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director William Burns, Pashinyan’s press office said.

The two “discussed issues related to international and regional security and the fight against terrorism. Reference was made to processes taking place in the South Caucasus region,” the brief statement said.

While in Yerevan, Burns also met with the secretary of Armenia’s Security Council, Armen Grigoryan, whose office said the two discussed issues related to the further development of U.S.- Armenia bilateral relations.

see VISIT, page 3



President Joe Biden meets with Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Archbishop Nourhan Manougian in Bethlehem

President Biden Meets with Patriarch Manougian in Bethlehem

BETHLEHEM, West Bank, Palestine — On July 15, US President Joe Biden visited the Armenian Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and had a meeting with Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Archbishop Nourhan Manougian. Patriarch Manougian thanked President Biden for his recognition of the Armenian Genocide and discussed other issues.

He presented Biden with a matching ceramic pomegranate and tray.



Pashinyan Talks With Erdogan In Breakthrough Phone Call

By Mark Dovich

YEREVAN (CivilNet) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan held their first-ever phone call Monday, July 11, the Armenian prime minister’s office announced, in a breakthrough moment for Armenia-Turkey relations. It is the first direct conversation between the leaders of the two countries in many years.

Pashinyan and Erdoğan “expressed their expectations that the agreements reached” to partially reopen the border and begin direct air cargo trade “will be implemented soon,” according to the Armenian government read-out.

At a meeting earlier this month, Armenia and Turkey agreed to open their land border to citizens of third countries “at the earliest possible date,” so far the most significant outcome of ongoing normalization talks.

Read more: Armenia, Turkey to partially open border in major breakthrough

The two sides have yet to announce a concrete timeline for the border reopening, but Pashinyan notably said at a cabinet meeting last week that Armenian government officials should start preparing to work with their Turkish counterparts to implement that agreement.

In addition, Pashinyan and Erdoğan see BREAKTHROUGH, page 2



Pilgrim walks through neighborhood in Kharpert searching for house

Carel Bertram Documents Pilgrimages To Historic Armenia in New Book

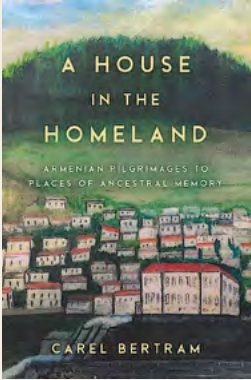
By Harry Kezelian

SAN FRANCISCO — Heritage pilgrimages to Historic Armenia and other parts of Turkey once populated by Armenians have become more and more common in recent decades, especially thanks to the efforts of pioneer tour leader Armen Aroyan, but academics and serious commentators have paid little attention to this phenomenon.

At a time when the fate of Artsakh or the current regime in Armenia and issues of the remaining Armenian community in Istanbul are considered more important, these heritage pilgrimages may be viewed as simply pleasure trips by well-to-do Armenian-American tourists to their ancestral villages, and as such are relegated to the status of a hobby. Not so, according to new book.

Ironically, the Armenian Genocide and destruction of Armenian life in Turkey is not only being continually denied by Turkey but also relegated to the dusty pages of history by those who wish to turn our attention, however understandably, to the needs of the current Republic, sometimes trivializing the historical experience of the Diaspora in

see PILGRIMS, page 14



ARMENIA

SOAR Holds Second Special Olympic Games



LOS ANGELES

Armenian Assembly Celebrates 50th Anniversary



GERMANY

Artists Share the Joy of Music in Marburg





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Catholicos Embarks on Pastoral Visit to U.S.

YEREVA (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II has embarked on a pastoral visit to the United States, the press office of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin reports.

During the trip, the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church will hold meetings with representatives of Armenian national and religious organizations in the U.S.

Monument to Russia Planned in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A monument of Armenian-Russian Friendship is planned to be installed in the Square of Russia in Yerevan within the frames of the celebrations dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Russia, the Armenian Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport said.

A working group has been formed for this purpose which approved the criteria for the competition.

Sculptors from Armenia and Russia having professional education are eligible to apply.

The deadline for submitting applications (including documents certifying professional education, a sketch, photos of previously made chamber-themed sculptures/works (if available)) is September 10, 2022.

Schiff: U.S. Won't Stand by Amid Baku's Belligerence

WASHINGTON (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The United States will not stand by as Azerbaijan continues its belligerency against the Armenian people, Rep. Adam Schiff has said, according to the Armenian National Committee of America, on July 19.

Schiff made the remarks after the recent U.S. House passage of Amendment #121 to the FY2023 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 7900). The measure calls for a report by the State Department and Defense Department that would detail the use of U.S. parts in Turkish drones used by Azerbaijan against Armenia and Artsakh; Azerbaijan's use of white phosphorous, cluster bombs and other prohibited munitions deployed against Artsakh; Turkey's and Azerbaijan's recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters during the 2020 Artsakh war.

"Over the course of 44 days starting in September 2020, Azerbaijan perpetrated a horrific war and humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh, killing thousands of Armenians and forcing thousands more to flee their ancestral homelands," Schiff said.

"And to this day, Azerbaijan continues to illegally detain Armenian soldiers who have been subject to torture. Azerbaijan also threatens thousands of innocent civilians who live in fear of another attack and invasion. It is of the utmost urgency that we understand the full extent to which Azerbaijan has violated international law so that we can hold the Aliyev regime to account."

Thousands of Armenian Workers Face Layoffs After Dramatic Rise of the Dram

PRAGUE (RFE/RL) — The economy of Armenia may be among the latest victims of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Thousands of workers at the country's largest textile factory are facing layoffs or wage cuts amid similar fears at other industrial firms and businesses. The reason? The country's currency, the dram, has risen dramatically in value in recent months, making Armenian exports more expensive and therefore less competitive.

Oddly enough, an influx of Russians fleeing their homeland amid a further clampdown in the wake of the invasion also may be putting pressure on the dram, analysts say.

The Gloria textile plant in the northern

In Armenia, since the outbreak of the war, the dram has strengthened by 13 percent against the dollar and 22 percent against the euro.

Experts put this down to the relative macroeconomic stability in Russia, Armenia's No. 1 trading partner. Ties go beyond the economic sphere. Armenia is Russia's strategic ally in the South Caucasus region and hosts a Russian military base, as well as being part of the Russian-led security alliance, the CSTO. Russian troops also maintain a shaky cease-fire after the short war between Azerbaijan and Armenia in 2020 over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Since Russia launched its unprovoked assault on Ukraine, Armenian Prime Min-

The Armenian government's Statistical Committee recorded an annual inflation rate of 8.4 percent in April, up from 7.4 percent in March. According to the committee, food prices in the country rose by an average of 12.1 percent in the first quarter of this year.

Russians who have fled to Armenia may also be bumping up the value of the dram, analysts say. Since the invasion of Ukraine, an estimated 108,000 Russian citizens have arrived in Armenia.

With European destinations closed to Russian airlines, there are few options left. Armenia requires no entry visas, and there are regular flights to Yerevan from Moscow.

According to Armenian authorities, about 27,000 foreigners, most of them Russian citizens, opened Armenian bank accounts between February 24 and the end of March. Also, some Russian tech companies reportedly relocated their personnel to the South Caucasus country to evade Western sanctions.

Russian professionals are particularly interested in the IT sector in Armenia, said Hayk Chobanian, executive director of the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises, in comments made in March.

Written by Tony Wesolowsky in Prague based on reporting by RFE/RL Armenian Service's Karine Simonian, Sargis Harutyunyan, and Robert Zargarian



Workers at the Gloria textile factory in Vanadzor. Owner Bagrat Darbinian has told the company's workers they would need to accept a 30 percent reduction in wages or risk being sent on unpaid leave or losing their jobs altogether.

city of Vanadzor ships most of the clothing it manufactures to Western Europe, owner Bagrat Darbinian told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

Due to a drop in exports, Darbinian said he's been forced to cut production costs to compensate for the loss of revenue. He said he has already told the company's workers they would need to accept a 30 percent reduction in their wages or risk being sent on unpaid leave or losing their jobs altogether.

"I am ashamed to walk out on the shop floor," Darbinian said. "People are already not paid much, and I want to cut their wages. But there is no other way out."

Like the Russian ruble, the dram weakened against the U.S. dollar and the euro in the immediate aftermath of the Russian invasion but rallied strongly in the following months.

Shortly after President Vladimir Putin ordered Russian troops into Ukraine on February 24, the ruble began a steep dive, reaching at one point a record low of about 135 to the U.S. dollar.

The West froze about half of Russia's \$600 billion foreign currency reserves. Some 1,000 Western companies have since suspended or pulled out stakes in the country, and Russia has been banned from buying key Western technology and services.

However, Russia's currency has proved resilient. After plummeting, the ruble has since rebounded, becoming one of the world's best performing currencies, according to Reuters.

The ruble has been bolstered by capital controls aimed at forcing businesses and investors to buy the Russian currency and soaring global energy prices, allowing the Kremlin to use the proceeds of oil and gas sales to prop up the ruble.

ister Nikol Pashinian's government has tried to walk a fine line between neutrality and tacit loyalty to Putin.

The creeping rise in the value of the dram is prompting growing concerns from Armenian companies oriented toward Western and other non-Russian markets.

Darbinian, who said he has invested \$5 million in the Gloria factory in the last three years, said he has already appealed to Armenia's government and the central bank to help weaken the dram.

He is not alone. Similar appeals have been made by other export-oriented entrepreneurs and businesses, notably representatives of Armenian software companies, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

Martin Galstyan, the country's central bank governor, made clear on June 12 that the bank will not cut interest rates or intervene in the domestic currency market to cool down the dram. Galstyan said that the stronger dram is somewhat easing inflationary pressures on the Armenian economy aggravated by the Ukraine war.

"By artificially weakening the dram, we would create an even worse inflationary situation that would hit all citizens, including exporters," he told reporters.

Galstyan also argued that the stronger dram is making many imported raw materials cheaper for exporters.

As Galstyan's comments suggest, a stronger dram is not all bad news.

Narek Karapetian, a Yerevan-based economist, suggested that the stronger dram will help to curb rising inflation in Armenia.

"This is a major development that will definitely have an impact on consumer prices," Karapetian told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

Pashinyan Talks With Erdogan in Breakthrough Phone Call

BREAKTHROUGH, from page 1

"emphasized the importance of the bilateral normalization process between their countries, which will also contribute to the strengthening of peace and stability in the region," the statement said.

Efforts to normalize the extremely fraught relations between Armenia and Turkey took on a new life late last year, when both sides appointed special envoys for talks. Though the two countries officially recognize one another, they have never established diplomatic relations.

The Armenia-Turkey border, which stretches for hundreds of kilometers, has been closed since the early 1990s, when Turkey, together with Azerbaijan, imposed a devastating economic blockade on Armenia.

Other ongoing disputes include Turkey's refusal to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide, as well as Turkey's crucial role aiding Azerbaijan in the 2020 war in and around Karabakh. That conflict saw Armenia suffer a disastrous military defeat and prompted a major humanitarian crisis in the region.

The negotiations between Armenian special envoy Ruben Rubinyan and his Turkish counterpart, Serdar Kılıç, have been the first direct talks between Armenian and Turkish officials in over a decade.

Rubinyan told CivilNet in an interview last week that "Armenia is ready to have open borders and diplomatic relations with Turkey at any time."



ARMENIA

Armenian Government Critic Dies During Trial

By Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A vocal critic of Armenia’s government arrested two months ago died during his trial on July 15, sparking outcry from the country’s human rights ombudswoman and opposition leaders.

Armen Grigoryan, a well-known entertainment producer, collapsed in the courtroom as his lawyer petitioned the presiding judge to release him from custody. Grigoryan, 56, was pronounced dead by an ambulance crew that arrived at the scene about 10 minutes later.

“They took resuscitation measures but to no avail,” Taguhi Stepanyan, the head of the national ambulance service, said.

Stepanyan said an autopsy will ascertain the cause of Grigoryan’s sudden death.

Grigoryan, who for years harshly criticized Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, was arrested and indicted on May 18 in connection with a 2021 video in which he made disparaging comments about residents of two Armenian regions sympathetic to the government. The National Security Service accused him of offending their “national dignity.”

Grigoryan as well as opposition figures and other government critics rejected the accusations as politically motivated. They said the fact that he was held in detention pending investigation only proved that he was a political prisoner.

Human rights activists also criticized the criminal proceedings. Some of them linked the case to daily anti-government protests launched by the Armenian opposition on May 1.

The state human rights defender, Kristine Grigoryan (no relation to Armen), expressed outrage at the anti-government activist’s death, saying that he clearly did not receive adequate medical care in prison. She said she has demanded “clarifications” from prosecutors and the Ministry of Justice, which runs Armenia’s prisons.

“I will work to bring the culprits to justice,” the ombudswoman wrote on Facebook.

Neither the ministry nor the law-enforcement authorities issued any statements.

Grigoryan’s lawyer, Ruben Melikyan, said that his client, who was a medic by training, suffered from serious “health problems.”

“He never let us speak up about those problems in the court and other bodies,” Melikyan said, speaking at an opposition rally in Yerevan held in the evening.



Dr. Karin Markides with Dr. Noubar Afeyan

AUA Hosts Conversation with Dr. Noubar Afeyan and Dr. Karin Markides on Data-Driven Bioscience

YEREVAN — On June 6, the American University of Armenia (AUA) Open Center for Transformative Health Solutions, in collaboration with the HENAR — Health Network of Armenia foundation, hosted a panel discussion with Flagship Pioneering Founder and CEO Dr. Noubar Afeyan and AUA President Dr. Karin Markides on “Data-Driven Bioscience.” The conversation was moderated by Columbia University and AUA Professor Dr. Kim Hekimian.

The moderator opened the talk by inquiring about the greatest achievements and challenges in the field of bioscience. To this, Dr. Afeyan said, “We’ve made some progress, but that progress has taught us just how little we know, in increasing increments. In other words, every year, we learn even more what we didn’t know about than we did the previous year.”

To fix that, he explained, scientists can measure massive amounts of information of every scale and every type. The greater progress is made in developing algorithms that can deal with complex systems, the more scientists begin to use those data to predict, model, and influence biological systems. “To me, data-driven bioscience — whether it’s applied to epidemiology, medicine, health, or any number of things — is all about attacking the problem with measurements, and then being able to distill them down to some useful models with which we can do things,” he concluded.

The panelists also broached the topic of preemptive care and health security, exploring how society can shift towards prioritizing these aspects of public health. “We are obsessed with physical security,” remarked Dr. Afeyan. “Why don’t we care about health security as much?” Speaking on the importance of preemptive care, he noted that scientists tend to spend most of their time working on the most serious diseases in their latest stages, which is one of the hardest problems to solve as few solutions remain at such a point.

Markides then spoke about the role higher education insti-

tutions play in collaborating with the industry and its stakeholders in advancing the field of bioscience. She highlighted the fact that universities house the next generation of scientists and have access to all the disciplines that could disrupt and transform any challenge or solve any problem. “No other stakeholder has these advantages,” she remarked. “We also have a long-term vision, so we should utilize those assets available to us.”

Markides also emphasized the transformative approach universities must take to involve themselves in the field of bioscience. “For so many years, universities have focused on different disciplines and siloed themselves because that is how scientists can handle and control experiments,” she said. “Now, we need to shift that. In order for us to train these computers to be most effective, we have to increase the amount of data we input and ensure that the data is relevant and open so that others can use it as well.”

At the end, HENAR Co-Founder and Chairman of the Board of Trustees Dr. Arman Voskerchyan thanked AUA for co-hosting the event and cited statistics which illustrate the pertinence and relevance of health security specifically for Armenia.

In conclusion, Afeyan encouraged the audience, particularly students, to think about their current and future academic endeavors in terms of acquiring, applying, and creating knowledge, which he described as the scientific process of discovery. He argued for a completely new approach to acquire and create knowledge, departing from the traditional incremental hypothesis-driven way. “Our imagination — or the computer-aided part of imagination, which is machine learning as far as I’m concerned — is the ability to foresee the next science that doesn’t yet exist, and see if you can leap to some new capabilities, new learnings,” said Afeyan. “That capability exists in your own brains.”

CIA Director, Russian Intelligence Chief Visit Armenia in the Same Week

VISIT, from page 1

Grigoryan outlined for the CIA director the security environment in the region, existing challenges, and Armenia’s approach to establishing peace in the region, a statement from Grigoryan’s office said.

“The sides talked about Armenia-Azer-



baijan and Armenia-Turkey negotiation processes,” the statement said.

