



Tekeyan Cultural Association Holds 36th Convention Via Zoom

WATERTOWN — The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of the United States and Canada held its 36th convention on Saturday, November 5, via Zoom. The 25 voting delegates included representatives from seven Tekeyan chapters and TCA Central Board (CB) members, while a number of additional TCA members and staff participated in the discussions.

The session commenced with words of welcome and a general summary of the situation in which TCA finds itself by CB President Edmond Y. Azadian, who served also as the president of the convention. He noted the unusual circumstances created by Covid, not least of which was holding the convention in the virtual realm, after the pandemic prevented the holding of in-person assemblies.

After roll call confirmed a quorum, the president announced the composition of the Nominating Committee, the Dicran Simsarian Award Committee and the Courtesies Committee. He then asked Executive Director Aram Arkun to present the CB report on activities for the 2021 year.



TCA Central Board 2021 Activities

The CB was able to resume some travel and in-person meetings with chapters and individuals in North America and Armenia. The Sponsor a Teacher program continued to fundraise and support teachers and staff in Armenia and Artsakh for the 20th year, while the CB and the Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund Committee for the fourth year awarded scholarships to two university students studying political science or international relations.

In 2021, the CB raised close to \$34,000 in support of the Hrant Dink School of Istanbul, and also sent \$20,000 to Beirut's Tekeyan School and other Armenian schools through West Coast TCA member donations. The CB provided assistance to the TCA of Vanadzor, Armenia, for its expansion, and initiated a program of aid to the staff and teachers of the Vahan Tekeyan School of Berdzor in Artsakh, who had become refugees after the loss of this region. This endeavor was implemented by TCA CB member Arto see CONVENTION, page 9



The musical performance

Montreal Chapter Celebrates 75th Anniversary of Tekeyan Cultural Association, Abaka's 47th Anniversary, Arno Babajanian

MONTREAL — The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Montreal Chapter celebrated three anniversaries simultaneously on October 29: the 75th anniversary of the founding of TCA, the 47th anniversary of the trilingual weekly newspaper *Abaka*, and the centennial of Armenian composer Arno Babajanian. A full house listened to the musical program and speeches at the Tekeyan Montreal Center.

see ANNIVERSARIES, page 4

Armenian PM Reacts to Reported Shooting at Farmers in Karabakh

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Monday, November 14, further questioned Azerbaijan's narrative concerning Nagorno-Karabakh as he reacted to a reported shooting by Azeri soldiers at Karabakh farmers working in the field over the weekend.

Armenian authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh said on Saturday, November 12, that one civilian was injured while carrying out agricultural work near the village of Khramort in the east of the region.

They said the 45-year-old farmer was harmed by fragments of the windshields of a tractor fired at from nearby Azerbaijani military positions and that another Armenian farmer was also present there during the attack.



A tractor that Armenian authorities in Stepanakert say was damaged when Azerbaijani forces opened fire at farmers working in the field near the village of Khramort in the east of Nagorno-Karabakh. November 12.

Officials in Stepanakert said the Russian peacekeepers were informed about the incident. The Russian Defense Ministry confirmed the incident, but Baku has not commented on it yet.

The Russian Defense Ministry also con-

firmed a similar incident in Nagorno-Karabakh a week before when Stepanakert said Azerbaijani armed forces opened fire at a civilian's tractor in the same area. Baku then denied any shooting at civilians.

The latest incident prompted the Arme-

nian leader to post a comment on Twitter countering statements by Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev that the Karabakh conflict "has been resolved" and "is now history."

see SHOOTING, page 2

WPI Students Design Modular Homes for Artsakh Refugees

By Melanie Touyssuzian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WORCESTER, Mass. — Last April, three architectural engineering students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) submitted their design for a modular home project for Artsakh war refugees as their major qualifying project (MQP), the capstone project needed for graduation. The work was impelled by the concept of "humanitarian architecture" as the Artsakh war began in 2020.

Students James Valentine, Katherine Bishop and Lara Varjabedian worked for one year with help from the WPI Armenia Project Center, professors, and various professionals in different fields.

Concerned by the effects of the war, Varjabedian, the only Armenian on the team, initiated the concept and the trio began their year-long collaboration. "I started to think about this the



The 3 unit housing complex, designed as the white pattern of the Artsakh flag



minute the Artsakh war began," stated Varjabedian, who graduated from WPI in May 2022.

Valentine and Bishop, both architectur-

al engineering students, had only heard a few things about the situation in Artsakh. "It was pretty insane to me that something

see HOMES, page 11

ARMENIA Catholicos Visits Jermuk



Page 3

VATICAN Henrikh Mkhitarian Meets with Pope



Page 6

ARMENIA/ARTSAKH Wineries of Armenia And Artsakh Highlighted Through Map



Page 16



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

FM Offers Condolences Over Istanbul Blast

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan has offered condolences on a deadly explosion that rocked the center of the Turkish city of Istanbul on Sunday, killing several people and injuring dozens.

“I express my sincere condolences to the families of the victims of the deadly explosion in Istanbul and wish a speedy recovery to the injured,” Mirzoyan wrote on Twitter on Monday, November 14, addressing his message to his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Çavuşoğlu.

FM, Russian OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Meet

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan received on November 14 Igor Khovaev, the Russian Co-Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group and Special Representative of Foreign Minister of Russia for normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

During the meeting, the recent developments regarding the process of normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were discussed.

The two touched upon the meeting of the leaders of Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan in Sochi on October 31 and the adopted joint statement. Mirzoyan emphasized the importance of the commitment of the sides to refrain from the use of force or threat of use of force, noting that Azerbaijan, with its aggressive behavior and maximalist aspirations continues to obstruct the establishment of sustainable and lasting peace in the region.

Mirzoyan and Khovaev also exchanged views on the border delimitation process between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Pashinyan Discusses Armenia-Azerbaijan Normalization With Blinken

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan “exchanged ideas” on the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan in a phone call with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on November 15.

The readout of the phone call noted that the two discussed the meeting of the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Washington on November 7 and their subsequent talks hosted by Blinken.

“Secretary of State Blinken expressed the willingness of the United States to continue supporting the settlement of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations, as well as the Nagorno-Karabakh problem,” the phone call readout said.

“Prime Minister Pashinyan highly appreciated the US efforts and the personal involvement of Secretary of State Blinken. The two agreed to continue discussions on steps aimed at increasing the level of security and stability in the region, including the settlement of humanitarian issues,” it added.

Armenian Opposition Ends Boycott of Parliament

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The opposition Hayastan faction has returned to the parliament after boycotting its sessions for more than six months.

Two opposition factions returned to the National Assembly on November 15 after more than half a year of boycotting sessions of the Armenian parliament for what they said were political purposes.

The Hayastan and Pativ Unem factions affiliated with former presidents Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan, respectively, said they ended their boycott to further “the agenda of vital concern” to the people of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

“We are here, and you have to reckon with this fact,” said Aghvan Vardanyan, a member of the Hayastan faction, at the beginning of a regular four-day session.

“This is the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, and the National Assembly of the citizens who sent us here. It is not your property,” added Vardanyan, addressing his words to the parliament majority represented by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s Civil Contract party.

Addressing the citizens, the opposition lawmaker stressed that the opposition boycotted parliament sessions “because we were fighting in the streets against the de-

structive policy of this government.”

He said that the opposition will fully use its parliamentary instruments while there was “a temporary pause in street protests.”

“In these difficult times for the Armenian people, this government is a threat to the statehood and national identity of Armenia. With this government in power, Armenia and Artsakh [Nagorno-Karabakh] have no future, our people have no future, we are not here to allow the destructive process to become irreversible,” Vardanyan concluded.

Pativ Unem lawmaker Taguhi Tovmasyan said on Friday that the faction would return to parliament, but would use “other forms of struggle in the street against the Pashinyan government to maintain its continuity.” She said they would continue to use all tools at their disposal to seek the current government’s ouster.

The two opposition factions began their political boycott of parliament sessions in April after Prime Minister Pashinyan’s statement about the purported expectation of the international community that Armenia should “lower the bar” in regards to the status of Nagorno-Karabakh in peace talks with Azerbaijan.

They scaled back the protests six weeks later after failing to unseat the prime minister.

Pashinyan and his political allies dismissed the demands for his resignation, saying that the opposition has failed to attract popular support for regime change.

Citing chronic absenteeism of opposition lawmakers, the majority ousted several of them from leadership positions in parliament committees, while Hayastan’s Ishkhan Saghatlyan was dismissed from his post of deputy speaker.

The pro-government Civil Contract faction also threatened to strip all “chronically absent” lawmakers of their mandates, but eventually did not act upon its threats.

An opposition movement supported by the Hayastan and Pativ Unem blocs held its latest rally on November 5. It said the rally was a manifestation of support for the demand of Karabakh Armenians that the Armenian government must not unequivocally recognize Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity through a bilateral peace treaty.

The Pashinyan government dismisses accusations that it is negotiating any peace deal that will disregard the rights and freedoms of ethnic Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenian PM Reacts To Reported Shooting at Farmers in Karabakh

SHOOTING, from page 1

Azerbaijan calls Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh ‘our citizens’ and, at the same time, shoots at them while they are doing agricultural work,” Pashinyan wrote.

The Armenian premier said that three civilians have been killed and 16 wounded since Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a Russia-brokered ceasefire agreement on November 9, 2020. There were, according to him, another 54 cases of “attempted murder.”

“Is this the implementation of Azerbaijan’s narrative saying ‘the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is solved’?” Pashinyan asked.

In his remarks late last week, the Armenian leader accused Azerbaijan of planning to cut a transport link between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia known as the Lachin corridor and seeking to end the presence of Russian peacekeepers in the region. He argued that this was an indication that Baku was “preparing the ground for a genocide” against Karabakh Armenians.

Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Friday described Pashinyan’s statements as “an attempt to deliberately escalate tensions in the region.”

French President Emmanuel Macron reportedly had a phone call with Azerbaijan’s President Aliyev on Saturday, stating about Paris’s readiness to support normalization between the two South Caucasus nations and “work on a political solution in the region that would make it possible to establish peace.”

The French leader also “welcomed the stabilizing effect” of the civilian monitoring mission of the European Union on the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The decision to deploy the mission along the border from the Armenian side was reached at the October 6 talks in Prague between Macron, President of the European Council Charles Michel, as well as Pashinyan and Aliyev.

The Elysée Palace announced that Macron intended to meet with Pashinyan on the sidelines of the Francophone Summit in Tunisia on November 19. Official Yerevan has not yet announced the Armenian leader’s immediate plans connected with a possible visit to Tunisia and a meeting with Macron.

IFS Raises \$29,000 for Wounded Soldiers In Jazz Concert Inspired by Komitas

YEREVAN —The Insurance Foundation for Servicemen and Megerian Carpets held a joint year-end fundraising concert on October 20. IFS top donors, friends, partners, and beneficiaries were among the guests. The event raised \$29,000 (11 million drams).

The purpose of this event was to raise funds for the well-being of the servicemen and their families who gave life or limb to war.

World-famous pianist and composer Joel Martin performed exceptional jazz interpretations of works by Komitas.

Irina Seylanyan, the Chairwoman of the Board of Trustees of IFS, in her speech emphasized the importance of the Foundation’s existence and activities. Regretfully, the last war has underlined the evident importance of the Foundation’s activities for the heroes, who have sacrificed their life and limb to war while protecting the borders of our homeland.

Karine Sarkissian, Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation, in her speech, referred to the work done by the



Guests at the event

Foundation with several figures. Sarkissian stated with faith that the stories and experiences of our heroes will instill strong values, beliefs, and attitudes in our society, and the Foundation can become a strong platform of consolidation for Armenians around the world for the sake of expressing gratitude, support and respect.

During the auction which was part of the fundraising evening, four works of art, donated to IFS, were offered for sale, including a lithograph by Jean Carzou. All proceeds of the auction were donated to IFS. The following lots were offered for the auction.

During the evening, the foundation acknowledged and thanked the donors for the years 2020 and 2021 and awarded them with certificates, pins, and plates.

As of November 10, 2022, the total number of IFS beneficiaries is 4,992.

IFS has provided over \$172 million in compensation for these cases. The list of IFS beneficiaries is published on the website: www.1000plus.am/en/compensation.



Pianist and composer Joel Martin



ARMENIA

Catholicos Visits Jermuk

YEREVAN — On November 5, Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, paid a visit to Jermuk, which has been repeatedly attacked by Azerbaijan since September.

There, the Catholicos met with soldiers defending the border, visited military and civilian wounded in a local hospital, and prayed with worshippers assembled for Divine Liturgy. He offered special blessings for the local children.

Earlier that week, His Holiness Karekin II presided over the latest gathering of the Supreme Spiritual Council, which convened November 1-4.

The meeting at the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin brought together bishops and archbishops from Armenia and diaspora jurisdictions, including Patriarch of Constantinople Archbishop Sahak Mashalian, and Pontifical Legate of Western Europe Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, who co-chaired the sessions.

The council discussed administrative, canonical, and national issues concerning the worldwide Armenian Church, with special emphasis on the aftermath of the Artsakh war and pandemic, and the church-sponsored efforts to alleviate distress and suffering related to these.

Council members noted with satisfaction that the restoration of the Mother Cathedral is nearing its final stage, with ceremonies for its reopening slated for 2023.

The Supreme Spiritual Council also issued a statement on the post-war situation in Armenia and Artsakh. The council condemned ongoing Azeri aggression, and addressed matters of territorial integrity and sovereignty, the justice of Artsakh's right to self-determination, the mission of the Armenian Church in the present situation, and the peaceful settlement of the Karabagh conflict.



Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II with soldiers defending the border in Jermuk

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

US, Russian Spy Chiefs Meet in Turkey over Ukraine War

ISTANBUL (AI-Monitor) — US and Russian spy chiefs on November 14 traveled to Turkey's capital for a delicate meeting amid increasing fears that Russia may be readying to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine.

CIA Director William Burns warned his Russian counterpart Sergey Naryshkin against using tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine, a White House official noted.

Burns was to deliver a message to his Russian counterpart, "on the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons by Russia, and the risks of escalation to strategic stability," the official, who spoke to Reuters, added.

While the Kremlin said it could neither confirm nor deny the meeting, Russia's *Kommersant* newspaper reported that a Russian delegation headed by Naryshkin, the head of Russia's foreign intelligence agency, traveled to Turkey.

The meeting was hosted by Turkey's National Intelligence Agency (MIT), the Turkish press reported.

The talks came as fears are increasing over Russia's potential use of tactical nuclear weapons in the face of heavy losses to Ukrainian forces, particularly to the west of the Dnieper River.

The US press reported in early November on discussions between senior Russian officials over the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons in the war.

Ankara Slams EU over Turkish Cyprus' Status in Turkic States' Body

ANKARA (Hurriyet) — Ankara has slammed the European Union for criticizing the Organization of Turkic States' decision to admit Turkish Cyprus as an observer member.

"Türkiye fully rejects the statement made by EU External Action Service today [on November 12] on the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' (TRNC) observer status in the Organization of Turkic States," read a statement from the Turkish Foreign Ministry on the same day.

The Organization of Turkic States announced that it approved the observer status for Turkish Cyprus at a leaders' summit last week.

The EU rejected the decision and statements made by Turkey on the issue in a written statement on Nov. 12. "This decision, pending ratification of Organization's members, is regrettable and is contradicting the fact that several members of the organization expressed strong support to the principle of territorial integrity and the U.N. Charter," it stated.

"The EU has made it repeatedly clear, including at the highest political level, that the EU recognizes only the Republic of Cyprus as a subject of international law, in accordance with the respective U.N. Security Council Resolutions."