Official Armenian bodies and the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan would not comment on media reports about Burns’ visit to Ye-

revan.

Burns, 66, served as U.S. ambassador to Russia from 2005-08. He visited Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2011 in his capacity as U.S. deputy secretary of state.

During that trip, he urged a greater “sense of urgency” for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, saying that “the status quo is not sustainable.”

Russian Intelligence Director Visits

The head of Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Yerevan on Monday, July 18, three days after Burns’ unexpected arrival in Armenia.

The Armenian government’s press office said Sergei Naryshkin discussed with Pashinyan “international and regional security” and “processes taking place in the South Caucasus.” It did not elaborate.

The office used the same words in a statement on Pashinyan’s meeting with Burns held on Friday. It said they also touched

upon “the fight against terrorism.”

Neither the CIA nor the US State Department has commented so far on what was the first-ever publicized visit to Armenia by a CIA director.

“My visit to Yerevan is definitely not connected with the arrival of my American colleague,” the state-run Russian news agency Sputnik quoted Naryshkin as saying. “But I don’t exclude that his visit is on the contrary connected with mine.”

Incidentally, Sputnik was the first to reveal Burns’ visit. It said that the CIA chief will stay in Armenia for several hours.

Tigran Grigoryan, an Armenian political analyst, told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service on Friday that US and Russian security “experts” arrived in Yerevan in recent days for confidential discussions focusing on the war in Ukraine.

Burns, 66, is a former career diplomat who served as US ambassador to Russia from 2005 to 2008. He visited Moscow in his current capacity last November. He

reportedly warned the Kremlin against invading Ukraine.

Pashinyan’s press office implied that Russian-Armenian relations were also on the agenda of his talks with Naryshkin. It cited the Russian intelligence chief as praising the “high-level political dialogue between Russia and Armenia.”

Naryshkin told Russian media outlets after the talks that Russia and Armenia have a “great deal of common tasks which need to be accomplished.” He also touted Russian-led alliances of former Soviet republics of which Armenia is a member.

“Besides, the Russian Federation has enough strength and resources to protect allies and friends in difficult times,” added Naryshkin.

Pashinyan spoke with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin by phone earlier in the day. According to the Russian government’s readout of the call, they discussed Russian-Armenian trade and the “implementation of large joint projects.”

INTERNAYIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Iran's Exports to Armenia Increase 21%

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The value of Iran's exports to Armenia increased 21 percent in the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), from the first quarter of the previous year, the spokesman of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced, Mehr News reported on July 19.

Ruhollah Latifi said that Iran exported commodities worth \$74 million to Armenia in the three-month period.

Iran and Armenia signed a memorandum of understanding in May. The MOU covers cooperation in transit, transportation, facilitation of exchange of goods, energy, development of environmental cooperation in Aras area and removal of pollution from border rivers, as well as medical tourism.

Khamenei Cautions Erdogan against Blocking Iran and Armenia Border

TEHRAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Iran will oppose any policy of blocking the border between Armenia and Iran, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said at a meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on July 19.

Khamenei and Erdogan discussed the war unleashed by Azerbaijan in 2020, during which Turkey supported the latter by sending fighters and arms during the war.

Referring to the fact that parts of Karabakh are now controlled by Azerbaijan, Khamenei said: "We are pleased to see Karabakh return to Azerbaijan. Of course, if there is a policy to block the border between Iran and Armenia, the Islamic Republic will oppose it because this border has been a communication route for thousands of years."

Khamenei also advised Turkey's president not to launch a new military operation in Syria.

Armenia Wins Six Medals At Int. Math Olympiad

OSLO (Panorama.am) — The Armenian schoolchildren's team has won two silver and four bronze medals at the 63rd International Mathematical Olympiad held in Oslo, Norway, on July 6-16.

The event fielded 589 students from 104 countries, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports reported.

Five students from the Artashes Shahinyan Physics and Mathematics Specialized School and one from Quantum College represented Armenia.

Vahagn Hovhannisyan and Ruben Hambardzumyan earned silver medals, while Hayk Karapetyan, Vahram Asatryan, Areg Mkrtchyan and Arayi Khalatyan won bronze medals. The team finished 26th in the overall ranking. The team was led by Smbat Gogyan (the Square Educational Foundation of the National Academy of Sciences) and Gurgen Asatryan (Armenian State Pedagogical University).

Mourad Papazian, CCAF Co-president Banned from Armenia

By Jean Eckian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PARIS — On July 13, Mourad Papazian landed in Yerevan on an Air France plane to go to a quarterly meeting of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF – Dashnaksutun/Tashnagsutun), of which he is a leader in France.

As soon as he arrived on Armenian soil, the co-president of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations of France (CCAF) was arrested by the police and sent back on July 14 on an Air France plane to Paris.

Papazian does not really explain this action by the Armenian authorities. He evokes his "democratic right to criticize Pashinyan's action," in particular the "rapprochement between Yerevan and Ankara." But also he notes it is an "operation to weaken the CCAF."

Papazian is waiting for Yerevan to provide him with the clear explanations that led to his banning from Armenian soil. Could there be a cause and effect here: In June 2021, the ARF in France, led by Papazian, organized an attack on the vehicles accompanying Prime Minister Pashinyan during his visit to France.

Below Papazian delivers his feelings following his deportation outside the Armenian borders.

"Arrived yesterday in Yerevan, I learned that I was banned from staying in Armenia.



Mourad Papazian, center foreground, leading an April 24 demonstration in France (photo Jean Eckian)

Dear friends,

It is with immense pain that I inform you that last night I was banned from returning to Armenia. By order of the Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, I am persona non grata in Armenia. The Armenian police accompanied me on the Air France plane at 5:20 a.m.

As soon as I arrived in Yerevan, I was arrested, placed in a small room, then in a transit zone. And my confiscated pass-

port. I knew that I was banned from Turkey and Azerbaijan. Today, I am banned from Pashinyan's Armenia.

After 40 years of hard work in favor of Armenia and the Armenian cause, some-



Mourad Papazian (photo Jean Eckian)

times at the risk of my life, finding myself in this situation hurts very, very badly. This decision by Nikol Pashinyan is one more demonstration that he is not up to the responsibilities incumbent on him. Pashinyan is strong when he asks his police to expel an activist of the Armenian cause. Can you imagine this little leader discussing with Erdogan or Aliyev? Sooner or later, the people of Armenia will understand that they will have to get rid of this leader who is doing everything to weaken Armenia. The diaspora will also understand. And then, the best will still be possible! But it's time to say stop!"



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's first visit to France, with Mourad Papazian to his left, 2018 (photo Jean Eckian)

Armenian, Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers Meet in Georgia over Nagorno-Karabakh

MEETING, from page 1

The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry said Bayramov demanded "the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the territory of Azerbaijan," a reference to the portions of Nagorno-Karabakh that are still under Armenian control.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on July 15 had expressed hope that "the first bilateral meeting between the ministers... will bring in a result."

The foreign ministers had held a three-way meeting in the Tajik capital, Dushanbe, in May with the participation of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

Georgian Foreign Minister Elijah Darchiashvili welcomed the meeting of the two nations' envoys in Tbilisi and said that he was "confident that our joint efforts to promote peace and stability in the region will yield results."

Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought

two wars -- in 2020 and in the 1990s -- over Nagorno-Karabakh.

The region, which had been under ethnic Armenian control for nearly three decades, is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan.

Fighting in 2020 claimed more than 6,500 lives and ended with a Russian-brokered cease-fire pact.

Under the deal, Armenia ceded swathes of territory it had controlled for decades, and Russia deployed 2,000 peacekeepers to oversee the tense truce.

Armenia Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Aliyev held EU-brokered bilateral talks in Brussels in May to discuss Nagorno-Karabakh.

Pashinyan has faced protests at home over opponents' allegations that he was preparing to make what they saw as unacceptable concessions to Azerbaijan.

United States Secretary of State Antho-

ny Blinken on Sunday called the inaugural meeting of Azerbaijani and Armenian foreign ministers a "positive step" for regional dialogue.

In his tweet, Blinken called direct dialogue "the surest path" to resolve differences between the two sides in the region.

The meeting between Bayramov and Mirzoyan came amid the Georgian Government's Peaceful Neighbourhood Initiative for the South Caucasus, a platform for facilitating talks between the regional states.

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili and Foreign Minister Ilia Darchiashvili also held meetings with the Azerbaijani and Armenian ministers on Saturday.

Darchiashvili said the meeting between Bayramov and Mirzoyan meant Georgia was playing an "important role" in ensuring peace and security in the region, and highlighted the role of Garibashvili in the creation of the mediation platform.



Community News

Gift Boxes Continue Their Journey to Ser Artsakh

“To honor and support the heroic, inspiring, and strong people of Artsakh who choose to raise future generations in their Homeland”

This is the motto of the “Ser Artsakh” charity program initiated by the Anna Astvatsaturian Foundation: to bring love to all those Artsakh families living in such difficult conditions.

All the items included in the gift boxes that are provided to the mothers of Artsakh in the framework of the “Ser Artsakh” Program: onesies, pajama sets, sleeping sacks, towels and blankets, health care essentials (diapers, wipes, baby shampoo, thermometer and pacifier), as well as maternity hygiene necessities for the new mother, custom-made soft baby book and a wooden wheeled toy are made in Armenia or Artsakh. In Artsakh, they are carefully packaged and delivered to maternity hospitals right in time for the next baby to be born.

There are three maternity hospitals in Artsakh: Martakert, Martuni and Stepanakert. Since the launch of the program, 161 children, 10 of them in Martakert, 6 in Martuni, have received their gift-boxes. Among the newborns were 2 sets of twins, a pair of beautiful sisters and a pair of brothers with their grandfather’s strength in the veins.

Victoria is one of the most common names: parents hope that the choice of the child’s name will be decisive in



Anna Astvatsaturian Turcotte

the fate of both the child and Artsakh.

“The news about the donation of 18 boxes in one day made me very happy. When mothers told me how helpful these items are for them to raise these babies that was the moment when I realized how important for the diaspora to keep donating to maintain the continuity of this project,” said Anna Astvatsaturian Turcotte, president of the “Anna Astvatsaturian” Foundation, and added, “Despite my childhood of a refugee from Baku, I was taught by my parents to always work toward more out of life. With this project, I choose to do the same in Artsakh. Armenian children and their future are my constant focus and I will never stop expecting and working toward a better future for them.”

An individualized approach is taken with each mother. Working
see GIFTS, page 9



The outpouring of raw emotion and joy at this year’s “I Can” Special Olympics.

SOAR Hosts Second ‘I Can’ Special Olympics Games

PHILADELPHIA/YEREVAN — Founded in 2005, the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR) provides humanitarian relief to orphaned children and adults with disabilities in Armenia. During the past 17 years, SOAR has remained vigilant by spearheading child protection issues and satisfying the needs of Armenia’s most vulnerable populations. Growing to meet these needs while keeping true to its mission, SOAR has expanded to prevent institutionalization by providing financial, educational, and humanitarian assistance to at-risk children, youth, and families. Today, SOAR has more than 600 volunteers in 145 Chapters worldwide, supports 34 care institutions in four countries, and has distributed more than \$11.5 million in humanitarian aid since its inception.

In May 2018, SOAR’s “I Can” Special Olympics launched a movement in Armenia to break down barriers and end discrimination against people with physical and intellectual disabilities by organizing a national sports festival. Fashioned after the Special Olympics, the games were held in Tsaghgadzor spanning three days, with 150 special needs children and adults participating in a variety of athletic and social activities.

In June 2022, SOAR’s quadrennial “I Can” festival was held in Shirakatsy Lyceum International Scientific-Educational Complex (June 24-25) and along Lake Sevan (June 26). More than 120 participants from 7 child and adult care centers participated in boccia, table tennis, relay, soccer, and rafting. Raffi Jehanian, Vice-Chairman attended on behalf of SOAR’s Executive Board. Special guest attendees included the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Narek Mkrtchyan; Vakhtang “Vic” Darchinyan, an Armenian-Australian boxer who held multiple world championships in two weight classes, including the IBF flyweight title from 2004 to 2007 and the WBA, WBC, IBF, and lineal super-flyweight titles between 2008 and 2010; Ashot Adamyan, Arm Wrestling World Champion; Arshak Hovhannisyian, Smbat Karapetyan, and Taron Umroyan, surviving soldiers of the 2020 Artsakh War; Hakob Abrahamyan, President of the Armenian National Paralympic Committee; and Tigran Martirosyan, Armenian Weightlifting Champion.

SOAR’s “I Can” Special Olympics empowers people with physical and intellectual disabilities by providing them opportunities to learn skills that transcend the
see OLYMPICS, page 8



Participants and supporters cheering on their friends at SOAR’s national sports festival for special needs children and adults.

Charlie Josephbek Earns Gold Medal In Quadruple Sculls At CanAmMex Regatta

LONDON, Ontario — Long Beach Junior Crew Men’s Varsity Rower, Charlie Josephbek (16), sophomore at Armenian Mesrobian High School, was part of a select group of top rowers from across the nation to be invited to the 2022 U19 Men’s National Team Selection Camp this summer. The selection camp began on June 12th and was held at the Chula Vista Elite Athlete Training Center in California. Upon completion of phase one of the training camp, Josephbek was chosen to represent the U.S. Team at CanAmMex.

The CanAmMex Regatta was held on July 8th and 9th, in London, Ontario Canada, bringing together rowers from Canada, the United States, Mexico and the Bahamas. The U.S. team earned eight gold medals and the overall points trophy at this year’s CanAmMex Regatta. Charlie Josephbek and his teammates Edward Achtner, Cole Bruen and Henry Cooper, racing in the men’s quadruple sculls, placed first. They finished with a time of 6:12.76, just over four seconds in front of Canada, winning the gold medal for Team USA.

Josephbek has been rowing for Long Beach Junior Crew for the past four years along with his brothers,



Charlie Josephbek

Andrew and Matthew. Andrew Josephbek, Mesrobian Class of ’22, will be rowing for UCLA this Fall. Charlie and Matthew will continue rowing with the Long Beach Junior Crew Men’s Varsity Team. LBJC was established in 1986 and continues to train and inspire athletes through their competitive rowing program at Marine Stadium, home of the 1932 Olympics.



OBITUARY

Dr. Vartan (Van) Ghugasian

Dentist, Dedicated to Armenia

ARLINGTON, Mass. — Dr. Vartan (Van) Ghugasian, DMD of Arlington, formerly of Watertown, passed away unexpectedly on May 23.

Vartan was the brother of the late Armen Ghugasian, son of the late Jack and Takuhe (Seferian) Ghugasian, cousin of Paul Seferian and his wife Penny of Medway, Diane Sheperd and her husband Ed of Arizona, Charles Seferian of Medford, Liz (Karaian) Gardner of Maine and Sarah Karaian of Lexington. Vartan is also survived by many loving relatives of the Seferian, Minakyan, Candan, Giritlian, and Karaian families.

Vartan completed his undergraduate studies at Tufts University and his professional studies at the Tufts School of Dental Medicine and went on to open a private prosthodontist practice on Boylston Street, moving to the Fresh Pond area in Cambridge in later years. Van and Armen were an infectious popular pair lending entertainment, current events, and comradery to all who walked through the door. Patients turned into friends and friends turned into life-long friends. Vartan's reputation preceded him as he built a thriving practice one block at a time of quality, compassion, and integrity ... His insatiable drive to help others led to treating many of Boston's homeless. He gave generously to many causes near and dear over the years; one of them being the Perkins School for the Blind for which he never forgot stealing an apple from as a little boy.

Vartan became involved in humanitarian activities in Armenia starting in the 1990s. He and his colleague Dr. Myron Allukian Jr. helped establish a state-of-the art free dental clinic for the Karagheusian Foundation in Nork (ultimately expanding to 5 locations). Vartan personally provided free dental care to children for one month every year for over a decade. They hosted and trained Armenian dentists in the US so that

they could bring their training back to other dentists in the homeland.

The Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and the government awarded the Medal of St. Nersess Shnorhali to Vartan on December 30, 2007 in recognition of his humanitarian actions for the homeland.

Vartan was bestowed with an honorary fellowship on November 9, 2020 from the American Academy of Dental Science (the first and oldest honor society for the field in the world) for his years of service to the organization. He has affectionately been referred to as the "patriarch" of the group and a member for over four decades.

Vartan was a founding member and past president of the Armenian Dental Society, fellow of the International College of Dentists, American College of Dentists, and the Pierre Fauchard Academy as well as other dental societies. He remained active in teaching at the Harvard and Tufts Schools of Dental Medicine for the remainder of his profession.

Vartan was a longtime member of the St. James Armenian Apostolic Church Men's club and former member of the St. James Choir and Executive Committee.

He was loved by his family for his keen sense of humor, loyalty, wit, and wry smile. He was an eloquent listener and a compassionate human being who appreciated life's simple pleasures such as a homegrown tomato, springtime flowers, and a long country drive. He enjoyed traveling, gardening, and his brother Armen's wonderful cooking. He could be fierce in his convictions, had a penchant for telling a side-splitting joke, and a passion for collecting the finer things.

His life was forever touched by the Armenian Genocide and he dedicated his to paying it forward by advancing the health of others. He had a soft spot for the under-



Dr. Vartan (Van) Ghugasian (Leo Gozbekian photo)

dog, the less advantaged, and the suffering. Funeral Service was at St. James Arme-

nian Church, Watertown, May 31. Interment followed at Mt. Auburn Cemetery,

Lisa Marie Bartley

Dedicated to Inclusivity, Advocacy

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Lisa Marie Bartley (b. August 2, 1964), an advocate for people with disabilities, a career counselor and public servant, a loving wife, an incredible mom and grandmother, passed away on July 15, surrounded by her loved ones. She was 58.

Lisa was a powerful, independent-minded woman with unmatched vitality. Her values drove everything she did: her commitment to social justice came from her innate generosity, faith, and compassion. She was drawn to underdogs everywhere and always sought to comfort the afflicted and speak truth to power. She leaves a legacy of loving, giving, and standing up for what she believed in.

Lisa found community everywhere she went. She was incredibly close throughout her life with friends from Andover High School, where she graduated with the third-highest grade point in her class. She had another set of lifelong friends from the University of Michigan, where she studied political science and communications, and cherished the relationships she made with her sorority sisters from Alpha Chi Omega.

Lisa made the decision to stay home during her children's early years. Her intellectual curiosity and lust for life was deeply imprinted on her children, who enjoyed her engaged presence at every juncture of their personal and academic development. During those years at home, she co-found-



ed the Ann Arbor Armenian Apostolic Church mission parish and was the editor of Offspring, a local parenting magazine.

Lisa's unstoppable intellectual drive made it inevitable that she would go back to school once the kids began getting on the bus every morning. In 2000, she obtained a master's degree in counseling from Eastern Michigan University and began a fulfilling career in counseling and academic services. Whether with adults experiencing mid-career job transition or young folks just starting out in life, Lisa's empathy and

curiosity meant that she loved getting to know other people, and helping other people get to know themselves. Her focus was always on helping others find and embrace their own innate passion and potential.

To say that she was the ultimate networker would be putting it mildly. Lisa was gratified by the meaningful and joyous connections she made throughout her career. In addition to her role as business consultant with the State of Michigan, where she helped businesses adopt inclusive hiring practices, Lisa also created Ready2Launch, LLC, where she guided hundreds of clients in the next steps of their academic or professional careers. She was a dedicated member of the Michigan American Business Women's Association. She left her mark at numerous organizations, including Concordia College, Washtenaw Community College, Cleary University, University of Michigan Alumni Services, Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living, Jewish Vocational Services, New Horizons, and the State of Michigan Rehabilitative Services. Lisa often joked that she had worked at every higher education institution in Washtenaw and Livingston counties.

Lisa married the love of her life, Bruce Bartley, in 2013, and they enjoyed twelve wonderful years together. Following a diagnosis of stage four cholangiocarcinoma in August of 2020 and undergoing chemotherapy and several surgeries, Lisa prevailed with integrity, humor, and endless resilience. Whether it was creating a classic Lisa "ditty" to bring levity to a difficult moment, poring over research articles

about genetic mutations with her husband, dubbing her children with designated roles, bringing feedback to the U of M health-care system to improve patient experience, or taking notes for an eventual book on self-advocacy through cancer, Lisa's spirit was indomitable and optimistic every step of the way. Even during chemotherapy treatments, Lisa was offering sage wisdom to her phlebotomists and revamping their resumes. Up until her last breath, she fought to be near her beloved family and soak up every moment life could offer her.

Lisa was a devout Christian who found her spiritual home in Grace Church Ann Arbor. She was involved in Community Bible Study and various other faith-centered groups over the course of her adult life. Her family is comforted to know she has likely found a role as heavenly career counselor.

Lisa Marie Bartley, 57, is survived by her husband, Bruce, her three children from her first marriage: Nicholas and Bethanie Mangigian; Grace Simon and her husband Matthew; her parents, Patricia and Harry Alatchanian; her brother, Gary Alatchanian and his wife Jieyu and her children Kimmily and Forest; Bruce's children Caitlin Lumpkin and CJ Bartley, as well as Caitlin's husband James and their children Oliver and Quinn.

Funeral services were held on Wednesday, July 20, at Grace Church, Ann Arbor, MI. Private burial was at Forest Hill Cemetery.

Arrangements were by the Heeney-Sundquist Funeral Home.



OBITUARY

Anoush Mathevosian

Philanthropist, Real Estate Entrepreneur

NEW YORK — Benefactor, real estate entrepreneur and public health administrator Anoush Mathevosian passed away at the end of June 2022 in New York.

Mathevosian was born in New Julfa, Iran in 1926 as one of eight children of a priest. Her grandfather was killed in the Armenian Genocide and her father was deported to Iran and raised in an orphanage. Her academic success in a Tehran high school

1960s together with her sister Siranoush (they lost their brothers at an early age) and used the proceeds over the years to support Armenians in Armenia, Artsakh and the US. Many of her humanitarian projects were through the Fund for Armenia Relief (FAR) of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern). The 1988 earthquake became a motivation for her involvement in Armenia. Later, her donations led to major improvements to Yerevan State University, the building of a new school in Artsakh, and the founding in 2002 of a school in Vanadzor, at the center of the earthquake zone, which residents named in her honor.

In 1997, she funded the establishment of a summer camp in Yegheknadzor for children who lost their parents in the first Karabakh war. She named it Camp Siranoush after her beloved departed sister.

Mathevosian established a scholarship fund through FAR which has helped hundreds of students from underprivileged families to continue their education at Yerevan State University. She helped establish Armenia's National Mammography Center through the Armenian

American Cultural Association.

Mathevosian was deeply affected by the Armenian Genocide and its effects on her family, and this led her to spearhead efforts to create an Armenian Genocide museum in the United States. To this end, she became involved in the Armenian Assembly of America, and served on the Board of Governors

led to an opportunity to study in the United States, where she graduated New York Medical School with honors to become a registered nurse. She later obtained a degree in Public Health Administration from Columbia University Teachers College and worked for 16 years as an administrator in Elmhurst Hospital (in Queens, NY).

She invested in real estate starting in the



Anoush Mathevosian at left in Armenia

of the Armenian National Institute and the Board of Trustees of the Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial. She donated a substantial sum of money towards the purchase of a building as well as spent much time in search of the appropriate site in Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, the museum was never built due to bitter disputes between other Armenian philanthropists who had become involved, but her donation could never be recovered (see <https://mirrorspectator.com/2017/10/19/washington-genocide-museum-shame-continues/>).

Mathevosian's philanthropy was recog-

nized by the government of the Republic of Armenia, which bestowed upon her the "Golden Medal" of the Ministry of Science and Education, the Holy See of Echmiadzin, through its St. Gregory the Illuminator award, its highest honor, and the Mid-Atlantic Knights and Daughters of Vartan, through its Lifetime Humanitarian Benefactor Award.

Mathevosian died in difficult financial straits. Her funeral services took place on July 12 at Holy Martyrs Armenian Church in Bayside, NY, and a graveside service followed at Cedar Grove Cemetery in Flushing, NY.

Andre Assalian

Cairo-Born Bon Vivant

COLONIE, N.Y. — Andre Assalian of Colonie, born on June 16, 1939, in Cairo, was an Armenian immigrant to the United States by way of Egypt and Canada. He was proud to call New York home for almost 60 years. He died at his home on July 5.

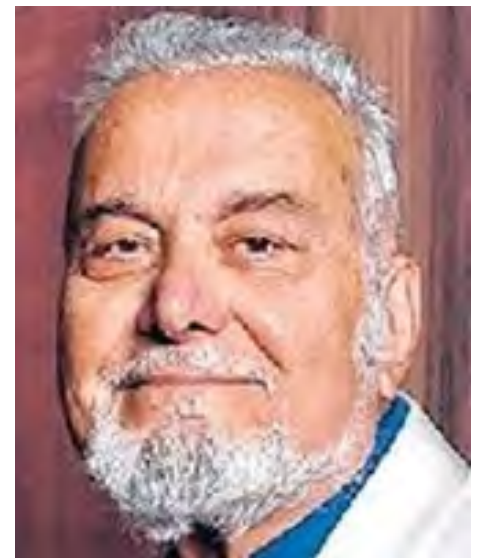
Andre was so grateful for the opportunities he had, the life he built, his professional success and above all, his family.

He married Anne Assalian (McCullough) in Montreal in 1964 following a chance meeting in Cairo. However an unlikely pairing; an Armenian from Egypt and a young, Irish nurse from Queens, they were at each other's side for 58 years. They raised four children while Andre advanced in his career as an educator and school administrator living in Queens, Smithtown, Greenville, Saratoga Springs and The Beltrone in Colonie.

Andre was an extrovert, supreme host and bon vivant. There was always extra food and room at the table. He loved bringing people together and sharing Armenian favorites and his recipe for Armenian Easter bread that won him first place in a cooking contest. He made a mess in the kitchen, over-used spices, and likely had the world's largest collection of yogurt containers. Andre loved connecting with people. He wanted to hear their stories and he wanted to tell you his; especially about the Armenian people and the trauma of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 when more than one million Armenians were slaughtered at the hands of Turkish forces while survivors fled to various countries, as his family did, settling in Egypt.

The most important fact that Andre wanted everyone to know is that Armenians were the first people to accept Christianity. He was an activist and donor for Armenian causes, always current on news and politics and loved debate. He was accepting of all people and had no tolerance for intol-

erance. He loved to travel, especially the many trips to visit family in Montreal. He was quick to show off his dancing skills; always the first one on the dance floor and the last one off. He knew all the classics - waltz, tango and rumba and his wife, Anne,



was his favorite partner.

Besides English, he was fluent in French, Spanish, Arabic and Armenian. A natural communicator, Andre was never shy of public speaking, yelling, clapping or cheering loudly at entertainment events or his kids or grandkids school activities much to the supreme embarrassment of his family.

He is survived by his wife, Anne; their four children, Therese (Michael), Denise (Brian), John and Andrew (Coleen); grandchildren, Ben, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Annabel, Mei, Joey, Nico and Leo; and his extended family in Montreal. Andre was recently predeceased by his brothers, Pierre Assalian and Antoine Assalian.

A funeral Mass was held in St. Peter's Armenian Apostolic Church, Watervliet, on July 14, followed by interment in Memory Gardens Cemetery in Albany.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

SOAR Hosts Second Special Olympics Games

OLYMPICS, from page 5
playing field. Our athletes can hold jobs, go to school, and be active members in their communities. SOAR's hope is to give the "I Can" participants the chance to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, become self-sufficient, and participate in community activities that foster inclusivity throughout Armenia.

SOAR extends its gratitude to the Har-old and Josephine Gulamerian Armenian Orphan Fund; SOAR Kentucky, London, Maine, Ventura County, and particularly Rocky Mountains, which provided one-third of the funding; Jur.am and Coca-Cola for supplying water and juice; and all of our financial supporters and in-country volunteers who made our 2022 "I Can"



Youth from Yerevan Special School Number 11 donning their silver medals at the games.

...
Special Olympics possible.

Headquartered in Philadelphia, SOAR is the world's only charitable organization devoted exclusively to providing human-

itarian relief to orphaned Armenian children. To learn more about SOAR and view the gallery of Special Olympics photos and videos, visit soar-us.org/specialolympics.

Longtime St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School Principal Boyamian to Retire

WATERTOWN, MA, July 7, 2022 – St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School (SSAES), New England's only Armenian Elementary school, announced this month that Principal Houry Boyamian M.Ed., is planning to retire from her position. Boyamian has served in the role for 34 years ago.

"We are profoundly grateful to Houry for her years of dedication to the importance and the mission of Armenian education," said Archpriest Antranig Baljian, pastor, St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church of Greater Boston, sponsor of SSAES. "I know I speak on behalf of the entire community when I say we cannot thank her enough. She built a solid foundation for our school and community that ensures that future generations can benefit from a superior bilingual Armenian and American education."



Michael Guzelian, chair of the board of directors of SSAES, echoed Baljian: "Houry's service to the community is immeasurable. Her commitment to the school over the years has been second to none."

"I feel blessed having been part of a wonderful school community," said Boyamian. "I cherish my years at St. Stephen's; they have been the most fulfilling and rewarding years of my life."

A search committee, chaired by Guzelian, has been formed to help SSAES find its next leader, with recruitment beginning immediately. Boyamian will stay in her current role until a successor is found and she will provide support during a transition period.

In a letter, Boyamian said, "I cherish my years at St. Stephen's; they have been the most fulfilling and rewarding years of my life, challenges and all. Serving St. Stephen's was not just a job, it was a mission. As a fierce advocate of the importance of Armenian education, coupled with my years of service to the School, the decision to retire was not easy. But I feel this is the right time for a new leader to take the School to the next level."

"One of the most satisfying benefits of being at the School has been watching our students: the development of their sense of identity, their growth, advancement and success at SSAES and beyond. Their involvement, active participation, and leadership roles in the Armenian community, here in the US, as well as in Armenia, has been a great source of pride for me."

Boyamian's accomplishments as principal include getting the school accredited by the Association of Independent Schools in New England in 2003, introducing the STEM Initiative in 2011, an initiative to support a deep and sustainable culture of inquiry-based teaching and learning that excites and inspires students, fundraising for the continued expansion of the school and sending off 18 graduating class trips to Armenia.

"It is with much love and fond memories that I leave my job. I wish the next Head of School much success. SSAES is a magical place; I will treasure it forever. My wish is to see our community and the community at large cherish, protect and contribute to the advancement of this beacon of light and hope for many years to come," she added.



Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles chapter members at the game

TCA Los Angeles Members Meet LA Angels Gen. Manager, Attend Game

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles chapter attended the Seattle Mariners versus Los Angeles Angels baseball game at Angel Stadium in Anaheim, CA on Saturday, June 25, 2022. Prior to the game, the group met with Perry Minasian, General Manager of the Los Angeles Angels, and his wife, Michelle Jamian Minasian, in the Angels press conference room. Minasian took time to welcome everyone and answer the many baseball questions presented by the youth. He mentioned that he met his wife at Hye Camp, which is organized by the Diocese of the Armenian Church (Eastern) and spoke of the resilience of the Armenian people.



Los Angeles Angels General Manager answering questions



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Assembly Praises House for Passing F-16 Sale Ban on Turkey, Aliyev and Erdogan Accountability

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America on July 14 praised the U.S. House of Representatives for passing the F-16 sale ban on Turkey and accountability for Aliyev and Erdogan in the 2020 Artsakh ethnic cleansing, among other amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23).

“The Assembly thanks the leadership of the Armenian and Hellenic Caucuses, and the sponsors and supporters of these key bipartisan amendments,” said Assembly Congressional Relations Mariam Khaloyan. “We also express our appreciation to House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith (D-WA) and Ranking Member Mike Rogers (R-AL), along with House Rules Committee Chairman Jim McGovern (D-MA),” she added.

Speaking in support of Rep. Jackie Speier’s (D-CA) amendment regarding Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) stated that many members have been “very concerned over the years about the constant waiver of requirements under Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act because the bottom line is that Azerbaijan has continued its aggression against Armenia and started a war against Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh a couple of years ago.”

“We don’t believe there’s any justification for waiving this because of the constant threat that Azerbaijan poses not only to Nagorno-Karabakh, but also to Armenia itself that continues ever since that war,” Pallone continued.

Offering the amendment on the House Floor sponsored by Rep. Chris Pappas (D-NH) that prohibits the sale of F-16s to Turkey, Rep. Pallone emphasized the destabilizing behavior of Erdogan’s Turkey and its flagrant violations of international law.

“We can’t ignore the Erdogan regime’s human rights abuses and anti-democratic actions at home that he uses to maintain his grip on power,” Congressman Pallone stated.