Montreal Chapter Celebrates TCA's 75th Anniversary, *Abaka's* 47th Anniversary, Arno Babajanian

ANNIVERSARIES, from page 1

Under the patronage of Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Canada Bishop Abgar Hovakimyan, represented by Fr. Komitas Mirzakhanyan, and under the presidency and with the presence of Armenian Ambassador to Canada Anahit Harutyunyan, the evening began as Harout Kouyoumjian, a member of the TCA Montreal executive, invited *Abaka* editor Avedis Bakkalian to present remarks.

Bakkalian noted the importance of the press, along with Armenian culture, schools and books, in the struggle to preserve the use of the Armenian language. He encour-



Dr. Arshavir Gundjian



Noubar Babikian presents Samuel Keuchkerian with an award

aged the older generations to provide gift subscriptions of *Abaka* to the youth to help in this struggle, building on the example of the custom in Armenia to give books as gifts to one another one day a year.

Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, who recently had received the Order of Canada from Governor General Mary Simon, in his capacity as vice president of the Central Board of the TCA of the United States and Canada, first congratulated the TCA Montreal chapter for a half-century of highly productive activity from the beginnings of the relatively young Armenian community of Montreal. He praised the entire team and especially editor Bakkalian of *Abaka*, the first Armenian newspaper in Canada, founded in 1975. He then spoke of how the 75th anniversary of the founding of TCA in Beirut was made possible through the farsighted actions of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party leadership back in 1947. Despite the difficulties of the Cold War, the TCA



Abaka editor Avedis Bakkalian speaking

had thus provided through its high quality cultural activities, exchanges and programs a bridge to maintain an effective communication link between the world of the Armenian diaspora and the Armenian homeland, then part of the Soviet Union.

Gundjian noted the irreplaceable loss of Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian, who passed away at the end of last year, and more recently, Vartouhie Balian, and evoked their invaluable contributions in the history of TCA Montreal.

Babajanian was one of the founders of the "estrada" form of popular Armenian music. In commemoration of his anniversary, Arden Arabian performed some of Babajanian's jazz pieces on the piano while soprano coloratura Sasha Djihanian and lyric tenor Sarkis Barsemian sang.



Harout Kouyoumjian

They were accompanied by Arabian's popular quartet, which includes Olivier Hebert on contrabass, Samuel Blais on saxophone and clarinet and drummer Sacha Daoud.

The artistic director of this musical presentation was Samuel Keuchkerian. He structured the program and chose the Babajanian pieces that were performed. TCA Montreal chairman Noubar Babikian presented Keuchkerian a plaque in recognition of his many years of service through music to the Montreal-Armenian community.

With ingeniously interwoven interventions during the entire length of the program, Silva Amadouni and Tsofig Moughalian served as the masters of ceremony. Asdghig Yazijian's decorations of the Haroutiun and Sima Arzoumanian Hall added to the festive atmosphere.



Tsofig Moughalian, left, and Silva Amadouni



INTERNATIONAL

Genocide and Denial: The Human Dimension

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

POTSDAM, Germany — Scholars and human rights proponents who came together earlier this month for a conference on “Genocide and Denial,” were continuing a discussion process begun in January this year. As Lepsiushaus director Dr. Roy Knocke recalled, the first conference, addressed by Prof. Taner Akçam and German Holocaust historian Wolfgang Benz, dealt with the denial of the Shoah and the Armenian Genocide as viewed from the historical perspective, whereas the second session would “develop the theme further, from a philosophical, sociopsychological and juridical perspective, with reference to human rights practice.” As referenced last week, all these aspects were treated in depth by experts. (See story in last week’s issue.) To do justice to all the presentations would require far more than an article, and what follows is a summary report. It is hoped that the papers will be published in the near future.

The Discrete Individual

If understanding the juridical aspects of genocide denial is crucial to effective action by human rights proponents in the pursuit of justice, grasping the nature of the social and psychological dimension of the phenomenon is vital to appreciating the human experience. Genocide involves entire populations and cultures, but it is perpetrated by individuals and they destroy the existences of individuals. How can one explain the mind of a perpetrator who denies his criminal actions? And, how may one access the emotional impact on the survivors and their progeny?

Dr. Angela Moré, professor of social psychology at Leibniz University, Hannover, offered profound insights into these questions in her talk on “Denial of Crimes against Humanity: Motives, Mechanisms and Consequences.” Among the defense mechanisms defined by psychoanalysis, denial serves to protect the ego from feelings of shame, fear and guilt, and it does this by creating constructs; in the attempt to deny a past deed, one creates an alternative version of events, as in an alibi or an outright lie. (Interestingly, in German the words for denial and lie, *Leugnen* and *Lügen*, are etymologically linked, sharing the same root.) For example, a German World War II veteran, who had told his family he had been a prisoner of war in Siberia until 1949, actually had been released from an English prison in 1945, where he was serving time for car smuggling. The lie about Siberia served to protect him from the shame associated with his own criminal act, while also eliciting recognition and sympathy.

Or, denial may function as a form of dissociation; here one eliminates any empathy for the victim, by depriving him of his hu-

manity. Moré cited the example of a Nazi SS member who proudly boasted of his executions of Jews with the construct that, if not eliminated, those victims could have done the same to his offspring. A group dynamic denoted as a “Soldier-Matrix” refers to perpetrators who experience their own brutal actions with feelings of superiority and power. Having denied the humanity of their victims, they end up destroying their own humanity.

Some perpetrators, Moré reported, might attempt to repair for their crimes, once returned to civilian life, but others would not. On the contrary, as amply documented in accounts of war crimes trials against Nazi perpetrators, they would flatly deny any wrongdoing, and, bound together in a sort of “sworn community,” rely on one other to hold up the lie. Furthermore, as an expansion of this phenomenon socially, significant layers of the civilian population would claim they had had no inkling of what had been laid bare in the war crimes tribunals.

Turkey and the Armenian Genocide

After presenting the evidence regarding post-war Germany’s mode of dealing with its Nazi past, including defense mechanisms and attempts to minimize or deny events, Moré moved to consideration of how the Armenian genocide is viewed. She stated that “in Turkish society, even after the fact and to the present day, there has been a removal of the persecution and a denial of the systematically planned and executed expulsions and killings,” even though this has been refuted by the long-standing consensus on the part of the international scientific community. Instead of the historical record, since Mustafa Kemal’s founding of the Turkish republic, the dominant narrative has been that all sides suffered, all sides had victims and perpetrators, so no need for anyone to take responsibility for the crimes of the Committee of Union and Progress.

Treating denial as the last stage of genocide, Moré reviewed points made by several researchers regarding the intention to erase memory and remembrance, as well as to destroy witnesses’ reports and cultural remains, which Henry Rousso dubbed “Negationism.” The fact that the perpetrators were not punished is itself a form of denial. Although trials were held in post-war Turkey, under Allied pressure, and criminals were convicted, very few death sentences were carried out, and the genocidal character of the measures was denied soon after the Lausanne Treaty. Article 301 of the Turkish penal code testifies to the fact that even mention of the genocide is considered a “national insult.” This fact leads to consideration of the thesis that nations seeking to exclude “others,” even by resorting to genocide, themselves suffer from an identity crisis; the Young Turk regime, seen in this light as politically insecure, engaged in projection of its own fears and dangers

onto the Armenians, especially the intellectual elites. Psychologically this betrays “a problem of its cultural envy, which is accompanied by existential insecurity, a sense of inferiority and fears of loss, even to the point of — fantasized or real — fear of being eliminated.”

With reference to Freud’s concept of the “uncanny,” Moré explained the process whereby denying criminal acts while placing the blame on the victims leads to creation of a vicious circle. As a result of an unconscious dynamic of projective identification, the identity crisis of the perpetrator remains, and with it the need for defense mechanisms. In addition, both sides, perpetrators and victims, along with their descendants, remain locked in a negative clinch. This, for Moré, “is the central unconscious function which the victims or victims are supposed to take on; they are to become the container as well as the grave of the insecure self-image and the negative parts of the self of the perpetrators or group.” This is linked to a perversion of the perpetrator-victim relationship, in that, if genocide survivors may develop so-called survivors’ guilt, perpetrators may tend to consider themselves victims.

Denial across Generations

For descendants of genocide survivors certainly the most intriguing aspect of this psychological analysis deals with transgenerational consequences of denial. Moré cited the work of Melanie Altanian (who also spoke at the conference), and her concept of “epistemic injustice.” This refers to the injury to genocide survivors’ descendants:

denial robs them of confirmation of their own identities, because it casts doubt on their family history. In the extreme this may create feelings of helplessness, and even fears of insanity. For the descendants, it means calling into question the veracity of tragic and painful events related by parents or grandparents, to the point that one feels obliged to provide proof.

For the descendants of the perpetrator generation there are psychological consequences as well, though they may remain latent and unconscious. Defense mechanisms emerge nonetheless, are experienced as necessary and are expressed often in vehement, aggressive denial of historical documentation.

Not to be forgotten is the phenomenon of silence, characteristic of those who survived the genocide as well as their progeny. For the latter, there is often an inkling of what had occurred, or at least, *that* something had occurred, but, as Moré said, “it was impossible for any exchange to take place.” One could not talk about it. This applies also to descendants of those Armenian survivors, mainly girls and women, who were converted to Islam by force and married. What, if any, inkling do they have of another identity? Here she noted the growing literature including biographical and autobiographical accounts of descendants, beginning with Fethiye Çetin’s best-seller *My Grandmother*. And she closed by stressing the immense value of such accounts by those who were witnesses to the genocide: theirs is lived history, history in the small, in the discrete individual person.

Turkey Alleges US Complicity in Deadly Istanbul Bombing, Rejects Condolence Statement

By Brad Dress

ISTANBUL (*The Hill*) — Turkey’s interior minister accused the US of being complicit in a recent bombing in the city of Istanbul on Sunday, November 13, that left at least six people dead and dozens of others injured.

Interior Minister Süleyman Soyulu rejected a statement of condolence from the U.S. during a press conference with reporters near the scene of the attack after authorities arrested a Syrian woman with suspected ties to Kurdish militants.

“I emphasize once again that we do not accept, and reject the condolences of the US Embassy,” Soyulu said, according to Turkish state media publication Anadolu Agency.

The interior minister said the US statement of condolence was like “a killer being first to show up at a crime scene.”

The US Embassy in Turkey tweeted Sunday that it was “deeply saddened” by the explosion, adding, “We extend our deepest condolences to the families of those who

lost their lives and wish a speedy recovery for the injured.”

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre also tweeted on Sunday that the US “condemns the act of violence that took place today in Istanbul.”

“Our thoughts are with those who were injured and our deepest condolences go to those who lost loved ones,” the statement read. “We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our NATO Ally Türkiye in countering terrorism.”

The bomb on Sunday exploded on Istiklal Avenue, a popular shopping thoroughfare. Turkish authorities arrested a Syrian woman who police said was connected to Kurdish militants and confessed to planting the bomb.

Authorities said instructions for the attack came from Kobani, a Syrian city that borders Turkey.

No groups have claimed responsibility for the attack, though Turkish officials have blamed Kurdish militants.

French Senate Votes for Sanctions against Azerbaijan, Expresses Support to Armenia

PARIS (Public Radio of Armenia) — The French Senate voted 295 to 1 to adopt a resolution calling for sanctions against Azerbaijan and expressing support for Armenia on November 15.

The resolution also demands to enforce the ceasefire agreement of November 9, 2020, and to promote any initiative aimed at establishing a lasting peace between the two countries.

The resolution calls for respect by the Azerbaijani authorities and all their part-

ners in the region, in particular Turkey, for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Armenia in accordance with their international obligations and commitments.

It also calls for the release and repatriation of all Armenian prisoners of war and condemns the violations by Azerbaijan of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 4 January 1969 and calls for the respect by the Azerbaijani authorities of the international agreements and conventions

aimed at ensuring the security of the Armenian populations and the preservation of Armenian cultural and religious heritage.

The resolution calls on the government to draw all the diplomatic and economic consequences from the recent attacks, and to consider, with its European partners, the strongest appropriate responses — including the seizure of the assets of Azerbaijani leaders and an embargo on imports of gas and oil from Azerbaijan — to sanction the military aggression carried out by the Azerbaijani forces on the territory of the

Republic of Armenia.

It invites the French government to consider setting up a humanitarian office in Nagorno-Karabakh and demonstrate by all means France’s support for Armenia, by considering in particular the strengthening of Armenia’s defense.

The resolution invites the government to make every effort to ensure that Azerbaijan engages in a process of negotiation through diplomatic channels, in order to achieve the establishment of a lasting peace in the South Caucasus.

INTERNATIONAL

Helen and Edward Mardigian Museum in Jerusalem Reopens

JERUSALEM (*Sion Magazine*) — On Sunday, October 23, the official reopening of the Helen and Edward Mardigian Museum of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem was held with many guests in the yard of the museum and the hall of the Gulbenkian library.

Patriarch Nourhan Manougian opened the program. The first speaker was Rev. Arakel Aljalian, the pastor at St. James Armenian Church in Watertown, Mass., who spent his youth under the arches of the Holy See Heritage School and has always been dedicated to the Holy See. He was actively involved in the renovation efforts of the museum.

In his speech, Aljalian first gave a historical overview of the presence of Armenians in the Holy Land and their rich heritage, then he thanked the participants in the organization of the renovation works of the museum, and especially Haroutian Bezjian, who coordinated the efforts with the Mardigians.

A musical interlude followed, with works by Komitas.

Next, Manougian spoke about the importance of reestablishing an Armenian



Rev. Arakel Aljalian delivered a talk

museum in a center like Jerusalem. After his speech, he, the congregation and the attendees proceeded to the entrance of the museum, and officially opened the museum.



Rev. Arakel Aljalian, left, with Patriarch Nourhan Manougian



Henrikh Mkhitaryan Meets with Pope

YEREVAN (*Armenpress*) — Henrikh Mkhitaryan, the former midfielder of the national football team of Armenia, and now a member of Inter Milan team, met with Pope Francis and presented him with his football jersey on November 14.

It is noted that a football match with the title “We are playing for peace” was held at the “Olympic” stadium in Rome, which was attended by many famous football players, including Henrikh Mkhitaryan. The tournament is being organized for the third time by the archpriest Scholas Occurrentes foundation. Before the match, the Pope welcomed the football players, the organizers of the competition and their families.

The Match for Peace, organized by the Pontifical Foundation Scholas Occurrentes, took place at Rome’s Olympic Stadium, with the support and blessing of Pope Francis on the evening of November 14.

Ahead of the match, the Pope greeted the world-renowned soccer players, organizers and their families, in the Vatican’s Paul VI

Hall.

The game, with the motto “We Play for Peace,” features the participation of many important figures in the world of football, and follows the first two matches, held on 1 September 2014 and 12 October 2016.

This year’s game pays homage to football giant Diego Maradona, who participated in both of the previous Matches for Peace, leading the ‘Scholas squad.’ Mara-



Pope Francis receives a jersey from Henrikh Mkhitaryan.

dona passed away in November 2020.

Receiving the footballers, with Henrikh Mkhitaryan among them, the Holy Father thanked them for growing seeds of peace in a world marked by war.

Peace, the Pope said, is the fruit of gestures like theirs, namely “of closeness, friend-

ship, the outstretched hand, always,” and “not with the stone in your hand to throw it.

These “seeds of peace,” he said, may be small, but “are capable of changing the world.”

The athletes had the opportunity to approach the Pope and communicate with him, giving him various gifts. The former midfielder of the Armenian national team presented him with his T-shirt.