Rep. Pallone continued: “The sale of American advanced fighter jets to Turkey will not incentivize Erdogan to suddenly transform into a good ally. More likely, these weapons will lead to further death and destruction in the region. For far too long, the United States has allowed Erdogan to dictate his terms and hide behind Turkey’s status as a NATO ally. He has avoided facing real-life consequences greater than a slap on the wrist for his flagrant violations of international law at home and abroad,

and it is time that we finally say enough is enough.”

The House of Representatives’ adoption of this amendment also reinforces the opposition of Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez to the Biden Administration’s proposed F-16 sale to Turkey.

The Assembly strongly supported and urged passage of the following bipartisan amendments to the FY2023 NDAA:

Amendment sponsored by Reps. Adam Schiff (D-CA) and Frank Pallone (D-NJ), and co-sponsored by Reps. Jackie Speier (D-CA), David Valadao (R-CA), Tony Cárdenas (D-CA), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Judy Chu (D-CA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Andy Levin (D-MI), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Jim Langevin (D-RI), Brenda Lawrence (D-MI), Dina Titus (D-NV), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Linda Sánchez (D-CA), Debbie Lesko (D-AZ), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Debbie Dingell (D-MI), Kim Young (R-CA), Elissa Slotkin (D-MI), Katherine Clark (D-MA), Abigail Spanberger (D-VA), Don Beyer (D-VA), Tom Malinowski (D-NJ), and Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL): This amendment “expresses the sense of Congress that the government of Azerbaijan should immediately return all Armenian prisoners of war and captured civilians. Urges the Administration to engage with Azerbaijani authorities, including through the OSCE Minsk Group, to make clear the importance of adhering to their obligations under the November 9 statement and international law to immediately release all prisoners of war and captured civilians.”

Amendment sponsored by Reps. Tony Cárdenas (D-CA) and Brad Sherman (D-CA), and co-sponsored by Reps. Adam Schiff (D-CA), Jackie Speier (D-CA), Andy Levin (D-MI), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), David Valadao (R-CA), Judy Chu (D-CA), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), Linda Sánchez (D-CA), David Cicilline (D-RI), Elissa Slotkin (D-MI), Brenda Lawrence (D-MI), Jim Langevin (D-RI) and Dina Titus (D-NV): This amendment “creates a report on Azerbaijan’s activities in Nagorno Karabakh in 2020 to be submitted to Congress by the Secretary of Defense in consultation with the Secretary of State.”

Amendment sponsored by Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA) and co-sponsored by Reps. Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Adam Schiff (D-

CA), David Valadao (R-CA), Judy Chu (D-CA), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Jim Langevin (D-RI), Brenda Lawrence (D-MI), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Dina Titus (D-NV), Linda Sánchez (D-CA), Elissa Slotkin (D-MI), and Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL): This amendment “directs the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of State, to document details of the consideration of the waiver requirements to Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act and report on whether security assistance to the government of Azerbaijan undermines a peaceful settlement to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.”

Amendment sponsored by Rep. Chris Pappas (D-NH) and co-sponsored by Reps. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Jackie Speier (D-CA), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Andy Levin (D-MI), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Grace Meng (D-NY), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Dina Titus (D-NV), Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY), David Cicilline (D-RI), John Sarbanes (D-MD), Jim Langevin (D-RI), Brad Schneider (D-IL), Linda Sánchez (D-CA), Brad Sherman

(D-CA), and Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL): This amendment “prohibits the President from selling or exporting new F-16s or F-16 upgrade technology or modernization kits to Turkey unless the President provides a certification to Congress that such a transfer is in the national interest of the United States and includes a detailed description of concrete steps taken to ensure that such F-16s are not used by Turkey for repeated unauthorized territorial overflights of Greece.”

Amendment sponsored by Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-MI) and co-sponsored by Rep. Darin LaHood (R-IL): This amendment “requires a report within 90 days of enactment that contains an evaluation of the humanitarian situation in Lebanon, as well as the impact of the deficit of wheat imports to the country due to Russia’s further invasion of Ukraine, initiated on February 24, 2022.”

The Assembly also welcomed the passage of two amendments by Rules Committee Chairman McGovern to enhance the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act and to strengthen monitoring, reporting, oversight, and determinations on arms sales and human rights.

Baikar Weekly Editor and Contributor Meet with New Primate Parsamyan

NEW YORK — Newly elect Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, Very Rev. Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan met with Hagop Vartivarian, *Baikar Weekly* Editor, and Nerses Babayan, *Baikar Senior Contributor*, at the Diocesan headquarters in New York City on June 28.

interlocutors in bringing different groups together to support programs that boost the dominant role of the Diocese. He also highlighted the role of the Armenian press in the United States in preserving the Armenian identity and cultural heritage, and supporting the Armenian



From left, Nerses Babayan, Primate Very Rev. Fr. Parsamyan, and Hagop Vartivarian

Discussions centered on multiple challenges facing the Diocese and efforts on outreach to the greater community in order to strengthen bonds between the Diocese and various Armenian organizations.

The exchange of ideas was frank and cordial, touching upon contemporary issues and how to solidify the role of the Diocese in providing stewardship to the Armenian community at large.

Fr. Mesrop shared his vision with his

Church. Fr. Mesrop expressed his gratitude to all those who labor intensively to keep Armenian newspapers alive in the diaspora.

Looking towards the future, the new Primate expressed firm confidence that the Eastern Diocese will reclaim its pivotal role. He shared his ardent beliefs that the Armenian Church safeguards and preserves the Armenian identity and faith.

Gift Boxes Continue Their Journey to Ser Artsakh

GIFTS, from page 5

with Ministry of Health of Artsakh the Foundation is aware when these mothers will be checking out of the hospital. It is important to the Foundation that no baby leaves the hospital without receiving a gift box.

“Mothers always accept the gift with gratitude. Many are even waiting for our gift boxes. There was a case when a pregnant woman contacted us and informed that her child will be born in a few months. She asked us not to forget about her baby and to visit her with a box as well,” Armine Vardanyan, representative of the Anna Astvatsaturian Foundation in Artsakh, recalls with a smile.

Anna Astvatsaturian Turcotte is an American-Armenian writer, philanthropist, lawyer, elected official, president of the Westbrook City council and the president of her eponymous foundation. She also is the author of the book *Nowhere, a Story of Exile*, based on her diaries which she wrote as an 11-year-old escaping the Baku massacres. In 2013 Anna spearheaded a successful recognition of Artsakh at the state of Maine legislature. Since then she has implemented a number of charitable programs in Armenia and Artsakh. One of her foundation’s major projects is the “Artsakh War 2020: Losses, Challenges - Opportunities for resistance development” survey conducted after the 44-day war.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Assembly Celebrates 50th Anniversary During Milestone Los Angeles Gala

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) celebrated its milestone 50th anniversary at the downtown Los Angeles Jonathan Club's outdoor "Great Lawn" on Sunday evening, June 5, where Professors Richard Hovannisian and Dennis Papazian, two prominent leaders of the Assembly, received the Distinguished Humanitarian Award, and Los Angeles's first Deputy Mayor of International Affairs, Ambassador Nina Hachigian, received the Assembly's Governor George Deukmejian Award for Public Service.

The spirited event, which highlighted five decades of the Assembly's influential achievements in advocacy, education, and awareness on Armenian issues, was attended by special guests, longtime Assembly supporters, and Assembly intern alumni, and was ably led by Mistress of Ceremonies Anita Vogel, a national news correspondent and anchor for FOX News.

During the invocation, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, highlighted the Assembly's "tireless efforts, dedicated service, perseverance and stamina."

"This legacy will certainly continue to grow and impact the lives of Armenians here in the U.S. and the motherland of Armenia," said Derderian, who congratulated the evening's honorees and their "invaluable contributions."

Assembly Board of Trustees member Lisa Kalustian shed light on the history of the Assembly and its "half-century of activism and support of Armenia and Armenian issues," by recalling the group of dedicated Armenians who came together "with a vision for a new, nonpartisan umbrella organization that would encompass the Armenian community's various and diverse community with the common goal of advancing Armenian issues in America."

Kalustian emphasized the Assembly's key strength of "working quietly behind the scenes to achieve positive



Dr. Richard Hovannisian (center) receiving the Distinguished Humanitarian Award alongside Assembly Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian, Assembly President Carolyn Mugar, and Assembly Co-Chair Van Krikorian

"He has been educating generations of scholars who now specialize in the history and culture of Armenia, about the importance of human rights, and he informs public officials about their responsibilities to strengthen ethical norms," said Mugar. A member of the UCLA faculty since the 1960s, Dr. Hovannisian organized both undergraduate and graduate programs in Armenian History and has published more than 30 books.

Reflecting on Hovannisian's efforts in forming the Assembly, in which he was a member of the initial steering committee, Mugar noted how he traveled around the country, from one Armenian center to another, to "persuade individuals that an organization like the Armenian Assembly of America was needed."

"You and your generation planted a flag that we continue to fly proudly," she continued. "You taught them that our voices should be heard by our nation's political leaders, and

that our story, unique as it is, is also part of the American story."

In his remarks, Hovannisian recalled the founding days of the Assembly, when he and a group of seven individuals "had a dream to bring together our very divided community, all of whom were dedicated, but none of whom knew each other."

He noted that when they all convened, they realized they had the same objectives and goals. They soon embarked on the "difficult task of bringing together our diverse community" and although there were obstacles from both inside and outside the community, such as battling genocide denial, he noted that their "objectives were furthered through the Assembly."

"What the Assembly brought to American politics was to bring in individuals who had never belonged to an Armenian political party or an Armenian organization, but who had done well personally and wanted to do something for the cause, without necessarily being activists

themselves, but being satisfied that there were activists moving on their behalf," he concluded.

Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny highlighted documents from the Assembly's historical files when introducing Dr. Dennis Papazian, the founding director of the Armenian Research Center (ARC) at the University of Michigan, Dearborn, and who served as Co-Chair and Executive Director of the Assembly during its formative years.

Ardouny cited letters and memos dated from the 1970s, outlining key priorities from aid to Lebanon, the internship program, confronting Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide, and the building of a professional network on Capitol Hill, among other pertinent issues.

"That's the type of work we started 50 years ago, and that is the foundation on which I stand here today," said Ardouny.



Ambassador Nina Hachigian receiving the Assembly's Governor George Deukmejian Award for Public Service, named in honor of the late California Governor, from former First Lady of California Gloria Deukmejian

In accepting his award, Papazian, who built the ARC's rich depository of documentation, publications, periodicals, audio-visual collections, and oral histories of Armenian Genocide survivors, where it now serves as an international center for scholars and students, looked back on his tenure as Director of the Assembly and noted that "a



Dr. Dennis Papazian (center) accepting the Distinguished Humanitarian Award alongside Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, Assembly Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian, Assembly President Carolyn Mugar and Assembly Co-Chair Van Krikorian

results, and to mitigate negative impacts to the Armenian community and our homeland."

She honored the service of the individuals actively involved in the establishment of the Assembly a half century ago, and its visionary programs, such as the Assembly's Terjenian-Thomas Internship Program that now boasts multi-generational family alumni, where Armenian Americans have honed their advocacy skills in the U.S. and Armenia, and have advanced to become leaders in business, academia, government, and in the Armenian community.

Introducing Dr. Hovannisian, the first holder of the Armenian Educational Foundation Endowed Chair in Modern Armenian History at UCLA and as a Presidential Fellow at Chapman University, Assembly President Carolyn Mugar said he is the "preeminent teacher of our community" and his teachings have not only educated the public, but given opportunities for Armenian Americans to become more involved in their communities.



COMMUNITY NEWS

couple of months turned into three years,” namely because of the “enthusiasm of the Steering Committee to make the organization work.”

Despite the difference in backgrounds of the supporters, Papazian taught people how to work together.

“What I discovered back then was if you want to be successful, you can’t worry about who gets credit,” he said. “By working together, we all succeed and can lead Armenians onto a more glorious future.”

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

In his introduction, Assembly Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian elaborated on the mission of the Assembly and how it strives to bring Armenian Americans to Washington to train them through the Assembly’s Internship Program.

“We appreciate each of you supporting the Assembly’s great work, which gives us a voice in Washington for Armenia, Armenia’s security, Armenia’s future, and for the children of Armenia,” said Barsamian.

The culmination of the Assembly’s achievements is



Guests at the Assembly gala

looked towards the future as Armenia continues to face its fair share of challenges.

“We should never take the existence of a homeland for granted,” she noted. “The work of the diaspora is to strengthen the homeland as much as possible, and while the transition to democracy is not easy, the main task is to keep looking out for the future of our motherland, and no group is better placed to do that than the Armenian Assembly of America.”

Special guest speaker Ambassador Arturo Sarukhán, introduced by Assembly Board of Trustees member Talin Yacoubian, is a career diplomat who served as Mexico’s Ambassador to the United States, and who currently serves as a Senior Fellow at The Brookings Institution, Ambassador in Residence at American University’s School of International Service, adjunct professor at The George Washington University, distinguished visiting professor at the Annenberg School of Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California, Global Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center’s Mexico Institute, and as an Associate Fellow at The Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) in the UK.

Tracing his family history to the Armenian Genocide, Sarukhán

said he is the “grandson and son of genocide and exile of refugees fleeing and leaving everything and everyone on both my father and mother’s side.”

“My story is the story of so many of us, and being here tonight as a collective are a reminder of what Armenia and the Armenian people have gone through. It’s why we consistently say ‘never forget’ and ‘never again’.”

Sarukhán underscored the resilience of Armenians, and the significance of historical collective memory to rebut denial.

“We are the retribution of those who were lost to genocide, and we shall never stop fighting for the whole world to acknowledge and recognize what was done to the Armenians by a putrefying Ottoman Empire,” he said.

Sarukhán urged the audience to continue supporting Armenia, Artsakh, and the Armenian people.

“Armenia and the Armenian diaspora need to be a beacon of light, and we need to recommit to the purpose of fighting injustice where we see it, of helping refugees,

and encouraging democratic values, whether it’s here, in Armenia, or elsewhere around the world,” he concluded.

In closing remarks and while reflecting on the organization’s successes, Assembly Co-Chair Van Krikorian acknowledged failures as well, including the 44-day War on Artsakh, and the importance of “having the political strength and persuasiveness to stop the bloodshed and to stop the loss of so many innocent lives.” “We are truly fortunate to be here in the U.S., and we don’t forget those who aren’t living here and whose lives are in danger, no matter where they are, just by virtue of being Armenian,” he continued. He appreciated everyone in the audience for supporting the Assembly during the last 50 years and those who will help shape the next 50 years. In a symbolic gesture, he welcomed to the stage Arman Agbabian, whose mother Valina is an Assembly Board of Trustees member, and whose grandfather Dr. Mihran Agbabian was influential in helping to establish the Assembly, to say closing words.

Very Rev. Fr. Zareh Sarkissian delivered the benediction on behalf of Bishop Torkom Donoyan, Prelate of



Ambassador Arturo Sarukhán delivering his keynote remarks during the Assembly’s 50th Anniversary Gala

work done behind the scenes, noted Barsamian.

“That work is done by individuals like Ambassador Hachigian, who helped change U.S. policy on issues like U.S. affirmation of the Armenian Genocide,” he said, emphasizing that Ambassador Hachigian has assisted in the advancement of U.S.-Armenia and U.S.-Artsakh relations to qualitatively higher levels.

Hachigian shared that her professional life and her Armenian identity merged in the last few years due to her current role as the City of Los Angeles’ first Deputy Mayor of International Affairs, the tragic war in Artsakh, and the Armenian Assembly of America.

“The leadership at the Assembly made me realize I may be able to play a small role,” she said. “The American people elected a president who finally stated the truth about the Armenian Genocide and his staff remains deeply engaged in Armenia.”

Hachigian conveyed that multiple generations worked hard to establish a foundation for the Assembly and



Assembly Family Legacy: Arman Agbabian gives closing remarks at the Assembly’s 50th Anniversary Gala

the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The evening’s Armenian music and entertainment were provided by Greg Hosharian and the Armenian Pops Ensemble, and the American and Armenian anthems were sung by Alene Aroustamian. The Assembly wishes to express its gratitude to its 50th Anniversary Gala’s generous sponsors and donors, as well as to the volunteer members of the Host Committee including: Margaret Mgrublian, Elizabeth Agbabian, Valina Agbabian, Jacklin Ajemian, Roupen Avsharian, Lily Ring Balian, Diane Barsam, Albert and Diane Cabraloff, Flora Dunaian+, Nicole Felikian, Sosy Hachigian, Helen Haig, Hermine Janoyan, Naz Jansezian, Lisa Kalustian, Michelle Kezirian, Arthur Kokozian, Michele Malkasian, James Melikian, Richard Mushegain, Nicole Nishanian, Joyce Stein, Aline Toujian, Tamar Tujian, Talin Yacoubian, and Zhelbert Zohrabian.



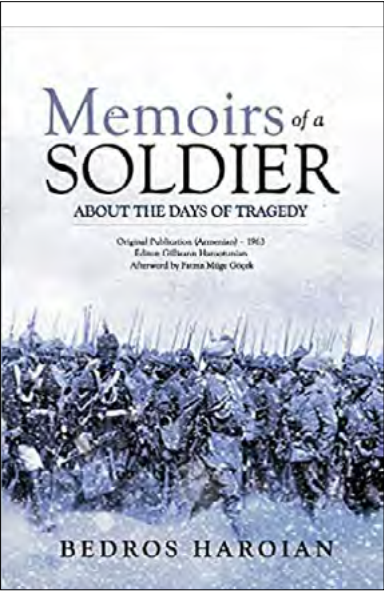
Arts & Culture

Bedros Haroian’s *Memoirs of a Soldier About the Days of Tragedy* Translated Into English

By Asya Darbinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Bedros Haroian’s *Memoirs of a Soldier about the Days of Tragedy* (editor Gillisann Harootunian, Tadem Press, Fresno, CA, 2021) describes how Haroian, originally from the village of Tadem, served in the Ottoman army during the First World War, fought at the Caucasus battle-front and witnessed the Genocide. He survived torture in a Baku prison and joined the Armenian Legionnaires in Cilicia, only to be disheartened by the betrayal of the French and ultimately forced out of his homeland.

Haroian’s memoirs were first published in 1963 in Armenian. Now translated into English, this version includes a thorough introduction by the editor, photographs of Haroian, his family and loved ones, an afterword penned by Prof. Fatma Müge Göçek,



as well as an extensive bibliography and notes that provide the necessary historic context to the specific events and multiple actors described in this fascinating testimonial.

Haroian’s account begins with the description of his home village of Tadem, in the Ottoman province of Mamuretulaziz (Kharpert). This chapter sets the tone for the entire memoir, showcasing Haroian’s immense admiration and love for his village and homeland: every church, sanctuary, school, mountain, gorge, neighborhood, garden, and well become part of the story. He makes certain to name all the family members, relatives, and neighbors he remembers, their professions and trades, including their past and the history of their struggle under the Ottoman discriminatory laws and practices. Similarly, at a later stage in his account, when his fellow “Tademtzi” soldiers fight and fall defending the lives of refugee survivors in the Caucasus and Cilicia, Haroian lists the “names of Tadem fighters” to honor them — the “heroic Armenian volunteers” (p. 307).

Growing up an orphan after the Hamidian massacres of 1894-96, Haroian managed to study four languages — Armenian, English, French, and Turkish — at the school

see MEMOIR, page 13



Simon Manukyan and Amalia Safaryan (Photo by Norbert KucheNorbert Kuche)

Artists Share the Joy of Music in Marburg

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

MARBEURG, Germany — What better way to welcome the summer than with music? What better way to enter summer in this troubled year than with a musical tribute to friendship across national borders? On June 17, a group of musicians gathered in the St. Marien Lutheran parish in historic Marburg, to present a selection of well-known pieces from many different cultures. The artists, mostly Armenian, performed works for voice, piano and string instruments to a large and very appreciative audience.

The idea for the concert came from Seda Nahapetyan, a young Armenian soprano who, after completing studies at the Yerevan conservatory, came to Germany, where she has continued her training and performed locally. It was months ago that the head of the Armenian parish in Giessen, where she lives, suggested that she and a pianist colleague, Amalia Safaryan, prepare some pieces for a commemorative event on April 24. Due to unforeseen developments, the event was cancelled, but the two performed for a small gathering the day before. That said, they had after all worked hard on a program, and wanted to bring it to fruition. They discussed the idea of reaching out to other musicians they knew, perhaps to organize another concert. Guitarist Simon Manukyan and violinist Ruben Gulkanyan agreed readily. Safaryan suggested calling the head of



Leo Jang and Amalia Safaryan (Photo by Norbert KucheNorbert Kuche)

the St. Marien parish, where she had performed in a concert two years earlier, to ask if the church might be available. And he offered a date in June. After the first musicians had started practicing, Seda Nahapetyan invited Leo Jang, a baritone and teacher who had been giving her voice training, to stop by to listen in. He went, listened, was excited about the project and offered to join. One thing led to another, and before long, six musicians had come together, shaped a program, prepared a poster, invited friends and colleagues, and on June 17 they were ready.

“Sounds of the world, through lands and epochs” was the name they gave the concert. Abderrahim En-Nosse, a local teacher and friend of the organizers, greeted guests in the church, and explained that the idea was to engage in a musical voyage across continents and centuries.

Nahapetyan opened the program with Schubert’s Ave Maria, accompanied on the piano by Amalia Safaryan. The beloved piece, beautifully performed, set a tone of warm

see MARBURG, page 17

Simon Abkarian Continues to Stand Out in the French Theater

By Mélanie Tuysuzian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PARIS — It’s almost 6 p.m. Sunday, June 25, when the cast of “Electre des bas-fonds” bows to the audience at the end of the play. The applause is powerful, showing the audience’s enthusiasm for the play. In this performance, Simon Abkarian modernizes the story of “Orestes,” a Greek tragedy, written by Aeschylus, in 458 B.C. This play highlights Orestes, who was forced by law and his sister Electre, to kill their mother, Clytemnestre, guilty of the murder of their father, Agamemnon. This is an old story completely reworked, performed with dance and profound music, through a swaying ballet format that is fervent and contemporary. This play embodies women’s oppression and makes it as serious as it is beautiful.

Chouchane Agoudjian has danced in the company since its beginning of the play in 2019. To her, having Simon Abkarian as a director is great luck. “I believe I have matured significantly since my arrival on the adventure alongside Simon and his company, I believe I have discovered myself, learned to know myself better,” Chouchane explains.

In 2020, Simon Abkarian won 3 Molière Awards for this play (a prestigious French theater award). However, this was not the first time Simon Abkarian has won a prize.

A Multicultural Artistic Journey

In 2001, Simon Abkarian received his first award as “best artist” for his role in the movie “Une bête sur la lune” [Beast on the Moon]. However, his career had started earlier, in Los Angeles.

Born in France to a Lebanese-Armenian family, Abkarian’s parents decided to go back to Lebanon before the war of 1975. The war pushed them to run away from the country, first to France, and then to Los Angeles. In the City of Angels, Abkarian discovered theater for the first time, through Shakespeare’s work. There, he joined an Armenian theater company led by Gerald Papasian.

Later, thanks to Georges Bigot, a French actor, he became a member of the Théâtre du Soleil, in France and started to perform with different directors, such as Ariane Mnouchkine, who taught him everything about theatre. His first steps on the scene led him to cinema. He worked with many French producers, especially with Cédric Klapish and Robert Guédiguian, but also with Atom Egoyan. The talent of Simon Abkarian is such that he can play different types of characters, good and bad ones, a colonel (“Kaboul Kitchen”), an Armenian grocery merchant (“L’Armée du Crime [The Army of Crime]”), or a Corsican mafioso (in the huge successful play Edmond).

see ABKARIAN, page 13



ARTS & CULTURE

Simon Abkarian Continues to Stand Out in the French Theater

ABKARIAN, from page 12
Commitment to Armenia through His Art

In 2016, he won the French Trophy of the Cinema, with his second role in the movie “Une histoire de fou” [A Crazy Story]. The movie, produced by Guédiguian, tackles the consequences of the Armenian



Simon Abkarian (photo Facebook)

Genocide. Simon Abkarian is especially known for his role as Missak Manouchian in another movie directed by Guédiguian, “L’Armée du Crime,” released in 2009. The movie pays tribute to a real life group of resistance fighters called the Manouch-

ian Group during the Nazi occupation of Paris in 1944. The Manouchian Group has really marked the history of France and its brave actions are still taught at school. Formed mostly by immigrants, like Italian, Spanish, Polish, or Armenian as the leader of the group, Missak Manouchian, it had a huge impact on the French Resistance before being caught and executed by the Nazis. “It affected me because my character is Armenian, and I’m Armenian. Manouchian has this vision of France, a little idealized – me too. It’s important to me to be in this movie because it’s devoted [to the goals of the Resistance] and what these people did was just extraordinary,” Simon Abkarian said after the release of the movie to the French cinema website Allociné.

The Power of His Words

In 2020, during the Nagorno-Karabakh war, the actor was so affected by the conflict that he decided to make his voice heard. He wrote an opinion column to support Artsakh in a well-known French newspaper, Le Figaro. This publication was his way of denouncing the Azerbaijani attacks and the Turkish racism against Armenians. It aimed to raise awareness of the war. “The consciences of this world are always behind a massacre. They always find the right and eloquent words to express their delay, which was not one. Wherever we live, we are Armenians, and we know this. We fight for the future of our children, remembering



Simon Abkarian with his three Molière awards (photo Facebook)

our dead who refused to die a second time. Soon, together with my friends, I will go to Armenia, as promised, to create an international theater festival,” wrote Abkarian.

More recently, in December 2021, after the arrival in Armenia of the French far-right politician Eric Zemmour, Abkarian wrote another article in the newspaper Marianne addressing him. Eric Zemmour was running for the French presidency and often alluded to the French-Armenian people during his election campaign: “Go back to your campaign, sir, to your ambition, to your racial obsession. The history of Armenians is much bigger than us, our fight

much more sacred than your career,” the actor proclaimed.

Abkarian became one of France’s most prominent actors and writers due to his voice in the Armenian community, the subtlety of his acting, and his charisma. “I love acting, but what I like the most is to disappear. The best compliment that people tell me is that they don’t recognize me,” Abkarian confessed to the website Allociné. He is now in charge of the Tera Company, which he founded in order to produce his plays. And every week since 2019, he is still applauded with his team at the end of “Electre des bas-fonds.”

Bedros Haroian’s *Memoirs of a Soldier about the Days of Tragedy* Translated into English

MEMOIR, from page 12

built in Tadem by American emigres. These skills served him well throughout his life: when he traveled to the U.S. to join his brothers and work in factories of Lynn and Watertown, MA, when he served in the Ottoman army or was arrested in Baku, and eventually when working for the British army in Constantinople and negotiating with the French in Cilicia.

While still in school, 15-year-old Haroian joined the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) political party, became a proud *Dashnak* and soon after decided that reading about the Armenian culture and studying history might be useful, but “to fight and to die — that was my sacred responsibility, instead of sitting at the school table, passive and indifferent” (p. 39). Haroian’s conflicts with the local Kurdish *aghas* and Kurdish and Turkish neighbors, however, resulted in his temporary exile, since he was not safe in Tadem anymore. He sailed to America.

In the United States, Haroian immediately joined the ARF and even became the Secretary of the *Dashnaksutun* Committee in Watertown (p. 69). Yet, as soon as opportunity presented itself, he returned to Constantinople (in 1912) with a “large package full of guns, bullets, daggers,” and revolutionary plans (p. 73). Upon his arrival, Haroian was jailed and eventually released with the help of the ARF’s Central Committee and Krikor Zohrab. Not only does this incident testify to his revolutionary character and to some extent the recklessness of Haroian’s actions, but it also demonstrates quite unique aspect of his experiences. Haroian’s account describes his interactions with such historic figures and prominent Armenians as Krikor Zohrab, General Andranik, Vahan Totovents, and Gevorg Chavush.

After a couple of relatively peaceful years back in Tadem, with his new wife Anna, in July 1914, Haroian was conscripted into the Ottoman Army and sent to fight Russian troops at the Caucasus battlefield

of the First World War. He gives detailed testimony of Ottoman troops’ movements towards Sarikamish. He describes the “empty” villages of Armenians and emphasizes that “the Turks had also disappeared” from those border regions following Russian advances in the fall-winter of 1914 (p. 136).

Haroian participated in the Battle of

rrior of the country.

It was during this ordeal, in spring and summer 1915, that Haroian transformed from a soldier into an eyewitness of the Genocide. In Garin “a monstrous scene opened to our eyes: a huge, armed army had surrounded the Armenians and was slaughtering them,” recalls Haroian. After this massacre, the Ottoman commander



Haroian family photo, with Bedros Haroian top left, the teenage boy with the fez.

Sarikamish, where the Armenian soldiers “distinguished” themselves “with brave fighting from the other Turkish and Kurdish soldiers” (p. 139), despite numerous challenges and hardships of the severe winter weather in the mountains and endless Russian attacks. “Our hands were frozen so we could hardly carry our arms. The cold crushed our bodies; we could not move,” laments Haroian (p. 142). However, following the Ottoman defeat in Sarikamish, Armenian soldiers received new orders from their commanders. Haroian and the other Armenian soldiers were forced to surrender their weapons and join the laborers performing road construction and move away from the frontlines back into the inte-

ordered the disarmed Armenian soldiers working on the roads to “dig holes to bury the dead” (p. 154). Witnessing another such carnage at the Keotur Bridge and forced to bury the bodies of the raped and slaughtered Armenian women and girls, Haroian describes how himself and “all the [former] soldiers wept in silence” (p. 156). Hence, as soon as they approached the villages in Kharpert they were familiar with, Haroian and a couple of his friends escaped. Haroian was filled with a desire for revenge. His goal was to reach and join the Armenian volunteers and Russian troops, which he accomplished not without the assistance of some Kurdish neighbors.

In November 1916, Haroian joined the

Russian Red Cross in Erzerum. After the Russian Revolution, in February 1917, he witnessed the abandonment of Armenian refugees and the departure of Russian troops from eastern occupied regions of the Ottoman Empire. Haroian traveled to Tiflis where he met General Andranik and joined the soldiers fighting for the “Armenian freedom” in the Caucasus (p. 212), later making his way to Cilicia and joining the Armenian Legionnaires in 1919.

Haroian’s account of the attempt of three Armenian political parties to unite for one goal of defending Armenian repatriates in Cilicia, is particularly valuable. Even though he emphasizes that the parties “realized the need for unity and organized efforts to protect the people” (p. 233), the memoirs show that the mutual distrust and miscommunications among them eventually prevailed. When it came to decision-making related to the actions of the Armenian soldiers against the local Turkish forces or the strategies in communicating with the French, the parties disagreed and rejected each other’s authority. Ultimately, the French disarmed the Armenian soldiers, including Haroian, and expelled them from Cilicia. This was an intimidating and disappointing experience for Haroian. His fight for the nation was over and he left the homeland with a hope for justice one day.

Memoirs of a Soldier about the Days of Tragedy is a critical and rare addition to the accounts by Armenian Genocide survivors. Not only did Haroian witness and survive the Genocide, but he also fought in the Ottoman, Russian, and French armies. Thus, his testimony sheds new light on a number of aspects of the history of the First World War and the Armenian Genocide, simultaneously serving as an excellent source for scholarship on the history of the Armenian emigres in the United States, the relations between the Armenian political parties, or the complexity of the Armenian experiences with local Kurdish and Turkish neighbors, among others.



ARTS & CULTURE

Carel Bertram Documents Pilgrimages to Historic Armenia in New Book

PILGRIMS, from page 1

the process. But a new book shows how American-Armenian heritage tourists (or “pilgrims,” as the author insists on referring to them) are, in a way, the last remaining witnesses to what was once the vibrant Armenian life of current-day Eastern and Central Turkey.

Carel Bertram, emerita professor in the Humanities Department of San Francisco State University, has championed the story of heritage pilgrims in her new book, *A House In the Homeland, Armenian Pilgrimages to Places of Ancestral Memory* (Stanford University Press, 2022). She is a fierce advocate for the survivors and descendants of the Armenian Genocide to lay claim to their historical existence in lands that are now part of the modern Republic of Turkey.

When Bertram first went to Turkey, she found something other than what she expected. The breezy art historian from California, of Sephardic Jewish descent, was fascinated by the domestic architecture of late-Ottoman houses. Travelling to interior towns with surviving 19th-century neighborhoods, she couldn’t stop asking questions about these fascinating abodes. She was surprised to learn that many “well-to-do Ottoman citizens” who originally lived in such houses turned out to be Armenians. She was further surprised that the Turkish government was still adamant in discussing this fact.

Bertram wasn’t a person who set out to make genocidal history her field. She finds the topic uncomfortable. Despite being Jewish, she admits that she has found it difficult to ever set foot in a Holocaust museum. But when introduced to a cousin-by-marriage, Nancy Kezlarian, who had travelled to Sivas and Harput as a heritage

on. I watched what happened and didn’t interview anybody.”