Community News

Festival Celebrates Armenian Culture With Food, Music And Dance in Rancho Mirage

By Ani Gasparyan

RANCHO MIRAGE, Calif. (DesertSun.com) — Coachella Valley residents were able to enjoy a bit of Armenia over Veterans Day weekend. St. Garabed Armenian Apostolic Church of the Desert hosted an Armenian Cultural Festival on Saturday and Sunday [November 12-13]. It is the 14th annual festival for the church, attracting hundreds of guests to enjoy Armenian food, music and dancing. [The festival committee reported on November 14 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* that in fact, this year a new record was set for the number of visitors, which reached 3,385 in total over the two days of the festival.]

Vartan Nazerian, chair of the parish council, said the church was established 17 years ago but its building was built 11 years ago. The festival was held on the land before the church was constructed, he said.

"It's basically, this festival is the source of income for the whole year for the church," he said.

The church asks for a \$3 donation to enter, though children under 12 and veterans can enter for free. Booths at the event sell items like jewelry, clothing and hair care. Hamazkayin Ani Dance Company performed traditional dances and there was live music from David Samuelian, Aram Lepedjian and DJ Greg.

Garbis Hindoyan, vice chair of the parish council, said it makes them happy to see many of the festival attendees include non-Armenians. He said the church is expecting around 3,000 guests on Saturday and Sunday.

"We feel so good that we're introducing Armenian food, dancing, pretty much everything Armenian — how hard we work! ... It gives us a sense of pride and joy," Hindoyan said.

He praised the church's volunteers, citing how its Ladies Auxiliary members prepared for months and made almost all of the food offered at the festival.

Some of the dishes include cheese *boreg*, stuffed grape leaves, *paklava* and *khadayif*. The men of the church prepared barbecue — a staple of any Armenian gathering.

Houry Sonia Matossian, former chair of the parish council and volunteer, has attended all 14 of Armenian Cultural Festivals and was one of the women who made the dishes. She said each festival has been more successful than the last, resulting in them extending the event from one day to two.

"We attract a lot of non-Armenian people because they are crazy about our food," she said. "They wait for this all the time."

Matossian spoke about the significance of having an Armenian church in the Coachella Valley. She estimated there are around 400 Armenian families here.

see FESTIVAL, page 11



Harout Nercessian, Honorees Serge and Nadia Kurkjian and Zaven Khanjian

AMAA Celebrates 103rd Anniversary with Banquet

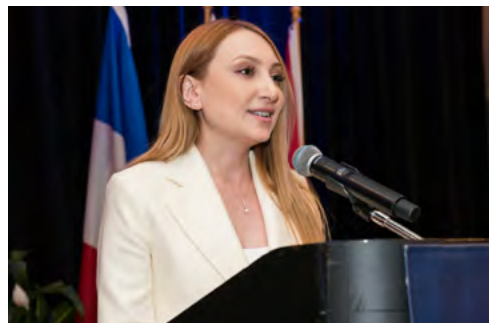
By Florence Avakian

HILTON HASBROUCK HEIGHTS, N.J. — Reaching a century of growth and great achievement is considered a climactic milestone, but exceeding it is a remarkable triumph. On Saturday, October 22, the Armenian Missionary Association of America did just that when it marked its 103rd Annual Meeting Banquet with close to 225 in attendance from all over the world.

At this event, titled "Empowering AMAA's Global Mission," this organization which serves as the missionary arm of the Armenian Evangelical Church internationally, and is working in 24 countries, honored its partners in Canada, Australia, and France.

Representing the association's fellowship which promotes education, churches, humanitarian and youth programs, and camps for Armenians worldwide, the banquet tables were symbolically decorated with globes sitting atop an ornamental bowl of fall flowers.

A warm welcome was shared by longtime AMAA officials and activists Vahram and Lucienne Aynilian in English, Armenian and French. "We stand on the shoulders of our courageous people and heroic history," they said to loud applause.



Armenia's Ambassador to the United States Lilit Makunts

Relaying a message from the AMAA President, Dr. Nazareth Darakjian, Khanjian reminded the audience that "our last meeting was five years ago due to the pandemic and other difficulties that beset the AMAA, Armenia, Artsakh, Lebanon and Syria during this period." "In the interim, the AMAA has helped our fallen and disabled soldiers with spiritual and humanitarian assistance as we did to aid the suffering during and after the earthquake with its many victims, including the orphans," he said with emphasis.

The AMAA will always "help and rebuild. If we stand united, we will always succeed," Khanjian stated to sustained applause.

Among the special guests in the audience were the Vicar of the Armenian Prelacy (eastern) the Very Rev. Fr. Sahag Yemishian, Tufenkjian Foundation representative Dr. Antranig Kasparian, Armenia's Ambassador to the United Nations Mher Margaryan, and Armenia's Ambassador to the United States Lilit Makunts, who in a brief address, spoke of the exemplary role of the AMAA in Armenia, as well as Armenia's progress in the last four years.

Also present were Armenian activists Hagop and Ica Kouyoumdjian, Tekeyan representative Hagop Vartivarian, AAHPO President Dr. and Mrs. Lawrence Najarian, with members Shoghag Hovanessian, and Seta Nalbandian, Armenian Radio Hour of NJ Director Vartan and Adrine Abdo with members Seta, Aren, and Diran Jebejian. (The latter photographed the event.)

Following a sumptuous dinner, the representatives of the Canadian, Australian and French AMAA partners took center stage, detailing the growth and virtues of their organizations, with lengthy videos and leaders speaking of their vibrant activities.

see AMAA, page 10

Racine Parish Marks Centennial With Weekend of Programs

RACINE, Wis. — The year-long centennial celebration at St. Mesrob Church of Racine, WI, continued last month with a weekend of celebrations and reunions. On October 8, some 200 guests gathered at Racine's Delta Marriott for a Centennial Banquet.

Presided over the occasion was Diocesan Vicar Fr. Simeon Odabashian, representing Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan. Fr. Simeon conveyed blessings from the Primate, and congratulated the parish on its milestone.

Racine Mayor Cory Mason presented the parish with a certificate commemorating the auspicious occasion.

Deacon Dan Korakian was Master of Ceremonies for the evening, in a program featuring opening and closing prayers by former St. Mesrob pastors Fr. Garabed Kochakian and Fr. Yeprem Kelegian. "We were very blessed to have so many supporters from our parish as well as guests from surrounding communities," remarked banquet chair Judy Petersen.



Fr. Garabed Kochakian at the reception

A video titled *The Translators*, highlighting the parish's trailblazing history, premiered during the dinner. Racine pastor Fr. Avedis Kalayjian produced the film and served as its narrator.

"The spiritual culture of St. Mesrob Church has been one of service for the glory of God," he said in the video. "Through the years, Armenians have cared for the less fortunate, the voiceless, the poor, the soldiers of our adopted country, our brothers and sisters in Armenia and Artsakh. The parish responded generously to appeals locally and abroad, and took its own initiative to spread the mercy of God to others."

Other highlights of the evening included remarks from Elsie Garoukian, Harry Boranian, Nadine Mach, and parish council chair Steve Genozian. A musical interlude featured Aram Kalayjian on piano. An Armenian tapestry featuring St. Mesrob Mashdots and the alphabet was unveiled, as a special gift to the parish from Diramayr Anahid Kalayjian.

Banquet attendees received St. Mesrob Centennial commemorative key chains handmade in Armenia, as

see CENTENNIAL, page 8

COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

Racine Parish Marks Centennial With Weekend of Programs

CENTENNIAL, from page 7

well as a commemorative anniversary booklet. The banquet concluded in a dance, with music provided by the Wisconsin-based Armenian band, the Mid-East Beat.

The following day, a special *hokehankist* was offered for all the clergy, *yeretzgins*, and other parishioners who have served and passed on during the past 100 years of parish life. After the service celebrated by Odabashian, worshipers gathered for a luncheon sponsored by the St. Mesrob Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA). Kochakian spoke on the stained glass project he had spearhead in the early 1980s, during his tenure in Racine.

Joining Fr. Kalayjian on the Centennial Banquet committee were dedicated parishioners Judy Hachikian Petersen, Lauren Chalekian, Linda Budlow, Patti Drumm, and Janet Mrazek. The October weekend was part of a series of anniversary events and initiatives in 2022. Others included the monthly Centennial Spotlight, the Racine 4th of July Parade, a *madagh* dinner, the Armenian Fest Centennial display, and a vespers service at the first church in Racine to host St. Mesrob worshipers.



Very Rev. Simeon Odabashian leading the service in Racine

OBITUARY

Varsen Naciye Alpian Custom Tailor and Great-grandmother, 102

LOS ANGELES — Varsen Naciye Alpian was born in Tokat (Yevtogia), Turkey in February 1920 to a physician father and educator mother, both born in Sepasdia (Sivas). Her original birth name was Varsen Karageuzian, but because of the difficult times after the Armenian Genocide her parents changed their surname to a more ambiguous-sounding one with Armenian roots, Arkun, and also gave her a Turkish first name, Naciye, for protective reasons.

It was a difficult time to be raised in Anatolia as a female child. For that reason, she was only able to graduate from elementary school in Tokat. However, in her teenage

years both of her brothers were sent to Istanbul to further their education. Her older brother Suren Sureyya Naci was in medical school, while the younger one, S. Vedat, was in an Austrian high school. So Varsen joined them and she started going to a fine arts school (Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi), where she excelled in drawing, cooking and tailoring.

At 24 years of age, she married her childhood friend and son of close family friends, Kegham Pabujian, whose name was changed to Kenan Alptekin for the same reasons as motivated her own parents. Eventually she became a mother of two boys, Arman and Sevan.

She and her family emigrated to the United States to join her two brothers in 1966 and settled in New York. Her fine arts school education bore fruit as she started to work at a custom shirt maker. A few years later, in 1970, the family was able to purchase a dry cleaning store. The first few years were a struggle but her tailoring skills became very helpful. Within a few years, the small dry cleaning store had to hire 5 more tailors to catch up with the customers' demands.

During that period, the US was involved in the Vietnam War and the country was in a deep recession. Both sons, who had become engineers, were struggling to find jobs and eventually they got into the family dry cleaning business as well. Shortly thereafter the business expanded to multiple locations.

Varsen was at the heart of the success of this business. Without her, it could never have happened. It was her hard work and talent that made it all possible.

In the United States, it was possible to change Alptekin to a new Armenian surname, Alpian, and Naciye turned back into Varsen. Mrs. Alpian lived a long life and enjoyed her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. In her retirement, she moved to Florida with her husband and lived there for the next 25 years, where she enjoyed her freedom of religion, nationality and her real name. She passed away on October 11 at the age of 102.

She is survived by her son and daughter-in-law Arman and Aida Alpian; son and daughter-in-law Sevan and Arlene Alpian; grandchildren Aris, Masis, Elisa, and Nickolas Alpian; and great-grandchildren Matteo and Emmanuel Alpian, as well as members of the Arkun, Kalfa, Balciyan, Calibasi, Kizak, Diktas, Demiral and Mkrtrichian families.

Services were conducted at St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church in Douglaston, NY, on October 25, and she was buried at Flushing Cemetery next to her beloved husband. Forty-day requiem services will be held on Sunday, November 20 at St. Peter Armenian Church in Van Nuys, Calif.

Donation

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* gratefully acknowledges the following donations in memory of Varsen Naciye Alpian: \$100 from Mrs. Silva Karachorlu and \$500 from Aram, Knarik, Mark Antranig and Raffi Vedat Arkun.

Armené Chorbajian Longtime Teacher



ARLINGTON, Mass. — Armené Chorbajian of Arlington, died on November 13, 2022.

She was the daughter of the late Yervant and Yeranoohi Chorbajian, and sister of Edward Chorbajian. She is also survived by many loving and devoted cousins in Massachusetts, New York, California and throughout the U.S. Armené was beloved elementary school teacher for 50 years at the Shamrock School in Woburn.

Funeral services were at Saint Stephen's Armenian Church, Watertown on Thursday, November 17. Interment followed at Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Arlington.

Arrangements were by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Watertown.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Tekeyan Cultural Association Holds 36th Convention Via Zoom

CONVENTION, from page 1
Manoukian of Montreal and monitored by TCA's Armenia representative Gayane Muratyan, with the assistance of Anahit Kosakyan, the last principal of the Berdzor school. TCA, in collaboration with the Syunik NGO of Vayots Dzor province, made investments into beekeeping and animal husbandry in order to create means of livelihood for the refugees.

The TCA CB continued its financial support of the newspapers *Azg* in Armenia, *Baika*, the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, *Abaka*, *Nor Ashkharh* of Athens, Greece, and *Zartok* of Beirut. The printing of *Baika*, which was halted in 2020 in Los Angeles due to the Covid pandemic, restarted in 2021. TCA also supported the Prague-based magazine *Ozer* in 2021.

Both the TCA Montreal Center and the Beshgeturian Center conducted significant renovations of their facilities in 2021. The Beshgeturian Center, despite the pandemic difficulties, created a Social Committee which held several dinners and lectures in 2021.

The TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group, based in the TCA New Jersey rented center, issued a music video, "My One and Only Love – Miak Im Ser" in Armenian and English, on December 26, 2021, for Christmas, together with the Huyser Music Ensemble. Due to the pandemic, it was forced

to postpone an open air concert in 2021 till the following year and could not hold other activities.

The CB supported a conference on Arpiar Arpiarian and the Reformed Hnchagian Party at the Armenian Academy of Sciences in Yerevan in June 2021, and book publications in North America, Armenia and Lebanon.

Finances

CB Treasurer Maro Bedrosian reported on the Tekeyan portfolio, which is managed by Michael Norehad. She noted that despite four major worries in the markets — inflation, higher interest rates, the slowdown in earnings growth, and geopolitical issues with both Russia and China — in the end the markets again rallied to make 2021 a third excellent year. However, there may be a pull back in 2022.

CB Assistant Treasurer Kevork Marashlian then reported on the budget during 2021.

Sponsor a Teacher Program

Bedrosian announced that in 2021, TCA raised and distributed \$38,610 in support of four Tekeyan schools in Armenia and one in Berdzor, Artsakh, to 334 teachers in total. President Azadian and CB member Mihran Minassian, along with TCA representative Muradyan, visited the schools to carry out the distribution. Between 2001 and 2021, a grand total of \$798,260 has been raised and distributed through this program. Bedrosian

has been in charge of this program since its inception.

Publications and Chapter Reports

Publications Committee Chair Hagop Vartivarian noted that TCA published ten Armenian-language books from 2019 to 2022, the majority of which are on topics of literary or historical significance, and presented their titles and authors.

This was followed by reports from seven chapters on their activities during 2021. The report from Boston was presented by Sossy Yogurtian, Detroit by Diana Alexanian, Greater New York by Sylvia Buzantian, Los Angeles by Lilit Keheyian, Metro Los Angeles by Shahnour Hovsepian, Montreal by Noubar Babikian, and Pasadena-Glendale by Siran Oknayan.

Election to Central Board

Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, chair of the Nominating Committee, which included as members Hagop Alexanian and Ara Balian, reported the names of candidates proposed for the three renewable positions of the CB. He and Azadian praised the decades of service of Kevork Keushkerian, a CB member who kept the Beshgeturian Center of Pasadena/Altadena active and renovated, and also organized many cultural activities and lectures (many of which he delivered). Keushkerian's CB term was up and he chose not to run again.

The nominating committee proposed Ara

Tcholakian of Las Vegas in Keushkerian's seat. Tcholakian has been devoted to Armenian cultural affairs and TCA for much of his life and studied at the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Melkonian Institute of Cyprus. He is the founder and CEO of Nevatronix, a leading digital signage, electronics, automated cash handling/payments and kiosk/software solutions company, and founder and CEO of Advanced Metal Works. Dr. Gundjian also submitted on behalf of the committee the names of two current CB members, Carl Bardakian and Arto Manoukian, for reelection, after highlighting their accomplishments.

All three candidates were elected unanimously for CB terms renewable at each TCA convention.

Simsarian Trophy

The Dicran Simsarian Committee this year was chaired by Kevork Keushkerian, with members Noubar Babikian and Sossy Yogurtian. Keushkerian announced that the Simsarian Trophy went to Maro Bedrosian and the Sponsor a Teacher program in recognition of its ongoing success over two decades.

Words of Thanks

Hagop Vartivarian, chair of the Courtesies Committee, which included Shahnour Hovsepian and Rita Balyozian as its members, read resolutions in appreciation of the work of the CB and its president, the seven TCA chapters of North America, the Sponsor a Teacher program led by Maro Bedrosian, Arto Manoukian's efforts to help those affected by the 44-day war, the TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group on its 25th anniversary, and the TCA Publications Committee. Dr. Arshavir Gundjian was congratulated for his investiture as a member of the Order of Canada by Governor General Mary Simon. Further resolutions thanked all those who contributed to the fundraising efforts of TCA during the 44-day war via the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, and the work of TCA Executive Director Aram Arkun, Executive Secretaries Mayda Kuredjian and Salpi Margossian, and Gayane Muratyan, Representative of the TCA of the US and Canada in Armenia, as well as the members of the Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund Committee.

A moment of silence was held for all TCA members who had passed away since the last convention in 2019: Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian, Nora Ipekian Azadian, Vartouhie Balian, Anahid Megerian, Loutfi Tabakian, Telma Ayaltin, Irma Der Stepanian, Hratch Manoukian, Ara Aharonian, Lucy Piligian and Missak Alexanian.

The Central Board made special mention of the success of the TCA 75th world anniversary gala organized this October by CB member Hilda Hartounian, who is chair of the TCA Greater NY Chapter, and her gala committee. It was an elegant affair that also was an opportunity to express the appreciation of all Armenians for the decades of efforts of Senator Robert Menendez on behalf of Armenian Americans.

Special thanks also went to the Montreal Chapter for organizing a combined celebration of the TCA 75th anniversary and *Abaka* weekly's 47th anniversary with the presence of Armenia's Ambassador to Canada Anahit Harutyunyan. Further 75th anniversary activities are planned this year, including a gala in December at the Beshgeturian Center in California. The TCA president encouraged all to participate.

The president congratulated the TCA chapters on their activities and thanked all the participants of the Zoom convention for attending. The convention closed with the promise that next year the TCA delegates would meet in person, barring a worsening of pandemic conditions.



Tekeyan Cultural Association

21st Anniversary

Sponsor a Teacher

in Armenia and Five Artsakh Villages




SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 2001, THE TCA SPONSOR A TEACHER PROGRAM HAS RAISED \$793,560 AND REACHED OUT TO 7,163 TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF IN ARMENIA AND ARTSAKH.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

AMAA Celebrates 103rd Anniversary with Banquet

AMAA, from page 7

International Efforts

Mihran Jizmejian, AMAC former President/CEO and Current Chair in Canada spoke of the birth of the Armenian Missionary Organization of Canada in 1984 with a group of dedicated founders including Reverends Abraham Jizmejian, Ardashes Kerbabian, Hovhannes Agnerian, Yessayi Sarmazian, Jirair Bezdikian, Alice Marandjian, Sonia Matossian, Dr. George Ajemian, Messer Anton Torunian, Karekian Sagherian, Papken Tountaian, Hagop Basmadjian, Souren Hadjian Sarkis Hanenian, Mihran Jizmejian, Antibas Lousararian, Puzant Danaian and Hagop Kaakahjian.

Four Armenian Evangelical churches were established in Canada - Toronto, Cambridge, and two in Montreal, following lengthy discussions with AMAA's Executive Director Rev. Guiragos Chopourian, and Rev. Dr. Movses B. Janbazian in 1982. Mihran Jizmejian with wife Vartuhi, served 40 stellar years, including Chair, President, an Executive Director.

Continuing AMAC projects include Child Sponsorship in Armenia, Artsakh, and Lebanon, relief programs in Artsakh, Lebanon, the Armenian Evangelical School in Anjar, Lebanon, in Askeran, Artsakh and the Vanadzor Shogh Center in Armenia.

Joseph and Joyce Stein, AMAA Board and Committee members, paid tribute to Rev. Krikor Youmshajekian, AMA Australia President/CEO, and spoke of their first meeting with Rev. Krikor in the 1970's on their annual visits to Lebanon and Syria at the urging of Joyce's father, Stephen Philibosian, "who wanted us to see the many



Honorees Rev. Dr. Krikor and Datevig Youmshajekian, Joyce Stein, Gary Phillips, Esq. and Joe Stein

projects he supported for many years."

In their appreciative remarks, Joseph and Joyce Stein continued, "we are here tonight to honor Rev. Krikor and Datevig for their years of bringing the Australian Armenian population into the limelight with the founding and growth of the Uniting Church and to thank them for their Christian leadership."

Created in 2001 through the efforts of the late Rev. Dr. Movses Janbazian, the first inductees included Hovhannes Soghomonian, Barkev Ishkhanian, Sevag Chelebian, Lucy Aroyan, Lena Bomoushakian, Arpi Giragossian, and Rev. Krikor Youmshajekian as President and CEO.

The Australian chapter's projects include student support programs in Armenia, Artsakh and Lebanon, emergency support and refurbishment of schools in Syria, Lebanon, Armenia and Artsakh, Shogh Centers in Armenia and Artsakh, summer camps, humanitarian and medical needs, scholarship assistance and spiritual literature, and underground shelters for the natural disasters in Australia.

Harout Nercessian, former AMAA Armenia Representative, and Hope for Armenia President Serge Kurkdjian, whose remarks in French were translated, recounted that the Armenian Evangelical churches in France established Hope For Armenia at the initiation of its president, the late Rev. Daniel Sahagian to provide material and spiritual help to the Armenian earthquake victims in 1988.

The first president was Rev. Dr. René Léonian, followed by Boros Haladjian, Rev. Gilbert Léonian, and the current President Serge Kurkdjian. The group has been instrumental in providing economic aid to Armenia with food, fuel and spiritual guidance during those dark times.

Serge Kurkdjian provided a 26-year collaboration with the leadership of Hope For Armenia, "tirelessly organizing trips to Armenia and meticulously organizing many creative projects, including camps for the children and domiciles for the elderly.

Injecting light humor in a joyous evening, the culinary expertise of the French cuisine was emphasized. "We the people of France love to eat, and we Armenians introduced them to our own food, of course, with wine, showing our love of God, and our creative menus," they said.

Hope For Armenia's latest program with the AMAA involves the opening of an Education Day Center for children in Stepanakert, Artsakh, The Center in AMAA-provided premises, will open in September 2023, with the teaching of Christian education and the French language.

Lovely art gifts from the AMAA were presented to the representatives of the Canadian, Australian and French partners made by Vasken Brutyan from Armenia. Each artwork, different in composition, utilizes fragments from manuscripts of the Gandzasar School, from architectural and crosstown motifs, as well as passages from the prayers of St. Gregory of Narek.

The Hope for Armenia French representatives also presented AMAA Executive Director/CEO a framed *Hayr Mer* (The Lord's Prayer) written by the orphans of Armenia.

Current State of Armenia, Artsakh

AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian, in his inspiring remarks, remem-

bered and expressed appreciation for all the individuals who made the evening possible, including the AMAA staff in Paramus, Glendale, Yerevan and Artsakh, as well as the many guests who came from many corners of the world.

Noting the current difficult times, he emotionally stated, "never in the past 35 years has the prospect of a free and independent Artsakh been so dim and remote. Never in the history of the living generation of Armenians has the concern about the homeland been so great and serious."

He recounted the "threats, assault, land grab, occupation, execution of unarmed POWs, incitement and promotion of hatred which have all gone through with impunity. Armenia has only received toothless condemnation from friends near and far. In this existential battle of survival, we are the sole guarantors of our destiny," he stressed.

Expressing hope, he reminded all that "we have endured such periods in history. Borne the pain and resurrected. Our resilience and persistence have prevailed. Our homeland is our yoke and we should all be engaged in a battle to defend, support and sustain it."

Khanjian informed the audience that "in the next few months "we will build two new kindergartens in Artsakh, half a dozen new homes, a tech center at the Avedisian School in Yerevan. We shall embark on a major development of the youth camp in Hankavan, pour the foundation of the resurrected Camp Armen in Tuzla, Turkey, and inaugurate the new AMAA Center and soup kitchen in Bert, Tavush *Marz*."

He again stated, "We are good in build-



Zaven Khanjian

ing, educating and spreading the Word. Those are our weapons. We shall use them."

Among the acclaimed performers of the event were noted violinist from Armenia, Diana Vasilyan who performed during the reception preceding the banquet, award-winning Armenian-American singer, actress and TV performer Ani Djirdjirian who had the crowd jumping during several of her stage performances, and the nimble footed, beautifully costumed dancers of the Sushi Dance Ensemble under the direction of artistic director and choreographer Seta Paskalian-Kantardjian.

The event closed with a devotional closing prayer and benediction by Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian, acting president of the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East and president of Haigazian University in Beirut, Lebanon.

The AMAA 103rd Annual Banquet Committee members included, Co-Chairs, Vahram and Lucienne Aynilian, Raffi and Lorri Aynilian, VJ and Simonè Aynilian, Hrag and Taline Chalian, Ida Gueyikian, Shant and Nary Gueyikian, Berjouhy Barsoumian Gulesserian, Nurhan and Celeste Helvacian, Vicki Shoghag Hovanessian, Zaven and Sona Khanjian, Gregory and Tamara Krikorian, Christine Kutlu, Seta Nalbandian, Magda Poulos, Nancy Rivera, Jennifer Telfeyan-LaRoe, Marie Viducich and Kathy Voskian.

For More information, visit www.amaa.org.

AMAA Holds 103rd Annual Meeting, Elects New Board Members for Class of 2025

By Louisa Janbazian

PARAMUS, N.J. — After an absence of five years, the Armenian Missionary Association of America's (AMAA) Annual Meeting and Banquet returned to Paramus, New Jersey where its main headquarters are located on 31 West Century Road, Paramus. The AMAA's 103rd Annual Meeting was held on Saturday, October 22, 2022, at the Sanctuary of the Armenian Presbyterian Church of Paramus.

In the absence of AMAA President Dr. Nazareth Darakjian due to an emergency, the meeting was presided over by the association's Vice President Gary Phillips, Esq. Rev. Hovhannes Hovsepyan, senior pastor of Evangelical Church of Armenia in Armenia, offered a prayer and a short devotion.

During the meeting AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian presented his report covering the Association's activities during the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year. Reports were also received from the AMAA Officers, Directors and Committee Chairs, as well as Representatives of the Armenian Evangelical Unions, the Armenian Evangelical World Council, and affiliated organizations, who shared their joys and concerns and praised God for another successful year post COVID pandemic era.

The AMAA's general membership elected the following nine members to the Board of Directors Class of 2025 for a term of three years: LindaKay Abdulian, Bryan Agbabian, Gregory Bilezikian, Phyllis Dohanian, Rev. Dr. Haig Kherlopian, Nurhan Helvacian, Ph.D., Mark Kassabian, Esq., Arda Melkonian and Michèle Simourian.

The AMAA's 103rd Annual Meeting concluded with a closing prayer offered by Rev. Joël Mikaélian, President of the Armenian Evangelical World Council and Pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Issy-les-Moulineaux, France.

In conjunction with the AMAA Annual Meeting, the AMAA Board of Directors and the Armenian Evangelical World Council held their meetings on October 20-21.

On Sunday, October 23, members, and guests joined the Armenian Presbyterian Church of Paramus, NJ for a special Worship Service. Mihran Jizmejian offered the Armenian sermon and Rev. Dr. Haig Kherlopian offered the English sermon. A special prayer was offered by Rev. Harut Khachatryan, Senior Pastor of the United Armenian Congregational Church of Los Angeles, in memory of AMAA members and friends who made the transition from this life-to-Life Eternal during the past year. Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian, the Executive Director of the Armenian Evangelical World Council officiated the installation of the members and officers of the AMAA Board of Directors.

"We take this opportunity to thank the members of the Armenian Presbyterian Church of Paramus and its Pastor Rev. Joseph Garabedian for hosting the Annual Meeting and welcoming us with great warmth and hospitality. We pray that God will continue to bless this congregation and their ministry abundantly in the Bergen County area of NJ," said Mr. Khanjian.



COMMUNITY NEWS

WPI Students Design Modular Homes for Artsakh Refugees

HOMES, from page 1

like this could be happening in the world, and it wasn't making mainstream news," Valentine recalled. "But I also felt hopeful that we would now have an opportunity with our project to maybe make a real impact in helping those that were hurting and being displaced," he added.

"Having two non-Armenian students committed was even more significant. They did their own research about the situation. It was very heartwarming that non-Armenians were actually very curious to find out about what was happening and wanted to help," Varjabedian said.

Humanitarian Architecture

Their project's humanitarian concept was designing and building a housing complex for Artsakh refugees. Since so much of Artsakh was taken over by Azerbaijan, the trio envisaged that the execution would take place in Armenia. Their view was not solely from an architectural perspective, but also inspired by the social aspect of providing housing for those in need. Considering the economic challenges, availability of materials, and climate, they chose to follow the design of modular homes, using shipping containers as the main structural component. They envisioned three types of units: a two-person unit, a single-family home and a multi-generational family home, a common household composition in Armenia.

The design was aimed to be powerful. Looking down on the complex, its layout represented the white pattern on the Artsakh flag: "The idea was to create a connection between the design and the symbolism

of the Artsakh flag," Varjabedian said.

They incorporated a lot of arches, outdoor living space and rooftop patios. They used volcanic tuff, native to Armenia, for the exterior and façade of the building. The team conducted several structural analyses to assess the complex's feasibility.



"It was also important to make this place environmentally friendly and sustainable, rather than using a traditional way of building homes," Varjabedian noted.

To implement this project, they have found many sites for sale in Yerevan, but their preference is in the residential neighborhood of Nor Arabkir. This location was chosen principally due to its prime location, residential area, and proximity to commercial establishments, as well as a hospital and an elementary school. Yerevan's center is only one mile away and can be reached via public transportation, including a bus

stop in the area. No contact has been made yet with the sellers, but the team is keeping this location top of mind.

Raising Awareness

Upon initial concept presentation, the team was directed by their professors who advised them to learn more about "humanitarian architecture."

This concept is based on improving society and living in appropriate housing. It incorporates consideration of the psychological aspects rather than solely the building and construction. This MQP team at WPI was the only one to choose a "humanitarian architectural" project.

After the submission of the project, they made a five-minute presentation to the WPI community. It was an opportunity for the team to explain the background and driving factor of the Artsakh war to students who were vaguely aware of what was going on

in Armenia and Artsakh at the time.

"I would say that our project was a good template or baseline for similar necessary projects that could be completed in Armenia. Small, affordable, easily assembled units that can be built to house those who were caught in the cross-fire of the conflict," Valentine said.

From Plans to Action

Since the end of April, Varjabedian, Bishop, and Valentine have been seeking professionals and organizations to support them and execute their project. During their research, they discovered a few associations already working in Armenia, such as the Artsakh Relocation Project. This youth diasporan organization assisted Artsakh refugee families and provided them with housing and food.

The trio are now looking forward to collaborating with Armenian organizations or individuals. The team aspires to build the complex within two or three years. They can't yet estimate the cost of their project since the team still requires professional advice and more specific work on the concept. But as young professionals, their commitment to this project continues as the need is escalating globally.

According to the Artsakh's government, 91,000 individuals were displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia as a direct result of the 2020 conflict and 36,989 persons in a refugee-like situation in Armenian were a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the UN Refugees agency (UNHCR) said on their report of July 2021.

Their entire project is available on line and can be downloaded.

Festival Celebrates Armenian Culture with Food, Music and Dance in Rancho Mirage

FESTIVAL, from page 7

"You go all over the world: if you have two Armenians there should be a church," she said. "This is what Armenians are all about; they love their church."

Many Armenians also come to visit from cities with larger diaspora communities, like Los Angeles. Four buses brought guests from sister churches in Glendale, Pasadena and other cities in the San Fernando Valley, according to Hindoyan.

Guests appeared to be enjoying the event on Saturday, many of them carrying bags of Armenian food they had bought and walking around the festivities to speak to each other.

Armenians are a small minority in the valley.

"Through this, when you attract the attention of non-Armenians, then you can introduce April 24, then you can talk about the genocide, then they will have an understanding when they see in the news Armenians are protesting something, they won't just switch the channel," she said. "It might ignite some memory and they might say 'Oh, these people have a right, have a reason for doing what they do.'"

Robert and Leanne Pilcher had seen the festival advertised for weeks. Leanne Pilcher said they visited the booths and bought some food to take home.



Guests grabbing food at festival. Saint Garabed Church of the Desert's Ladies Auxiliary members prepared most of the dishes (photo Ani Gasparyan)

Tables were set up underneath the shade for people to eat and children could play in a bounce house. The church was open for guests to walk in and either sit in the pews or light candles.

Hasmik Sarkissian said she has been attending the festival for many years. She said it's crucial to have the festival because

"It's well worth the time and it's fun to listen to the music," she said. "The music is festive and wonderful."

Lusine Poghosyan's daughter is performing as part of Hamazkayin Ani Dance Company. She said she didn't know there was an Armenian church or community in the Greater Palm Springs Area.



Hamazkayin Ani Dance Company (photo Ara Babayan)



Tavit Samuelian singing accompanied by Aram Lepejian (photo Ara Babayan)

"It's new, it's a new experience and it's really nice to see that there's so many of

us so different and yet so — there's a lot connecting us," she said.

Arts & Culture

Antoine Bordier

'Armenia Inspired Me to Publish My First Book'

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — I learned about the newly published French novel *Arthur, le petit prince d'Arménie* (Arthur, the little prince of Armenia) by Antoine Bordier while navigating online news and learned that the author happened to be in Armenia at that moment. We met very soon and talked about his book and more.



The journalist, consultant and writer Antoine Bordier was born in France and lives in Paris. Since his teens, he has written poetry and worked as a journalist. He later studied law, economics and finance, worked as auditor, managed companies in Romania and Portugal, launching his own consulting firm. In 2018 he went back to journalism and became an author in 2021.

Antoine, this is your fourth time in Armenia.

That's right. My first visit was last year. I came for an economic mission, to work as consultant in founding of a French company in Armenia. Then I was writing for *Challenges*, a newspaper covering economic topics. After that I visited again and stayed for a longer time to write my book. So I was writing my book from March to September 2021 in Armenia. It was like a dream. It was a new life for me. My ability to write was not new, yet it is different between writing an article as a journalist and novel. So Armenia inspired me to publish my first book. I visited Armenia twice this year. My book was published the day before my arrival. Now I am looking for an Armenian translator and publishing house.

Is there any interest from the media?

I was already interviewed several times by French media. Actually this is too new to speak about responses. In France, the media is too focused on Ukraine. We do not see the reality in Armenia; we are so blind.

Before your discovering Armenia what was your knowledge about the country and culture?

It was very limited. I knew only see BORDIER, page 15



Nora Armani as Zaruhi in "Zaruhi and Mercedes"

The Nerkaght Revisited

Coming Home Isn't Always What You Imagined

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK — Few non-Armenians at the November 6 performance of Anush Aslibekyan's 2015 play "Mercedes and Zaruhi" had ever heard of the *nerkaght* or repatriation movement. In the late 1940s, the soviet government urged Armenians from all over the diaspora to return to their supposed homeland and join the "communist paradise" that awaited them. Similar appeals went out from other soviet republics with important diasporas such as Ukraine. The Armenian call was perhaps the most urgent since that nation had been depleted of more than half its population during the Armenian Genocide and then WWII.



What awaited the repatriated Armenians was far from paradise. For most, it turned out to be a living hell. Some 200,000 Armenians — many of them repats — were imprisoned in Soviet Armenia or sent to die or languish in Siberian gulags or labor camps, a fate shared by writers such as Zabel Yessayan, Gurgen Mahari and Vahan Totovents. Worse yet, they were treated by "native" Armenians with suspicion and jealousy, and referred to by the derogatory slur "akhpar," a deformation of the Armenian word "yekhpayr" or brother.

Nora Armani has done a splendid job of translating and adapting the original Armenian play to an extended hour monologue that showcases the history, and Armani's talents with equal vigor. She also produced and directed the play, wearing many hats equally well. In this version, we meet Zaruhi, one of two Armenian sisters from the city of Thessaloniki, Greece, as she is about to board a ship to head for her new life in Yerevan. Zaruhi is an idealist, a true patriot who blindly believes the propaganda that the communist government has entrapped other diasporans with as well. She leaves behind her sister Mercedes, who is more circumspect and warns her — who leaves a beautiful cosmopolitan city on the Mediterranean for some ramshackle new city in the Caucasus? God knows what awaits you, she seems to be warning Zaruhi.

And she is spot on. Zaruhi arrives in Gyumri — Leninakan at the time — and is picked up at the train station by long-lost relatives. Armani deliciously delivers a scene where on her first night there, they serve a glutinous, yellowish cow's head for dinner. She lies down sick from the experience — harbingers of catastrophes to come.

Zaruhi becomes a seamstress and begins to prosper through her hard work, but a see ZARUHI, page 17

Joan Agajanian Quinn and Daughter Offer Peak at Artistic Life at AIWA Fundraiser

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WINCHESTER, Mass. — The Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) program, "An Evening with Joan Agajanian Quinn" on October 28, at the home of Raffi and Nina Festekjian, presented an occasion to hear from the noted art collector, as she was interviewed by her daughter, Amanda Quinn Oliver, about her fascinating role in the nascent West Coast art world in the 1960s.

The event also raised funds for the various scholarships that AIWA awards annually.

AIWA New England President Zela Astarjian got the program started by speaking about the goals of the organization for women globally, including health and wellness, economic improvement and education. She explained that as part of the health and wellness, AIWA is focusing on among



From left, Joan Agajanian Quinn, Nina Festekjian and Amanda Quinn Oliver

other things, domestic violence, and sponsoring the work of the Women's Support Center in Armenia.

AIWA has handed out 58 scholarships for a total of \$80,000 for the 2022-23 academic year, she said.

Among those who have established scholarships was Chris Aharonian, who established a scholarship for women in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), in the name of her mother, Lucy Kasparian Aharonian. Through AIWA, Aharonian hands out three \$1,000 scholarships annually.

One of the newer scholarships was by Dr. Patti Fletcher, who dedicated the Arshalous Tashjian Medzorian scholarship, named in honor of her grandmother, in partnership with AIWA. She explained that her grandmother, a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, "lost agency of her own life and instilled in us the importance of education." The scholarships will be given to women 30 and over, a group that she said was not typically able to enjoy scholarships.

continued on next page



ARTS & CULTURE

from previous page

Family Lore and Art

Joan Agajanian Quinn and her late husband, Jack, were prodigious art collectors, becoming an integral part of the Southern California pop art, with a collection that would be hard to put a price on. She was appointed to the boards of the California Film Commission and the California Arts Council. She is a member of the executive committee of AIWA, the Cedars-Sinai Hospital Arts Advisory Council, is a vice-president of the L.A. Music Center's Blue Ribbon and is a trustee for the Armenian Museum of America.

A part of Joan Agajanian Quinn's collection is currently on display at the museum in an exhibit titled "On the Edge: Los Angeles Art 1970s - 1990s from the Joan & Jack Quinn Family Collection." It has a companion exhibit, "Discovering Takouhi: Portraits of Joan Agajanian Quinn," featuring exclusively Armenian artists.

The Quinns, in conversation, held the rapt attention of the hundred or so guests, as they hashed over a big chunk of history of modern American art, which also doubled as family stories.

Olivar, the editor-in-chief of [curator.guide](#), a contemporary design and art platform, said at the outset of the talk that her parents had not wanted to display publicly their remarkable art collection before.



Barbara Merguerian, left, with Amanda Quinn Olivar

However, she added, her mother agreed to the exhibit at the Armenian Museum of America and at museums in California earlier, to educate viewers.

Quinn, often called a muse to Andy Warhol, gave some background about her family, noting that her grandfather had come over the early 1900s from Kars and put down roots in Los Angeles. Both her parents, she noted, were born in Los Angeles and assimilated so totally that neither spoke Armenian at home. Ironically, she said, "you then have children who want to become part of the Armenian community."

Quinn explained how she came to be interested in the arts through her artistic mother, while her daughter echoed the sentiment and the two reminisced at length about the various points in Quinn's life where she bumped into artists. For example, Dora De Larios, the noted Mexican-American sculptor and ceramist, whose works she collects now, was a classmate in elementary school and later a colleague. "She loved art always wanted to work with her hands," Quinn recalled.

Another artist whose works ended up in her collection was the late Billy Al Bengston, with whom she worked at a department store in Los Angeles. Quinn, Bengston and De Larios all worked at the department store. Later, she and De Larios and their husbands would get closer.



From left, Zela Astarjian, Joan Agajanian Quinn, Nina Festekjian and Amanda Quinn Olivar

"Those were my friends. We would meet together as a couple," she said, referring to her husband, Jack, and De Larios and her husband, architect Bernard Judge.

The mother and daughter continued to speak about artists who were friends of the Quinn, whose works the couple would purchase because they loved the piece, but also sometimes as favors to the down-on-their-luck artists, or even in lieu of payment for legal work done by Jack Quinn.

Quinn again said what her motto is for building her incredibly valuable collection: "None of it was bought for investment. Do not collect to invest. If you are going to collect, be passionate about it."

Quinn went down memory lane, speaking about her crossing paths with Andy Warhol, and eventually becoming the West Coast editor of his *Interview* magazine. Through her travels for work, she met and became close with British artist David Hockney and designer Zandra Rhodes.

Artist Joe Fry, whose work appears in the current Armenian Museum exhibit, was also at the program. He spoke briefly and said he had moved to Los Angeles from Montana as a young man because he was a surfer as well as an artist. He had this advice: "You should do what you want to do, not what you have to do."

So many of those artists in Quinn's orbit then, including Warhol, Hockney, Jean-Michel Basquiat and photographers Robert Mapplethorpe and Helmut Newton, ended up capturing her. (Quinn joked that she had an intense negotiation session with Newton, the famed art and fashion photogra-



Guests pose with Joan Agajanian Quinn



From left, Maral Ayanian, Araz Arslanian and Sylvie Zakarian

pher whose work often featured models in the nude or in erotic poses. Hers was very demure by comparison, with just a peak of a shoulder, she said.)

Again and again, it was delightful to hear the names of artists as family friends. As an aside, Olivar said that Divine (born Harris Glenn Milstead), who found fame as one of the most famous drag queens of the 1960s through the 1980s, and starred in several cult movies by writer and director John Waters, including "Pink Flamingos" and "Hairspray," babysat her and her twin sister, Jennifer, regularly.

Following the program, guests were treated to dinner and a chance to speak to Quinn.

A full list of this year's scholarship recipients and the schools they are attending can be found on the AIWA website, <https://www.aiwainternational.org/scholarships>.

The "On the Edge" exhibit at the Armenian Museum, due to popular demand, has been extended.



ARTS & CULTURE

Wineries Of Armenia And Artsakh Highlighted Through Map

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — It is no secret that the oldest known winery in the world, dating from somewhere between 4100 and 4000 B.C., exists on the territory of the Republic of Armenia (in Areni), yet contemporary Armenian winemaking only recently has experienced a renaissance after a retreat in the Soviet period. Wine now produced in various regions of Armenia and Artsakh is attracting more attention domestically and internationally. The EVN Wine Academy, affiliated with the International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE), just issued the second edition of the “Wine Map of Armenia” to facilitate finding some of the more unique wineries.

Marina Mirzabekian, who works parttime for ICARE, collaborated with Sargis Antonian, a graphics designer, to prepare this map. She said that Armenia’s neighbor Georgia has had for some years now a map representing the main wine-producing areas of that country, and that gave ICARE the idea to do an Armenian one in 2021.

There are over 100 wineries in Armenia and Artsakh, so this is far too many to place on a map. In fact, only 24 wineries of Armenia and Artsakh are included in the map. Mirzabekian said that the majority of the wineries chosen to be highlighted have their own vineyards and produce their own wines, but most importantly, the ones that were selected also accept guests and offer a special touristic experience.

She said, “We visited all the wineries we included in order to assess their quality, and the focus was on the small and medium wineries because they are the ones that need the visibility and recognition.” They tend to be fam-



Marina Mirzabekian visits the Aparteny winery, a new small family winery. Hayk is the only one who makes wine from the Karmrashat grape. It is mentioned on the wine map.

The first edition of the map included more wineries in Artsakh, but a good number were lost as a result of the 2020 war, leaving only three Artsakh sites for the second edition to depict which still consistently produce wine and accept guests.

The map includes a description of each winery as well as the scale of the winery. More significantly, Mirzabekian said that she did not just copy the text from the websites of the various wineries, as some are poorly written and sometimes not that captivating. Instead, she said, “What we have done in the wine map is storytelling...Storytelling is what makes each winery authentic and unique.” She conducted interviews, asking the owners to tell how they started, and this uncovered reasons why people should come visit their winery instead of another. The names of the families involved are given, which personalize the stories further. She said that this approach will hopefully attract both local and international tourists.

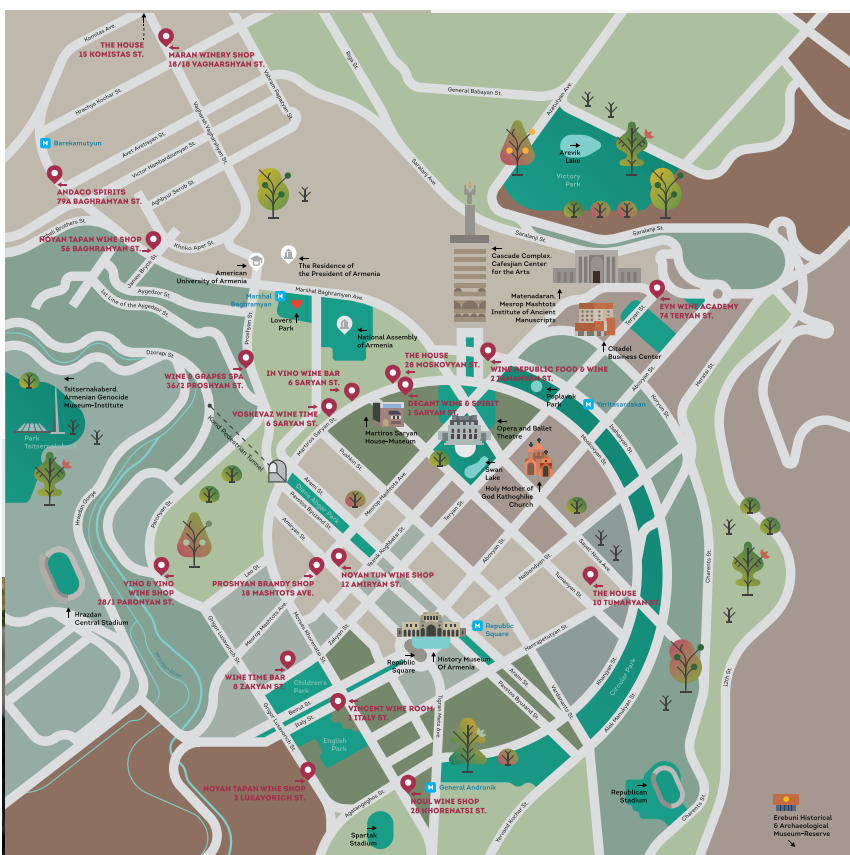
On the reverse of the wine map is a second map which depicts the locations of wine bars, restaurants and shops in the center of Yerevan city, basic information about the

The map exists at present in English and Russian editions, but Mirzabekian said that the preparation of a version in Armenian was planned for the following year. Furthermore, in the 2023 version there may also be another map depicting small and medium-sized gastronomy destinations, she stated, though not large chain restaurants.

Sea of Wine

Mirzabekian as part of her work at ICARE is also involved in another wine-related project called the Sea of Wine, which is funded by the European Union. She declared that it is the next step after the wine map and a continuation of sorts. Armenia has partnered with Ukraine, Greece and Georgia to prepare wine-related travel routes.

“Each country has developed a theme to use, like wine and art, wine and extreme sports in the case of Armenia, or wine and gastronomy,” she explained. In Armenia’s case, in addition to wineries, other venues that might be memorable for tourists or visitors such as “gastro yards,” village sites or restaurants where barbecue is prepared in the traditional tonir ovens, or local crafts and skills are demonstrated, will be described on the website of the



Yerevan city portion of Wine Map of 2022

ily-owned and family-run. The large wineries, some of which can practically be called factories, are well established and do not need extra promotion, she continued, so only a few have been included. Many export, especially to Russia.

In future editions, if there are some new small wineries with decent quality wine, they will replace some of the big wineries on the map, since the space in the map is limited.

Armenian wine festivals are noted. Mirzabekian said that the Dilijan festival started this year but it was too late to include it in the current edition.

Interestingly, the map notes that the best value for money Armenian wines cost in the range of 4,500 dram per bottle, or roughly \$8. Mirzabekian said that she consulted some of her colleagues and sommeliers to come up with this figure, but it should be noted that every year the price of wine is increasing because of increasing demand.



Marina Mirzabekian volunteering picking grapes for the Alluria winery. She said, “I admire Samvel Machanyan, the co-founder and winemaker, for making natural wines through spontaneous fermentation, with no added yeast.”

Voskehat and Khndoghni (Sireni) indigenous grape varieties used for winemaking, and a description of the programs offered by the EVN Wine Academy. Several annual

project, where various routes will be visible.

The project is funded for a limited period of time, but after it concludes, Mirzabekian said that hopefully these routes could be enriched and further developed through investments. She said, “Probably the most realistic option is to collaborate with Georgia, because we are neighboring countries. We are both ancient winemaking nations.”

She added that this project, along with the wine map one, has led her to continue to follow the work of the various Armenian wineries to see what experiments are being done with some almost forgotten and rare varieties of grapes. She gave as examples the creation of Armenian ice wine, or *pét nat* (*petillant naturel*, which means naturally sparkling in French).



ARTS & CULTURE

Antoine Bordier: 'Armenia Inspired Me to Publish My First Book

BORDIER, from page 12

Charles Aznavour. I did not know about Great Armenia that existed in pre-Christian times, between the two seas, from Beirut to Baku — a very big territory indeed, while now it occupies only less than 9 percent of its historical borders. It was also great to know Armenian-French connections have a long time history, approximately after the beginning of Christianity here, perhaps since the 4th century.

Regarding economic issues, what do you recommend for Armenia?

This is a good question. There is a big potential here, but also big problems. The first problem is that you are divided, even if there are less than three million people in Armenia. I am a consultant, so I can say what Armenians in my opinion have to focus on. Firstly, agriculture should be more developed. It is great that brothers Vigen and Vahe Badalyan, along other projects, launched an agricultural mission. They have a good vision for their country. The Armenian government should ask the Diaspora to invest in agriculture. And to invest not in small parcels, (this is an old reality to change, from the 19th, not for the 20th or the 21st century), but you have to produce more both in quantity and quality. That means you have to involve the knowhow of Western experience. The second sector to invest in is IT. You have very good potential in IT and artificial intelligence. Another option might be the field of crypto money. Here people invest a lot in education; there are many cosmopolitan polyglot people which is excellent, but other fields also need to be developed. The nation should be organized around the agriculture and IT. I do not see another sector, although energy or diamond fields also might be alternative options.

But because of political situation many diaspora Armenians avoid investing.

Yes and no. For instance, you recently had the AGBU assembly in Yerevan discussing development projects in Armenia. If Armenia and the diaspora remain divided, no developments will take place. That's for sure.

L'union fait la force! (Unity is strength).

Absolutely! Due to the situation of the war, your enemies just wait until you get even more divided. You are alone, so you need to find not, let say, 50 projects, but two and three major developing projects to pursue. You need a vision. And you need key actors. You need a specific task force. By the way, the situation is not better in France. We also have no vision. For instance, we lost our sovereignty in energy, now French energy sector depends on other countries. The same is true for our industry; our commer-

cial balance is so down, it is in deficit. But we are lucky, we do not have enemies on our borders. Here you have enemies on both east and west, so your population and nation need to be mobilized. You need unity. This is a question of survival.

When you are here, I assume you heard lots of stories about the 44-Day war of 2020, so you decided to write on that subject.

Although I am not personally part of your tragedy, it was difficult for me to write about this. I never interviewed soldiers, yet I listened a lot. I saw young people without their limbs. I saw the reality, so I can understand what happens when you have drones over your heads. I also have friends who took part in war.

In Armenia we are the gatekeepers of civilization. That means you are the first civilization of humanity: because of Noah, of the history of the flood, because of Ararat. So if the door is broken down, that means all our civilization will fall, the rest of the world. That's why we have to help you, to help the country to be free, to give the capacity to go on, to continue the life. I met the new generation in different places, in poor villages, and I see that you have a lot of capacities. But you need, of course, peace and unity. We are not in 1994, so you could not win again, as this time Azerbaijan has had Turkey and Israel helping. And it is not a good sign to invest a lot in your army: it is a sign of war, not peace. In reality, you have no choice: you must arm yourself, train and prepare your population to defend their homeland. Please remember: Azerbaijan after 1994 made continuous investments in their army and this allowed them to come back and win in 2020 and since September 13 continue their aggression towards Armenia.

Let's go back to your novel. What is the main message of Arthur, the Little Prince of Armenia?

It is a triptych, three paintings. The first one is journalistic: the hero, Arthur, is a 20-year-old French man who lost his parents in car accident. Because of this tragedy, one needs to begin with something different: not to turn the page, but go toward new challenges, new adventures. That's why Arthur comes to Armenia and as a young journalist he files many reports. This first painting is very realistic. The second one is an allegory with the story of our civilization, and with Christianity. In my books there is something like parabola. For example, Arthur meets Noah and Abraham. And he is able to be in various places at the same time. And the third part is fantastic. We understand that Armenia needs someone else. In the novel this "else" is a fantastic world, where queen Anahit reigns with a giant royal eagle, Aroso. And Arthur goes back to past and saves



lives after the Spitak earthquake and during the war in Stepanakert. He also meets Komitas when he was arrested in 1915. It might be seemed messy, but I wanted to be very simple. We need to know our past and our roots: my novel's message is to know who we are. We have to know our history, both good and bad sides of it. As Christians, we have to be more connected with the Bible. In the beginning it was God, but we are more and more ignorant about that and perhaps not in France, but also here. It is not enough to be the first Christian state, but also to know about your faith and Christianity. So, my book is a message for peace, for unity and for the defense of values, whether ancient or modern. Because values do not belong only to the past. Look, for example, more and more countries aspire to democracy which is an old philosophical concept taught by Aristotle and Plato. But, its reality is modern, and, rare, too.

Finally, Arthur is the little prince of fraternity, friendship, peace, unity and roots.

I am finishing two other books. And, Arthur will continue his adventures, in other countries.

Greece and Armenia

Mirzabekian has lived most of her life in Greece, where she was involved in the tourism industry. After moving to Armenia, over the past decade, she has gone back every year, especially to Thessaloniki, where she is from, and visited wineries. She said that she always compares how service-oriented people are in Greece and in Armenia.

The winery scene in Greece is more established. She said, "The people are more open to show you and tell you everything. They can treat you to coffee without charge and they can surprise you with some treats that you didn't ask for. I have seen this in Armenia too, but I think in Greece it comes more naturally." She speculated that this was due to the greater contact over the years with tourists in Greece, which after all is a country open to the sea so more used to travel and tourism.

In Armenia, she said, people had already been getting more training and education in technical fields, but now the younger generations are traveling and learning about service and tourism too. In the small hotels in villages and in the provinces in general, she felt service was much better over the last decade, and this would make a significant difference.

"Wine tourism is not only about infrastructure. I think it is mostly about people, sharing, telling stories, and their soft skills – how they are going to meet you. This is what makes an experience so unforgettable," she stressed.

A digital copy of the current edition of the wine map may be found at <https://icare.am/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/WINE-MAP-PRINT-1.pdf>.



At the Mnatsakanyan gastro yard, Artur is making homemade wines. Everybody has fun and laughs at his jokes during the tasting.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Elmass Avedisian's Famous Choreg/Walnut Rolls

Elmass Edith Avedisian was born in Fresno on November 27, 1928 to Harold and Araxie Aloojian, and passed away on November 29, 2019 at the age of 91. She was preceded in death by her Armenian immigrant parents, her devoted husband of 61 years, Arthur Ardash "Ace" Avedisian, and her three loving sisters Annette Egoian, Louise Avakian and Harriett Aloojian.

During her childhood, Elmass' family lived on a small farm on Locan Avenue in Sanger where they specialized in dried and candied fruit. Elmass and her sisters would spend many hours helping pick the various crops which included grapes, apricots, peaches and boysenberries. They worked in the cannery cutting and arranging fruit on drying trays with their parents, and canning fruits and vegetables for the winter months.

Elmass attended elementary school in Sanger and Sanger High School. As she grew up, her interests included bowling with her friends and attending musical events and dances at Fresno's historic Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church. Elmass enjoyed singing in the church choir on Sundays, and had special family memories of playing music, dancing, and singing with her multi-talented sisters through the years.

One summer day, Elmass and her sisters decided to go swimming at Fresno's Weymouth Swimming Pool that had opened in 1934 on West Whitesbridge Road. While at the pool, a friend named Ron Bakarian introduced Elmass to the love of her life, Art Avedisian. The couple were married in Fresno on July 29, 1950.

If you visited the Avedisian house you would automatically be treated like family, and were invited to enjoy whatever delicious meal or dessert Elmass had prepared that day, her children remember. One of Elmass' specialties was her famous Elmo Burgers. She excelled at canning large batches of vegetables and Armenian cucumbers (gootah) in the summer, and make homemade yalanchi grape leaves and dolma for endless family meals and celebrations. When Art retired in 1979, the couple were both the happiest when their backyard was filled with family and friends enjoying their popular family barbeque meals.

Elmass was a member of the Holy Trinity Ladies' Guild in Fresno for many years. Throughout her married life, Elmass took great pleasure in cooking, baking, and preparing tray after tray of Armenian gata, cheese boureg, and her famous choreg/walnut rolls for her growing family. Any time a friend or neighbor would stop by for a visit, Elmass made sure they left with a bag of choreg/walnut rolls and whatever else she had made in her kitchen that day.

"My mom often baked these choreg/walnut rolls in the winter time and around the holidays. I remember my mom and my grandmother baking their recipes in our kitchen — we would all sit around waiting patiently until these rolls were out of the oven," says Arnell Avedisian Work, one of Elmass' daughters. "They are buttery and delicious — this is one of her best recipes that we enjoyed while growing up..."

In 2005, Elmass and Art sold their family home on Clark Avenue and purchased a mobile home at the Woods Mobile Park on Sylmar Street in Fresno. After moving to their new home, Elmass and Art discovered how much they liked to play bingo with their friends. There was a weekly game held on Tuesday nights, and their family could always expect a call at 8 p.m. when it was over so they could share how well the couple did. "My father arrived early to hand pick the bingo cards and his system sure did work. Our parents won at least a game and sometimes more games almost every week they played," remembers Arnell.

Elmass and Art were married for 61 years when Art's health failed, and he passed away in 2011. Elmass continued to reside at the couple's home in the Woods Mobile Park until 2014. At that time, she moved to the Fresno Guest Home where she lived until passing peacefully on the morning of November 29, 2019, two days after celebrating her 91st birthday.

Throughout her life, Elmass was a loving, dedicated, and devoted daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmother who is deeply missed by her family. She was a gifted home chef who never tired of entertaining and making the many recipes and dishes her family loved the most. She leaves a remarkable family legacy of five children, two daughters-in-law, two sons-in-law, nine grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, and many nieces, nephews and dear friends in the Fresno area.

For over 70 years, Elmass and her beloved mother Araxie baked these choreg/walnut rolls for their family and friends. This treasured recipe is sure to please many more families into the future.

Elmass Avedisian's Choreg/Walnut Roll

INGREDIENTS:

5 pounds all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 tablespoon salt, to taste
3 packages yeast
3 cups butter and 1 cup Crisco
1 can evaporated milk
6 large eggs, beaten
Sesame seeds, optional

Walnut mixture:

INGREDIENTS:

4 cups chopped walnuts
2 cups brown sugar
2 tablespoons cinnamon

PREPARATION:

In a large bowl, dissolve yeast in warm water; follow directions on package. (It should tell you to add the sugar.)

Melt the butter and Crisco together in a medium pan, and stir in the evaporated milk. The temperature should be warm, not hot.

In a separate bowl, measure and mix all dry ingredients together. Make a small indent in flour mixture and pour in the butter and Crisco; add eggs and yeast at that time. Mix together. Add about 1/2 cup water to make the dough very soft.

Knead the dough until smooth. Cover with wax paper and let dough rise until double in size; this might take a few hours or overnight. If you prefer to leave the dough overnight, you can heat the oven at its lowest temperature, then turn off the heat and place the covered dough in the oven.

When dough is ready, weigh out 10 oz. balls and set aside. Roll out each ball to 8"x 16" sheet. Cover dough with walnut mixture. Roll up dough sheet and place on a prepared cookie sheet. Brush with egg wash and sprinkle with sesame seeds, if using.

Cut roll diagonally. Bake at 375°F for approximately 20 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool completely before serving.

Elmass Avedisian's Family Streusel Cake

INGREDIENTS:

Mix together in large bowl:
1 package yellow cake mix (Duncan Hines)
1 package instant vanilla pudding mix
1 cup sour cream
4 large eggs
1/2 cup oil
Beat the above ingredients for 10 minutes, this is very important. Mix the following ingredients together in separate bowl:
3/4 cup chopped nuts (almonds, walnuts, pecans)
3/4 cup brown sugar
3 teaspoons cinnamon

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a 9" x 13" cake pan with cooking spray. Pour half the batter into a tube pan, then add half the nut mixture on top of batter. Then repeat.

Add remaining cake batter and nut mixture. Take a butter knife and make a swirl in and around the pan.

Bake for 1 hour. Remove from oven. Let cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Store cake at room temperature for up to 3 days or store in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.



(Recipes and photos courtesy Nancy Egoian Mugrdechian and Arnell Avedisian Work)



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

NOVEMBER 19 — Holy Resurrection Church of New Britain, CT, will hold its annual "Holiday Fair" on Saturday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., on the church grounds (1910 Stanley St., New Britain). Armenian delicacies, games for children, raffle, crafts, Armenian wine sampling. Place orders for the holidays. Sponsored by parish Women's Guild; free admission. E-mail garyhov@aol.com for information.

JANUARY 28 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles Chapter presents "An Evening of Comedy III featuring Harout Soghomonian" on Saturday, at 8 p.m. at Phoenicia Restaurant in Glendale. Special guest appearance by Antic and guest appearance by Tsoghig Samuelian. Admission \$100. For reservations call or text 818.730.1100. No tickets will be sold at the door.

MASSACHUSETTS

NOVEMBER 19 — Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church, Chelmsford, Food Festival. 12 Noon – 7 p.m. Eat-in or Take-out. All lunches and dinners along with Country Store items are to be pre-ordered by Wednesday, November 9. The Food Festival menu includes shish-chicken-losh kebab dinners, a vegetarian platter, a variety of desert items, and a country store featuring eetch, cheese beureg, spinach pita, vosbov kofta, tourshi, choreg, and green beans. Food order and Festival Sponsor forms are available on the church website, www.stsvartanantz.com.

DECEMBER 8 – Join the Trustees of the Armenian Museum of America for a Christmas Reception in the museum galleries. All Museum Members are cordially invited for socializing, networking, and to enjoy the exhibitions including "On the Edge: Los Angeles Art 1970s-1990s from the Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection." 5:30 p.m. – Save the date!

DECEMBER 11 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church presents a Christmas Holiday Concert by Erevan Choral Society in memory of Fr. Oshagan Minassian on

what would have been his 90th birthday, at the Sanctuary of Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St, Cambridge, MA. Sunday, 7 p.m. Conductor will be conductor/composer Konstantin Petrossian and will feature soloists Rosy Anoush Svazlian, soprano, and Giovanni Formisano, tenor. The free concert is open to the public.

DECEMBER 11 – Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. CANDLIT Labyrinth Walk: IN PEACE & HARMONY. Sunday at 4:45pm. "Boston's Newest Holiday Tradition" Hot Chocolate & Festive Cookies. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

NEW YORK

OCTOBER 14-DECEMBER 9 — Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church presents:

- November 4 - Biblical music from the Louvre, Paris by Edouard Barseghian, Dr. of Philosophy (Musicology), 7:30 p.m.

- December 9 - Christmas concert at Church sanctuary, Friday at 7.30 p.m.

Armenian Cultural Hour: Whether or not you have a Facebook account, you can find the LIVESTREAM of the event through the parish's Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/armenianchurchprovidence/videos/>

RHODE ISLAND

DECEMBER 9-28 — Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church presents: December 9 Christmas concert at Church sanctuary featuring Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island, Junior Choir, soloist Friday at 7 p.m., free. Armenian Cultural Hour: Whether or not you have a Facebook account, you can find the LIVESTREAM of the event through the parish's Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/armenianchurchprovidence/videos/>

- December 28 at 7:30 pm - "David Ayriyan - Memorial concert"

The Nerkaght Revisited: Coming Home Isn't Always What You Imagined

ZARUHI, from page 12

series of disasters soon unfold. She soon faces betrayal from her native Armenian husband who abandons her for a Russian wife in Russia — still common practice today in Armenia. She is then betrayed by a tenant who is a party apparatchik and loses her home. Her daughter abandons her and her disabled son when she gets married. Despite all these trials and tribulations, the play ends on a note of hope in the 1990s. Independent Armenia, along with Zaruhi herself, seems to have survived an earthquake, a war, and economic collapse.

The multitalented Armani has made performing at the United Solo Theatre a yearly happening. It is a prestigious showcase and this year Armani was on her mark, translating and adapting the original play into English, and then producing and directing the performance. Says Armani: "The full multi-actor play by Anush Aslibekyan exists and I played the lead in it in Armenia, in the Armenian original. This solo version is slightly different from the full play. My work entailed translating the solo play and adapting it by adding some material, to make it clearer to a non-initiated, non-Armenian audience." Armani also recorded her own voice in Western Armenian in the recorded segents meant to be Mercedes.

Last year's "Back on the Couch with Nora Armani" was delightful as well, but Armani seems to have hit her stride in this most recent performance, bringing everything in her dramatic repertoire to bear, and moving some in the sold-out audience to tears. She handles the play's humorous and tragic passages with brio and holds the audience's attention throughout. Aslibekyan is also an accomplished playwright, dramaturg and author whose work has been performed internationally.



Nora Armani with friends after the performance of "Zaruhi and Mercedes"

"Mercedes and Zaruhi" won the coveted Armenian Book festival in 2017. The play is now part of the National 10th Grade Curriculum in Armenian Literature — which is a good thing in a newly reborn democracy trying to come to terms with an often-difficult past.

As for Armani, she recently had a part in a feature film, "Absolute Dominion," and is currently working on a TV miniseries with a Middle Eastern theme.

"Mercedes and Zaruhi" was performed by Nora Armani on Sunday, November 6 at Theatre Row, as part of the 2022 United

Solo Theatre Festival.

(Credits: Nora Armani, Performer, Producer, English language adapter; Anush Aslibekyan, Playwright; Vahan Arzruni, Composer; Peder Smith, Sound; Ared Spendjian, Marketing /Design; Mike Dougherty, PR & Digital marketing.)



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EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST

Edmond Y. Azadian

STAFF WRITER

Harry Kezelian III

CONTRIBUTORS

Christopher Atamian, Florence Avakian, Artsvi Bakhchinyan, Christine Vartanian Datian, Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, Ken Martin, Gerald Papasian, Benyamin Poghosyan, Suren Sargsyan, Harut Sassounian, Hagop Vartivarian

REGIONAL

CORRESPONDENTS

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepiyan, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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Baikar Association, Inc.

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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EDITORIAL

Samarkand in Armenia's Future



By Edmond Y. Azadian

The city of Samarkand in Uzbekistan may be distant from Armenia, but it will shape its future, as it has in the past.

Samarkand has become the focus of the political world recently. On November 11, it hosted the ninth summit of the Organization of the Turkic States (OTS), with the participation of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, with Turkmenistan and Hungary attending as observers.

One would ask why a European country would be present in the midst of all these Turkic nations. The answer is that Hungarians claim to be descendants of Magyar settlers, Huns and Turks – thus the brotherly ties. Perhaps that would explain Hungarian Prime Minister (and international neo-Nazi pariah) Viktor Orban's gift to Baku when in 2012 he repatriated Azerbaijani officer Ramil Safarov, who was convicted of killing Armenian army Lt. Gurgen Margaryan in that country in 2004.

Mr. Orban also offered his country's support to the summit, stating, "Our country supports the work of OTS and will work for the successful implementation of the Turkish vision in the next decade."

Incidentally, if you need to know how out of touch the Armenian world is, the Armenian Catholic Patriarch Raphael Bedross XXI was in Budapest two weeks ago to present to Orban the Holy Cross Medal of Gratitude!

Kissing the Turkish overlord's boots even further, the OTS also awarded observer status to the occupied northern Cyprus region (the unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus), triggering an angry rebuff from the European Union.

The summit received scant coverage in the Armenian media, despite the fact that the goings on there may have a serious bearing on Armenia's future. Azerbaijan and Turkey were major players and Armenia's destiny and particularly the issue of the "Zangezur Corridor" were conspicuously on the agenda. There was also a clear threat aimed at the territorial integrity of neighboring Iran.

The Turkic world or the Turanic empire, has survived more than a century as a vision of Turkey. The realization of that vision was postponed for a full century because of the emergence of the Soviet Union, which absorbed all the Turkic nations in Central Asia. Because of the atheism practiced in the Soviet republics, religion failed to serve as a cohesive factor, something Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan has learned the hard way. He has made futile attempts to open Islamic madrasas and mosques in those countries, after they emerged out of the rubble of the Soviet empire, all to no avail. That is why he turned instead to the issue of ethnicity, which seems to be working.

Over the centuries, when waves of Turkic hordes moved from Central Asia to the West, they trampled over all the civilizations in their path, including the Armenian and Byzantine ones. Ironically, Turkey is looking back to Central Asia to discover or create the Turkish civilization in Central Asia.

No wonder that President Erdogan attended the victory celebration in Azerbaijan on December 10, 2020, in Shushi, following the 44-Day War, and evoked the memory of Enver Pasha, stating that "we are back here to pursue the dreams of our ancestors."

Indeed, Enver Pasha, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, fled to Central Asia to unite the Islamic nations and build a new one. He was a member of the Ittihadist triumvirate, along with Talaat and Jemal, who organized and perpetrated the Armenian Genocide.

After the Central Powers (Germany and the Ottoman Empire) were defeated in World War I, Ottoman military tribunals sentenced to death many war criminals in absentia. The leaders escaped the verdicts for a while, until the Armenian Nemesis group caught up with them and executed them one by one. Enver was the last one to fall victim to those avengers, in Au-

gust 1922. Before him, Cemal (Jemal) was assassinated in the same year.

All those Islamist leaders turned to the Bolsheviks to save their necks. Cemal Pasha was in Russia when he met his destiny. Similarly, Enver Pasha had convinced Lenin to support him and allow him to travel south to quell a Basmachi revolt in Central Asia. (The revolt started out when the Red Army started drafting the local Muslim population.) But as soon as Enver arrived in Bukhara, instead of doing as he had promised Lenin, he joined the Basmachis to fight the Bolshevik rule. Thus, he became fair game for the Soviet regime, which chased him until the very end. In fact, a cavalry brigade of the Red Army, led by Armenian Yakov Melkumov (Hakob Melkumian) traced Enver and finally killed him.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Turkish state claimed and received the remains of Enver Pasha in 1996 and reburied them at *Abide-i Hürriyet* (Monument of Liberty, in Sisli neighborhood of Istanbul).

During World War II, Turkey was cooperating with Nazi Germany and thus was able to retrieve Talaat's remains in 1943 and bury them in Istanbul. (We all know Talaat was assassinated by Soghomon Tehlirian in Berlin.)

It was only Mustafa Kemal, a minor figure in the Ittihadist hierarchy who was able to dupe Lenin that he was fighting to build a socialist state in Turkey and thus receive arms, gold, food and political support to fight and deport Greeks and Armenians, who succeeded in laying down the foundations of the current Turkish Republic (1923).

Therefore, President Erdogan is following Enver Pasha's

footsteps when he undertakes to band together the Turkic nations of Central Asia to use them as a springboard for creating an empire to satisfy his global ambitions. No wonder he is criticizing the structure of the Security Council of the United Nations, claiming that the five major powers should not determine the fate of the rest of the world, and that there should be a place for nations like Turkey.

Turkey joined NATO to build up its armed forces and to attain a power beyond regional confines. As the bipolar world breaks up

into a multipolar configuration, Turkey is seeing an opportunity to try its luck. For a long time, Ankara believe the road to achieve its imperial ambitions was through the European Union. Finding that gate shut tight, it has resorted to using the Turkic world, which may be a viable solution, since it has found some encouragement in the West. Indeed, Farida Musayeva writes on the website *modern diplomacy.eu*, that "The meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Organization of Turkic States Summit was held on November 11, 2022 in Samarkand amid increasingly frequent statements from the European Union and the United States America that the countries of Central Asia should get rid of the influence of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China."

This statement suggests that the West intends to fight its two major adversaries by creating a third power bloc. This begs the question as to whether President Nixon envisioned that today, the US would face China as a major adversary when he visited that nation in 1971, and the Nixon-Kissinger tandem aimed to split the Moscow-Beijing axis, and weaken the Soviet Union?

The OTS began as the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, founded by the 2009 Nakhichevan agreement, and later became an organization with more clearly defined political and economic goals. As of now, the military component does not feature on its agenda. However, given Turkey's full participation on Azerbaijan's side during the 44-Day War against Armenia, it does not leave any doubt that the leaders have the military aspect on their mind as well. The irony is that besides Turkey and Azerbaijan, the rest of Central Asian nations are Armenia's allies in the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). This did not stop them from congratulating Baku for its victory in its "patriotic war" as part

continued on next page





COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

More Examples of Turkey Seeking to Extradite its Citizens from Overseas

After my last week's article about Turkey kidnapping its dissident citizens from overseas, I came across several other examples of the Turkish government's attempts to bring back, under false pretenses, the critics of Pres. Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Last month, there was a disturbing news item in the Armenia media speculating how two armed Kurdish fighters, who were arrested after crossing Armenia's border from Iran, ended up in Turkey. Were the Kurds handed over to Turkey by the Armenian authorities in view of their recent attempts to normalize relations with Turkey or were they kidnapped from Armenia by Turkish agents? Either way, this is a very alarming development.

Armenia's Ministry of Justice announced that the two Kurds were initially sentenced to seven years in jail. After the court of appeal reduced their sentences, they were set free and placed on probation. Somehow, they surfaced in Turkey where they are now under arrest.

On September 24, a Kurdish website published a statement from Kurdish People's Defense Forces, accusing Armenia of extraditing the two Kurds to Turkey. Armenia's Ministry of Justice responded by saying that it did not hand over the Kurds to Turkey.

Turning to other cases of Turkish attempts to have its citizens extradited, Abdullah Bozkurt wrote an article in the Sweden-based *Nordic Monitor* on September 22, titled: "Turkish Embassy in Canada came up with a new tactic to secure extradition of critics, opponents."

Based on confidential Turkish documents, Bozkurt revealed that Turkey asked Canada to extradite Suat Yildirim, an 80-year-old professor and author of several books, who "faces outstanding arrest warrants on fabricated charges." The Turkish government has filed "dozens of frivolous extradition requests with Canadian authorities" to hand over to Turkey its domestic opponents, including several journalists.

Bozkurt wrote a second *Nordic Monitor* article with the title: "Turkish Embassy in Ottawa spied on critical journalists, NGOs in Canada," revealing that Turkish diplomats kept under observation two Canadian-Turkish social organizations. The Embassy also profiled two Turkish journalists, Faruk Arslan and Hasan Yilmaz. "According to the Stockholm Center for Freedom, 211

journalists were jailed in Turkey as of March 14, 2019 and 167 journalists who face arrest warrants were forced to live in exile or remain at large in Turkey."

Bozkurt wrote a third *Nordic Monitor* article titled: "Turkish Embassy in New Zealand spied on child care center and profiled critics." He revealed that the embassy surveilled the Little Pearls child care center in New Zealand.

Levent Kenez wrote in the *Nordic Monitor* an article titled, "Documents show Turkish diplomats spied on Erdogan's critics in the United Kingdom," disclosing that the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation into "70 Turkish nationals who were listed by Turkish diplomats in London without any concrete evidence of wrongdoing."

Kenez also disclosed that Turkish educator Orhan Inandi "was kidnapped in Kyrgyzstan on May 31 and illegally brought to Turkey by Turkish intelligence agency, MIT." In addition, the Turkish Embassy in Kosovo profiled 78 exiled Turkish teachers. The *Nordic Monitor* also revealed that the "MIT infiltrated refugee camps in Greece in order to spy on opponents who were forced to flee to Greece to escape an unprecedented crackdown in neighboring Turkey."

In another *Nordic Monitor* article with the title, "Diaspora agency that runs covert recruitment programs with Turkish intelligence seeks young lobbyists in the US and Canada," Kenez disclosed that The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) recruited 30 young Turkish residents of the United States and Canada for a training program called the "US-Canada Diaspora Advocacy Academy," which took place in Maryland in September. The program covered: "Contemporary Issues in Turkish Foreign Policy, the 1915 Events and the Turkish-Armenian Conflict, USA and Canada Structure and Decision Making Processes, Pressure groups, and Lobbying." In addition, workshops were held on "Raising Turkish Diaspora Awareness and Media, Politics and Hate Speech."

During last week's meeting with Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson in Ankara, Pres. Erdogan demanded the extradition to Turkey of exiled Turkish journalist Bulent Kenes, the former editor-in-chief of the now-closed English language *Today's Zaman* daily, also an outspoken critic of the Turkish government. Kristersson was hoping to persuade Turkey to drop its blocking of Sweden from joining the NATO military alliance, with Ankara accusing Sweden and Finland of harboring political dissidents who are labelled as "terrorists" by Turkey. "The deportation of the terrorist named Bulent Kenes is of importance to us," Erdogan said at a news conference with Kristersson.

The Committee to Protect Journalists issued a statement warning Sweden not "to give in to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's blackmail and set a precedent that would endanger exiled Turkish journalists worldwide."

Samarkand in Armenia's Future

from previous page

of OTS' Samarkand declaration.

Speaking at the summit, Azerbaijan's leader Ilham Aliyev stated that the Turkic world covers a geography of more than 200 million people and has great economic potential. Assuming that Armenia's territory is part of that Turkic world, he went further by claiming part of Iran as well. He stated: "I think that it is time for our organization to give importance to the issues such as the protection of the rights, security, and national identity of our cognates living outside the OTS member countries and preventing their assimilation." Continuing in the same vein, Aliyev added, "The young generation of the Turkic world should have the opportunity to study their mother tongue in the countries of their residence. Unfortunately, the majority of the 40 million Azerbaijanis living outside Azerbaijan are deprived of these opportunities."

This was a direct allusion to the segment of Iran's population in the province of Azerbaijan, in the north of that country. Since tensions between Tehran and Baku had already been rising in recent weeks, a strong rebuke came from Iran's parliament, referring to the Treaty of Gulistan of 1813 between Russia and Iran, stating that were it not for that treaty, Azerbaijan itself would have been included in the current territory of Iran.

Further expounding his ambitions, Aliyev added, "This week, the Azerbaijani people proudly celebrated the second anniversary of the liberation of Karabakh and Eastern Zangezur from Armenian occupation."

He also indicated "during the occupation, Armenia destroyed 65 out of 67 mosques," to inflame the ire of the Islamic world, never mind that many of the Azerbaijani religious groups languish in Aliyev's prisons.

But most important of all, Aliyev brought up the "Zangezur Corridor" to the agenda of the OTS, stating, "The results of the Second Karabakh War create new opportunities for the region. Azerbaijan actively promotes the establishment of the Zangezur Corridor and carries out large-scale activities related to the corridor in its territory. All countries from the region will benefit from the opening of the Zangezur Corridor."

Thus, he insinuated that the corridor is not only Azerbaijan's plan but that it should be considered a cause célèbre for the entire Turkic world.

In Mr. Erdogan's vision, the OTS is not only a regional organization but also one that should entertain and attain global ambitions. In his speech, Erdogan drew attention to the "global instabilities and problems" and he added, "It is important that we increase the visibility of our organization in the international arena," referring to the steps taken by the OTS towards becoming a full-fledged international entity.

All these statements and plans indicate that the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is not just a regional one but rather one that has broader ramifications as its territory and the "Zangezur Corridor" have been placed on the butcher's block of the entire Turkic world. Thus, Aliyev's bellicosity and arrogance represent the top of the iceberg.

Armenia, therefore, has a bigger challenge than it can handle alone. While it can aspire to build its armed forces to deal with Azerbaijan's incursions into its territory, on a broader scale, it has to build its foreign policy to find its niche within global developments where the expansion of the Turkic world crosses the interest of other opposing powers.

Strategic Interests of the US in South Caucasus

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

After the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, the rivalry between Russia and the US in fact was not over, despite the fact that Russia was in a state of social and economic decay and could not effectively take care of its foreign policy agenda.

Since that time, the US has pursued two fundamental goals in the South Caucasus region. In the case of Russia, the "minimum plan" was the reduction of Russia's influence and the maximum the expulsion of Russia from the South Caucasus region entirely. The second strategic goal was the containment or, if possible, the isolation of Iran (for example, by implementing approaches such as the "Goble plan," which suggested exchanging part of the Syunik region of Armenia with Nagorno-Karabakh. That would have deprived Iran of its external border, making it dependent on Turkey, the US strategic ally and NATO member).

Since then, the establishment of Armenian-Turkish relations, as well as the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, have been seen as key premises for limiting the presence of Russian armed forces in Armenia. At the same time, there was a belief that in that scenario Yerevan would be less dependent on Moscow, which meant a new opportunity to deprive Russia of its sphere of influence. Of course, Turkey was (and still is) a problematic ally, but it is better to have a problematic ally rather than such a rival as Russia in charge of the whole region. Naturally, in order to restrain or at least balance the two regional superpowers, essentially Russia, as well as Iran, Washington should bring a third player into the South Caucasus region, as the US was far away and didn't have enough resources, tools and mechanisms to be directly involved in the region "personally." That player would have to be a US ally, a powerful regional player, and have the ability to challenge Russia. Figuratively speaking, the US should gain regional influence and enter the South Caucasus exclusively through Turkish gates (in fact, there are no other gates).

In order to enter the South Caucasus region through the Turkish gates and gain influence, first of all, it was necessary to open those gates, i.e. to regulate Armenian-Turkish relations. A very good example is Georgia. Despite the fact that the collective West, led by the US, openly supported the Georgian revolution, today one of the main investors and trade partners of Georgia is not the EU or the US, but Turkey.

Because of the closed borders and the absence of relations between Armenia and Turkey, it was impossible to manage the acquisition of Turkish influence in the South Caucasus at large. In general, almost all attempts to normalize Armenian-Turkish relations were initiated or openly sponsored and supported by Washington, starting with the G. H. W. Bush administration in the early 1990s. According to the prevailing opinion in the US, in order to reduce Russian influence in the South Caucasus, it is

see CAUCASUS, page 20



Documents Detail Foreign Government Spending at Trump Hotel

By Luke Broadwater and Eric Lipton

WASHINGTON (*New York Times*) — Officials from six nations spent more than \$750,000 at former President Donald J. Trump's hotel in Washington when they were seeking to influence his administration, renting rooms for more than \$10,000 per night, according to documents that his former accounting firm turned over to Congress.

The governments of Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and China spent more money than previously known at the Trump International Hotel at crucial times in 2017 and 2018 for those countries' relations with the United States, according to the documents, which were obtained by the House Oversight Committee and released on Monday.

The documents build on the public record of how Mr. Trump's hotel brought in millions during his presidency from foreign governments. The Oversight Committee has previously estimated that the hotel received more than \$3.75 million from foreign governments from 2017 to 2020, raising concerns about possible violations of the Constitution's foreign emoluments clause.

The new documents cover only a period of months, but they provide a revealing

window into how foreign governments spent heavily at the hotel during key months when they were trying to influence Mr. Trump's administration.

"It paints an extremely troubling picture," Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney, Democrat of New York and the chairwoman of the committee, said in an interview. She added that the documents "sharply call into question the extent to which President Trump was guided by his personal financial interest while in office rather than the best interests of the American people."

Eric Trump, when asked about the spending by these government officials, said on Monday that any profit the family company earned on the hotel stays was returned to the federal government through a voluntary annual payment to the Treasury Department.

Last month, the committee released records showing that the Secret Service had paid more than \$1.4 million to Trump hotel properties since Mr. Trump took office in 2017, and had charged as much as \$1,185 per night for hotel rooms used by agents protecting the president and his family.

The committee disclosed the latest documents as it released a letter from additional documents about the Trump hotel and communications with foreign governments. The National Archives confirmed on Monday that it had received the letter.

Maloney said the additional documents were needed to "determine whether former President Trump distorted U.S. foreign policy to serve his own financial interests at the expense of the American people and in violation of his oath of office."

The documents released on Monday

show that in September 2017, Mr. Trump welcomed Najib Razak, the prime minister of Malaysia at the time, to the White House when Mr. Razak and members of his family were under investigation by the Justice Department.

Mr. Razak and his entourage spent at least \$259,000 at the Trump hotel. Mr. Trump praised the Malaysian leader, thanking him for "all the investment you've made in the United States."

The documents also show that Elliott Broidy, the vice chairman of the Trump Victory Committee who at the time was also the vice chairman of the Republican National Committee, stayed at the hotel for four nights during the Malaysian delegation's visit and spent more than \$5,000. Broidy later pleaded guilty to conspiracy to violate foreign lobbying laws as part of a covert campaign to persuade Mr. Trump and the Justice Department to drop the investigation.

White House officials denied at the time that Najib had picked the hotel at Trump's behest. "We certainly don't book their hotel accommodations," the press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who was recently elected governor of Arkansas, said in 2017.

Also that year, after Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates severed ties with Qatar, igniting a regional crisis, all three governments spent hundreds of thousands of dollars at the Trump hotel while lobbying the administration.

From late 2017 through mid-2018, government officials from Saudi Arabia and the Emirates spent at least \$164,000 at the Trump hotel, while Qatari officials and connected companies spent at least \$307,000, the Oversight Committee found.

From March 7, 2018, to March 14, 2018, the Saudi Ministry of Defense spent more than \$85,000, including renting several \$10,500 suites. Two officials who stayed there were referred to as "His Excellency," indicating that the Saudi royal family or senior government ministers were patronizing the Trump hotel.

The records released by House investigators also show a total of \$65,139 in charges by the American Turkish Council, a non-profit group with ties to the Turkish government.

The council helped sponsor two conferences held at the Trump hotel in Washington in 2017 and 2019, at around the same time President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey pushed Mr. Trump and his aides to shut down an investigation into sanctions violations by a state-owned Turkish bank. The Embassy of Turkey Delegation and Embassy of Turkey also had billing records at the hotel, but no details on the amounts paid.

Records from Mazars USA, the longtime accounting firm for Mr. Trump that cut ties with him and his family business this year, also showed \$19,370 in spending by a delegation from the Embassy of China at the Trump hotel in late August 2017, two months before Mr. Trump traveled to the country.

The Trump Organization wrote checks to the Treasury Department totaling \$355,687 covering profits at its hotels during the first three years of Mr. Trump's tenure at the White House. But it never provided a breakdown of which foreign government officials had stayed at its hotels.

Strategic Interests of the US In South Caucasus

CAUCASUS, from page 19

necessary to settle all the conflicts in the region. If Armenian-Turkish relations are regulated, Moscow would have nothing to do with the security of the Armenian-Turkish border. If the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is settled, Moscow has nothing to do in Artsakh. Actually, it does not matter to Washington whether the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is settled within the framework of the principle of self-determination of nations or within the framework of territorial integrity. The important thing is the comprehensive and lasting settlement of the problem, as American officials are usually mentioning.

Despite the fact that the US never had any published strategy on the South Caucasus region, such as the "US Strategy for Central Asia 2019-2025," the region is of the utmost importance. Undeniably, the US is more interested in the South Caucasus region as a whole rather than in deepening bilateral relations with individual states. After all, the South Caucasus is bordered by the main regional US ally, Turkey, and two main rivals and adversaries, Russia and Iran. Because of this regional approach, the US has appointed one representative as the Minsk Group co-chair, who is simultaneously involved in the "Geneva International Discussion" format created on the issues of Georgia, putting the existing conflicts in the South Caucasus into one complete picture.

This geography and regional approach provides the South Caucasus with serious importance for the US. Ideally, the US would like to have a situation and regional model in the South Caucasus similar to that of the Baltic states; that is, three states with no serious issues with each other, common foreign policy principles and bearers of the same Western values.

(Suren Sargsyan is an expert on US foreign policy, researcher and author. He is a graduate of Yerevan State University, American University of Armenia and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Sargsyan is a founder of the Armenian Center for American Studies, a research center based in Yerevan.)

In Armenia, Rallies against Karabakh Negotiations Fail to Gain Traction

By Ani Mejlumyan

An Armenian opposition umbrella group staged a rally in Yerevan on November 5 against the likely signing of a peace treaty that will make substantial concessions to Azerbaijan on Karabakh.

But the demonstration turnout was relatively meager compared to one day earlier in Stepanakert, Karabakh's de facto capital, on October 30, where residents vowed never to accept Azerbaijani sovereignty over the de facto independent entity.

The Yerevan rally was organized by the "Resistance Movement," whose members include two opposition parliamentary blocs - the Armenia alliance, led by former President Robert Kocharyan and I Have Honor, led by former President Serzh Sargsyan.

The rally featured solemn trumpet music that evoked the Karabakh Movement that arose in 1988 and led to Karabakh claiming independence from then-Soviet Azerbaijan.

It opened with a traditionalist appeal by a senior cleric in the Armenian Apostolic Church: "I believe that spiritual Armenia will defeat the new Armenia. Real and strong Armenia will defeat the fake, Facebook Armenia. The temple will prevail against the street."

That was an obvious reference to the government of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, which came to power in 2018 through street rallies and social media campaigns and is now in talks with Azerbaijan.

Ishkhan Saghatlyan, a member of parliament in the Armenia alliance, thundered against Pashinyan's apparent readiness for concessions.

"No document that would limit Artsakh's right to self-determination can be signed and ratified. Such a document would be torn up by our people and be declared null and void immediately after the regime is changed," he said, adding that what Armenia needs is a

new "top negotiator." (Artsakh is an alternative Armenian name for Karabakh.)

Saghatlyan asserted that once the opposition gained power, it could secure "external support that would rule out vital concessions." That was an apparent reference to the opposition's hope for help from Russia, and possibly Iran as well.

Kocharyan, who is perhaps the most prominent opposition figure and is linked to key opposition media outlets, was present at the rally but did not speak.

About 6,000 people turned out for the rally, according to estimates, compared to around 40,000 for the demonstration in Stepanakert the previous week.

These numbers are remarkable considering Yerevan's population is an order of magnitude greater than that of all of Karabakh.

The November 5 rally was also considerably smaller than the spontaneous protests that broke out in Yerevan on 13 September after Pashinyan first openly signaled he was ready for major concessions on Karabakh following Azerbaijan's incursion into the territory of Armenia.

The notion that "Karabakh is Armenian" has been a central pillar of Armenian identity worldwide for decades. So why the unimpressive turnout?

Perhaps because the issue of the Karabakh negotiations has become closely tied to domestic politics.

Since then the Armenian opposition - led largely by elites who ruled the country from 1998 to 2018 - has failed to win society's trust despite widespread outrage against the government.

They forced an election in mid-2021 that only renewed Pashinyan's mandate. They then launched several campaigns of street protests aimed at ousting him, but all of them have sputtered out.

An IRI poll published in September found that 64 percent of Armenians don't

trust any politician. Pashinyan is the most trusted individual, with 16 percent - a paltry figure but one that still dwarfs Kocharyan's 3 percent.

The widespread disenchantment is linked to the peace process with Azerbaijan, which offers little hope for an outcome favorable to Armenia.

The ongoing negotiations have been conducted on parallel, even competing, paths. One has been led by the European Union, with support from the United States, and the other by Russia.

Reports have emerged that a Russian version of the peace treaty envisages delaying the resolution of Karabakh's status, and a continued presence of the Russian peacekeeping mission while the European version emphasizes the rights of ethnic Armenians inside Azerbaijan.

While Armenia would prefer the first option, it is not clear whether Moscow has either the will or ability to preserve Armenian control over Karabakh.

It is growing more and more evident that Pashinyan is trying to prepare the public for a surrender of that control.

"Unfortunately the international community, without exception, considers Karabakh to be a part of Azerbaijan, and this is evident in all documents," he said on October 29.

His government has also taken up the line that Karabakh Armenians must deal directly with Baku to determine the terms of their future coexistence.

The polarized discourse on the peace process is mirrored in Armenia's media scene.

Public TV generally toes the government line, portraying the challenges in the talks as insurmountable and seeking instead to hype the authorities' domestic initiatives. The November 5 protest, for example, was given only brief mention sandwiched in between reports about social programs in Syunik and a corruption investigation.