Bertram started as a quiet observer, but her fascination grew, and her fluency in Turkish and familiarity with local culture – as well as an admitted skill for carrying luggage! – made her a sort of right-hand woman to Aroyan on many trips. Fifteen years later, she has interviewed scores of pilgrims and other members of the Armenian community, many of whom she still keeps in touch with.

Gaining a New Perspective On Turkey

“My interest as an academic and scholar is in memory and place,” she says. “I’m trained as an art historian in Islamic art and studied the end of the Ottoman Empire and beginning of the Republic of Turkey. My PhD thesis was on Ottoman Turkish houses, which have a very distinctive look and emotional resonance in Turkey. They connote family and Ottoman ideas, and I thought I was going to study how the windows all look alike, or if they are different depending on the owners’ ethnicity or economic status, or something like that.”

But Bertram’s encounter with the Armenian pilgrims changed her perspective and interest. “I found out that people had ideas of places they never lived in. My interest turned to the meaning of places rather than architecture. And the period [as described in Turkish scholarship] didn’t talk about the Armenians, so I realized there was this hole. And I said to myself that...I want to tell that story.”

Bertram began to get to know Armenian pilgrims on a personal level, rather than just as two-dimensional ethnic representatives. “Over long period of time, there were extended periods of talking to people, and the enormous generosity I found from peo-



Current remnants of Kharpert’s Veri Tagh (Upper Quarter), including part of Soorp Hagop church



Carel Bertram in Chunkoush

pilgrim, Bertram was introduced to “a Turkey I did not know.”

The tours which Armen Aroyan led for decades brought mostly American-Armenians, including Kezlarian, to the Turkish interior to visit the hometowns of their parents and grandparents. Bertram decided to join her first Aroyan trip in 2007.

“I had no idea how powerful or lifechanging it was going to be for me,” the scholar said in a recent interview. “My first trip was in 2007 and I was just sitting on the bus and listening. And I didn’t have much to write about, but they were speaking Armenian to each other so I depended on people that would sit by me and tell me what’s going

ple was astounding,” she says.

One pilgrim, Mary Ann Kazanjian, features in the book’s first chapter, as the group travels to her father’s hometown of Yozgat. “I realized that Mary Ann was carrying all of this stuff and was extraordinarily nervous that when she got to Yozgat, Armen would not be able to satisfy all of the questions and feelings that she had. But she also had pictures of grandparents and I realized what people were carrying was very emotionally laden... and I was immersed in their painful stories about what had happened to families.” Kazanjian had pictures of the town that family members had drawn, maps, documents, photographs,

and other objects connecting her family to the town. Her family, which was well-to-do, had lived in one of Yozgat’s mansions, which is still standing and is now an ethnographic museum of Ottoman Turkish domestic life. It’s exactly the type of Ottoman-era home that Bertram was studying in her earlier years in academia. The fact that it was owned by an Armenian family is brushed aside by the tour guides in Yozgat and by Turkish academia. This was the very problem that Bertram wanted to solve, the hole in the scholarship that she was looking to fill. And Kazanjian, though she hadn’t been born there, had stories and knowledge of that house and its affective power on its former inhabitants, her father and his family. The story that Bertram wanted to tell would now be driven by the experiences and family memories of people like Kazanjian, rather than some abstract art history theory or what Ottoman Turkish scholarship has to say.

Bertram stresses that the group of pilgrims she studied was “a pivotal generation between leaving Turkey and the Diaspora.” This group of people, who are mostly Bertram’s own age, were born in the Diaspora as children or grandchildren of survivors who were natives of Anatolia. They did not have personal memories of the towns or villages in Turkey which they visited, but they had heard about those places directly from family members who had lived there, that is, from firsthand witnesses. Later generations will not have as close of a connection, Bertram points out, and so she felt a duty to document the stories of this group, a group which she also generationally identified with, before it is too late. “When people were going ‘home’ and to ‘their’ houses it became to connect with people they had

known in their real lives,” and not some long-ago ancestor, Bertram points out.

Bertram also notes that the pilgrims’ understanding of Historical Armenia was not driven by a political ideology, but by personal family history and relationship with the parents or grandparents who had raised them, that lived in these places. These were “intimate geographies,” says Bertram. “At the time of the end of the Ottoman Empire, Armenia didn’t have borders. People thought of their ‘Armenia’ in terms of their villages and towns. It was their house and village and area and they carried that to the United States and the Diaspora.” Being born in the Diaspora, the pilgrims didn’t have the direct experience of that land which their parents did, yet its importance was stressed to them growing up, and they finally had an opportunity to make the connection real for themselves. “They aren’t returning as their parents and they aren’t returning for their parents,” Bertram says. Pilgrims made these trips, in other words, to ground their own connection to these historic lands, a connection which had been passed down only verbally from the original inhabitants. The connection was often cemented through various activities, which Bertram, in an anthropological vein, calls “rituals.”

Rituals of Homecoming

Rituals form an important part of Bertram’s analysis in the book, as well as the importance of place and the sacred. The seminal work of Romanian-born scholar of comparative religion, Mircea Eliade, plays an important role in the way Bertram looks at the activities of the Armenian pilgrims. Eliade describes the concept of sacred places and spaces throughout various religions, such as in the Old Testament story of Mo-



ARTS & CULTURE

ses who encounters God in a burning bush, prompting him to take off his shoes in what he recognizes as a “sacred” place. Bertram describes Armenian pilgrims’ encounters with their family’s village or house in a similar manner, using academic theories from anthropology and comparative religion to describe familiar practices such as “bringing back soil from the homeland.”

In fact, it was the participation in rituals that caused Bertram to accept the designation of “pilgrim” for these travelers. “The ritual element was overwhelming,” she says. “Which is appropriate to a pilgrim looking for a change, looking for something to happen.”

“Other people have written about rituals like picking up dirt and taking it back home and putting it on graves. I was moved by that. But just saying it for what it was missed something. It’s not just that they thought they were reuniting...the power of ritual is in the activity. So, the digging of the earth did something, it was a ritual that unleashed the spirits of the earth, and that’s why for [one pilgrim] suddenly she started talking to her mother long deceased. And taking it somewhere was an act of connection and filial piety.” Bertram continues, “It wasn’t just performative. It was an interaction with the souls of the past.”

In relation to Eliade’s idea of sacred places, “something happens and people realize they are on sacred ground. That connects them with a pole of some kind, to the transcendent. People were realizing that they were on sacred space. And what erupted from them were stories [i.e. recalling stories about the region told to them by parents or grandparents].” Were the pilgrims expecting this kind of reaction? “They weren’t expecting it all,” says Bertram. “They were hit by the power of place. [But] they were expecting change. So they were nervous before they got there, and so relieved after they left.”

It was these types of reactions that made Bertram understand the deep, real meaning that these regions and locations in Historic Armenia had for those visiting. “How these places were so integral to them and to their souls, when I saw that and realized that I was talking about the soul and real people being moved in ways that only poetry does, I realized that I was in an area that

a major component of their identification with Historic Armenia. The subject of music takes up an entire large section of her book, and songs tied to homeland locations pop up throughout the entire work.

“The music also surprised me,” Bertram says. “I didn’t know a lot, but listening to Chuck [Deacon Charles Hardy of Racine, WI, one of the primary figures in the book who made several pilgrimages] singing and many people singing songs and listening to music that encapsulated so much to them, was such a major part of the story.” Hardy had been visiting his father’s native village of Khulakiugh in the Kharpert region, and upon arrival, sang specific Armenian songs that were sung to him by his father, which he associated in one way or another with that place.

Just as the pilgrims’ relationship to the land was informed by an “intimate geog-



“Arslanian Mansion” in Yozgat where Mary Ann Kazanjian’s father lived

raphy” of family relationships with actual natives of these regions, rather than any political ideology, the music which they identified with their homelands was also derived from personal experience with natives who sang particular songs or listened to particular types of music, rather than music promulgated officially by Armenian political or cultural organizations. Even when “officially accepted” Armenian songs like *Giligia* (*Cilicia*) were a part of the pilgrims’ experience, they seem to only have taken on relevance due to being associated with a family member. Hardy, visiting Kharpert, sang various songs that have nothing to do with Kharpert in particular (like the *ashughagan* song *Kna Plpul*, which was written by the poet Ashugh Sheram in far-off Gyumri) because his father had

sung these to him, he was in his father’s village, and because the lyrics had a meaning that he could connect with his father’s life and which even his father had connected with the Genocide or with exile from his hometown.

Metro Detroit’s well-known clarinetist Hachig Kazarian plays a major role in the book. He learned folk and dance music directly from his parents, grandparents, and their friends, all of whom were natives of Van. Returning to the Van-Vasbouragan region to visit his father’s native village of Ankugh, Kazarian performed Van melodies as well as dance songs that other pilgrims would be familiar with and

would dance to, because they corresponded to Western Armenian dance styles that have been passed down in the US. Local Kurdish and Turkish individuals showed familiarity with the rhythms and musical styles, cementing the connection of these songs and the Armenians who played them to Van, as well as other areas of Anatolia. The irony commented on by Bertram was that some of these songs, even if they have Armenian lyrics, would be out of place in Yerevan while right at home in Eastern Turkey or in the Armenian Diaspora.

Of course, even Turkish-language songs were not omitted from these experiences. The story of Araxie Hardy’s visit to her father’s native village of Efkeri in the Kayseri region includes the song *Gesi Baglari*, a well-known Turkish-language ballad of the region, which in the book is described as the story of a kidnapped Armenian wom-

to the understand of being Armenian and of homeland.”

The Story Is Not Finished

The book will certainly have a different impact on readers depending on their background. Armenians who have roots in Anatolia or who have gone on these pilgrimages themselves, will, naturally, most closely identify with the story Bertram tells. When asked how Turks and Kurds might receive the book, the author says: “I think that for those Turks willing to read it, it will hit home, because Turkish culture of that generation understands the attachment to place, village, house, music, and the land. They will say, ‘oh, yes,’ and it will ring true to them, and be eye-opening.” As for other Armenians, particularly those without a direct connection to the experiences described in the book: “I hope that it reopens this once-large population group and brings them back as an ‘owner of history.’”

Does Bertram think that the book will resonate outside these primary ethnic communities? “I’m hoping it can be used theoretically, methodologically for understanding group attachment to their past. It could be used in various classes and various disciplines.” And as to non-Armenian and non-Turkish people who have read the book, Bertram shares that “They were deeply moved by it and realized that, oh, they know Armenians, but they didn’t know Armenians.” The author explains that they might have Armenian friends, colleagues, and even relatives, but this was a side of the Armenians — including American-Armenians whom they thought they knew well — that they weren’t aware of. “That’s one, and then Jews will immediately identify with trauma and genocide, so that population will be interested. And it will bring the story of the Genocide out.” Bertram adds that in her university courses, “I taught it over several years. My students, who I thought I was forcing it on, thanked me, saying ‘I never knew about this.’”

One of the hot-button issues lately in regard to the subject matter of this book is that of Hidden Armenians. Descendants of those Armenians who had either accepted Islam or kept their Christian religion secret, and remained in Anatolia, have increasingly started coming forward. Bertram mentions that although arguably it is outside the scope of her research, she felt it was important in the final book. “I wanted to put this in because I felt there was another Turkey emerging that Armenians were going to visit. The nature of what Turkey is, was going to have to change if they [the hidden Armenians] came out of hiding. That’s why I put them in the book, because people [including pilgrims] were reacting to them and they became now another part of the landscape. When people go, they aren’t just afraid of Turks and Kurds, but they know there are Armenians there.”

Bertram continues, “So, Turkey’s changing and I wanted to put in that the pro-Kurdish movement has a lot to do with it. So of course they [the pilgrims] go and all these things hit them. And they don’t know, and some learn, that there is a whole pro-Kurdish movement, and [its leaders] now after 2016 are in jail for life. This presents another face of Turkey, so it’s not just a place that’s a door closed.”

Something is brewing in Turkey, despite the regime’s fight against it. The story is not finished. But as for Bertram, her passion is to make sure the story of the Diaspora Armenians of her generation is told, the last generation to have heard first-hand accounts of Armenian life in Eastern Turkey. “This is on the ground; this is the real story, or a real story.”

A House in the Homeland is available at all major bookstores as well as on the website of the Stanford University Press, www.SUP.org.



Armen Aroyan questions a local man to find Leo Derderian’s family neighborhood.

was unfamiliar to me as a scholar, and I became nervous. Although what I was doing was authentic, it didn’t fit into an academic discipline. The soul, memory, loss, trauma — the sense of interiority overwhelmed me. How the Genocide has affected their family and them though this generation.” Thus, how the art historian turned to theories of comparative religion and spirituality to explain what was happening with a group of Diasporan Armenians returning to their parents’ Anatolian villages.

Music Ties Generations to the Homeland

As Bertram got closer to the pilgrims, she began to realize that music was also

an whose lover is searching for her. Araxie Hardy, who was born in Beirut, learned this song from her father who used to sing it constantly. She connected the lyrics about the loss of a sweetheart to her father’s loss of his younger brother, who was a small child during the Genocide, adopted by a Muslim family and stayed in Efkeri.

In addition to her many interviews, Bertram also takes a look at memoirs written by earlier generations of pilgrims, those who were born and raised in Historical Armenia and bravely decided to make the trip back to their homes when travel opened up in the 1950s. One of these individuals, known by the penname “Kavar,” was a native of Agn, an area known for its music, and Bertram goes into great detail relating his experiences with homeland music and especially the famous melodies of Agn and “andouni” songs, which even before 1915 were known as representative of migration and exile from one’s homeland. Such songs took on even deeper meaning after the Genocide, and in Kavar’s memoirs, he returns to his hometown of Agn in the 1950s and hears locals singing these songs in Turkish, as well as encountering a remaining Armenian oud player who performs for him the well-known *Groong*, which has now become a pan-Armenian anthem of dispersion.

“Kavar goes to Agn and listens to music and it means so much to him. And Hardy is singing in Khulakiugh, he’s bringing there the music that was so profoundly important to his father and reliving it there,” says Bertram. “It surprised me because it’s not what I would have expected from my own history. As a Jew, I wouldn’t have sung songs that my parents sung about their villages...so that was new to me.” The author goes on, “It’s deeply meaningful because individuals know in their own lives the importance of music but don’t always tie it to a sense of community. Music was integral



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

PHOTO: KATE LEAHY



Armenian Summer Salad From Balakian Farms

Amber Balakian's great-grandparents were hardworking immigrants who fled the Armenian Genocide over a century ago and settled in Reedley, California, a small San Joaquin Valley farming town where they planted vineyards. Balakian Farms was founded in 1925 by Zadig Balakian. His son, John, was the eldest of Zadig's six children. He continued the family business for many years adding tree fruit and other crops along the way. In the 1990s, Ginger Balakian, Amber's mother, transitioned to organic practices, and began growing heirloom tomatoes.

There are over 3,000 varieties of heirloom tomatoes in active cultivation around the world, and over 15,000 varieties worldwide. The Balakians currently grow up to 40 varieties of heirloom tomatoes, with the season peaking in July and August. Heirloom tomatoes have a striking colorful appearance that is beautifully diverse. The Balakians grow organic crops, including peaches, plums, nectarines, pluots (part plum and part apricot in heritage), apricots, lemons, eggplant, Armenian cucumbers, pomegranates, persimmons, summer squash, and heirloom tomatoes.



Fourth-generation farmer and entrepreneur Amber Balakian (left) and her beloved grandmother Stella Balakian at Balakian Farms, Reedley, California. Photos: Amber Balakian

Amber's energy and entrepreneurial spirit combined with her solid farming background led her to launch her own brand of tomato sauce from the heirloom tomatoes that weren't quite "perfect" enough for fresh tomato customers. "As a fourth-generation farmer, I set out to create healthy and tasty products. Adapting my Grandma Stella's Armenian recipe passed down through generations, we created our own line of Organic Blended Heirloom Tomatoes. These blended tomatoes are quite popular. We're undergoing a rebranding and will soon be doing some co-packaging. We can supply more blended tomatoes online and to more retail outlets, and that is really exciting for us."

As a girl, Amber spent long hours working alongside her family and their employees (who she considers practically family) on their 20-acre Reedley farm. While she loved spending time on the farm, working in agriculture was never part of her dreams. "I grew up going to farmers markets (including to the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market in San Francisco on Saturdays), and working on a farm was a major part of my life. After graduating high school, though, farming was something I didn't consider for a career," she says.

"I studied economics at UC San Diego, and went to Harvard for my master's degree in management and operations," she says. "Going to school on the East Coast, Amber was one of the few students from California, and even rarer, she grew up on a family farm. "Classmates asked about my family's farm, and I start-

ed thinking of it more as a business, and wondered how I could help my family with my business background."

Instead of a corporate career, Amber returned to California to see how she could contribute to her family's legacy. She remembered how her Grandma Stella cooked lunch every day in her own home for the farm's employees — many of whom had worked for the family for over 20 years. This sense of devotion and service gave Amber the belief that working together on a farm creates invaluable relationships that last a lifetime. "I'm a fourth-generation farmer, my great grandparents struggled and came to America to escape the Armenian Genocide, and began a new life in Reedley. I'm very proud of their dedication to their family and their farm all these years."

Today Amber manages the farm with her parents, Ginger and Clarence, and beloved Grandma Stella, along with several full- and part-time workers. She has also innovated and expanded the farm's offerings, and is a full-time professor at Fresno City College (FCC) where she teaches entrepreneurship.

Amber's personal story reflects both the history and future of family farming. "Though I'm half African American and half Armenian, I would say my identity shows up for me in farming, especially in terms of what it looks like to be a farmer," says Amber. "A farmer looks a certain way...is a certain ethnicity, is a certain gender. I do not fit that stereotype—like, any of them." Currently, the <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2019/2017Census_Farm_Producers.pdf> majority of farmers in the U.S. are male (95%), white (64%), and over 55 years old (62%).

Amber was one of the winners of the 2021 Stacy's Rise Project: 10 women received \$10,000 and marketing support to help their businesses succeed. Oscar-winning actress/producer Reese Witherspoon and her media company Hello Sunshine will work with Plano-based Stacy's Pita Chips to help support the visibility and success of female founders. "This grant allows us to scale our e-commerce sales channel, and in turn grow our business. This gives us broader customer reach and opens up the possibility to expand our offerings of more healthy food products," says Amber.*

Armenian Salad: A Tomato Story

A traditional salad, bursting with summer flavor, reveals a deep story of farming, family, and heritage. In this video, Amber Balakian takes us behind the scenes and into the fields to meet the people behind Balakian Farms. She meets with Kate Leahy, coauthor of the cookbook *Lavash*, who shares how to make a traditional Armenian salad, using a rainbow of the Balakian's vine-ripened heirloom tomatoes. This recipe was adapted from: *Lavash: The bread that launched 1,000 meals, plus salads, stews, and other recipes from Armenia (Armenian Cookbook, Armenian Food Recipes) Hardcover – Illustrated, October 29, 2019*. For this video, go to: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIjI1fwXOkU>> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIjI1fwXOkU>

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 to 5 large tomatoes, cut into chunks (about 4 cups)
- 1 large Armenian cucumber or 4 Persian cucumbers, skin-on, cut into chunks roughly the same size as the tomatoes (about 4 cups)
- 1/4 red or yellow onion, thinly sliced (if very strong, rinse the onion with water)
- 1 Anaheim pepper or other mild fresh pepper, cored, seeded, and thinly sliced crosswise
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- 2 tablespoons chopped dill
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons olive oil or sunflower oil
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- A pinch of red pepper flakes or ground black pepper

PREPARATION:

In a large bowl, mix together the tomatoes, cucumbers, onion, Anaheim pepper, cilantro, and dill. Drizzle the vinegar and oil over the salad and season with salt and pepper. Mix everything together thoroughly. Taste, adding more salt, pepper, or vinegar if needed. The salad keeps for a couple of days in the refrigerator.

Serves 4-6.

FROM KATE LEAHY: "This recipe is a hybrid from our book and what we learned by talking with Amber Balakian from <<https://cuesa.org/seller/balakian-farms>> Balakian Farms (<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIjI1fwXOkU&feature=youtu.be>> watch the video). Tomatoes and cucumbers are easy to find year-round in Armenia, where they're often eaten plain, simply sliced up and eaten like pieces of fruit. The Balakians use Armenian cucumbers in their version of the salad, a variety that actually comes from the melon family. It isn't as juicy as other cucumbers, so it balances out the ripe heirloom tomatoes. Other keys when making this salad: use fresh herbs (cilantro and dill or parsley and opal basil are common combinations), a little onion, and a fresh green pepper. Armenians in California dress their version with a little vinegar or lemon juice and olive oil, but Armenians in Armenia go lighter on the acidity and use sunflower oil. For an extra treat, have bread alongside to soak up the juices left in the salad bowl."

For "Next Generation Farmer, Amber Balakian," see: <https://cuesa.org/article/next-generation-farmer-amber-balakian>

<https://dallasinnovates.com/stacys-pita-chips-partners-with-reese-witherspoon-to-amplify-female-founders-and-announces-the-2021-stacys-rise-project-finalists/> Balakian Farms 10510 S. Lac Jac Avenue Reedley, California 93654 Phone: (559) 638-4095 Minority and female-owned.

Website: <https://balakianfarms.com/>

ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

JULY 31 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. CONCERT AT THE PARK. Maléna, 2021 Jr. Eurovision Winner representing Armenia, will feature her winning performance “Qami Qaml”. Sunday at 4pm. Special Program of The Armenian Scholarship Fund at Berklee, Berklee College of Music and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park

AUGUST 3 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Join us for **TEA & TRANQUILITY.** Meet Boston City Council President Ed Flynn and Boston City Councilors. Wednesday at 4pm.

August 14 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Join us for **UNDER THE AUGUST MOON.** Sunday at 7:30pm. 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! at 3pm. 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.

RHODE ISLAND

AUGUST 5 to SEPTEMBER 9 — The Cultural committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church of Providence continues programming the “Armenian Cultural Hour” programs, Fridays at 7:30 p.m. The program can be livestreamed on the church’s Facebook page by everyone at <https://www.facebook.com/armenianchurchprovidence>

August 5 – Armen Ajemyan, Trumpet
August 19 - Ruben Matevosyan, Concert in Yerevan
September 9 – Dance Ensemble of Vanush Khanamiryan Academy

Artists Share the Joy of Music in Marburg

MARBURG, from page 12

reverence and solemnity. Safaryan was to continue throughout the entire evening, displaying versatility in ensembles or accompanying vocalists, and virtuosity in works for piano. As a soloist she played Nocturne by A. Babajanyan, and Fantasie – Impromptu (Op. 66), Waltz in b minor (Op. 69 N. 2) and Nocturne in E-flat major (Op. 9 n. 2), by Chopin.

Nahapetyan later sang a second art song from the German repertoire, R. Schumann’s Widmung (Dedication), as well as Armenian pieces, R. Melikyan’s Vard (The

faryan to perform Thaïs: Méditation by J. Massenet and Cantabile by N. Paganini.

The second vocalist was baritone Leo Jang, originally from South Korea, who sang two pieces by Schubert, Im Frühling (In Springtime) and An die Musik (To Music). The grand finale featured Jang and Nahapetyan, accompanied by violinists Gulkanyan and pianist Safaryan in a lively rendering — in song and dance — of the famous Lippen Schweigen (Lips are silent), from F. Léhár’s operetta, “The Merry Widow.” The audience, made up of friends, relatives, members of the community, but

as a team. As indicated, they came together around the project, motivated not by profit or career, but solely through friendship and the shared love for music.

Most of the performers are Armenian. Like Seda Nahapetyan, pianist Safaryan also comes from Armenia, and studied at the Conservatory in Yerevan before moving to Germany. A mother of four children, she teaches piano in a school in Marburg.

Simon Manukyan and Mariam Manukyan are father and daughter. Employed as a bookkeeper, Mariam played violin as a child and was delighted to be invited to join the other musicians for the concert. Her father Simon studied guitar in Yerevan, where he played with several bands. Given the financial difficulties many musicians face, he sought and found other employ-

ment, but continues to perform whenever possible.

Foremost among the professionals in the group is Leo Jang. Originally from South Korea, this extremely gifted singer studied in Seoul and later in Cologne, Germany. He performed for several years as a soloist in the Stralsund Theater before joining the Giessen City Theater, where he sings in the chorus. Violinist Ruben Gulkanyan, who studied in Armenia as well as Nürnberg, plays in the orchestra of the same theater in Giessen.

There was no entrance fee for the concert, so participants showed their appreciation with flowers—many more bouquets than there were musicians – as well as spontaneous donations, certainly intended to defray the costs of the next concert.



From left, Simon Manukyan, Ruben Gulkanyan, Maryam Manukyan, Amalia Safaryan, Seda Nahapetyan, Leo Jang and Abderrahim En-Nosse. (Photo by Norbert Kuche)

Rose) and G. Chitchyan’s Aghavniner (The Doves), and Laurretta’s aria, O mio babbino caro, from Puccini’s opera, “Gianni Schicchi.”

The duets by pianist Safaryan and guitarist Simon Manukyan included Oblivion by Piazzola and Elegy by Babajanyan. Daughter Mariam Manukyan and Ruben Gulkanyan, both violinists, formed a trio with Safaryan to perform a Prelude as well as an Elegy by Shostakovitch. And in two violin-piano duets, Gulkanyan joined Sa-

also foreign tourists, responded with unbridled enthusiasm and joy.

What made the concert so wonderful was not only the excellent acoustics in this historic church, whose original Romanesque structure dates back to the 13th century; nor was it only the program, which indeed offered such musical and cultural diversity. What was most striking and moving was to realize that the musicians, who combined talent and accomplishment, are both professionals and amateurs, working



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TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
GREATER NEW YORK CHAPTER

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Details to follow

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

Is the US Positioning Itself in the Caucasus?



By Edmond Y.
Azadian

A cloak-and-dagger story is currently unfolding in and around Armenia, as the security chiefs of three major powers have visited Yerevan in quick succession.

First came Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council. The next was Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director William Burns, followed immediately by Sergei Naryshkin, Russia's director of Foreign Intelligence Services.

So many visits by foreign dignitaries have created confusion in the news media and political circles; the question was whether Armenia had become such an important country to deserve so much attention, or whether there was a calamity brewing in the region.

Information about the meetings has been scant, as boilerplate news releases were issued by representative parties about corresponding Armenian-Iranian, Armenian-American and Armenian-Russian relations. One has to be naïve to believe that statemen of that caliber could travel such distances for insignificant issues. There were certainly major developments behind the smokescreen of generic news releases.

All involved parties have been tightlipped, allowing analysts to hazard speculations.

Major events under consideration were the phone conversation of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in July, as well as the impromptu meeting of Foreign Ministers Ararat Mirzoyan in Tbilisi, at the invitation of Georgian Foreign Minister Illia Darchiashvili, with Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov, without intermediaries.

The US State Department had been following these developments and reacted immediately and publicly after each event.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed his delight with the Pashinyan-Erdogan phone call, while Assistant Secretary of State Karen Donfried was briefed by Mirzoyan and Bayramov upon the conclusion of the Tbilisi meeting, which in turn was followed by Blinken's phone calls with his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts. Incidentally, Donfried had visited Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan a month ago.

The US involvement in these contacts — and the corresponding absence of Russia — call for some speculation, especially when contrasted with the fact that there was no mention whatsoever of the November 9, 2020 declaration crafted by Russia at the conclusion of the war.

It is the open policy of the US and the West in general to push out Russia from the Caucasus and these moves are the practical consequences of that policy.

The initiatives by Canada and Spain to open their embassies in Yerevan and the return of Armenia's ambassador to Israel enhance Armenia's significance in the region.

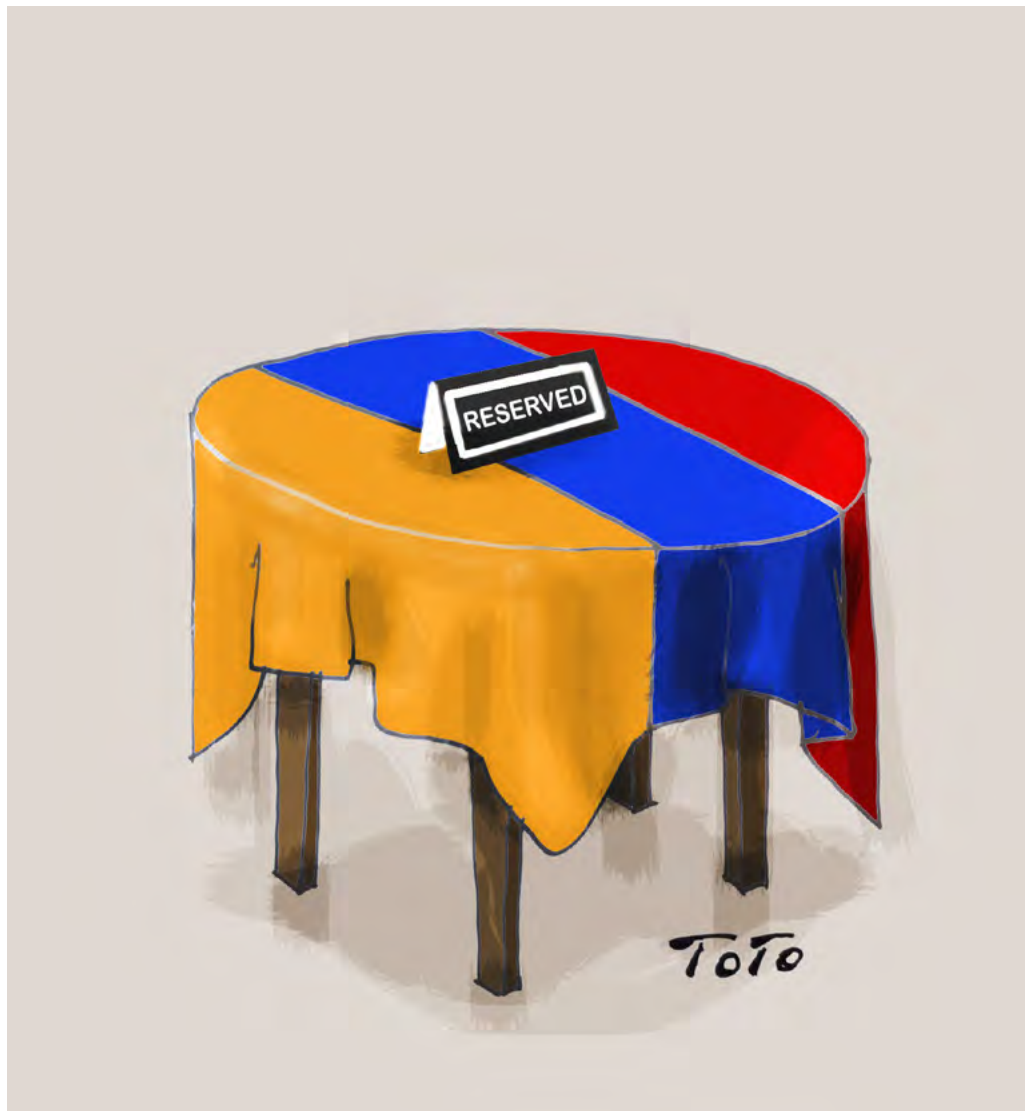
The other, broader dimensions of the current dynamics in the region are the war in Ukraine and resulting sanctions on Russia, as well as the Tehran summit on July 18 between Vladimir Putin, Erdogan and Iran's leader, Ebrahim Raisi.

It is believed that the main topic on its agenda was Syria, where the three powers are at loggerheads. Mr. Erdogan has been planning another confrontation in northern Syria against the Kurdish forces allied with the US (YGP). During the recent NATO summit in Madrid, Mr. Erdogan was not able to make a deal with President Biden, or Russia and Iran about the raid, as that will further foment instability in an already volatile region. He did manage, however, to score some victories, in return for not blocking the memberships of Sweden and Finland, namely the lifting of arms embargos and the deportation by the latter two countries of Kurdish immigrants Turkey considers dangerous.

But certainly there are other issues on the summit's agenda, such as sanctions. Russia and Iran are both under heavy sanctions by the West, and Turkey, despite being a NATO member, has refused to participate in applying these sanctions. Thus, Turkey remains the most convenient route to go around those prohibitions and Mr. Erdogan is willing to offer that chance, but for a price. It remains to be seen how that compensation will shape up at the conclusion of that summit.

Russia and Azerbaijan have expressed deep concerns about Burns' visit to Armenia. Naryshkin's surprise visit to Yerevan proves that. Incidentally, that visit is a bad omen as Mr. Naryshkin is believed to be beholden to Azerbaijan's lobby. His association with Azerbaijani oligarch God Nisanov contributed to Moscow's duplicity during the 44-Day War.

During Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's last visit to Baku, he proclaimed his support for Azerbaijan's policy, to

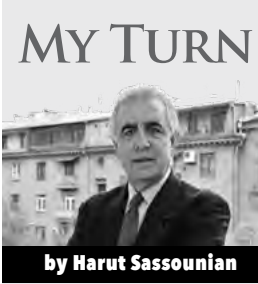


Armenia's chagrin. He repeated verbatim what Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev had been pushing, stating that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, which for decades had been tasked with finding a final peaceful resolution for Karabakh, is now dead and that new realities have emerged on the ground following the 44-Day War; Armenia has been pinning its hopes on that group which still maintains that the status issue of Karabakh has not been settled and it should be done so through peaceful negotiations, indirectly implying that Azerbaijan's use of force has been contrary to the Minsk Group's principles, mandated by the United Nations.

continued on next page



COMMENTARY



MY TURN
Prime Minister Pashinyan Has No Right to Ban an Armenian From Entering Armenia

French Armenian community leader Mourad (Franck) Papazian and his wife were not allowed to enter Armenia last week after they arrived at the Yerevan Airport. Papazian is a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation’s worldwide leadership (Bureau) and the Co-President of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations of France.

At passport control, Papazian was told to wait until they verified his information. He had a proper French passport and did not need a visa to enter Armenia. While he was waiting, customs officials were consulting with their superiors on the phone.

Papazian was then led to an isolated room at the airport where he was kept for several hours. Finally, National Security Service agents told him that he was not allowed to enter Armenia.

Despite Papazian’s several requests, he was never informed of the reason for his being barred from entering Armenia. He was expelled from the country by placing him on the next flight to Paris.

This is an incident with serious ethical, legal, diplomatic and national implications.

Ethically, if Armenian officials want to ban someone from entering Armenia, they should have the minimum courtesy of telling the individual the reason for such a grave decision. The visitor is entitled to know why he is not being allowed to enter the country.

In terms of Armenian laws, regardless of the reason for banning Papazian from entering the country, Armenian officials don’t have the right to take such an action on their own, be they airport officials, National Security Service agents or prime minister. Banning any visitor, let alone a fellow Armenian, from entering the country is a very serious decision. If Papazian had violated any Armenian laws, airport officials could have detained him, presented the charges against him to a judge who would have taken a legal decision based on the evidence after listening to both sides. Is Armenia a country governed by laws or by the vindictive decisions of the prime minister? If one man can act as the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government, then Armenia is far from being a democratic country. It is sad that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who came to power four years ago as a democrat, is ignoring all democratic norms. Papazian’s sole guilt is being critical of the failed regime of Pashinyan.

In terms of European laws, Armenia violated in this case several principles of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which it had committed to uphold. The required procedure is that Papazian first challenge his expulsion in a domestic Armenian court. If he is unsuccessful there, Papazian can then take his complaint to the European Court of Human Rights. I am certain that the European Court will find that the Armenian government violated Papazian’s “right to a fair trial,” “freedom of expression” and “freedom of movement.” Furthermore, Papazian’s expulsion was a violation of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Regarding this incident’s possible negative effect on Armenia’s relations with France, as a French citizen, Papazian has filed a complaint with the French Embassy in Yerevan and the French Foreign Ministry in Paris. As a well-known political activist, Papazian has close ties with President Macron of France and other high-ranking French officials. Already, there was another unpleasant incident last May, when Papazian accompanied the pro-Armenian mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, on her visit to Armenia. Since Papazian is a critic of Pashinyan, he informed the prime minister’s office that he will not join the mayor’s scheduled meeting with Pashinyan, in order not to create an unwelcome scene during the meeting. Without any explanation, at the last minute, the prime minister decided to cancel the meeting with the Paris mayor. This was a major diplomatic error. Armenia can ill afford to alienate French officials who are some of its staunchest supporters.

In terms of the Armenian government undermining the collective interests of the Armenian nation, it is counterproductive that while Armenia is surrounded by bloodthirsty enemies and its very existence is threatened, its leaders are engaged in a self-defeating action regarding the diaspora which only serves to further weaken Armenia. Azerbaijan does have massive petrodollars, but Armenia has a large diaspora which is an unutilized asset.

I am afraid that Papazian’s expulsion, if not reversed quickly, will have an adverse effect on Armenia’s relations with the seven-million-strong diaspora. Armenia’s leaders, rather than coming up with initiatives to attract more diasporan Armenians to visit, immigrate and invest in Armenia, are unwisely alienating them.

Since Papazian’s only guilt is that he was a critic of Pashinyan, his expulsion could cause many other diaspora Armenians, who are opposed to the prime minister, to avoid visiting Armenia out of a concern that they too will be stopped at the Yerevan Airport and not be allowed to visit their homeland.

It is highly regrettable that Papazian, a man who has dedicated his entire life to defending the interests of Armenia and the Armenia Cause, is treated in such an offensive manner. With great sadness, he acknowledged: “I knew that I was banned from Turkey and Azerbaijan. Today, I am banned from Pashinyan’s Armenia.”

Is the US Positioning Itself in the Caucasus?

from previous page

For all practical purposes, the Kremlin intends to deep freeze the Karabakh issue, because any solution will undermine its position in the Caucasus. Whether the issue is settled in Armenia’s favor or Azerbaijan’s, the outcome is the same for Moscow; in both cases, its military presence on Azerbaijan’s soil will be nullified.

Thus far, Moscow has taken Armenia for granted. Nominally, the two countries are allies, but Moscow has failed to fulfill its security obligations time and again.

Now, as the US demonstrates some activity in the region, Moscow has been watching those movements with apprehension. At this point, Armenia has to wield its diplomacy skillfully to take advantage of the situation, in view of the US’s increased activity there. Some politicians, like the president of the European Party, Tigran Khzmalyan, believe that “Armenia’s decolonization has begun.”

Despite Armenia’s miniscule size and clout in the region, it can play a pivotal role within the context of rivalry among major powers and the recent prominent visits are a testimony to that.

Since many theories are advanced in the absence of solid news about recent momentous developments, every commentator is entitled to venture proposing their own theory. The eruption of a second crisis, while a major one is already raging around the globe, is not uncommon in international politics. Therefore, we cannot discount any other eruption in the Middle East, following President Biden’s visit there. His major goal, through that visit, was to rally forces against Iran. After the failure of negotiations in Qatar, over Iran’s nuclear deal, President Biden stated that a military option was on the table, if his patience runs out. President Biden’s policy of refraining from perpetual war and engaging in perpetual diplomacy may act in Armenia’s favor, now that Washington is trying to revive the OSCE Minsk process.

All along, Israel has considered it its prerogative to make preemptive strikes at any perceived threats. Washington’s role has been to restrain Israel and assume responsibility for that action, because Israel may launch an effective preemptive strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities but it cannot contain the ensuing conflagration all around the Middle East, where Tehran maintains proxy forces. But Washington can certainly and can even announce an exit strategy.

It seems that Mr. Burns’ visit to Armenia is in that context to touch base with Armenian leadership. In such a scenario, Armenia has these two options: either to maintain strict neutrality or partner with Azerbaijan for a short period in serving as a launching pad for US-Israeli striking forces against Iran, for a substantial reward, and then cynically condemn the aggression and express sympathy to Tehran, as the latter did during the 44-day war, congratulating Baku after announcing that any territorial change in the region was a red line for Tehran.

No one should wish that such a grim scenario might develop in the region but world politics are primed now for all sorts of crazy actions throughout the globe.

LETTERS

Remembering Ivana Trump

To the Editor:

One of my many volunteer activities was to coordinate earthquake relief for the Armenian Diocese (Eastern) in 1988. It was a terrible time for our brethren in Armenia but one of the few positives was the outpouring of help. People with a modicum of Armenian blood and non-Armenians alike offered their help whether financial or donations of in kind goods or volunteering their time. I will never forget the emotional cab driver who knocked on the door of the Diocese at 11:00 p.m. to donate all of the money he had made that day or the single mother on welfare caring for her three children who lamented the fact that she didn’t have money to donate but offered her blood instead.

Along with getting medical supplies and equipment, food, clothing etc. donated and getting it flown to Armenia without charge, I was also asked to get a suite of rooms donated at a hotel for His Holiness Catholicos Vasken of blessed memory and his entourage when Vehapar came to New York to coordinate the humanitarian efforts of all of the organizations. My first phone call was to Mrs. Ivana Trump who was managing the Plaza Hotel for “The Donald” at a salary of \$1.00 per year. I expressed my request to her executive secretary who promised to run it by Mrs. Trump and get back to me. Not even ten minutes passed when the phone rang and the message was that Mrs. Trump would be honored to host His Holiness and his entourage.

Not only did Mrs. Trump give Vehapar one of the largest suites at the Plaza with an adjoining suite for his entourage, she also arranged a formal/VIP greeting for His Holiness upon his arrival, sent a magnificent floral arrangement to his suit, installed a red phone so that calls could be made directly without going through the switchboard, put security guards outside his suit and at my request flew Vehapar’s flag outside of the entrance to the Plaza Hotel. Mrs. Trump attended to every detail of Vehaps’s visit including sending him a cheesecake every day knowing that it was his favorite dessert.

Of course our Primate Archbishop Torkom Manoogian of blessed memory expressed his profound appreciation on behalf of the Diocese to Mrs. Trump with a gift and a letter. However so many years later when this kind and generous woman has gone to her final rest, we still need to show respect and remember how she helped our people even if it’s just to light a candle in her memory.

Adrienne G. Alexanian
New York, NY



FemInno: Celebrating Female Innovation in Armenia and Caucasus

YEREVAN — A new celebration of female talent and leadership in business, science and technology is starting up this year in Yerevan, called FemInno, to be able to feature female innovation and give it a new vibe in the so-called silicon mountains — Armenia.

On July 30-31, FemInno is launching its first edition as the biggest annual international women innovation conference in Armenia and in the whole region of South Caucasus with a mission to promote female potential, to empower women and feature the value they create in male-dominated fields. Moreover, FemInno also aims to position Armenia as a new innovative destination where women also have their say.

“FemInno has featured the topic of the conference as #FemaleisNOW to prove that instead of looking in the ‘future is tech’ or ‘future is female,’ we should confirm that the time is now,” explained Seda Papoyan, the founder of FemInno.

The conference will feature more than 30 speakers joining from all over the world: Canada, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Germany, USA, UAE and Armenia. Among the speakers there are professional women and men from businesses, science and technology. Even several ambassadors of countries represented in Armenia joined the conference to share their expertise. FemInno organizers also managed to invite some government representatives to be sure that the change will happen also on decision-making level.

FemInno is backed by a number of international tech companies present in Armenia - among them PMI Science, Ado-



Participants at FemInno

be, Synopsys, Siemens, Semrush, Miro, ZEVIT, IPONWEB and others. They all share the values of diversity and inclusion in the modern workplace as well as the female leadership being the new normal.

These and other companies are going to take part in the two-day FemInno Recruitment Fair held during the conference. The participants will also benefit from a parallel workshop and master-class agenda.

Being committed to spreading diversity culture and promoting female talent as a

mission, FemInno also organizes a start-up competition for teams with at least 1 female founder. The final pitching session of the selected 10 teams will also take place during the conference.

FemInno has also a very dear component - the Female Talent Scholarship Fund created in the honor of a talented young Armenian woman Sona Mnatsakanyan gone too soon in a tragic car accident in April 2022. The still in process fundraising campaign is collecting funds to be awarded as

scholarships to talented Armenian women in three main categories: - Renewable energy, technology and science.

Below are some featured speakers of FemInno 2022:

- Ann Makosinski - 24 year old inspiring young inventor, writer and public speaker from Canada. She has given 5 TEDx talks and was included on both the Forbes magazine's 30 Under 30 & the Times magazine's 30 under 30 lists.

- Francesca Cavallo - an award-winning, New York Times best-selling author, entrepreneur and activist. She co-created the Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls book series and podcast and was the recipient of the Publisher's Weekly StarWatch Award in 2018.

- Jumok Dada - with years of experience in the design industry and graduated with a first-class degree in Architecture, Jumoke grew her tech-enabled E-Commerce business that leverages mixed reality to sell furniture with zero capital from friends or family in Lagos Nigeria to a multi-million dollar business in a couple of years.

- Lara Setrakian - the co-founder of News Deeply, now in collaboration with The New Humanitarian. She also serves as an Impact Partner with Fresco Capital, a global venture capital fund based in Singapore. Inc Magazine dubbed her one of the “Women Who Could Own the Future,” while Fast Company named her one of its “100 Most Creative People in Business.”

The conference will take place in Yerevan at Karen Demirchyan sport/concert complex on July 30-31.

To learn more about FemInno please visit the website: www.feminno.com

Speier and Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Applaud Inclusion of Robust Funding for Armenia, Artsakh

WASHINGTON — Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues Co-Chairs Congresswoman Jackie Speier (CA-14) and Congressmen Frank Pallone, Jr. (NJ-06), Gus M. Bilirakis (FL-12), David Valadao (CA-21), and Adam B. Schiff (CA-28) last month announced the inclusion of an unprecedented \$60 million in economic assistance for Armenia and \$2 million for demining activities in Artsakh in the Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs spending bill for Fiscal Year 2023 that passed the full committee. This welcomed news comes after Speier and 63 Members of Congress sent a letter in April, requesting the Subcommittee to include robust aid for Armenia and Artsakh in the bill. The House is expected to vote on the underlying legislation in the coming months.

The funding for Armenia will help to bolster its economic development, private sector productivity, energy independence, and democratic and rule of law reforms. The funding language offers flexibility to address the ongoing humanitarian needs in Artsakh linked to the deadly 2020 war provoked by Azerbaijan. The bill also includes funding for demining activities that will help clear some of the dangerous mines and unexploded ordinances on civilian lands in Artsakh. Additionally, the bill includes language requiring the State Department and USAID to develop an assistance strategy for addressing humanitarian and recovery needs arising from the deadly 2020 war provoked by Azerbaijan in Artsakh. The strategy will identify resources and programs available to address the ongoing crisis, along with an estimate of resources available for such purpose.

“The significant economic support for Armenia and Artsakh included in the Fiscal Year 2023 funding bill demonstrates a firm commitment from the United States House of Representatives to the Armenian people. We are pleased

with the strong commitment the Appropriations Committee has made to the U.S.-Armenia relationship, and especially thank Appropriations State and Foreign Relations Subcommittee Chairwoman Barbara Lee (CA-13) and others on the committee for their work on this bill. This funding will go a long way in helping Armenia to build upon the significant democratic reforms it is currently enacting and help it grow into a strong regional economic partner for the

United States.”

“We also welcome the inclusion of demining funding for Artsakh and the language requiring the Administration to develop an assistance strategy to address the ongoing humanitarian needs relating to the 2020 war. It's clear that more can and must be done to help the people of Armenia and Artsakh in their time of need. We must also do more

to hold Azerbaijan accountable for their aggressions and destabilizing actions in the region. We are deeply disappointed that the Department of State waived Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act last week, potentially allowing U.S. assistance to flow to Azerbaijan. We will continue to explore every action possible to halt any further funding to the corrupt Aliyev regime.”

In September 2020, Azerbaijan, actively aided by Turkey and foreign mercenaries, initiated a deadly invasion of Artsakh that led to six weeks of devastating fighting that killed more than 5,000 people and forced more than 100,000 ethnic Armenians to flee their homes. Artsakh and Armenia continue to grapple with an ongoing humanitarian crisis that resulted from the invasion. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan continues to provocatively station troops in Armenian territory while falsely declaring the land as its own and illegally holding ethnic Armenians as detainees and prisoners of war in contravention of international human rights law.

Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan Injured in Auto Accident, Condition Stable

ALBANY, N.Y. — The Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America announced that the Primate, Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, was seriously injured in an automobile accident in the morning hours of Saturday, July 16.

He is currently in stable condition and under medical supervision at a hospital in Albany, NY. Praise God, Fr. Mesrop's injuries are not life-threatening; however, he has sustained damage to his hip and both ankles. He underwent his first surgery on Saturday, with further surgeries planned for the coming week.

Early Saturday morning, Fr. Parsamyan was traveling to St. Vartan Camp on the New York State Thruway, when short of the camp exit his car swerved off the highway. No other car was involved. He was rushed to Albany Medical Center.

The Diocese has been in communication with the Catholicos of All Armenians and Grand Sacristan of the Mother See.



Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan